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GOCE DELČEV

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DIMITAR DIMESKI

GOCE DELČEV

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The soul of the Macedonian Organization was Goce Delčev – that Balkan Garibaldi…

N. Rogdaev, *Burevesnik*, 16/1909

Rare and exceptional people are a dignity to the whole of humanity. Goce Delčev is one of these.

Goce Delčev, the person and his work, is an inextricable part of the recent history of the Macedonian people. His name personifies the admirable achievements of the Macedonian Ilinden generation.

Goce Delčev emerged as the visionary, ideologist, organizer and leader of the Macedonian national liberation movement towards the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th.

The Macedonian Revolutionary Organization (MRO) was founded in the 1890s, in circumstances of bloc division between the European imperialist powers, semi-colonial status in the Ottoman Empire and widespread religious propaganda from the neighbouring Balkan states nourishing aspirations towards Macedonia. MRO appeared in the role of an advocate and torch-bearer of the Macedonian national liberation movement which thus embarked upon a new, higher stage of development. It emerged at the right moment to prevent the dismembering of the living body of the oppressed Macedonian people. At the same time, this emergence "marked the beginning of a newer, more developed stage in the process of the national establishment of the Macedonian people. With the help of this movement, the Macedonian people stepped onto the Balkan political scene as an active national and political subject, clearly announcing their aspirations towards their own national territory and seeking ways of shaping their future national

and political destiny" (M. Pandevski).[1] Furthermore, the Macedonian national liberation movement propagated and supported the establishment of a Macedonian nation-state. In addition, with its democratic bourgeois character, the Macedonian national liberation movement also had the characteristics of a social and economic revolution, overthrowing the feudal constraints of the backward Ottoman state. The highest achievement of this movement, the Kruševo Republic, was also a combination of the creative role of Nikola Karev and the visionary messages of Goce Delčev.

Goce Delčev enlightened Macedonia. He was a sublime offspring of his time. His brief but impressive life, from his birth in Kukuš to his death in Banica, was wholly dedicated to his people. He bequeathed the last and most fruitful decade of his life to the Macedonian national liberation movement, to the uncompromising Macedonian struggle for national and social freedom, to his own people. His active presence on the Macedonian historical scene in the turbulent period between 1894 and 1903 greatly enhanced the Macedonian national liberation movement from the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century.

[1] For reasons of space, this edition does not contain footnotes giving details of the literature used. Readers are directed to the Macedonian edition of this book which contains a further 860 footnotes (See: Димитар Димески, *Гоце Делчев*, Скопје, 1992).

1. Goce Delčev was born in Kukuš, a well-known centre of the Macedonian Revival movement, situated in the coastal region of Macedonia, 35 kilometres north of Salonika.

In the late 19th century Kukuš had about 12 thousand inhabitants. There were two thousand Macedonian families and only about two hundred Turkish houses, as well as a few Romanies.

Renowned Macedonian revivalists such as Dimitrija Miladinov,[2] Rajko Žinzifov,[3] Partenij Zografski[4] and Kuzman Šapkarev[5] left a deep impression on this typically Macedonian region. It is not by chance that the town of Kukuš has been immortalized in the excellent poem 'Longing for the South' by Konstantin Miladinov.[6]

Situated close to Salonika — the Macedonian metropolis of the time — the town of Kukuš was also known as a 'political nest'. It was the centre of the important Kukuš Union. A strong revolutionary upsurge was also felt during the Great Eastern Crisis (1875–1881). There is no doubt, however,

[2] Dimitrija Miladinov (Struga, 1810 – Constantinople, 1862), great Macedonian revivalist.

[3] Rajko (Ksenofont) Žinzifov (Veles, 1839 – Moscow, 1877), Macedonian revivalist and writer.

[4] Partenij Zografski (sacral name: Pavel Trizloski, village of Galičnik, 1818–1876), Macedonian revivalist and metropolitan.

[5] Kuzman Šapkarev (Ohrid, 1854 – Sofia, 1909), Macedonian revivalist.

[6] Konstantin Miladinov (Struga, 1830 – Constantinople, 1862), Macedonian revivalist and poet. The international *Struga Poetry Evenings* festival is held each year in honour of the Miladinov brothers.

that this Macedonian lighthouse of revival has been most celebrated in Macedonia and the Balkans as Goce Delčev's native town.

Obviously, this was the reason for the Greek army levelling the town to the ground in 1913. However, this did not impede the spread of Delčev's charisma. The effect was exactly the opposite: the interest in the fate of this small Macedonian town near the outskirts of Salonika became even greater.

2. Goce Delčev came from the well-off Kukuš family of Delčev. Goce (Georgi) Delčev was born on February 4, 1872, as the first boy and third child in the large Delčev family which was to have nine children. Goce had three brothers (Mico, Milan and Hristo) and five sisters (Ruša, Coca, Tina, Lika and Elena). His father, Nikola Delčev, was also born in Kukuš and his mother, Sultana Nurdžieva, came from the nearby village of Murarci.

Nikola Delčev was engaged in trade and inn-keeping. He also owned a flock of sheep. He was a prominent and highly respected citizen of Kukuš, strict but righteous. His firm patriarchal attitude, however, did not make his children weak as personalities. On the contrary, all of them grew into freedom-loving, hard-working and self-conscious individuals. Their amiable mother, Sultana (Nurdžieva) Delčeva, also had a strong and beneficial influence on their upbringing.

II. GROWTH

1. Goce Delčev spent half of his brief life in his native town of Kukuš. It saw the first, almost idyllic period of his childhood.

Some positive traits of Goce Delčev's character became apparent very early. For example, at the age of five, when his parents were quarrelling, Delčev tried to protect his mother, showing a rare courage in front of his strict father. His sense for protecting the oppressed and the weak seems to have developed at an early stage.

We know that Delčev had many friends as a child: Macedonians, Turks and Romanies, making no differences between them. Here lay the roots of his cosmopolitan breadth. Radical nationalism, chauvinism and ethnic hatred were always foreign to him. On the other hand, his Macedonian national feeling developed into a positive patriotism accompanied by an international outlook.

Goce Delčev was a highly temperamental person; he would easily burst into flames. He could not tolerate traitors even as a child. At the age of 13, Delčev attacked a pupil from his school, a 'traitor', with a small knife.

However, the young Goce was to draw a lesson from this incident. He later developed a strong self-control. This is best illustrated by the example of an insulting Vrhovist physical provocation at the beginning of the century, when Delčev first pulled out his dagger, but managed to restrain himself, threw the dagger on the floor and walked away in a dignified manner.

The first stage of Delčev's instruction is linked with his native town of Kukuš. There Delčev completed his elementary education. In the school year

1879/80 he was enrolled in the first form of the Uniate School, but was later transferred to the Exarchal School.

Delčev was a good pupil. He was eager to learn and developed a love for books very early. Books drew him close to the elder 'learned' town-dwellers — the teacher Hristo Bučkov, Dino Popgutov and Pone Ikiljulev — who satisfied Delčev's curiosity for knowledge by telling him interesting stories and lending him books. He came across *The Captain's Daughter* by Pushkin. In addition, he read books from the junior grammar school library, mainly world classics. The citizens of Kukuš could expand their horizons by reading the works of Molière, Shakespeare, Lessing, Goethe, Darwin, Chateaubriand, Victor Hugo, Alexandre Dumas, Alphonse Daudet, Pushkin, Gogol, Turgenev and Dostoevsky, the hagiographies of St Clement of Ohrid, the biography of Alexander the Great, etc. There were also several periodicals and newspapers.

In the school year 1886/87, in his native town of Kukuš, Goce Delčev completed the third and last form at the Exarchal junior grammar school with good grades. His hope to continue his education stumbled over an insurmountable barrier: his father. According to Nikola Delčev's unwritten patriarchal rules, his first son had to inherit his father's profession. He considered the education Goce had acquired more than sufficient. Thus the hunger for education of the disciplined son had to give way before the iron will of the strict father.

So Goce Delčev became an apprentice in Hristo Basmadžiev's grocery shop in order to master the craft of trading. But soon afterwards, instead of finding him in the shop, Nikola Delčev met his son in the street bearing two jugs of water for the grocer's wife. This unforeseen misuse of Delčev's apprenticeship was a harsh blow to Nikola Delčev's honour, so Goce found himself in his father's inn. But his thoughts were drifting elsewhere.

Finally, his father's blessing opened the way for his education, thanks, above all, to Delčev's older friends. So the Salonika Grammar School did not remain only a vain desire.

2. It is an indubitable fact that Salonika — the social, economic and cultural centre of Macedonia of the time — played a special part in the moulding of the revolutionary climate in Macedonia.

The Ss Cyril and Methodius Exarchal Boys' Grammar School was the focus of revolutionary pulsation. Almost immediately after its foundation in the early 1880s — in the school year 1882/83 — it was the venue for certain revolutionary activities.

Prominent Macedonian and foreign teachers taught at the Salonika Grammar School. The School itself, regardless of its Exarchist 'Jesuit'

regime, was a real nursery of revolutionary ideas. Banned books circulated there, various plans were made and student rebellions were organized. This School was the place where almost all the outstanding Macedonian revolutionaries studied. Later, in the 1890s, they were to take the leading role in the Macedonian national liberation movement.

Among the first students of the Salonika Exarchal Grammar School were Ǵorče Petrov[7] and Pere Tošev.[8] As a result of the well-known student rebellion in early 1885 they were expelled.

Three years later, in early 1888, in connection with a new student rebellion, 19 students from the seventh form of the Salonika Exarchal Boys' Grammar School were expelled. One of the major reasons for this was the demand of the students for the withdrawal of the Bulgarian language and the introduction of the Macedonian "dialect" in instruction. As a result, 26 students went to Serbia to continue their education, including Dame Gruev,[9] Petar Pop Arsov,[10] Dimitar Mirčev,[11] Hristo Pop Kocev[12] and Nikola Naumov.[13]

When Goce Delčev arrived in Salonika to continue his schooling, the excitement among the older students over the above-mentioned event had not yet subsided. This was in the school year 1888/89. Delčev was enrolled in the fourth form. Three other boys from Kukuš were enrolled together with him: Goce Imov, Goce Petkov and Hristo Tenčov. They were accommodated in the Grammar School boarding house. This was the beginning of the second, very important stage of Delčev's education.

"All political, academic and cultural influences and aims came through Salonika as the core, outlet and link of Macedonia with the world. Hence this city became an attractive centre for the more alert Macedonian forces who discovered the world there, receiving their essential education, devel-

[7] Ǵorče Petrov (village of Varoš, Prilep region, 1865 – Sofia, 1921), Macedonian revolutionary and ideologist. Liquidated in Sofia.

[8] Pere Tošev (Prilep, c. 1865/66 – Drenovska Klisura, 1912), Macedonian revolutionary. Liquidated by the Turks on May 4, 1912.

[9] Dame Gruev (village of Smilevo, 1871 – Petlec, village of Rusinovo, 1906), leading Macedonian revolutionary. Coryphaeus of the Macedonian Revolutionary Organization (MRO). Greatly honoured for its establishment. Killed in battle against the Turkish army, December 23, 1906.

[10] Petar Pop Arsov (village of Bogomila, 1868 – Sofia, 1941), Macedonian revolutionary. Coryphaeus of MRO.

[11] Dimitar Mirčev (Prilep, 1865 – Sofia, 1936), Macedonian revolutionary. Secretary of Ivan Garvanov's Revolutionary Brotherhood. Secretary of the Central Committee of MRO during the January Salonika Congress (1903).

[12] Hristo Pop Kocev (Štip, 1868 – Sofia, 1933), Macedonian revolutionary. Member of MRO Central Committee.

[13] Nikola Naumov (Štip, c. 1871 – Sofia, 1934), Macedonian public figure and journalist.

The Staff of the Ss Cyril and Methodius Salonika Exarchal Grammar School, School Year 1888/89

oping their fundamental principles and revolutionary beliefs. [Therefore] eager for knowledge, Goce Delčev chose this city and joined the vortex of new life with remarkable youthful vigour and spirit" (H.A. Poljanski).

Salonika, Macedonia and the world now lay before Goce Delčev as if on the palm of his hand. He was 16 at the time. He was older than the rest of the students owing to the undesired break in his education, and was thus more mature and more serious. At first he was rather shy. His best friend was Hristo Tenčov[14] who later, in 1897, joined Garvanov's 'Revolutionary' Brotherhood.

Goce Delčev was a good student in Salonika, just as he had been in Kukuš. He was especially attracted to mathematics, mostly as a result of his teacher, the mathematician Blagoj Dimitrov.[15] In addition to the latter, Delčev had a high esteem for another of his teachers, the poet Konstantin Veličkov.[16] Delčev spoke excellent Turkish, thanks, above all, to the knowledge he had acquired in Kukuš. At the same time he was utterly fascinated with Darwin's theory.

Apart from his solid command of school subjects, Goce Delčev constantly broadened his intellectual outlook. He dedicated almost all of his spare time to the reading of books. The library had a good selection, but he

[14] Hristo Tenčov, born in Kukuš. Macedonian politician and medical doctor. From April 1910 president of the National Federal Party (NFP). Died in Sofia in the 1930s.

[15] Blagoj Dimitrov (village of Embore, Kostur region, 1856–?), Macedonian educator and mathematician. Son of the distinguished Macedonian author of textbooks, Dimitar Makedonski. Later became member of the Macedonian Scholarly Institute (MNI) in Sofia.

[16] Konstantin Veličkov (1855–1907), Bulgarian educator, writer and politician. Minister of Education in the Bulgarian government of Dr Konstantin Stoilov.

was not satisfied with that. He also borrowed books from his school colleagues and even ordered one of Ivan Turgenev's books from Odessa by mail. At this time Delčev became close to the most talented student of the Salonika Exarchal Grammar School, Jordan Nikolov from Prilep, from whom he borrowed many books, including works by Darwin, Pisarev and Flammarion. Goce Delčev knew Pisarev almost by heart. In Salonika he also studied socialist literature.

At this time Delčev's interest was mainly concentrated on works of philosophy, history, revolution and natural history. He did not pay much attention to belletristic literature, with the exception of poetry, especially revolutionary poetry. He admired Hristo Botev's revolutionary poetry in particular.

It is known that Goce Delčev was a great admirer of the immortal work of the pan-Slavonic educators Ss Cyril and Methodius. At the moment when a student tried to ridicule the patrons of the Salonika Exarchal Grammar School, Goce Delčev attacked him with the words: "Sheep-head, remember that you must take your hat off standing before those to whom you owe the fact that you can write your name 'man' even when you curse them!" (P.K. Javorov).

The Salonika Grammar School was well-known all around Macedonia. There Delčev made friends with people from various parts of Macedonia. It was in Salonika that he saw at close quarters the position of subjugated Macedonia under the Ottoman Empire of Abdul Hamid. It was there that his ideas for the struggle against tyranny were born. He wanted to devote his life to this struggle. "He repeated that freedom could be earned with sacrifices full of blood, that those sacrifices must be made; but how?" (P.K. Javorov).

Goce Delčev's first revolutionary gesture in public dates from April 1889. At the celebration dedicated to the birthday of Sultan Abdul Hamid II,[17] while all those present shouted "Çok yaşa!" (Long live!), 17-year-old Delčev was the only one to shout "Aşağı!" (Down!). This incident, which was ignored by the authorities, greatly strengthened Goce Delčev's reputation in the circles where he moved in Salonika. Words of admiration could be heard everywhere in the grammar school: "The boy from Kukuš spoke out for all of us today."

Towards the middle of 1889, six students of the Salonika Exarchal Grammar School who had completed their education there — G. Balasčev,[18]

[17] Abdul Hamid II (1842–1918), Turkish Sultan (1876–1909). Creator of the notorious 'Regime of Oppression'.

[18] Georgi Balasčev (Ohrid, 1869 – Sofia, 1936), Macedonian public figure. Member of the Young Macedonian Literary Society (MMKD), Sofia.

Sultan Abdul Hamid II

G. Belev,[19] A. Trendafilov, K. Karaǵulev,[20] D. Dimčev and A. Čakarov — witnessing from close quarters the Exarchist denationalization[21] policy, offered their services to the Serbian propaganda hiding at the time under a Macedonist disguise, on condition that they would be "teachers in Macedo-

[19] Georgi Belev, born in Ohrid. Member of MMKD. Later a prominent activist and treasurer of the Supreme Macedonian Committee (VMK) and one of Končev's men.

[20] Kliment Karaǵulev (Ohrid, 1868–1916), Macedonian public figure and linguist. Member of MMKD.

[21] The terms *denationalization* and *denationalize* are used throughout this book with the meaning of 'obliterating the national (i.e. ethnic) character of a people with the purpose of assimilation' (translator's note).

nia teaching in the Macedonian vernacular". Half of them were founders of the St Clement Cultural and Educational Association, Ohrid.

It seems that this act was not unknown to Goce Delčev. Negotiations failed and they went to Sofia where they appeared among the initiators of the *Loza* (Vine) journal movement.

These two fresh demonstrations of a pro-Macedonian national character which originated from the Salonika Grammar School (in 1888 and 1889) could not leave the more progressive students of the Salonika Exarchal Grammar School indifferent.

A revolutionary spirit increasingly spread among the students of the Salonika Exarchal Grammar School. In 1889, for example, three student circles were active in the grammar school boarding house: the literary, the philosophical and scientific, and the insurgent (revolutionary) circles. The revolutionary circle was headed by Boris Sarafov[22] and Dimitar Pažev. Other members of this circle included Goce Delčev, Hristo Čemkov[23] and Atanas Murdžev.[24] The circle was a place where the works of Karavelov, Botev, Zaharij Stojanov and Ivan Vazov were studied. The biographies of famous revolutionaries such as Mazzini, Garibaldi, Washington, Lafayette, Kostyushko, Dombrowski, Kossuth, Lavrov, Kropotkin, Bakunin, Stepnyak and others were also analysed.

In the autumn of 1890, after Boris Sarafov and Dimitar Pažev had left the school, Goce Delčev became the head of the revolutionary student circle.

In 1891 Goce Delčev completed his sixth form. On the occasion he was given the works of Aleksandr Pushkin, presented to him by the Vali (Governor) of Salonika personally.

Seeing Goce Delčev's imagination, sharpness of mind and talent, as well as his knowledge of books, Dino Popgutov, a citizen of Kukuš, prophetically told Nikola Delčev: "You have an intelligent son, Koljo. He will be a great man!" (K. Hristov).

Having completed his sixth form, Goce Delčev found himself at a crossroads: whether to continue at the grammar school and become a teacher or to go on with his education in some military academy. He found the latter more attractive, as "to be an officer looks as if you were preparing to join immediately the struggle for what the Macedonian people had the right to.

[22] Boris Sarafov (village of Libjahovo, Nevrokop region, 1872 – Sofia, 1907), Macedonian revolutionary. Participant in the 1895 Melnik 'uprising'. President of the Supreme Macedonian Committee (VMK), Sofia. Member of the General Staff of the Second Revolutionary District during the Ilinden Uprising. At the Rila Congress of MRO (October 1905) he was given a suspended death sentence. Sarafov was liquidated in 1907 by order of the Ser (Serez) circle.

[23] Hristo Čemkov (Štip, ? – Prilep, June 1899), Macedonian revolutionary. Took his own life when his attempt to form a revolutionary detachment was revealed.

[24] Atanas (Tane) Murdžev (Prilep, c. 1875–?), Macedonian revolutionary. Very active in the Sabler grenade factory. Later went over to the Vrhovists.

An officer, as it seemed to many young Macedonians at the time, was almost an accomplished leader, who would head and lead forward his armed units" (K. Hristov). Delčev's dilemma was finally resolved before the persuasive recommendation of his acquaintances, Second Lieutenant Dimitar Žostov and cadet (*Junker*) Dimitar Atanasov, about the Bulgarian Royal Military Academy in Knjaževo (Sofia). Moreover, Goce Delčev knew that Boris Sarafov was also there.

Thinking of the usefulness of a military education for those who would lead the future revolutionary struggle, and known for his inspiring words, Goce Delčev managed to convince four of his student friends, members of the revolutionary circle, to embrace this idea.

Of course, the dutiful 19-year-old son Goce did not want to go to Bulgaria without his father's consent. Once again Nikola Delčev was consulted, this time through the mediation of Goce Imov's grandfather. This was the last time that Goce Delčev asked for permission from his parents to carry out his intentions. From this moment on he took his destiny into his own hands.

In July 1891 a small group of five school-leavers from the Salonika Grammar School (Goce Delčev, Stamat Stamatov from Debar, Ilija Konduradžiev from Prilep, Goce Imov from Kukuš and Stefan Strezov from Koprivštica) went to Sofia. Thus the entire Salonika Grammar School revolutionary circle joined the military academy in Sofia.

Some fifty young Macedonians, among others, followed the three-year course at the Royal Military Academy. Delčev's group belonged to the 13th Class. The previous, 12th, Class included the former Salonika Grammar School students Boris Sarafov, Georgi Apostolov and Dimitar Atanasov, who welcomed the arrival of Goce Delčev's group.

This was the beginning of Goce Delčev's first three-year stay in the neighbouring Principality of Bulgaria.

3. By Act No. 192 of July 23, 1891, Goce Delčev became a cadet (*Junker*) in the Royal Military Academy in Knjaževo, Bulgaria. This was the start of the third and last stage of his education.

Goce Delčev's three years of education (1891–1894) in the Principality of Bulgaria took place at the time of Stefan Stambolov's regime (1887–1894).[25] Only the last few months of Delčev's education coincided with the first months of Dr Konstantin Stoilov's new government (1894–1899).[26]

[25] Stefan Stambolov (1854–1895), Bulgarian statesman. Bulgarian Prime Minister (1887–1894).

[26] Dr Konstantin Stoilov (1853–1895), Bulgarian statesman. Twice Bulgarian Prime Minister (June–August 1887; 1894–1899).

Goce Imov and Goce Delčev as Cadets

Stefan Stambolov's dictatorial regime, supported by Prince Ferdinand of Coburg (Ferdinand I of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha),[27] stifled the freedom-loving demonstrations in the Bulgarian society. On the other hand, the merciless bourgeois exploitation of the broad masses of the Bulgarian people created a grim picture in the young Bulgarian state.

Of course, the Royal Military Academy could not remain outside contemporary Bulgarian social trends. An austere regimental discipline ruled there, accompanied by harsh military training. The aim was to create royalist machines whose only ambition would be the epaulets of a colonel or general. Hence any freedom-loving thought and action was eradicated. And this was precisely what the freedom-loving Delčev's spirit could not tolerate. All his illusions connected with this academy were suddenly shattered.

Goce Delčev expressed his profound disappointment with the following words: "Why did I not stay in Salonika, why did I not complete the grammar school course, why did I not become a teacher?" This was the first and only open regret Delčev expressed during his education.

But there was no way back. Ambition on the one hand, and the usefulness of the military education, on the other, did not allow him to step aside. Even Ivan Hadži Nikolov's[28] attractive offer in Boris's Garden (Sofia, July 1893) in the presence of Kosta Šahov[29] — to go back to Salonika and head the future revolutionary organization for the liberation of Macedonia — did not sway Goce Delčev's determination. On that occasion, Ivan Hadži Nikolov presented the following projection:

"1. The Revolutionary Organization should be established inside Macedonia and be active there so that the Greeks and Serbs would not designate it an instrument of the Bulgarian government;

"2. The founders should be local inhabitants and live in Macedonia;

"3. The political slogan of the Organization should be the autonomy of Macedonia;

"4. The Organization should be secret and independent, not maintaining links with the governments of the neighbouring free states; and

"5. Only moral and material support for the struggle of the Macedonian revolutionaries should be sought from the Macedonian émigrés in Bulgaria and Bulgarian society."

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[27] Ferdinand I of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha (Vienna, 1861 – Coburg, 1948), Bulgarian ruler (Prince, 1887–1908; Emperor, 1908–1918). Abdicated in 1918 in favour of his son, Boris III.

[28] Ivan Hadži Nikolov (Kukuš, 1861 – Sofia, 1934), Macedonian revolutionary. Coryphaeus of MRO.

[29] Kosta Šahov (Ohrid, 1862–1916), Macedonian public figure and journalist. Member of MMKD and the *Loza* movement.

Ivan Hadži Nikolov

Although Goce Delčev agreed in principle, he intended to complete the military academy first and then start on the practical realization of this idea. After the completion of the Military Academy "I'll be made an officer. I'll resign from the officer's post, I'll come to Salonika and we'll form a revolutionary organization. Having begun our work, we'll earn authority and there will be no need to look for another figure of authority."

But events took a swifter course and Delčev's insistence on completing his education prevented him from taking part as one of the founders of the Macedonian Revolutionary Organization (MRO).

Not ready himself to abandon the academy, Goce Delčev at least tried to thwart other young Macedonians from enrolling there. It is known that Goce Delčev strongly dissuaded his fellow townsman Petar Drvingov[30] from doing this. Hence Stamat Stamatov assumes that "even then the idea was ripe in Delčev that the intellectual forces of Macedonia would be more useful in their native places rather than in coming to Bulgaria".

Such ideas of Delčev's were strengthened in particular by the Macedonian *Loza* ('Vine') Movement. Naturally, during the rare occasions when he left the atmosphere of the drab barracks, Delčev joined this progressive Macedonian circle. There he and Kosta Šahov from Ohrid became close friends.

It was a lucky event that the arrival of Goce Delčev in Sofia coincided with the appearance of the Young Macedonian Literary Society. The same intellectual forces which were later to establish or lead the Macedonian Revolutionary Organization could be found within or around this society.

The leading figures of the Young Macedonian Literary Society included Kosta Šahov, Petar Pop Arsov, Georgi Balasčev, Georgi Belev, Kliment Karadžulev, Evtim Sprostranov,[31] Hristo Pop Kocev, Dimitar Mirčev, Andrej Ljapčev,[32] Tomo Karajovov,[33] Angel Naumov, Naum Tufekčiev,[34] Hristo Matov[35] and Ivan Hadži Nikolov.

In the beginning the society maintained close links with Dame Gruev's student Macedonian Society and later with Goce Delčev's circle active within the Sofia Military Academy.

In early 1892, the *Lozars* (members of the *Loza* Movement) raised their voice against foreign propaganda through their *Loza* journal, stressing the following: "Only a strong resistance on our part can protect us from plunderous encroachments. But in the present state of affairs we cannot accomplish a similar feat; we need forces to do that, and our forces are shattered and divided. Therefore we should unite, we should integrate them into one

[30] Petar Drvingov (Kukuš, 1875 – Sofia, 1958), Bulgarian colonel of Macedonian descent.

[31] Evtim Sprostranov (Ohrid, 1868 – Sofia, 1931), Macedonian public figure. Member of the *Loza* movement.

[32] Andrej Tasev Ljapčev (Resen, 1866 – Sofia, 1933), Macedonian public figure. Member of MMKD. Went over to the Vrhovist ranks. Later transformed into a Bulgarian statesman. Ljapčev became Bulgarian Prime Minister (1926–1931). Publicly favoured Vančo Mihajlov.

[33] Tomo Karajovov (Skopje, 1868–1951), Macedonian public figure. Member of MMKD and journalist.

[34] Naum Tufekčiev (Resen, ? – Sofia, 1919), Macedonian public figure. Arms trader. Vice president of VMK. Killed in Sofia.

[35] Hristo Matov (Struga, 1872 – Sofia, 1922), Macedonian revolutionary. Member of MRO Central Committee. External representative of MRO in Sofia. Following the Ilinden Uprising, ideational protagonist of the conservative faction within the movement.

general powerful force — a popular force — if we want to protect the future of our fatherland. This should be the aim of every sensible Macedonian wherever he may be."

The *Lozars* tried to block the denationalization policy of foreign church and education propaganda by putting forward their strongest weapon — the language — through the choice of "the Ohrid dialect, which will be the literary language of the future Greater Macedonia", to use the words of alarm of their open opponent Levov,[36] a Greater-Bulgarian. Hence it was no wonder that Stambolov's official journal *Svoboda*, sounding a note of alarm, called them Macedonian national "separatists", following which the *Loza* journal was banned and the *Lozars* were persecuted.

In the Military Academy Goce Delčev withdrew into himself. He was silent, modest and good-natured. He was a good student. He did not want to expose himself too much on the professional military plane and maintained a golden mean. By an order dated September 15, 1892, he passed into the middle, and by an order of October 5, 1893, he entered the third and final year of the Military Academy.

Here Goce Delčev became close to Minčev. Marin Peev was another young man to join them. Several other cadets with open socialist orientation gravitated around them. This group was designated as the socialist circle. It is known that they ignored the strict academy ban on reading newspapers, journals and books with a revolutionary content. Banned revolutionary books circulated secretly among them, especially those of socialist nature. Thus under Delčev's "pillow there were always works by Marx, Engels, Kautsky, Shalgunov, Chernyshevsky, Dobrolyubov, Herzen" (V. Kocev). Punishments did not prevent Delčev and his friends from continuing this practice.

In June 1894, at the final year examinations, Goce Delčev showed an average mark of 9.45 and his behaviour was assessed as excellent 12 (according to the 12-point system). So Delčev successfully completed his education in the Royal Military Academy. After this he registered for training in the 22nd Thracian Infantry Regiment in Tatar-Pazardžik. Only the promotion of the cadets into their first rank as officers remained to be carried out. And a scandal broke out precisely in connection with this.

In order to save money, Konstantin Stoilov's new government announced the postponement of the date for promoting the new class of officers until January 1, 1895. This caused great indignation among the cadets who had completed the academy. Two sharp anonymous letters arrived at the addresses of the Minister of War and the head office of the Royal Military

[36] Levov, pseudonym of Lev Dramov.

Academy. This was interpreted as an attack on military discipline. In order to discover and eradicate the culprits, three 'suspicious' cadets were arrested (Vasil Minčev, Vladimir Kovačev and Marko Vankov), all close friends of Delčev's. Somewhat later Marin Peev was also arrested. Then Goce Delčev unselfishly decided to take the blame on himself, declaring that he had written the anonymous letters and that the arrested cadets were innocent. He was not believed, but was arrested nevertheless, mostly owing to his socialist orientation. Gospodin Željaskov was arrested together with him.

In fact, the event with the anonymous letters was only a pretext for settling accounts with these young people of a socialist orientation. This is supported by the discovery during the 1896 manoeuvres at Loveč that the author of the anonymous letters was one S.N., an officer serving at Loveč.

The charge against Goce Delčev stated that he was not only "a socialist but also that he spread such propaganda in the academy".

Order No. 107, paragraph 5 of October 6, 1894, of the Royal Military Academy, by which the aforementioned six cadets were expelled, read as follows: "On the basis of the act of September 16, [old style, author's note] No. 133, the cadets of this academy, Vasil Minčev, Vladimir Kovačev, Marko Vankov, Gospodin Željaskov, Georgi Delčev and Marin Peev, are hereby expelled from this academy and transferred to army reserves as privates. The first two have no right to re-enrolment and promotion to officer's rank, and the last four have the right to be re-admitted into service, being responsible of writing an anonymous letter to the Minister of War. Those who are allowed to be re-admitted into the army if they wish must first join a military unit of their own choice, where they shall present themselves for promotion to the rank of first officer."

The order was so rigorous that it insisted on "eradicating the six men from the academy's lists".

Peju K. Javorov[37] is categorical in maintaining that Goce Delčev was expelled from the Royal Military Academy "as a socialist".

This turn of events did not disappoint Delčev; on the contrary, it made him happier. He felt himself free as a bird. His conscience was clear as he had been relieved of the constraints of the training period with someone else's 'help'. Broad revolutionary prospects now opened before him. It was then that Goce Delčev said to Tuše Deliivanov: "Our slave-like position in Macedonia clearly sets out what I should do... It is unforgivable for us, who have elevated ourselves spiritually, to suffer, to endure any longer and wait for others to liberate us."

[37] Peju Kračolov Javorov (Čirpan, 1878–1914), Bulgarian poet and journalist who participated in the Macedonian revolutionary movement. Goce Delčev's first biographer.

Tuše Deliivanov

At the time Goce Delčev still did not know of the already established, strictly secret MRO. His companion in those "unpleasant" days in Sofia, Tuše Deliivanov,[38] reveals Delčev's intentions: "He is to go to Macedonia and devote himself to revolutionary activity, organizing the population for the struggle against the oppressors. Here he could not find out anything definite about such activities in Macedonia, nor did he meet anyone who could instruct him..."

The first step Goce Delčev made in this regard was to send an application to the Exarchate for a teacher's post in Macedonia. His fellow townsman Deliivanov, encouraged by Delčev, did the same. "After some ten

[38] Tuše (Petar) Deliivanov (Kukuš, 1869–1950), Macedonian revolutionary. External representative of MRO in the Bulgarian capital, Sofia.

days we were employed almost simultaneously: myself by the Exarchate, and he by the Štip School Board," writes Deliivanov.

Thus in October 1894 Goce Delčev learnt about his first employment, in the post of teacher in the Štip suburb of Novo Selo.

This marked the conclusion of the third and last stage of his schooling. This was also the end of the second stage of Delčev's life, his early youth, which covered his education in Salonika and Sofia.

Goce Delčev was now at the threshold of the third, the last and the most significant, revolutionary stage of his eventful life.

III. OUTLOOK

At twenty-two years of age, having completed his general and military education, before starting his activity for Macedonian national liberation, Goce Delčev gave the impression of a mature person with a strong character and a well-formed progressive outlook.

"Goce Delčev's intellectual development passed through several stages. In Kukuš he acquired his basic knowledge of the world and people. In the Salonika Grammar School he made this more profound and succeeded in penetrating the spheres of science, literature and socialism. In the Military Academy the breadth of his interest in a number of questions was already clear, especially in the area of various political and socialist doctrines" (H.A. Poljanski).

Goce Delčev was fascinated by the ideas of the French Enlightenment, the French Bourgeois Revolution, the American War of Independence, the 1830 and 1848 Revolutions and the 1871 Paris Commune. He was especially interested in the struggle for liberation, starting from the American War of Independence, through the Carbonari, the Italian national liberation movement and its ideologist Mazzini, to the revolutionary concepts of the liberation struggle of the Balkan peoples (Serbs, Greeks, Romanians, Bulgarians). Of course, he was best acquainted with the most recent, the Bulgarian national liberation movement. This was largely a result of his three-year stay in the young Bulgarian state. Goce Delčev not only studied the literature on this question, especially Zaharij Stojanov's *Notes*... and his biography of Vasil Levski, but also had the opportunity of making personal contacts with Bulgarian revolutionaries.

Delčev's primary interest was directed towards the national liberation struggle of the Macedonian people, especially at the time of the Great Eastern Crisis: the Razlovci Uprising, the Macedonian (Kresna) Uprising and the Demir-Hisar Plot. As a matter of fact, he was later to have contacts with the leader and ideologist of the aforementioned two uprisings (Razlovci and Kresna), Dimitar Pop Georgiev Berovski,[39] having the opportunity of hearing first-hand information on these glorious events in Macedonian history.

Delčev was undoubtedly well acquainted with the major demonstrations of the Macedonian national cause at the time. He was personally close to the *Lozars* and the Macedonian Socialist Group in Sofia. He was also very well acquainted with the biographies of Washington, Lafayette, Mazzini, Garibaldi, Kostyushko, Dombrowski, Kossuth, Rakovski, Karavelov, Botev and Levski, which widened his revolutionary vision.

Of course, in the overall building of his revolutionary profile, Delčev's activity in the Salonika and Sofia circles as well as his close links with the *Lozars* and the socialists in Sofia were of considerable significance. In this respect, his friendship with Kosta Šahov was extremely useful.

Goce Delčev was almost equally attracted to the natural and social sciences. His interest ranged from mathematics and biology to history and philosophy.

He came into contact with a large number of doctrines. The scope of Delčev's knowledge ranged from Darwin's theory to Marx. He was particularly fond of the ideas of the Russian revolutionary democrats Dobrolyubov, Chernyshevsky, Herzen and Pisarev.

"He was also influenced by various revolutionary, utopian-socialist, utopian-communist and anarchist ideas, in particular those of Blanqui, P. Kropotkin, Mikhail Bakunin and S. Mikhailovich Kravchinsky–Stepnyak." Hence he was close to the *Siromahomilist* movement of Spiro Gulapčev[40] from Lerin.

Delčev's ideological views acquired a socialist character after he became acquainted with the work of Dimitar Blagoev[41] from Zagoričani. This was also a result of his contacts with Vasil Glavinov's[42] Macedonian

[39] Dimitar Pop Georgiev Berovski (Berovo, 1841 – village of Dolna Grašnica, Kustendil region, 1907), Macedonian revolutionary. Leader and ideologist of the Razlovci Uprising (1876) and the Kresna (Macedonian) Uprising (1878/79).

[40] Spiro Gulapčev (Lerin, 1856–1918), Macedonian journalist and public figure. Founder of the *Siromahomilist* movement (movement for the protection of the poor) in Bulgaria.

[41] Dimitar Blagoev–Dedoto (village of Zagoričani, Kostur region, 1856 – Sofia, 1924), founder of the socialist movement in Bulgaria.

[42] Vasil Glavinov (Veles, 1869 – Sofia, 1929), founder of the Macedonian Socialist Group in Sofia (1893).

Workers' Socialist Group, and particularly of his inseparable friendship with Dimo Hadži Dimov.[43] On the other hand, it was thanks to Spiro Gulapčev's publications that he became acquainted with the creators of Marxism — Marx and Engels — via some of their works.

Surrounded by the aforementioned Macedonians, outstanding propagators of socialist ideas, and drawn by his intellectual inclinations, Goce Delčev delved into the doctrine of socialism. A piece of public information in this respect appeared in the Sofia *Socialist* newspaper (October 4, 1894, old style): "Six students who share socialist ideas have been expelled from the military academy, under the pretext that they have written some anonymous letter to the Minister of War. In fact, the aim is that the despots over poverty get rid of the socialist 'infection', which is dangerous for them."

Here is Goce Delčev's personal view of the socialists: "These people carry out a real revolutionary task by spreading socialist literature so that socialist ideas may penetrate our ranks. They may play a revitalizing role, not a damaging one."

Yet Delčev's inclination towards their ideas was mostly of a declarative character. He was, above all, a classical national revolutionary. Thus, according to Stamat Stamatov, Goce Delčev "knew perfectly well that Macedonia would be liberated neither by the theory of Darwin nor that of Marx". Here is Hristo Andonov Poljanski's[44] interpretation in this regard: "Delčev was aware that the concrete situation of Macedonia at the time did not allow a stereotyped application of scholarly views and revolutionary ideas which did not correspond to the concrete and specific conditions prevailing in the Macedonia of that period. As a result, he acted as a typical revolutionary democrat and tribune who, owing to the specific objective conditions and circumstances, had brought the national liberation revolutionary idea to the foreground. It was of an obvious and preeminent significance before all other things."

It was this Goce Delčev, with his progressive ideological views and military training capital, who found himself in front of the newly opened transcendental doors of Macedonian history.

[43] Dimo Hadži Dimov (village of Gorno Brodi, Ser region, 1875 – Sofia, 1924), Macedonian revolutionary, journalist and visionary. Liquidated in Sofia.

[44] Hristo Andonov Poljanski (Dojran, 1927 – Skopje, 1985), Macedonian historiographer. Rector of the Ss Cyril and Methodius University, Skopje (1984–85). Author of a six-volume publication on Goce Delčev (1972).

IV. STORMY YEARS

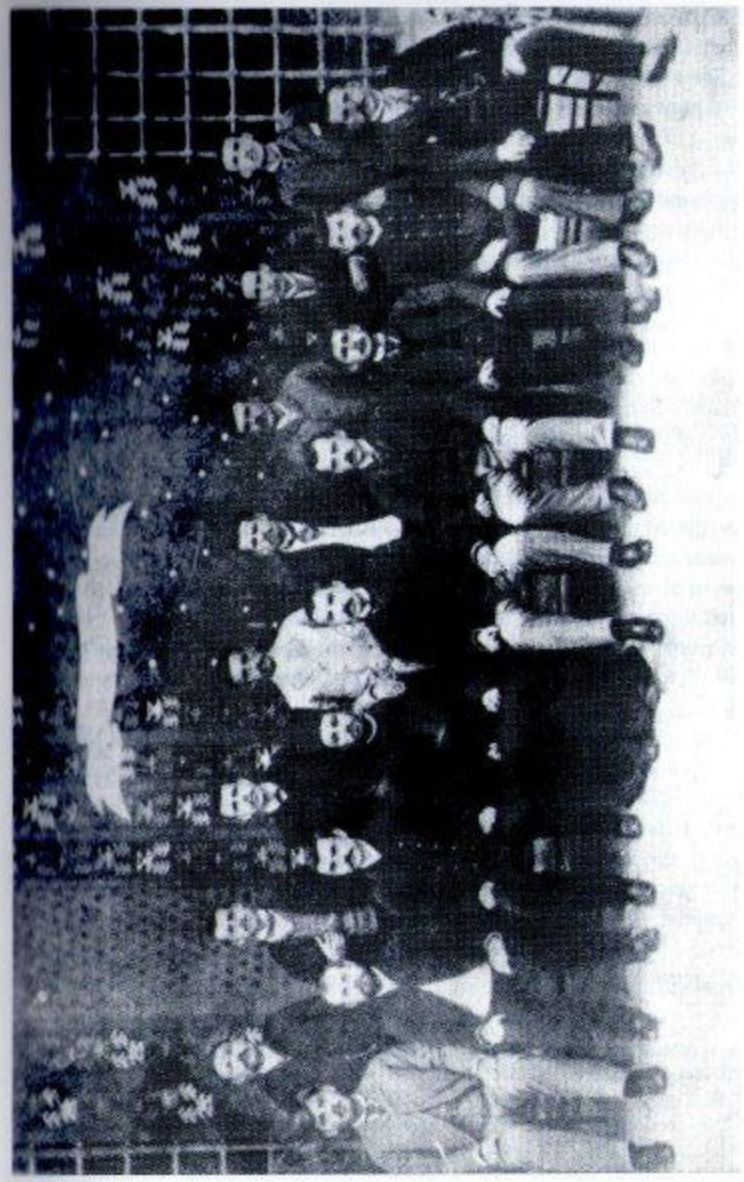
The establishment of the Macedonian Revolutionary Organization (MRO) opened a new chapter in more recent Macedonian history. The *agens movens* in the foundation of MRO was the young Macedonian intelligentsia. The chief proponent of MRO's establishment was Dame Gruev.

The idea of the establishment of a revolutionary organization became the basic preoccupation of a number of Macedonian intellectuals, among whom Pere Tošev, Ivan Hadži Nikolov and Dame Gruev deserve a special mention for their efforts.

Dame Gruev belonged to the group of Macedonian intellectuals that grew up fast thanks, above all, to his painful schooling odyssey in Salonika, Belgrade and Sofia, experiencing most directly the harsh denationalization approach of the Bulgarian and Serbian propaganda machines. Dame Gruev embraced the idea of the establishment of a revolutionary organization in Macedonia as early as 1891. He believed that the emphasis on its liberation component would be the best way of blocking foreign propaganda, especially Serbian, "before Serbian propaganda becomes strong enough and succeeds in dividing the people".

The aforementioned student Macedonian Society was Dame Gruev's first more serious step in this direction. The ideas and intentions of this Macedonian student society were interrupted after the murder of Minister Belčev and Dame Gruev's arrest in Sofia. Somewhat later, this Society, although without Dame Gruev, became the meeting-place of the *Lozars*.

In the summer of 1891 Dame Gruev made a new attempt at revolutionary organization in Bitola by establishing a 'Teacher's Union' with "a purely



The Staff of the Prilep Junior Grammar School (Pere Tošev, Dame Gruev), School Year 1892/93

revolutionary goal". But this attempt of Gruev's failed because of Archimandrite Kozma Prečistanski,[45] an instrument of the Exarchate, the current president of the Exarchal Church-School Community in Bitola.

The harsh Exarchal centralist and denationalization church and educational policy in Macedonia was largely responsible for the cohesion at the beginning of the last decade of the 19th century of Macedonian young people and the middle class, primarily among craftsmen and the intelligentsia, turning isolated instances of anti-Exarchist resistance into a broad anti-Exarchist movement which opposed the Exarchate's control over the Macedonian church-school communities and its Greater-Bulgarian orientation. The following question arose as an imperative of the time: "Until when are we to be foster children? Are we not going to stand on our feet again one day? Or should we perhaps continue to crawl?"

The arrival of Stambolov's exponent Lazarov[46] at the head of the Exarchate's School Department in 1892 and his unscrupulous aggressiveness in implementing the denationalization policy in Macedonia contributed even further to the growth of the already tense anti-Exarchist mood of progressive Macedonian circles. The anger of the Exarchate was to be most felt by the Macedonian progressive intelligentsia which was financially dependent on Exarchal donors who had come with money "to create Bulgarians in Macedonia". The famed Macedonophobe Vasil K'nčov[47] openly declared that he had come "to Bulgarize Macedonia".

Criticizing this shortsighted policy of the Exarchate somewhat later, in 1894, Petar Pop Arsov said: "The Exarchate gives money but buys wind, for ethnicity cannot be bought with money!"

The penetration of Bulgarian teachers into Exarchal schools in Macedonia, despite the existing overproduction of native Macedonian teachers, the discrimination, harassment and expulsion of Macedonian progressive 'separatist' teachers (e.g. Dimitar Conev, Ivan Hadži Nikolov, Georgi Balasčev), the use of the Bulgarian language in Exarchal schools and the incorporation of Macedonian church-school communities within the Exarchal system were the main motives for the growing discontent of the awakened Macedonian middle class and intellectuals whose edge was directed against the Exarchist denationalization and Greater-Bulgarian encroachment on the independent development of the Macedonian society. Hence Petar Pop Arsov said: "They give us money to destroy us... To the devil with such money; they are not only destroying our communities, but they do not believe us either and appoint all kinds of presidents, clergymen, managers, teachers, etc., so that they can control (?!) the sums — the sole motive of Bulgarian propaganda... Yes, Bulgarian propaganda!"

The anti-Exarchist movement in Macedonia brought about a growing revolutionary feeling among Macedonian middle class circles. Ǵorče Petrov was right to interpret that movement "simply as a reaction against the long-standing aspirations of the Exarchate to gather into its own hands the control of social life, and besides, I consider it the first step towards independent activity in the country. It imperceptibly grew into a revolutionary movement."

Thus, while the former attempts at revolutionary organization ended at best as revolutionary aspirations, at the time when the necessary conditions were created, in 1893, the efforts were crowned with the establishment of the Macedonian Revolutionary Organization. The principal merit for its formation goes to Dame Gruev.

Dame Gruev's return to Salonika in the summer of 1893 was certainly of crucial significance. He became employed as a proofreader in the printing shop of Kone Samardžiev,[48] a book seller and outstanding example of the Macedonian conservative, pro-Exarchal bourgeoisie. As a matter of fact, Dame Gruev replaced Nikola Naumov.

Ivan Hadži Nikolov, fascinated by the idea of liberation since his early youth, around 1892 became convinced that "only a secret revolutionary organization will block the way to foreign propaganda in Macedonia", because the aspirations were for "Serbia [to become] — a Balkan Piedmont and Bulgaria — a Balkan Prussia". With this in mind, in 1892 he probed the following progressive Macedonian intellectuals in Salonika: Petar Pop Arsov, Hristo Tatarčev, Dimitar Conev and Hristo Batandžiev.[49] But the fact that they were few in number discouraged them from taking practical steps in this regard. In search of an authoritative person, in July 1892 Ivan Hadži Nikolov went to Sofia. It was on this occasion that his aforementioned meeting with Goce Delčev in Boris's Garden, through Kosta Šahov's mediation, took place. Goce Delčev accepted his idea in principle, but he preferred

[45] Kozma Prečistanski (village of Orlanci, Kičevo region, c. 1835–1916), church prelate of the Bulgarian Exarchate. Earlier prior of the Kičevo monastery of the Holy Immaculate (Sveta Prečista), later archimandrite and finally (after 1897) the Exarchate's Metropolitan of the Debar-Kičevo region.

[46] Nikola Lazarov, head of the School Department of the Bulgarian Exarchate in Constantinople.

[47] Vasil K'nčov (Vraca, 1862 – Sofia, 1902), Bulgarian educator, scholar, public figure and politician. Victim of an assassination. Killed as Bulgarian Minister of Education.

[48] Kone Samardžiev (Prilep, 1854 – Salonika, 1912), Macedonian bookseller and publisher. Prominent Exarchist activist.

[49] Hristo Batandžiev (Ǵumendže, Enidže-Vardar region, ?–1913), Macedonian revolutionary. Coryphaeus of MRO. Resigned from MRO Central Committee in 1899. Liquidated by the Greeks.

to complete his education in the Royal Military Academy first. As a result, this attempt of Ivan Hadži Nikolov's failed.

Dame Gruev, however, was not of the same opinion. He believed that the conditions for the establishment of a revolutionary organization were ripe. His optimistic prognosis was based on the extremely difficult social and economic position of the Macedonian people, on the growing denationalization activity of the propaganda machines, on the fervent anti-Exarchist struggle, in particular on the strained atmosphere created by Lazarov as the head of the School Department of the Bulgarian Exarchate (1892), on the return of the *Lozars* to Salonika (1892), on the Exarchate's transference or sacking of several progressive Macedonian teachers from the Ss Cyril and Methodius Boys' Exarchal Grammar School in Salonika, on the appointment of the former Bulgarian minister Mihail Sarafov[50] as the principal of the Salonika Boys' Exarchal Grammar School (school year 1893/94), as well as on the appointment of the pronounced Bulgarian Macedonophobe Vasil K'nčov as the chief inspector of the Exarchal schools in European Turkey (1893). Dame Gruev simply felt the pulse of the time; it proved that his persistence was not a vain effort.

Dame Gruev first joined the circle of the progressive Macedonian teachers' intelligentsia in Salonika. He came into contact with his old friend Petar Pop Arsov who shared the same ideas and from whom he had probably heard about Ivan Hadži Nikolov's unfulfilled plans. Goce Delčev's name is likely to have been mentioned on that occasion. Dame Gruev also became close to Andon Dimitrov,[51] a teacher of Turkish in the Ss Cyril and Methodius Boys' Exarchal Grammar School in Salonika. In August 1893 Dame Gruev met Hristo Tatarčev,[52] an Exarchal school doctor in Salonika, for the first time. There is no doubt that he was impressed by Tatarčev as a person, and talked to him concerning the organization of future revolutionary activity.

On November 2, 1893, walking on the Salonika coast, Dame Gruev and Andon Dimitrov met Ivan Hadži Nikolov. There they finally agreed to hold a joint meeting.

The founding meeting took place on Saturday evening, November 4, 1893, in Hristo Batandžiev's home in Salonika. On that occasion, the six MRO leaders — Dr Hristo Tatarčev, Ivan Hadži Nikolov, Petar Pop Arsov,

[50] Mihail Sarafov (1854–1924), Bulgarian public figure, politician and diplomat.

[51] Andon Dimitrov (village of Ajvatovo, Salonika region, 1868–1933), Macedonian revolutionary. Coryphaeus of MRO.

[52] Hristo Tatarčev–Doktorot (Resen, 1869 – Turin, 1952), Macedonian revolutionary. Coryphaeus of MRO. First president of the Central Committee of MRO. Later, MRO's external representative in Sofia.

Dr Hristo Tatarčev

Hristo Batandžiev, Andon Dimitrov and Dame Gruev — exchanged ideas concerning the physiognomy and goals of the Revolutionary Organization. The discussion covered a broad spectrum of issues ranging from the struggle for the implementation of Article 23 of the Treaty of Berlin to Ivan Hadži Nikolov's already crystallized idea.

According to Hristo Tatarčev, the group was constituted as an association without a written protocol and without electing a head such as a president. "At the meeting there were no formalities, vows or anything similar so that the members could feel themselves bound to act for the cause." Yet the very fact that the group was constituted confirms the founding character of its first meeting.

The second meeting, held in early January 1894, dealt with the concrete establishment of MRO. Petar Pop Arsov was then given two assign-

ments: (a) to prepare a Draft Statute of the Organization, and (b) "to write a booklet entitled *Stambolovism in Macedonia*". Ivan Hadži Nikolov's proposal was accepted stating that "Those who have chosen the Exarchate's centralist policy should be considered unsuitable, and those in favour of decentralization of the church-school cause in Macedonia should be considered suitable... and [as such, author's note] should devote themselves to the revolutionary idea". This itself confirms how true was Ǵorče Petrov's view that the anti-Exarchist movement in Macedonia "imperceptibly grew into a revolutionary movement". Once MRO was formed, it made its first steps chiefly as an antipode to the Exarchate and its harsh centralist and denationalization policy in Macedonia.

It is very likely that the Adrianople region was not part of the plans of the chief MRO actors at the first two meetings.

It is rather difficult to follow MRO's founding organization in connection with its character, goals, name, the time and manner of adoption of its first legal acts (Statute and Regulations) owing to the different accounts of its protagonists, but primarily owing to the lack of original protocol documentation. The only certain thing is that all of them had "the principle of autonomy" in mind.

Of course, all dilemmas around the organizing principles, character and goals of the Organization arising from the different accounts of its founders were dispersed after the adoption of its legal acts — the Statute ('Constitution') and the Regulations.

The Draft Statute prepared by Petar Pop Arsov was based on the Statute of the Bulgarian Central Revolutionary Committee published in Zaharij Stojanov's[53] famous *Notes...*

The Statute was adopted at one of the subsequent sessions of the six founders of the Organization. It is difficult to establish whether the Statute was adopted without corrections, or with considerable modifications, as can be concluded from Dame Gruev's words: "We grouped ourselves and we worked out a Draft Statute together."

The Organization's first statute was of a narrow, nationalistic character, which was certainly the result of the ideological intolerance, external influences and inexperience of its authors at the time.

MRO Statute contained 14 articles divided into four chapters covering the goal, composition and structure, as well as the financial support and penalties of the Organization.

According to Article 1, the goal of the Organization was the attainment of the "full political autonomy of Macedonia and the Adrianople region",

[53] Zaharij Stojanov (1850–1889), Bulgarian revolutionary and statesman.

Petar Pop Arsov

which was a significant step forward with regard to Article 23 of the Treaty of Berlin. For the attainment of this goal, according to Article 2, the Organization was bound to awaken "awareness for the self-protection" of the population, to spread among them, in the press or orally, revolutionary ideas and to prepare and incite a general uprising.

The organization was based on the centralist principle. According to the Statute, it consisted of a Central Committee as well as district, subdistrict and village committees (Article 5).

The conspiratorial character of the Organization was reflected in Article 4 of its Statute: "The members of each committee shall be divided into groups led by a head appointed by the director. Each member of the

group, as well as the head, shall receive a number given by the responsible committee. Each activist shall know only the members of his group and the head, and the latter shall know only the director of the committee or the mediator." In fact the groups were the basic cells of the Organization.

A managing body stood at the head of each particular local committee. The managing bodies of the district committees were appointed by the Central Committee (CC), those of the subdistrict committees were proposed by the district committees and appointed by the Central Committee, and the village committees were appointed by the subdistrict committees (Article 6).

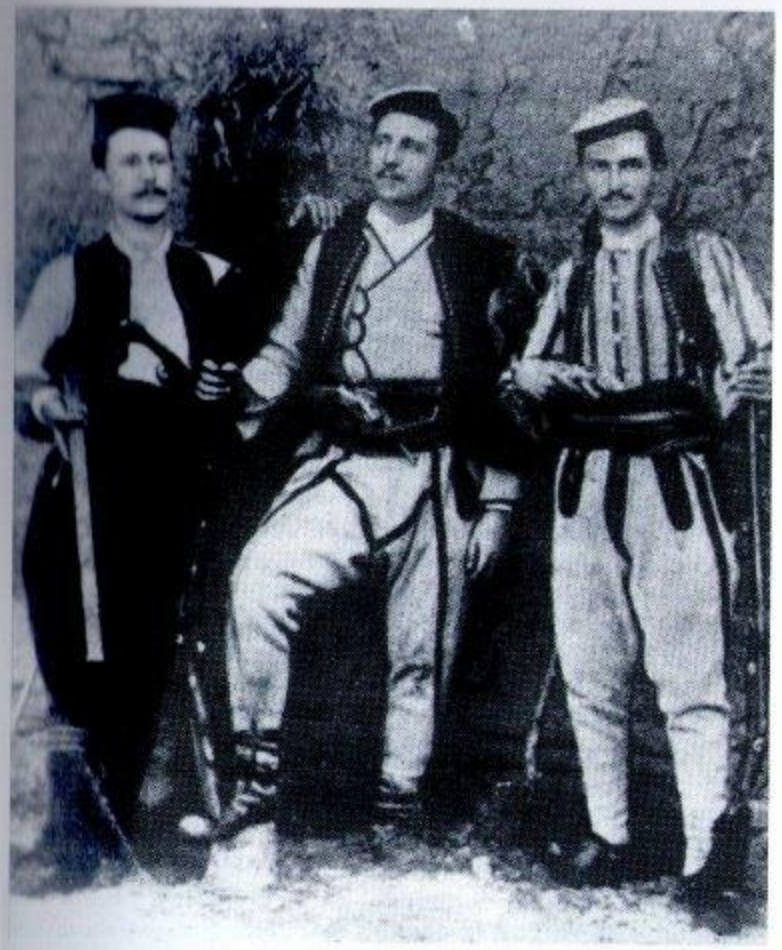
The final Article, 14 of the Statute, set forth the following: "Detailed internal Regulations have been worked out on the basis of this Statute." This was certainly an anticipation, as the Regulations were prepared later.

The first Central Committee was constituted at the same session as that at which the Statute was adopted. It was headed by Dr Hristo Tatarčev as president and Dame Gruev as secretary and treasurer.

The Regulations contained 50 articles grouped into 11 chapters. They set forth the statutory ('constitutional') norms in detail. The Regulations contained the following chapters: I. Composition, Structure and Duties of Revolutionary Committees; II. Duties of the Managing Bodies of Local Revolutionary Committees; III. Duties of the Members of Managing Bodies; IV. Duties of the Heads of Groups; V. Duties of the Worker Members; VI. Correspondence; VII. Secret Mail; VIII. Secret Police; IX. Penalties; X. Armament, and XI. Financial Means of the Committee.

The Central Committee and the managing bodies of the local revolutionary committees were composed of a president, secretary, treasurer and several advisors (Article 1). Membership of the Central Committee was by election. They were to be elected once a year with a majority of votes by the directors of the district committees or their proxies.

The duties of the Central Committee members are specified in Article 4. Of special interest is Item 5 of Article 4 which reads as follows: "It [the Central Committee, author's note] shall direct the contacts with external MRCs [Macedonian Revolutionary Committees, author's note] if there are any, and in agreement with them and the district internal committees it shall proclaim the day of the uprising, it shall adopt the plan of action and direct the movement directly or through a special commission composed by it in agreement with the external committees." This clause shows the extent to which the authors of the Regulations, while the Organization was still taking its initial steps, cherished illusions of external help, their eyes mainly turned towards the Macedonian émigrés in Bulgaria. Hence they made the rank of possible external Macedonian committees equal with that of internal district



Dame Gruev, Grigor Popev and Aleksandar Hadži Panov

committees, retaining, however, the right of the Central Committee as the principal factor and coordinator of the future uprising.

District committees made contact with the Central Committee directly, and subdistrict committees indirectly, via the district ones. They were obliged, at the end of each month, to submit a report to the Central Committee on their work and the situation in their territory.

"At the end of each year they shall submit a detailed report relating to:

"1. How many comrades/workers for freedom they have in any specific town and village, and how many of them are capable of fighting against the enemy with arms in their hands;

"2. The quantity of arms they have and the quantity they need;

"3. The quality and activity of the secret police;

"4. The organization and activity of the postal service;

"5. The financial situation;

"6. The spirit of the members and opponents; and

"7. Existing Turkish armed forces: army, zaptiehs, bashibazouks, etc."

The groups were the main cells of the Organization, and their heads were the basic guidance staff. In accordance with Article 13, "the heads of the groups shall be bound:

"1. To forward tasks given by the president or mediator to their subordinates;

"2. To notify, once a week, the president or mediator of the position of the groups in all respects: discipline, weapons, etc.;

"3. To care for and maintain in order the weapons of the fighters;

"4. To gather their subordinates regularly once a week with the purpose of instruction, and extraordinarily, whenever it shall be deemed necessary; also to distribute and read revolutionary books, and to strengthen in various ways their revolutionary spirit in general;

"5. To collect monthly fees and voluntary assistance from their subordinates and hand them over to the president or mediator."

The reception of new members into the Organization was made conditional on the "recommendation of an older member or the permission of the president" (Article 14).

The insufficient strength of the Organization was compensated for by a strong conspiratorial cloak. Thus, in accordance with Article 18, "each member shall know only the comrades and the head of his group... The workers should be sober, honest, reticent and incorruptible; they should not drink nor should they talk to anyone about the revolutionary cause, not excluding the closest friends, closest family members and relatives. They should not have a threatening comportment towards anyone and should systematically avoid anything that may arouse suspicion among the people that they are members of the committee. Singing of rebellious songs and outbursts of patriotic feelings are forbidden to the workers, not only in front of people undecided as regards the cause, but also in front of comrades in the cause."

The Organization attached great importance to discipline. Hence, in accordance with Article 19, "no worker under any pretext can refuse unpun-

Goce Delčev

ished any duty imposed upon him by his superiors, be it easy or difficult, in the place or outside it."

The centralist structure of the Organization is also seen in Article 26: "All those workers who criticize and attack their superiors, the managing body or the Cause in general shall be considered renegades of the Cause."

The Organization had its own secret police. In accordance with Article 34, "each committee has its own secret police which consists of two departments: investigative and punitive..."

As far as arms were concerned, "each member should be provided with a rifle and also, wherever possible, with a revolver and dagger..."

With regard to finance, the committees were obliged to contribute one-third of the money collected into the treasury of the Central Committee (Article 50).

The statutory norms established in this way opened good prospects for the powerful structuring of the future organizational network. The establishment of MRO was a crucial event in the more recent history of the Macedonian people. It marked the beginning of a new, highly significant period in the painful past of Macedonia.

The Macedonian Revolutionary Organization became an avant-garde force of the Macedonian national liberation movement, which entered a new, higher stage of development. Therefore the establishment of MRO was a historic turning point for the Macedonian people.

At the outset the spread of MRO took place gradually, cautiously and slowly, but safely and with no disturbances. The revolutionary centre of the young MRO was located in Salonika, the city from which its revolutionary ideas spread radially.

The Resen Conference (August 27–29, 1894) marked the beginning of a new stage in MRO's development.

This Conference was initiated by the Central Committee of MRO as a result of the growing need to exchange ideas with activists in the field in order to surmount the initial weaknesses of the Organization, find new elements of organizational activity and adopt the most adequate solutions for further building, strengthening and expansion of the Organization's network.

At first glance, the Resen Conference may seem to have been of a regional character, but its decisions exceeded the regional framework and applied to MRO as a whole.

The Resen Conference, as the first conference of MRO, gave a strong impetus to the Organization's further activity towards the spread and organizational reinforcement of the Macedonian liberation movement.

Following this Conference, new, fresh forces joined the Macedonian national liberation movement, such as Pere Tošev, Goce Delčev and Ǵorče Petrov, who introduced new meaning and vigour into MRO's expansion and development.

There is no doubt that Goce Delčev, alongside Ǵorče Petrov, came at the head of the new revolutionary forces which had outgrown the ideological views of MRO's founders, reinvigorating and expanding their ideological horizons by creating a new, more democratic concept for the development of the Macedonian liberation struggle.

IV/1

1. An event of particular importance in the history of the Macedonian national liberation movement is Goce Delčev's joining of the Macedonian Revolutionary Organization.

This marked the third, the last and the most successful, revolutionary stage (1894–1903) of Delčev's short life. It included two sub-stages. The first covered Delčev's legal activity as a teacher in Štip and Bansko (November 1894 — November 1896), and the second, entirely dedicated to the revolutionary cause, lasted until the end of his life (December 1896 — May 4, 1903).

A historic meeting between Goce Delčev and Dame Gruev took place in Štip in early November 1894.

Having arrived in Štip, Goce Delčev and Tuše Deliivanov were welcomed by Dame Gruev, who worked as a teacher in Štip at the time. Gruev had met Deliivanov before, but this was his first personal contact with Delčev. Goce Delčev's name, however, was not unknown to him. He had probably heard of him in Salonika in the autumn of 1893, during the probing for MRO's foundation. He must have been informed at the time that Kosta Šahov had a high opinion of Goce Delčev. Hence Gruev's welcome was not accidental, and even less accidental was his effort to discourage guests from visiting the lodgings in which they stayed — in the house of the old village teacher Mite Terancaliev — where Gruev himself used to live during his stay in Štip.

That same evening, at Dame Gruev's provocative question as to why he had left Bulgaria, Delčev answered fervently: "Can there be any other place for a Macedonian than Macedonia? Is there a people more unlucky than the Macedonians? And is there a broader field for work other than Macedonia?"

The Junior Grammar School in Novo Selo, near Štip

Delighted by Delčev's liberation concept, Gruev opened his heart wide with the words: "May you be welcome!", presenting him the Constitution of the young MRO. The following day Goce Delčev took an oath before the first man of the Organization, becoming a full member of MRO.

From this first contact between Delčev and Gruev, on the threshold of Goce Delčev's revolutionary activity, up to their last, which took place in dramatic circumstances, nearly a decade later — at the end of Delčev's brilliant organizational work, on the eve of his tragic death — a rare closeness and profound respect characterized their relations.

Delčev's legal teaching activity in the two-form Novo Selo Junior Grammar School was at a highly competent level. He taught four subjects in the second form: Geometry, Natural History, Geography and French. He was a strict and just teacher.

Delčev paid special attention to the training of adults. In the evening and Sunday schools, together with his colleagues (Gruev, Deliivanov, etc.) Goce Delčev covered important subjects from European and American history, but above all from the history of the Balkans, managing to encourage a revolutionary atmosphere in the town of Štip.

With his activity as a teacher, Goce Delčev intelligently camouflaged his real revolutionary activity before the local Ottoman authorities. His teaching was an excellent screen for the unobstructed expansion and strengthening of the Organization's network.

The young Goce Delčev proved an unrelenting agitator and organizer. Dame Gruev was impressed: "Delčev has immediately made an impression on me with his openness and honesty. He was, in his first attempts at becoming a member, even too open, so we had to restrain him to prevent him giving away our weaknesses, the weaknesses of the Organization. He always tended to tell the truth, believing that everyone should adopt the idea in the way he had adopted it. He was very nimble."

Goce Delčev's radius of activity covered only Novo Selo and the surrounding villages, but his aspirations were much greater. Here are the recollections of his colleague Tuše Deliivanov: "Each Saturday evening he disappeared from Štip, sometimes disguised, sometimes not, and returned on Sunday evening or Monday morning. In two month's time he had completed his work and one night, sometime about Epiphany, he complacently and smilingly said that we could even send caravans to Bulgaria, and from Bulgaria to as far as Radoviš and Strumica."

Dame Gruev was a witness, in Štip, of Goce Delčev's historic role in the spread of the movement, reflected above all in the incorporation of the rural areas into MRO and in the organization of MRO's important channel on the Macedonia-Bulgaria route. Motivated by Delčev's tremendous enthusiasm and vigour, in the school year 1894/95, together with Todor Lazarov[54] and Tuše Deliivanov, and independently of Delčev, Dame Gruev organized new people in the town of Štip and its surroundings. "The whole town and Novo Selo were enveloped by revolutionary fever," points Deliivanov. Therefore it was not by chance that Štip turned into a true bastion of the Macedonian liberation struggle.

Goce Delčev's first major organizational mission within Macedonia took place in April 1895 during the Easter holidays. Delčev went on a journey together with his friend Tuše Deliivanov. In Veles they exchanged views with Petar Pop Arsov. From there they took a train to Salonika where they met Dr Hristo Tatarčev, the president of the Central Committee of MRO. On Easter Day they came to Delčev's native Kukuš, where they chose 15 new MRO members. Goce Delčev's sister, Ruša Delčeva,[55] was among them, becoming one of the first women members of MRO. Goce Delčev showed clear democratic broadmindedness on that occasion. During his stay in Kukuš, 180 Turkish liras were collected for the needs of MRO, and imme-

[54] Todor Lazarov (Štip, 1869 – Sofia, 1912), Macedonian revolutionary. Seriously ill, he committed suicide.

[55] Ruša Delčeva (Kukuš, 1868 – Sofia, 1945), Goce Delčev's sister. Joined MRO in April 1895. Mother of Lika Čopova.

diately after his departure the contribution rose to 330 Turkish liras, which were sent to MRO Central Committee in Salonika. On his return to Štip, Delčev visited Dojran where "he established the local organization. From there he went on to Furka (Gevgelija region), Bogdanci, Gevgelija, Strumica and Radoviš. In all these places Delčev established local organizations and spread the spirit of freedom" (H.A. Poljanski).

Dame Gruev points out the following, among other things, in connection with this mission: "During the Easter holidays, Delčev and Deliivanov set off to Kukuš with the duty of visiting Salonika, where I recommended them, in order to check what kind of activity the others had developed. They returned utterly disappointed: the work there was in a slumber."

They were right, as after Gruev's departure from Salonika, MRO Central Committee, headed by Hristo Tatarčev, had become passive and the situation within the organization was close to inactivity. At that time, in terms of the various types and forms of revolutionary life — thanks, above all, to the tandems Dame Gruev-Goce Delčev and Pere Tošev-Gorče Petrov — Štip and Bitola by far exceeded Salonika as the Organization's metropolis. Hence Gruev had to leave Štip and returned to Salonika after the end of the school year 1894/95. As far as Štip was concerned, Dame Gruev was not worried at all, as he had left Delčev there, who had already shown his high qualities as an organizer.

Without doubt, in terms of the speed of recruiting new members, the swift building of the Organization's network and providing it with organizational channels, Goce Delčev took the leading place among the Organization's activists. Thus Delčev distinguished himself as an excellent worker among the people.

Dame Gruev and Goce Delčev crowned their joint activity with 'a farewell assembly' of the leading figures of the Štip region, which they held in the vicinity of the Kežovica baths in early July 1895, where, in addition to a recapitulation of what had been done, directions were given for future activity.

2. The appearance of the organized Macedonian national liberation movement on the historical scene had strong repercussions in the circles of the Bulgarian bourgeoisie. They suddenly found themselves confronted with a powerful independent and indigenous Macedonian factor, which lethally threatened their prestige and 'historical' interests in Macedonia. As a result, they again adroitly used Macedonian émigrés in Bulgaria in order to parry

and neutralize MRO's activity. They hoped that this would be the easiest way to succeed in turning the course of events in their own favour.

The establishment in the spring of 1895 of the Macedonian Committee in Sofia, headed by Trajko Kitančev,[56] was instigated by the Bulgarian bourgeoisie themselves. The Macedonian Committee almost immediately turned into an instrument in the hands of the Bulgarian bourgeoisie, which became quite apparent after the staging of the so-called 'Melnik Uprising' of 1895.

Immediately after the foundation of the Macedonian Committee in Sofia, the Central Committee of MRO came out against any parallel authority in the Macedonian liberation cause. Aware of the danger to the independence of the Macedonian liberation movement, the Central Committee of MRO attempted, through Ivan Hadži Nikolov and Dame Gruev, to halt the activity of the Macedonian Committee in Sofia, or at least to reduce its role to a morale-helping and supportive institution linked with the Macedonian liberation cause. Goce Delčev joined them in their efforts, but to no avail.

It is known that around July 10, 1895, Dame Gruev, no doubt in agreement with Goce Delčev and in coordination with MRO Central Committee, came to Sofia, the centre of the dangerous game aiming to destroy the Macedonian Revolutionary Organization. There Dame Gruev met the protagonists of the Macedonian Committee: Trajko Kitančev, Naum Tufekčiev and Andrej Ljapčev. According to Dame Gruev's testimony, he did not tell Kitančev anything about the 'uprising' even though "it hampered our plan considerably", largely because of the worsened health of the obviously misguided Trajko Kitančev. Their talk concentrated on mutual assistance in the future.

Meanwhile, according to MRO's leader Andon Dimitrov, the Salonika streets saw 40 to 50 bound "peasants from the Gorna Džumaja, Melnik and Nevrokop regions, detained and tortured as a result of the infiltration of Vrhovist detachments in those places. The damage to the Internal Organization caused by these thoughtless activities of the Sofia (Vrhovist) Committee was extensive. There was hesitation in the minds of our followers. The leaders of the Internal Organization were shaken. Measures had to be devised in order to put an end to that abnormal situation" (A. Dimitrov).

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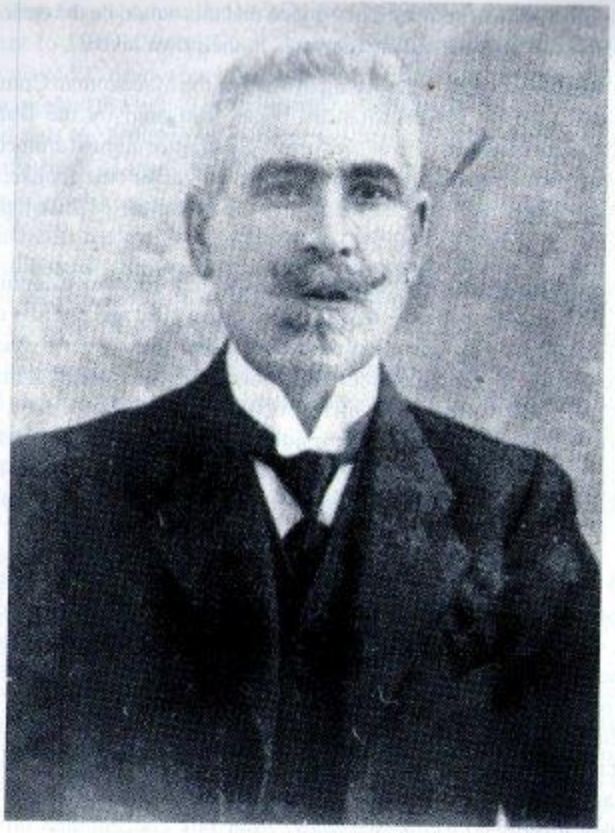
[56] Trajko Kitančev (village of Podmočani, Resen region, 1858 – Sofia, 1895), Macedonian educator and public figure. First president of the Macedonian Committee (later VMK) in Sofia. Died of a heart attack.



Andon Dimitrov

As a result, the summer of 1895 saw the holding of the Salonika Conference of MRO. This Conference, convened on Dame Gruev's initiative, was held under the disguise of a Teacher's Gathering. Attending it, among others, were Dame Gruev, Pere Tošev, Goce Delčev and Ivan Hadži Nikolov. It is likely that the Conference covered the well-known counter-revolutionary propaganda tour of the Exarchist exponent, Kone Samardžiev, who in the spring of 1895 travelled all over Macedonia propagating the message that "Bulgaria has 200 thousand bayonets with which it is going to liberate Macedonia". In this regard, the position of MRO was quite clear. It can be best expressed by Petar Pop Arsov's well-known maxim: "Anyone giving us freedom from outside will take our land!"

The Salonika Conference, held primarily as a result of the interference of the Sofia Macedonian Committee in Macedonian internal matters, undoubtedly speeded up the decision of MRO Central Committee to put an end to outside interference.

Following Dame Gruev's return to Salonika, in the school year 1895/96, a strong revolutionary triangle was active: Dame Gruev in Salonika, Pere Tošev in Bitola, and Goce Delčev in Štip. A sturdy dam against Vrhovist encroachment was built. Hence the Vrhovists attempted to move Dame Gruev away from Salonika. Ǵorče Petrov gave the warning in this respect, so the former plan for Dame Gruev's transfer to Ser (Serez) was cancelled and his further stay in the Macedonian metropolis was strongly assured.

During the summer holidays (1895), in the course of his second tour of the Salonika, Kukuš, Gevgelija and Dojran regions, Goce Delčev took steps for strengthening and expanding the effects of his recent Easter visit.

Peju K. Javorov's claim that Goce Delčev met Trajko Kitančev, the first president of the Macedonian Committee in Sofia, immediately before the 'Melnik Uprising', has no real foundation.

In the subsequent school year 1895/96, Goce Delčev was promoted to principal of all Štip schools, a post which included inspection of the village schools in the Štip region. This appointment of Delčev's was clearly inspired by MRO.

Goce Delčev's rich and varied revolutionary activity can also be authentically illustrated with what has survived of his extensive correspondence, which is considered "a significant epistolary defence of his revolutionary philosophy".

This can be seen in his earliest surviving and impressive letter to Efrem Karanov,[57] president of the Ḱustendil Macedonian Society, sent on October 29, 1895, which is certainly of major significance. Goce Delčev's revolutionary concept concerning the independent character of the Macedonian cause is strongly manifested. Here "Delčev explains the basic principles upon which the Macedonian revolution should be built and upon which he builds it... Delčev also shows the objective of the Macedonian revolution: 'a free state'... He also points to the means by which that objective can be attained: an internal uprising" (K. Hristov).

By stigmatizing the unsuccessful attempt by the Vrhovist adventurer, Bulgarian Lieutenant Aleksandar Čakarov, 'to proclaim' in Vinica, or more precisely to provoke an 'uprising', Goce Delčev in fact fully unmasked the

[57] Efrem Karanov (Kratovo, 1852–1927), Macedonian educator and public figure. Associate of Delčev.

sordid, supposedly 'Macedonian' policy of the Sofia Macedonian Committee — so loudly propagated through the 'Melnik Uprising'.

It is of great importance that Goce Delčev very early on notified the Sofia Macedonian Committee, through its branch, the Ќustendil Macedonian Society, of his views in writing. He clearly pointed out: "In Macedonia, systematic propaganda, which has already taken large proportions, is being carried out for a general internal uprising, and there is no place in Macedonia which has not been involved." Further on, he stresses: "It is the duty of every patriot to help as much as he can, and it is the duty even more of the committees for that purpose, especially of the Ќustendil committee, which could help in every way." He appeals: "There are a lot of people, but unfortunately we suffer from a shortage of the most indispensable thing for an uprising: we have no arms, and you, if you are willing to help, help us in this, send us as many arms as you can."

Hope was still not lost.

In order to strengthen the border regions on a line extending through Štip, Pehčevo, Vladimirovo, Berovo, Džumaja, Dupnica and Ќustendil, Delčev inspected them once again towards the end of 1895. He secured the links and routes, he appointed responsible people for the centres and organized methods of traffic and communication with the interior. Two important centres stood out during this activity: Ќustendil, headed by Nikola Zografov,[58] and Dupnica, headed by Nikola Maleševski.[59]

Ќustendil and Dupnica were soon to grow into significant transit centres of MRO on Bulgarian territory.

In December 1895, at the Second Congress of the Macedonian Societies in Bulgaria, the Macedonian Committee was renamed as the Supreme Macedonian Committee (*Vrhoven Makedonski Komitet,* VMK) headed by General Danail Nikolaev,[60] with the patently transparent aim of taking over the conductor's baton and playing the principal role in the Macedonian liberation cause, offering its services to the Bulgarian patrons.

The 'Melnik Uprising' was the first more important step of the insane Vrhovist game with the Macedonian liberation cause. The subsequent attempt by Aleksandar Čakarov, in the autumn of that year, to instigate an 'uprising' in the interior of Macedonia — of course, with Naum Tufekčiev's blessing, the then Vice president of the Macedonian Committee in Sofia — was a clear indication that such Vrhovist ambitions were not subdued.

[58] Nikola Zografov, citizen of Veles. Watchmaker. Head of MRO's centre in Ќustendil.

[59] Nikola Maleševski (Berovo, 1852–1935), head of MRO's centre in Dupnica. Associate of Delčev.

[60] Danail Nikolaev (1852–1942), Bulgarian general. President of VMK. Later adjutant to Ferdinand.

General Danail Nikolaev

Vrhovist verbal aggressiveness, which increased after the arrival of General Danail Nikolaev at the head of the Supreme Macedonian Committee (VMK) was also worrying. At the same time Vrhovist actions aimed at dismantling MRO continued. In January 1896, for instance, VMK sent the aforementioned Aleksandar Čakarov to Ќustendil to take control of MRO's Ќustendil transit centre, and somewhat later Andrej Ljapčev tried to win Nikola Zografov, the head of MRO's Ќustendil centre, over to the Vrhovist cause. Hence, as early as the first months of Vrhovism, MRO Central Committee decided to combat strongly any outside interference coming from the Bulgarian capital.

Yet it was still too early for an open break owing to MRO's frailty. It was necessary to use diplomatic tactics. Thus the correspondence between MRO Central Committee and VMK (Sofia) began.

The first known letter sent by VMK to MRO Central Committee bears the date January 10, 1896. The original correspondence is inaccessible to us as the Bulgarian archives are still closed.

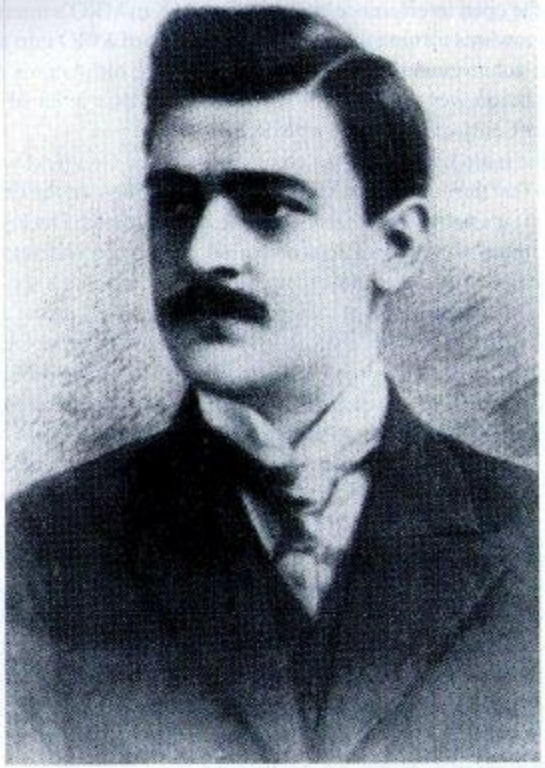
Apart from correspondence, personal contacts were not neglected either. In February 1896 in Sofia, for example, in the capacity of delegate of MRO Central Committee, Goce Delčev met General Danail Nikolaev, the president of VMK, with whom he parted sharply, saying the following: "We — you known who we are: the peasants, the Macedonian population, the people. We cannot play politics, nor can we allow others to play politics with Macedonia. Our struggle, it is a question of life or death for us. We will not allow others to decide whether we should live or die, and when. The people will decide when an uprising will start. We will not let you give us orders from here and throw us, as you tried to last year, into an uprising adventure... We believed we could get brotherly help from you, the Committee and the émigrés. But please bear this in mind, we are not seeking patrons, even less masters!"

Goce Delčev also had an argument with Josif Kovačev, the vice president of the Supreme Macedonian Committee.

Goce Delčev used his brief February stay in Sofia to meet some of the members of the dissident Macedonian Committee, headed by Naum Tufekčiev, but with Lieutenant Anton Bozukov[61] playing the chief role. Goce Delčev was mostly interested in the supply of arms and ammunition, and talked to the well-known arms-suppliers Naum Tufekčiev and the Ivanov brothers. This meeting was probably arranged by the Reserve Lieutenant Dimitar Žostov, treasurer in the dissident Macedonian Committee, a key figure who initiated Delčev's training in the Royal Military Academy.

Then Goce Delčev met Boris Sarafov once again, suggesting that they go to Macedonia and become 'forest tsars'. This is a confirmation that even then, on the eve of MRO Salonika Congress (1896), Goce Delčev had a vision of the future structure of the Organization's fighting detachments. Hence the invitation to Boris Sarafov was not mere chance, as both of them, as military men, could play a leading part in the development of the Organization's military structure. As a matter of fact, Goce Delčev was to incorporate his vision in Article 11 of TMORO's Constitution. Yet it was not put into practice until after 1898 (with the exception of Duko Tasev Judovčanecot's detachment of 1897), and was only sanctioned in TMORO's Detachment Regulations in 1900.

[61] Anton Bozukov, Bulgarian officer and Vrhovist. Participant in the 1895 Melnik 'uprising'.



Boris Sarafov

At this period (February 1896), however, Sarafov's adventuresome spirit prevented him from conforming to MRO's norms.

After his return to Štip, in a letter to Nikola Zografov, MRO's head of the Kustendil centre, Goce Delčev wrote the following of the Sofia Supreme Macedonian Committee: "The impression that committee made on me was such a cooling experience that I am not concerned any more about them not helping us, but I am afraid they may inflict great damage on our cause."

During his contacts with the leadership of VMK in Sofia, Goce Delčev acted in the capacity of an emissary of MRO Central Committee for the first time and, more importantly, "for the first time, Goce Delčev openly declared the autonomy and independence of the Internal Organization in the face of Sofia Vrhovism."

3. The immediate reason for the convocation of the First Congress of MRO was the open interference by the Sofia VMK in MRO's internal matters with a bias towards turning the Central Committee of MRO into an obedient tool for the achievement of VMK's objectives. The ultimatums of VMK to the Organization were particularly arrogant in VMK's letter of March 20, 1896, to the Central Committee of MRO.

Yet the main reasons for the convocation of the Congress were deeper. It is known that during the first stage of the development of the Organization (1893–1896) it established a basic network in Macedonia. During this stage, due to its initial weaknesses, but above all due to the restricted scope of MRO's first documents, the movement was of a limited character. It recruited mainly craftsmen and lower middle class people as well as the educational intelligentsia. In this period MRO had the character of an urban organization.

At this stage, MRO came face to face with numerous problems which hampered its speedier development. Indeed, the two conferences — the Resen Conference (1894) and the Salonika Conference (1895) — instilled some vigour, but did not remove the main obstacle preventing the achievement of a broader, mass character for the Macedonian liberation movement.

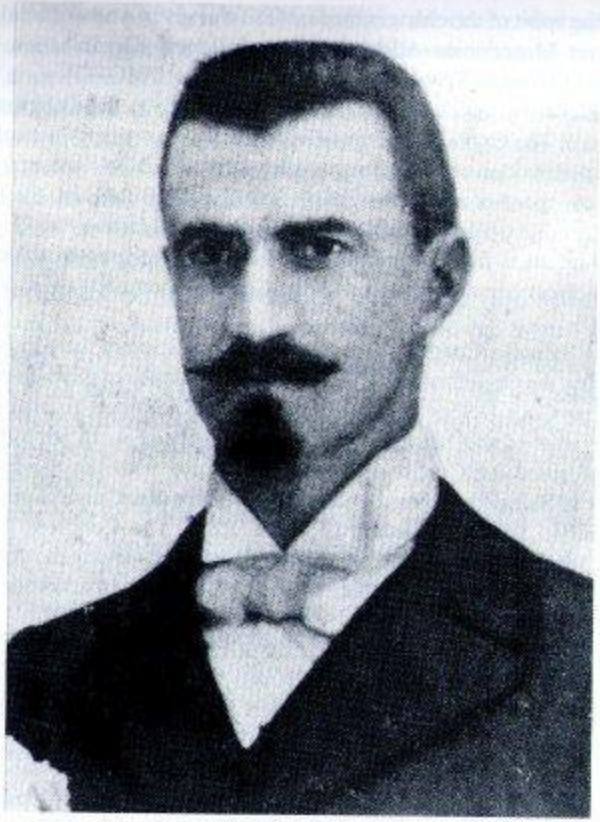
On the other hand, MRO found itself confronted with numerous enemies. The progressive elements in MRO's ranks (Goce Delčev, Ǵorče Petrov, Pere Tošev) had developed a clear vision of the future of the Macedonian national liberation movement by overcoming the narrow scope of MRO's first statutory documents and creating a broader ideological platform, which was to secure internal allies for the Macedonian liberation cause, eliminate speculation concerning the Macedonian revolutionary movement by foreign propaganda machines and cut off or weaken their artificial roots in Macedonia.

This speeded up the holding of MRO's First Congress, the Salonika Congress of 1896.

MRO Salonika Congress was held during the Easter holidays, in the period April 5–12, 1896. The sessions of the Congress took place in Andon Dimitrov's flat, opposite the Exarchal Grammar School.

In addition to the members of the Central Committee, the leaders of the Organization from the more important centres were present at the Congress. Fifteen to sixteen persons took part in the work of the Congress; thirteen names are known: Dr Hristo Tatarčev, Dame Gruev, Andon Dimitrov, Ivan Hadži Nikolov, Ǵorče Petrov; delegates Goce Delčev (Štip), Hristo Matov (Skopje), Pere Tošev (Bitola), Petar Pop Arsov (Prilep), Kiril Prličev[62] (Voden), Vasil Kalejčev (Ser), Velko Dumev[63] (Veles) and Hristo

[62] Kiril Prličev (Ohrid, 1875–1944), Macedonian revolutionary. Son of Grigor Prličev.



Hristo Batandžiev

Pop Kocev (Adrianople). It is quite possible that the fourteenth participant in the Congress was Hristo Batandžiev, member of MRO Central Committee, who resigned from that duty as late as August 1899.

The Congress adopted major, essential changes in the conceptual and ideological platform of MRO, which now acquired elements of an international character. This was not only a turning point for the further development of the Macedonian national liberation movement, but an event which made MRO one of the leading and most progressive organizations among the liberation movements in the world.

[63] Velko Dumev (Voden, 1874–1945), Macedonian revolutionary. Later joined Vančo Mihajlov's ranks.

In the spirit of the changes made, MRO was given a new official name: The Secret Macedonian-Adrianople Revolutionary Organization (*Tajna Makedono-Odrinska Revolucionerna Organizacija,* TMORO).

The changes on the organizational plane made at the Congress were fairly small. The Organization was divided in a new manner. Instead of the previous distribution of its territory into three districts, MRO's new territorial division consisted of seven districts: I. Salonika, II. Bitola, III. Skopje, IV. Štip, V. Strumica, VI. Ser, and VII. Adrianople. In addition, the Organization's committees in Constantinople and Prilep were granted the right to maintain direct communication with the Central Committee of TMORO in Salonika.

The Salonika Congress also initiated the question of the admission of women into the Organization. There is no doubt that one of the men insisting on this was Goce Delčev who, a year earlier, had admitted his sister, Ruša, into the ranks of the Macedonian liberation movement. In addition, Pere Tošev informed the Congress of his negotiations with the pro-Exarchist elements in Salonika grouped around Kone Samardžiev, underlining that a reconciliation with the Exarchists was illusory. The Congress passed a decision suspending negotiations with the Exarchists, leaving the door open, however, for their possible joining of the Organization in accordance with its statutory norms.

Strictly adhering to the principles of autonomy and revolution, the 1896 Salonika Congress of MRO stood firmly on the ramparts of revolutionary struggle and defended the independence of the Macedonian liberation cause.

The open Bulgarian expansionist policy necessitated the establishment of a special institution — the External Representative Office — with its seat in Sofia, the city where most of the underground plans for obliterating the independent character of the Macedonian national liberation cause were devised.

The talks with the highest representatives of VMK in Sofia held by Goce Delčev in February and Dame Gruev in March 1896, with the purpose of changing VMK's position or at least bringing their views on the Macedonian liberation cause closer to those of the Organization, failed utterly. These brief contacts thus clearly showed the deep abyss dividing MRO and VMK. This seems to have been the crucial reason which made the Salonika Congress of MRO (1896) pass a decision on the establishment of an External Representative Office of MRO based in Sofia.

There is no doubt that this decision of the Salonika Congress was also influenced by the large number of Macedonian émigrés living in Bulgaria and the opportunity for winning them over to the Macedonian cause and

turning those who had been misled away from the Greater-Bulgarian idea. There were also great hopes that they would provide financial support and supply arms.

The Salonika Congress obliged Ǵorče Petrov and Goce Delčev — the principle advocates of the new, progressive course in the Macedonian national liberation movement and the leading initiators of these changes — to work out a draft of the new constitution (statute) and regulations in accordance with the changes in the Organization's programme adopted at the 1896 Salonika Congress.

TMORO's Constitution, where the spirit of the 1896 Salonika Congress is apparent, contained nineteen articles divided into four chapters.

Article 1 of the Constitution stressed MRO's new ideological and political orientation: "The aim of TMORO is to unite all discontented elements in Macedonia and the Adrianople region, regardless of nationality, with the purpose of attaining, through revolution, full political autonomy for these two regions."

According to Article 2 which, among other things, was an open challenge to foreign propaganda machines and a guarantee for the independent character of the Macedonian liberation cause, "...the Organization shall strive to overcome chauvinist propaganda and national disputes which divide and weaken the population of Macedonia and Adrianople in their struggle against the common enemy; it shall work on instilling a revolutionary spirit and awareness among the population and use all means and efforts for the swift and timely armament of the population with all that is necessary for a general and widespread uprising."

TMORO was composed of local revolutionary organizations (companies) (Article 3). The local organizations were divided into groups directed by heads *(desetniks)*. In fact the groups remained MRO's principal cells.

With regard to organization, MRO's old centralist structure from the previous constitution was retained. The old hierarchical structure consisting of commanding revolutionary bodies (village, subdistrict and district committees, and a Central Committee) remained in force. The secret mail and police were also retained (Articles 14 and 15). The novelty was that "each subdistrict revolutionary section has its own detachment, the task of which shall be defined by special regulations" (Article 11).

In connection with membership of MRO, "A member of TMORO can be any Macedonian or Adrianopolitan who has not compromised himself with anything dishonest and characterless before society and who promises and vows to work for the benefit of the revolutionary liberation cause" (Article 4).

TMORO's Regulations were worked out on the basis of its previous regulations and were brought into agreement with TMORO's Constitution. TMORO's Regulations contain 48 articles divided into the following ten chapters: I. Central Committee; II. Village, Subdistrict and District Committees; III. Duties of the Heads of Groups; IV. Duties of the Worker Members; V. Correspondence; VI. Secret Mail; VII. Secret Police; VIII. Penalties; IX. Armament; and X. Financial Means of the Committee.

Clearly, the broad platform of TMORO's new constitution, whose main purpose was to unite all patriots regardless of ethnicity, religious affiliation, political colour or conviction for the attainment of the objectives set by MRO — provided that their acts and actions were not contrary to MRO's basic principles — opened wide the process of democratization and expansion of the revolutionary movement. Thus, in addition to the Macedonians, MRO attracted as new members or sympathizers people from other nationalities or ethnic groups living in Macedonia, regardless of their religious affiliation. These included Vlachs, Albanians, Greeks and even Turks. Of course there were also Bulgarians, who abandoned the comfort of the Principality of Bulgaria, dedicating themselves to the Macedonian cause. In other words, MRO found the internal allies so much needed in the merciless struggle against the long-standing oppressor and the ravenous foreign propaganda machines. This marked the beginning of the second and qualitatively advanced stage in the development of the organized Macedonian national liberation movement. From an urban organization, MRO gradually grew into a predominantly rural one. This change was a result of the increasingly mass character of the movement, and the peasants indeed formed the large majority of the population.

This came as a result, primarily, of the Salonika Congress of April 1896 and the newly-adopted documents by MRO, which eliminated the principal barriers standing in the way of the mass character of the Macedonian national liberation movement.

The role of Goce Delčev, one of the chief architects of the Salonika Congress, was undoubtedly of crucial significance in this respect.

The 1896 Salonika Congress was a highly progressive and historic turning point in the development of the movement. Its main columns were further strengthened at the Rila Congress of MRO in 1905.

4. The preoccupation of the Bitola District Committee of MRO with the supply of arms and ammunition was not limited only to revolvers, rifles and ammunition, but also involved the supply of grenades. The principal role in arousing this early interest in obtaining grenades in the Bitola District Committee was played by Goce Delčev, who had already established a

successful channel of the Organization to Bulgaria. In this connection, Ǵorče Petrov says: "We asked Delčev to send us a few grenades, just to see them, so that they could encourage us and cheer us up... We still nourished no hopes in the power of the people, we looked for salvation in the grenades."

During one such action of grenade supplying in Bitola, on April 19, 1896, Done Stojanov Tošev (Dončo Štipjančeto)[64] from the village of Erdželija was caught and imprisoned. This was to lead to what became known as the Done Affair.

As a result of the Done Affair, MRO was confronted for the first time with the great danger that its conspiratorial activity might be revealed. Only the prompt preventive measures taken by MRO and Done's strength limited the scope of the affair and precluded its being turned into a disclosure of larger proportions.

In Štip, according to Ǵorče Petrov, "our information from Bitola came two days earlier than that of the authorities, which enabled Goce and his comrades to take all the possible precautionary measures. The dispatcher of the grenades himself, Koce Efremov, set off for Bulgaria just in case; Done's wife was warned and received instructions, and Goce, having appeared in the town centre so that everyone could see him, stayed at home expecting a visit — and writing a school report."

What had been foreseen came to pass. Goce Delčev was among the suspects. He had earlier attracted the attention of the local Ottoman authorities after his return from Sofia, appearing as the organizer of the March protest demonstration in Štip in response to the brutal murder by the Turks of an 18-year old Macedonian. After the outbreak of the Done Affair, Goce Delčev, according to Peju K. Javorov, was brought before the Štip Kaimakam, but as there was no evidence, he was immediately released.

Javorov claims that a month later, by order of the Skopje Vali, Goce Delčev was again detained and sent to Skopje. According to other sources, however, quoted by Konstantin Pandev,[65] Goce Delčev was escorted to Skopje as late as approximately July 2, 1896. The latter is more probable, as Delčev's last letter written at liberty from Štip, addressed to Nikola Zografov, was dated June 6, 1896.

Goce Delčev's brief stay in the Skopje Kurshumli-An, where they suggested to him that he should not to go back to Štip, was a serious warning. This made Delčev take his farewell of the town of Štip.

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[64] Done Stojanov Tošev–Štipjančeto (village of Erdželija, ? – Kustendil, 1930), chief protagonist of the Done Affair.

[65] Konstantin Pandev (Nevrokop, 1938 – Sofia, 1983), Bulgarian historiographer. Studied the Macedonian revolutionary national liberation movement.

According to Ǵorče Petrov, this "affair in the Organization did not cause any immediate damage, but two problems were self-evident:

"1. The fact of the existence of a plot in Štip and Bitola has become known to the Turkish authorities; and

"2. Goce Delčev has attracted to himself the attention of the authorities in Štip" (Ǵ. Petrov).

The Done Affair announced to the world that "something horrible" was being prepared in Macedonia (*Pravo* journal). On the other hand, the event made a strong impression on the Macedonian people, who exaggerated MRO's strength in their imagination. And finally, Done's name became a synonym for the revolutionary firmness and endurance of the Macedonians in their further struggle for national and social freedom.

5. In September 1896, the Exarchate appointed Goce Delčev Head Teacher (Principal) of the two-form school in Bansko (the Razlog region) for the school year 1896/97.

In the summer of 1896, after he had left Skopje, Goce Delčev briefly stayed in his native town of Kukuš to attend the wedding of his sister, Tina. He used his stay rationally for a revision of the Organization's network in Kukuš. After that, in all likelihood, he visited Salonika.

Delčev's falling into disfavour with the Ottoman authorities because of his involvement in the Done Affair threw him into semi-illegality.

The appointment as the Principal of the Bansko Junior Grammar School again brought him back to legal activity, but only briefly. A little over two months later, Goce Delčev ended his career as a teacher, just as two years earlier he had broken off his military career, in order to devote himself entirely to the Macedonian liberation cause.

In Bansko, too, Delčev had proved a good teacher. His melodious accent as a teacher of French became unforgettably imprinted on the memories of his students.

Immediately after his arrival in Bansko, Goce Delčev started building up the Organization's network in Razlog. "Having founded revolutionary committees in Bansko and Mehomija [Razlog], he gradually expanded the Organization's network to the villages of Belica, Godlevo, Draglište, Dobrsko, Banja, Dobrinište, Jakoruda, Elešnica and Bačevo. Then he founded revolutionary committees in Gorna Džumaja [present day Blagoevgrad] and Nevrokop [present day Goce Delčev]. During his work as a teacher in Bansko, Delčev organized two channels to the Rila Monastery via Godlevo and Draglište-Dobrsko. At the same time he organized a channel from Bansko to the village of Srbinovo [Brežani] and Gorna Džumaja. Later, channels were also organized via Jakoruda to L'džene [Velingrad] and via Belica to Samokov" (K. Pandev).

Goce Delčev deserves the utmost merit for building the strong foundations of MRO in this important part of Macedonia.

"His aim was to unite and boost the spirit of the population in the whole of the Pirin region, which he called 'an invincible fortress, desired home of *ajduks* and a future sacred region of the revolutionaries'. He had achieved his aim from Ser and Drama to Gorna Džumaja, along the valleys of the Mesta and Struma. In the main centres he founded and organized revolutionary committees, inspired them with faith in the future, gave them directives and a plan for their further activities" (L. Tomov).

Because of the hostile attitude of the wealthy people of Bansko, the acute danger of denunciation, and above all because of his eager desire to dedicate himself fully to revolutionary activity, Goce Delčev announced his resignation from the office of principal as early as October 17, and on November 13, 1896, through the Nevrokop Metropolitan, Ilarion,[66] notified the Exarch Josif (Joseph) I[67] in writing of his irrevocable decision to resign from the post, due, as he wisely stated, to "health reasons".

Thus, of his own free will, Goce Delčev ended his brief, two-year activity as a teacher, his chief objective being to devote himself entirely to the Macedonian national liberation struggle.

Although some authors claim that immediately after his departure from Bansko (November 1896) Goce Delčev came to Sofia, the period between November 13 and December 16, 1896 — the date when he sent a telegram from Sofia to Nikola Zografov in Ḱustendil — is rather unclear.

In all probability, during this period (November 13 — December 16, 1896), Goce Delčev first briefly visited Salonika, where he was appointed by MRO Central Committee as the first External Representative of MRO in Bulgaria with a seat in Sofia, on the occasion of which he was given an authorization with appropriate powers. Then, it is believed, he spent some time inspecting the Organization's border centres in Bulgaria — Dupnica and Ḱustendil.

This assumption is supported, above all, by the contents of Delčev's telegram from Sofia mentioned above, dated December 16, 1896, addressed to Nikola Zografov in Ḱustendil: "The envelope with Mount Athos [code word for Salonika] letters forgotten at home. Send them quickly." By "home" he certainly meant the Ḱustendil centre, and "Mount Athos letters" was Goce Delčev's 'external' authorization by the Central Committee of MRO.

In any event, there is no doubt that Goce Delčev was in Sofia from mid-December 1896, in the capacity of the first external representative of the Central Committee of MRO in the Principality of Bulgaria.

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[66] Ilarion (1850–1915), the Exarchate's Metropolitan of Nevrokop (1894–1912).

[67] Josif I (sacral name: Lazar Jovčev, 1840–1915), Bulgarian Exarch after April 1877.

1. "It is precisely MRO which appeared with its clearly set programmatic aims and tasks, acting as a huge barrier against the aggressive aspirations of Greater-Bulgarian imperialism. Its ever increasing activity, especially following the Salonika Congress (1896) and the establishment of the External Representative Office, created new relations and, naturally, undermined the concepts and objectives of expansionism and aspirations of the Bulgarian Court and Bulgarian bourgeoisie" (H.A. Poljanski).

In the last, revolutionary stage (1894–1903) of Goce Delčev's brief life, several cabinets replaced each other on the Bulgarian political scene: the Popular Government of Dr Konstantin Stoilov (May 18, 1894 — January 13, 1899), the Radoslavov-Stambolov government headed by Dimitar Grekov[68] (January 19, 1899 — October 1, 1899), the Radoslavov-only government headed by Todor Ivančov[69] (October 1, 1899 — January 9, 1901), the coalition Democratic and Progressive-Liberal cabinet of Petko Karavelov[70] (February 19 — December 21, 1901) and the Progressive-Liberal Government of Stojan Danev[71] (December 21, 1901 — May 5, 1903).

It is interesting to note that the governments of Grekov and Ivančov belonged to what was known as the Radoslavov Regime. The chief figure in both cabinets was Vasil Radoslavov,[72] Minister of the Interior. As far as Petko Karavelov is concerned, he was a brother of the distinguished Bulgarian national revolutionary, Ljuben Karavelov.[73]

All these cabinets were under the strict control of, and hence dependent on, the personal regime of the Bulgarian Prince Ferdinand of Coburg. The military department was the main exponent, or more precisely, the executive of the Court's desires in the Bulgarian government. Hence the attitude of these cabinets towards the Macedonian question had a Greater-Bulgarian, 'San Stefano' colour, with slight variations from one government to another. As a result, there were no essential differences between the Court and the governments on the Greater-Bulgarian strategic objectives as regards Macedonia. There were only occasional disagreements between the Prince's Court

[68] Dimitar Grekov (1847–1901), Bulgarian statesman and Prime Minister.

[69] Todor Ivančov (1858–1905), Bulgarian statesman and Prime Minister.

[70] Petko Karavelov (c.1843/45–1903), Bulgarian statesman and Prime Minister.

[71] Stojan Danev (1858–1949), Bulgarian statesman and Prime Minister.

[72] Vasil Radoslavov (1854–1929), Bulgarian statesman. Bulgarian Prime Minister (1913–1918).

[73] Ljuben Karavelov (c. 1834–1879), Bulgarian revolutionary and writer.

and some Bulgarian governments concerning the methods of implementation of their 'Macedonian' policy.

"In such an atmosphere and social and political situation, Goce Delčev and Ǵorče Petrov began their activity as external representatives of the Macedonian Organization, defending — at the very centre of Greater-Bulgarianism and Vrhovism —Macedonian truth and freedom... TMORO could not find a more suitable tandem than these two people to head such an important institution as the External Representative Office. They turned it into an unconquerable fortress of the Macedonian independence struggle and a shield of Macedonian truth and freedom. The decision of the Central Committee of TMORO to send these two powerful creators of the Macedonian policy and protectors of Macedonian interests to the centre of Vrhovism, where anti-Macedonian aggressive policy was inspired and tailored, proved a farsighted move, because Greater-Bulgarianism did everything to infiltrate Macedonia and take over the revolutionary organization from within" (H.A. Poljanski).

Hence, by openly unmasking and parrying Greater-Bulgarianism, Goce Delčev and Ǵorče Petrov played an invaluable role in the protection of the independent, authentic character of the Macedonian national liberation movement.

2. Goce Delčev's appointment as the first external representative of the Macedonian Revolutionary Organization in Bulgaria opened the second and most fruitful period of the third and last, revolutionary stage of his life. It was a period when his extraordinary intellectual and organizational talent blossomed into a manifold and diverse Macedonian revolutionary activity.

For nearly five years (December 1896 — September 23/October 6 new style, 1901) Goce Delčev occupied the post of external representative of MRO in Sofia (Bulgaria). This period coincided with the major part of Delčev's activity in the Organization.

"As an external representative, Goce Delčev was primarily engaged in providing financial means for the Organization, in supplying it with arms, ammunition and revolutionary literature and periodicals, in dispatching revolutionary forces into the land, in securing the border centres and in caring for the situation concerning the revolutionary cause in the various regions of Macedonia. He was also an uncompromising fighter against Vrhovism and unmasked and foiled Vrhovist actions in Macedonia. He was also engaged in other activities connected with the Macedonian liberation cause" (H.A. Poljanski).

At the insistence of Goce Delčev, in March 1897 the Central Committee of MRO expanded the External Representative Office with the election

of another member — Ǵorče Petrov — whose mandate was to end simultaneously with that of Goce Delčev, in October 1901, when the staff of the External Representative Office was changed. By authorization of MRO Central Committee, signed by the new president, Ivan Garvanov,[74] Tuše Deliivanov and Dimitar Stefanov[75] became the new external representatives of MRO, without doubt with Goce Delčev's knowledge and blessing, given in August 1901, immediately prior to his 'great campaign' around Macedonia.

The change was necessary because of Ǵorče Petrov's internment in Trnovo. The external representatives (Deliivanov and Stefanov) were under the immediate control of Delčev and Petrov. They remained at their posts until November 1902, when the direction of MRO External Representative Office was taken over by Hristo Tatarčev and Hristo Matov, who had just returned from imprisonment in Asia Minor. With their opportunism, they cast a dark shadow on the practice Goce Delčev and Ǵorče Petrov had established in the Office. There is no doubt that Delčev saw through their orientation. Therefore, before his last departure for his fatherland, in January 1903, Goce Delčev warned them: "I shall approve only what you carry out together with Ǵorče." This warning had great weight as Goce Delčev was a major authority in MRO at the time, a 'mobile' member of the Central Committee and director ('inspector') of the Detachment Institute of the Organization. Yet Delčev's return to Macedonia and Ǵorče Petrov's new internment in Kazanl'k, allowed Hristo Matov and Hristo Tatarčev to show their true intentions.

The Macedonian national liberation movement suffered a great loss with the separation of the historic tandem of Goce Delčev and Ǵorče Petrov. "The confidence between Goce and myself was great, nobody could separate us and we stayed that way until the end" (Ǵ. Petrov).

3. The Third Congress of the Macedonian Societies in the Principality of Bulgaria took place in November 1896, on the eve of Goce Delčev's arrival in Sofia as the first external representative of MRO. The old VMK leadership, headed by Brigadier General Danail Nikolaev, was re-elected. The VMK leadership also included Hristo Stanišev[76] from Kukuš and the distinguished

[74] Ivan Garvanov (Stara Zagora, 1869 – Sofia, 1907), president of the Secret Bulgarian Revolutionary Brotherhood, Salonika (1897–1899). President of the Central Committee of MRO (1901–1903). Liquidated in Sofia together with Boris Sarafov.

[75] Dimitar Stefanov (village of Karaagač, Bessarabia, 1872 – Burgas, 1940), external representative of MRO in Sofia.

[76] Hristo Stanišev (Kukuš, 1863–1952), Macedonian public figure. Activist among Macedonian émigrés in Bulgaria. Opposed Končev's platform in VMK.

Ǵorče Petrov, Nikola Maleševski and Goce Delčev

Bulgarian literary figure, Aleko Konstantinov,[77] whose brutal murder was strongly condemned by Goce Delčev in May 1897. Delčev's acquaintances Tomo Karajovov and Nikola Naumov were elected reserve members. The Third Congress announced a Patriotic Loan of 300,000 lev.

In March 1897 General Danail Nikolaev offered his resignation as he had become an adjutant to the Bulgarian Prince Ferdinand of Coburg. Thus his former association with the Court and his definite Greater-Bulgarian orientation became apparent. VMK's presidential post was given to the vice president Josif Kovačev,[78] who was "already dull of old age" (G. Delčev). So there were no significant changes in the old Vrhovist policy towards MRO. He had met Josif Kovačev a year earlier and knew him well; by parting sharply, Goce Delčev avoided any official contact with VMK. But this does not imply that he did not have contacts with some of its members if that was useful for MRO. He had more frequent contacts with the officers "from the year 1895" (participants in the 'Melnik Uprising') who after the 1895 split found themselves outside VMK and from whom he had occasionally received symbolic financial support for the needs of MRO. In addition, he

[77] Aleko Konstantinov (1863–1897), Bulgarian writer.

[78] Josif Kovačev (Štip, 1839 – Sofia, 1898), Macedonian teacher and public figure. President of VMK.

further strengthened his relations with Naum Tufekčiev from whom he continued to procure revolvers and grenades. At this period, however, he maintained closest contacts with the Ivanov brothers, well-known suppliers of arms, and for the most prosaic reason.

"Delčev had an agreement with the Ivanov brothers[79] to take Crimean rifles freely as a gift. Later we continued together with the same business and received about 4,140 rifles without ammunition... The Ivanov brothers convinced us that they had donated 3 thousand rifles and that they had the approval of the Government to give another 3 thousand" (Ǵ. Petrov).

All this had its own prehistory.

As early as 1895, Greater-Bulgarian circles began spinning their spider's web around MRO. The Melnik adventure, carried out with the assistance of the Sofia Macedonian Committee, which played in this case the role of an instrument of the ruling regime, was the first major action in this regard. Its main objective was to secure international recognition for Prince Ferdinand of Coburg.

Dr Konstantin Stoilov's Bulgarian government played several cards directed against the independent character of the Macedonian national liberation movement.

In 1896 the Government changed its tactics. It now tried to flirt with MRO, to come closer to it, make it dependent and control it. With this intent, the Bulgarian government started from MRO's constant shortage of money and its unquenchable thirst for weapons. The farce of the English rifles launched by means of VMK, Vasil K'nčov (an Exarchate functionary), Boris Sarafov and Anton Bozukov ('1895' officers), as well as with the help of the Bulgarian police inspector, Cavalry Captain Morfov (a man of Stoilov's government), was to be the first bait.

The concrete step was taken only after the complete modernization of the Bulgarian Army, when the obsolete arms were replaced by new and more modern weapons. The Ivanov brothers then bought 112 thousand Crimean rifles with 50 million cartridges from the Government at an extremely advantageous price. A considerable part of these arms were resold to the Albanians. MRO, of course, found out about this deal. Hence, according to Stoilov's diary, in the summer of 1896 Ǵorče Petrov demanded 5-10 thousand rifles for the needs of MRO. This same summer, in Sofia, Dame Gruev met Račo Petrov,[80] Minister of War in Stoilov's government, who promised

[79] Ivanov brothers, Macedonian immigrants to Sofia from the Razlog region. Founded a trading firm for the retail of arms. Close to the high military circles of Bulgaria.

[80] Račo Petrov (1861–1942), Bulgarian statesman and general. Minister of War (1887; 1894–96). Bulgarian Prime Minister (January–February 1901; 1903–1906). During the First World War he was appointed military governor of the occupied part of Macedonia.

MRO 2 thousand Martin rifles "on his own responsibility". This signal saw its practical realization towards the end on 1896, which speeded up Delčev's departure to Sofia. Goce Delčev's demand for the expansion of the External Representative Office was based, above all, on his engagement around the transport of arms.

At first Delčev alone, and later he together with Ǵorče Petrov, received from the Ivanov brothers, with the approval of the Bulgarian government, the more than 4 thousand Crimean rifles, but without cartridges. This generosity on the part of Konstantin Stoilov's government had hidden aims. The then Minister of War, Colonel Ivanov,[81] said categorically: "We are not so crazy as to give you ammunition: in this way we keep the power in our hands, otherwise you would turn away from us!" Most of these trophy rifles from the Crimean War were transferred to MRO's Skopje, Štip and Strumica Districts. A considerable number of them were lost in the Vinica Affair.

"We later worked out for ourselves the whole game with the rifles, and the revolt Delčev and I felt from this whole deal... Here lie the roots of our strong disgust with any help from a purely official source... After our disillusionment... the idea of self-armament was born... We realized that only what we could achieve with our own forces would be achieved for certain" (Ǵ. Petrov).

Yet this was not the only disappointment. Goce Delčev and Ǵorče Petrov also heard about the imminent Serbian-Bulgarian Accord of 1897. "Račo allowed himself to tell me that negotiations were under way for determining the spheres of influence... This and other similar signs convinced us that it was dangerous to make political combinations to our detriment and without our knowledge. This compelled us to be even more careful and more independent in our actions and not to give any opportunity for making similar combinations at the expense of Macedonia" (Ǵ. Petrov).

These events confirmed even more their position that "Bulgaria comports itself selfishly towards us, it acts selfishly, which has driven us early onto our independent road" (Ǵ. Petrov).

Indeed there were attempts, which came very early on, at paralysing, or rather suppressing, the activity of MRO External Representative Office in Bulgaria. These first tried to oust Ǵorče Petrov by offering him an attractive job — secretary of the newly-established trading agency in Salonika. These recipes, concocted in Stoilov's political kitchen, were aimed, first of all, at the political paralysis and compromise of Ǵorče Petrov, and then, if possible, at his transformation into an obedient Bulgarian tool, under

[81] Nikola Ivanov (1861–1940), Bulgarian officer, later general. Bulgarian Minister of War (1896–99).

the patronage of the Salonika trade agent, Atanas Šopov,[82] a pronounced Greater-Bulgarian.

When this attempt failed, another try was made, this time from within VMK, to instigate a quarrel and cause a split between Goce Delčev and Ǵorče Petrov, and also compromise and neutralize Ǵorče Petrov. Thus at the Fourth Congress of the Macedonian Societies in Bulgaria held in June 1897, Goce Delčev was unexpectedly elected a regular member of the new VMK "in order to alienate Delčev from me" (Ǵ. Petrov). Goce Delčev saw through this subterfuge and in his letter to Josif Kovačev, president of the Congress, categorically and laconically stated: "My position in our cause does not allow me to accept the election." Hristo Stanišev from Kukuš came to the head of the new VMK, and Kosta Šahov, a reserve member, was co-opted in Goce Delčev's place for VMK membership.

4. But while the attempts at undermining the activity of MRO External Representative Office in Sofia involved attractive traps, in Salonika, at the centre of MRO, an infernal plan was devised to destroy MRO from the inside, on its own territory. This was the establishment, in March 1897, of the Secret Bulgarian Revolutionary Brotherhood headed by Ivan Garvanov. This event was to have grave and portentous consequences on the Macedonian liberation cause.

"K'nčov, as agreed with the Exarch [Josif, author's note] and Seldžobaliev,[83] were the authors of the idea of the Brotherhood" (Ǵ. Petrov). Of course, VMK and the Bulgarian expansionist bourgeoisie were also implicated.

According to Hristo Kuslev, the godfather of the 'Revolutionary' Brotherhood was Lieutenant Colonel Anastas Jankov,[84] a close associate of Prince Ferdinand and VMK.

Immediately after its foundation, the 'Revolutionary' Brotherhood established contacts with the VMK president, Josif Kovačev, and also, via Kolušev,[85] with representatives of the Bulgarian government. Whose fingers

[82] Atanas Šopov (Panagjurište, 1855–1922), Bulgarian public figure and diplomat. Secretary of the Bulgarian Exarchate (1884–1897); Bulgarian trade agent in Salonika (1897–1907). Šopov continued his diplomatic activity in 1909, after his appointment as Bulgarian Consul General in Salonika (1909–1913).

[83] Konstantin Seldžobaliev, chief accountant of the Bulgarian Exarchate in Istanbul.

[84] Anastas Jankov (village of Zagoričani, Kostur region, 1857 – village of Vlahi, Melnik region, 1906), Bulgarian officer of Macedonian descent and Vrhovist. His attempt at provoking an insurrection in south-western Macedonia in the autumn of 1902 failed.

[85] Nedelčo Kolušev, teacher in the Salonika Exarchal Grammar School. There he became a member of Ivan Garvanov's Secret Bulgarian Revolutionary Brotherhood and later served as a Bulgarian diplomat.

were involved in this perfidious game with the Macedonian liberation cause is best confirmed by the establishment of the *Milosrdie* (Mercy) Bulgarian Voluntary Brotherhood in Salonika in 1897, organized by Atanas Šopov, a Bulgarian trade agent, and personally sanctioned by the Bulgarian Prime Minister, Dr Konstantin Stoilov, who became an honorary member of *Milosrdie*. Moreover, all the members of the Secret Bulgarian Revolutionary Brotherhood were also admitted to membership in *Milosrdie*!

"The entire activity of the Revolutionary Brotherhood was directed towards the attainment of one basic aim — to take over the positions of the Revolutionary Organization" (Konstantin Pandev). Their aspirations also extended towards infiltration into the Central Committee, the ultimate objective being usurpation of MRO's leadership. At the same time they tried to spread the idea of "accepting VMK as the supreme body of the Organization". To achieve these aims, they planned the liquidation of Dame Gruev, Hristo Matov, Pere Tošev and Ivan Hadži Nikolov. When in September 1899 an agreement was made, with the mediation of Boris Sarafov's Vrhovist emissary, Kamburov, between the 'Revolutionary' Brotherhood and MRO Central Committee for the self-dissolution of the Brotherhood and the incorporation of its members within the ranks of MRO, it was nothing else but infiltration of "the wolf into the sheepfold" (Ǵ. Petrov). The events which followed in 1901 and 1903 were the best proof of this.

5. The constant shortage of money in MRO was the main factor limiting its swifter prosperity. Membership fees and voluntary contributions were far from sufficient for the growing needs, above all, for the purchase of arms and ammunition. As a result, violent methods began to be used to provide larger amounts of money. In these actions, the system of blackmail, threats and kidnapping became predominant.

In those troubled times, the provision of finance was Goce Delčev's continuous preoccupation.

The first major action for this purpose initiated by Goce Delčev, according to Nikola Zografov, was carried out on January 6, 1897 (Christmas Day), when the telegraphist Andon Zlatarev (from Ohrid), in the interest of the cause, robbed the Ḱustendil post office, collecting 28 thousand lev. Before he escaped, Zlatarev gave Vasil Glavinov and Aleksandar Kiprov,[86] as agreed, 25 thousand lev to deliver to Goce Delčev for the needs of MRO. These two took advantage of the opportunity, transferring the money into the Socialist treasury. They devised a flimsy story that they had buried the

[86] Aleksandar Kiprov (real surname: Dimitrov, 1880–1931), revolutionary and anarchist from Adrianople.

money in a river bed, but that the rising water had washed it away. For a long time Goce Delčev could not reconcile himself to this dishonest trick by Vasil Glavinov, as can be seen in some of his letters.

Sometime in the spring of 1897, on the eve of the Greco-Turkish War, Goce Delčev, together with Kosta Kondov, seems to have come to Odessa and made contact with two Armenian revolutionaries (probably Leon and Kirkor), well-versed in pyrotechnics, grenades and infernal machines. The four of them boarded the Russian ship *Voroniezh* and came to Mount Athos in order to obtain money from the Zograph (Zographou) Monastery. As early as April 1896, at MRO Salonika Congress, Goce Delčev found out about the similar unsuccessful March attempt of Boris Sarafov, but was encouraged by the rumour that the Cretan revolutionaries had managed to procure some 10 thousand Turkish liras from there. Of course Goce Delčev also nourished the idea of building an Organization nest amidst the Zograph monks. In the end he had to satisfy himself with siting the warehouse and grenade factory between the Zograph Monastery and Chilandar on Mount Athos.

Goce Delčev tried to 'become specialized' in kidnapping beys. The year 1897 saw the unsuccessful attempts at capturing the wealthy Turk Cherkez, the Vinica Bey and the Strumica Mafi-Bey. The kidnapping of the Strumica Nazlam-Bey was successful; a ransom of 6 thousand Turkish liras was demanded, but owing to someone's carelessness, the bey managed to escape. Goce Delčev made similar attempts in 1898 and 1899. However, "this business is not for Goce, he is not good at [kidnapping] beys" (Mihail Popeto).[87]

In May 1900 Goce Delčev planned his most significant kidnapping attempt. Taking as starting point the more or less good cooperation with Sarafov's VMK and also from the fact that the action was to take place on the territory of the Principality of Bulgaria, Goce Delčev planned it as a joint action of MRO and VMK. It involved the kidnapping of the son of the famous Bulgarian statesman Ivan Evstatij Gešov,[88] from whom an enormous ransom of 1.5 million lev in gold was to be obtained. VMK accepted the plan, indicating the specific steps: "Sarafov should rent a house where the child would be kept; Davidov[89] should buy a fiacre and find a loyal fiacre driver; Delčev should take care of the child's capture, and Ǵorče should find a way

[87] Mihail Apostolov–Popeto (Sofia, 1871 – village of Galavjanci, Kukuš region, 1903), Macedonian revolutionary. His parents came from the village of Bistrica, Gorna Džumaja region. Close associate of Goce Delčev.

[88] Ivan Evstatij Gešov (Plovdiv, 1849 – Sofia, 1924), Bulgarian statesman. Bulgarian Prime Minister (1911–1913).

[89] Toma Davidov (1863–1903), Bulgarian officer. Vice president of Sarafov's VMK. Later joined MRO.

Miss Ellen Stone

of receiving the money from Gešov" (VMK Protocol No. 9 of May 19, 1900). But the plan came to nothing, as Gešov's son unexpectedly went to Paris.

In 1901, thanks, above all, to Jane Sandanski,[90] the American missionary, Miss Ellen Stone,[91] and her companion, Katerina Cilka[92] were sensationally kidnapped. This led to a serious conflict with the Vrhovists.

[90] Jane Sandanski (village of Vlahi, Gorna Džumaja region, 1872–1915), great Macedonian revolutionary. He gave his own stamp to the Macedonian revolutionary national liberation movement following the Ilinden Uprising, and particularly during the Young Turk period. Killed in an ambush, April 1915.

[91] Ellen Maria Stone (Roxbury, Massachusetts, United States, 1846 – Chelsea, Massachusetts, 1927), American Protestant missionary.

[92] Katerina Stefanova–Cilka, Macedonian Protestant missionary, born in Bansko. Her husband, Gligor Cilka, was a Protestant priest from Korçë.

The affair gained strong publicity around the world. Ǵorče Petrov's wise tactics resulted in receiving the fantastic 14,500 Turkish liras, known as 'miss-stones'. Goce Delčev heard about it at the conference in the Kostur village of Zagoričani on January 14, 1902 (*Vasilica*, New Year's Day, old style) and, exhilarated, he said: "Now this will help us a great deal! We should be acting faster."

The money was deposited with trustworthy persons (the poet Anton Strašimirov,[93] Biolčev, etc.), who guarded them like the apple of their eye. A special commission composed of Goce Delčev, Tuše Deliivanov, Dimitar Stefanov and Nikola Maleševski was established for the rational use of the 'miss-stones'.

6. Armament was undoubtedly one of the primary tasks of MRO. It was clear to anybody that they could not be considered a military factor without arms, and without a military factor there could be no revolution.

The Organization began by procuring side arms (mostly daggers) and firearms (revolvers and grenades). The first rifles provided were domestically produced: Tetovo and Debar rifles.

The first major supply of rifles (Crimean rifles) dates from 1897, following the modernization of the Bulgarian Army. This supply was closely connected with the name of Goce Delčev.

After the 1897 Greco-Turkish War, Greek rifles of the Gra type started to be supplied. At the same time smaller quantities of Mannlicher rifles were purchased. Of course, the Organization also procured ammunition and dynamite.

In addition to Bulgaria and Greece, arms and ammunition were supplied from Serbia, Romania, Belgium, Austria-Hungary, France, Switzerland and Britain. Among these Bulgaria was the leading supplier. Goce Delčev deserved the greatest merit for the supply of arms and ammunition from Bulgaria and for their transportation to Macedonia.

But he would not stop there. At the above-mentioned conference in the village of Zagoričani, Kostur region (January 14–17, 1902), Goce Delčev spoke about an even more organized supply of arms from Greece.

It is known that in the autumn of 1902 Goce Delčev managed, via Tomo Karajovov, to procure arms and ammunition from Berlin and Vienna.

Delčev's correspondence is full of extensive information on the supply, storage and transport of arms and ammunition into Macedonia. His inexhaustible energy, vigour and enthusiasm were indeed impressive.

[93] Anton Strašimirov (Varna, 1872–1937), Bulgarian writer. Participated in the Macedonian revolutionary national liberation movement.

Dimitar Pop Georgiev Berovski

Very early on, in addition to the organization of the arms supply, Goce Delčev and Ǵorče Petrov considered the idea of the independent manufacture of arms, mostly of grenades. It was with the help of their creative minds that the Sabler grenade factory ('bomb foundry') in the foothills of Mount Osogovo was built. The distinguished Macedonian revolutionary Dimitar Pop Georgiev Berovski, the leader of the Razlovci Uprising and the Kresna (Macedonian) Uprising, also played a major role in this project.

The Sabler grenade factory was opened in May 1897. Several enthusiasts worked there in extremely substandard conditions. The chief master was the Armenian revolutionary Kirkor, and his first assistants were Goce Takedžiev and Atanas Murdžev. Goce Delčev and Ǵorče Petrov came there occasionally and helped them. On one occasion, the Armenian Leon inspected the process of grenade-casting.

The Sabler grenade factory produced, among other things, between 1,000 and 1,500 grenades of various sizes. The factory was abandoned immediately prior to the intervention of the Bulgarian police.

There are different views as to the length of its operation. Konstantin Pandev, for example, believes that the Sabler grenade factory existed for only a few months, Peju Kračolov Javorov mentions a period of ten months, and Ǵorče Petrov says "a year and a few months" in his memoirs. But if we follow original sources, starting from Delčev's letter of May 1897, addressed to Nikola Zografov, when the Sabler grenade factory actually appeared, up to Ǵorče Petrov's encoded letter addressed to this same Nikola Zografov of July 17, 1899, where he writes that "the workshop has no reason to stop working, but should work fast and more intensively", we may assume that the Sabler grenade factory operated for over two years.

In any case, the Sabler grenade factory played a significant role, strengthening the confidence of the Organization in its own forces and capabilities. Similar grenade factories appeared in other places in Macedonia, following its example.

7. Goce Delčev was concerned to secure the unimpeded operation of the Organization's vital channels. The flawless functioning of the courier service was a prerequisite for the normal flow of people, the transport of arms and ammunition and the circulation of secret revolutionary mail.

"Goce Delčev was extremely committed to the instruction of the forces of the revolutionary movement and the subjugated masses of the people. He started from the concept of carrying out a revolution in the people's minds, of creating educated people, educated masses, who would successfully carry out the revolution."

Hence his constant effort to provide and distribute progressive periodicals and revolutionary literature among the Macedonian people. In this way he distributed the following periodicals, to mention just a few of them: *Pravo* (Justice), *Glas Makedonski* (Macedonian Voice), *Maleševski Balkan* (Maleševo Balkans), *Politička Sloboda* (Political Freedom) and *Delo* (Cause). Together with the revolutionary literature, Delčev also distributed works of socialist nature. Goce Delčev's closeness to socialist circles is also borne out by the fact that, according to Mihail Gerdžikov,[94] he took part in the May Day demonstrations in Sofia together with Dimo Hadži Dimov.

Goce Delčev was particularly concerned with the creation of literature in Macedonian. Here are his words, which best confirm this concern: "Is

[94] Mihail Gerdžikov (Plovdiv, 1877–1947), prominent revolutionary who participated in the Macedonian revolutionary national liberation movement. Head of the Adrianople District during the Ilinden Uprising.

there nobody who can write at least one book in Macedonian?" He encouraged some Macedonian authors, Razdolov,[95] for instance, to write works with revolutionary contents.

"Goce Delčev had long ago and clearly seen the significance of the press as a means for agitation and mobilization in the implementation of a specific political concept" (M. Pandevski).

There is no doubt that Goce Delčev had a major influence on the establishment of MRO's hectographed mouthpieces *Buntovnik* (Rebel, 1898/99, edited by Ǵorče Petrov) and *Sloboda ili Smrt* (Freedom or Death, 1903, Peju K. Javorov), as well as the journal *Delo* (1902).

8. The Vinica Affair of November 1897 finally removed the conspiratorial veil from the Macedonian Revolutionary Organization. This time the international public came face to face with the fact of the existence of a widespread movement. MRO itself came face to face directly with the centuries-old oppressor. This marked the end of an almost idyllic period when MRO, more or less quietly, in half-legal circumstances, carried out its agitational and organizational activity. But MRO quickly consolidated itself after the Vinica shock, changing its strategy and tactics with the initiation and establishment of the Detachment Institute, which acted as its integral agitational, organizational and combating constituent.

The Vinica Affair dealt a heavy blow to the Organization's network in the Skopje sanjak and shattered MRO as a whole.

The news of the Vinica Affair reached Goce Delčev in Ḱustendil. He was briefly overwhelmed by feelings of depression. He felt as if the entire cause had been crumbling. He returned to Sofia in order to think about it and take steps for the neutralization of the Affair's effects.

He was still under the painful impression of the large-scale reprisals by the Ottoman authorities when he wrote the following in his letter of December 1897 to Nikola Maleševski: "Let our comrades make ready, let them prepare themselves and expect of me every day to call them under the banner not of freedom but of revenge..." Goce Delčev had a telephone conversation with Boris Sarafov concerning the same question. Bearing in mind Sarafov's fighting experience in Melnik, Delčev proposed to Sarafov the formation, if possible, of a detachment with which he would go to Macedonia "in order to put an end to the Turkish atrocities" (Boris Sarafov). But soon enough, sobering himself up from these desperate ideas, and

[95] Atanas Razdolov (Berovo, 1872 – Sofia, 1931), Macedonian revolutionary journalist. Took his own life by poisoning himself.

probably consulting Ǵorče Petrov, Goce Delčev renounced Boris Sarafov's services.

Concerned with the future of the cause, and having made tremendous efforts, Goce Delčev surmounted the painful trauma and as early as the first months of 1898 once again spread optimism in his letter to Ǵorǵi Pop Cvetkov and Nikola Zografov: "Be cheerful and have courage! Is there an empire which has not fallen apart before enemies in a position such as ours? We are strong because what we now have is aimed against the Turkish Empire."

In the meantime, a Provisional Committee for Refugees was established in Ḱustendil, and a three-member commission was formed for the same purpose in Sofia. Hristo Stanišev's VMK distanced itself from the outlaw gang which had entered Macedonia from the Ḱustendil region and precipitated the affair. The Vrhovist delegation which visited Dr Konstantin Stoilov, the Bulgarian Prime Minister, and several foreign diplomatic representatives accredited in Sofia, stated that "the Supreme Macedonian Committee has nothing to do with the sending of the detachment which killed Kyazim-Aga in Vinica and that the Committee is neither the direct nor indirect culprit for the events in Macedonia".

Goce Delčev, however, felt the malicious joy of some Vrhovist leaders over the difficulties in which MRO had found itself. Hence, as regards the coming Fifth Congress of the Macedonian Societies in Bulgaria, in a letter dated from July 1898 and addressed to Nikola Zografov, Goce Delčev pointed out: "We shall not actively participate. We intend to act, if there is an opportunity, and push through the list of Stanišev, who is much closer according to his programme to us, and is an honest man, rather than Kovačev."

But the plan failed. At the Fifth Congress, Aleksandar Radev[96] was elected the VMK president, and Andrej Ljapčev vice president. Therefore the relations between MRO's external representatives — Goce Delčev and Ǵorče Petrov — and VMK became even colder than before.

On the other hand, the Bulgarian government of Stoilov, astounded by the unexpected strength of the Organization which was partly brought to light with the Vinica Affair, took its own steps for the neutralization of MRO. In March 1898, in a letter to Nikola Maleševski, Goce Delčev bitterly concluded: "The thunder of the Vinica Affair was not enough to crush our cause, but also this (i.e. Bulgarian) government has sought to relieve the Turkish authorities in their deeds of persecution, taking upon itself to destroy

[96] Aleksandar Radev (Bitola, 1864–1911), member of VMK in 1895/96. Later took an active part in the political life of Bulgaria. Became Minister of Justice and later Minister of Education in the governments of Petko Karavelov and Stojan Danev.

what cannot be destroyed. Persecution has never been stronger; we'll see whether or not it will be successful. May they beware of us!"

The Vinica Affair had prolonged repercussions owing to the effective investigation of the astute Skopje head of police, Dervish-Effendi, and because of the betrayal by the Vinica spy Ǵorǵi Ivanov (Jovančev), a former close associate of Goce Delčev.

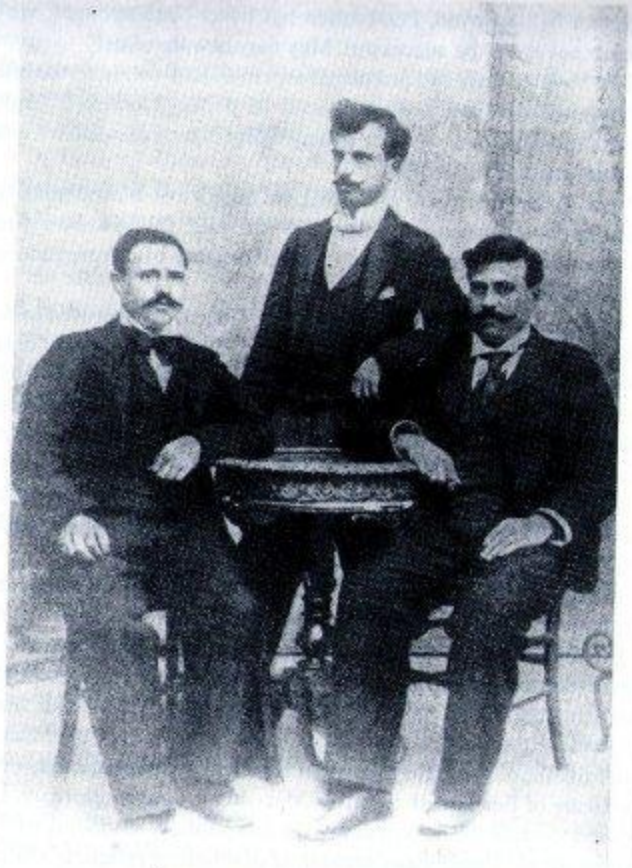
Goce Delčev saw very early that the number of Macedonian traitors had multiplied, and as early as April 1897 he said: "Who knows if there is any other people who has suffered so much because of its renegade sons as the Macedonian people?"

As far as Ǵorǵi Ivanov was concerned, Goce Delčev proved to be quite tolerant, trying to drag him out of the mud and make him useful again for MRO. Ǵorǵi Ivanov was arrested for the first time together with Goce Delčev in June 1896 in connection with the Done Affair. Thereupon he became an informer of the Ottoman police. But Ivanov's treachery was fully expressed in the Vinica Affair. In order to sober him up, in May 1899 Goce Delčev even sent him the book *The Spy* by James Fenimore Cooper. But everything was in vain: Ǵorǵi Ivanov proved incorrigible and somewhat later was liquidated by MRO.

In July 1898, Goce Delčev sent two letters expressing gratitude to the Archbishop of Plovdiv, Menini, for the Archbishop's humane gesture of giving shelter at the Paljurci Monastery (Gevgelija region) to seven Macedonian revolutionaries, who thus avoided the Ottoman 'Vinica' reprisals. Yet Delčev's intention was more far-reaching: through Menini, he wanted to present before the Holy See in Rome the exalted nature of the Macedonian national liberation struggle. "Our aim is to rectify the iniquitous decisions of the Treaty of Berlin with regard to Macedonia, and therefore our struggle is directed towards the attainment of the full political autonomy of this land for all the people living there, regardless of ethnic or religious affiliation... We lead our revolutionary struggle for freedom alone, unconcerned about the sacrifices we make. However, any assistance from the sidelines is a proof for us that our struggle is just" (G. Delčev).

9. The Vinica Affair speeded up the foundation of MRO Detachment Institute.

With his military background, Goce Delčev was certainly among the first to see that the existing terrorist groups could not offer resistance in open battle with the Turkish army. They had simply played their part. The existing level of development of MRO required a definite re-grouping of its frail and rudimentary military forces into a more modern, stronger, more massive and more developed military mechanism capable of resisting the numerous



Efrem Čučkov, Kuzman Šapkarev and Goce Delčev

enemies of the Macedonian liberation cause. This was the reason for the establishment of the Detachment Institute of the Organization, which initiated a higher stage of development for MRO.

The first more serious practical step in this respect was taken by Goce Delčev himself. Thus, in April 1898, in order to put right as quickly as possible the problems arising from the Vinica Affair, he sent into Macedonia three armed groups consisting of three men, known as flying illegal groups, headed by experienced former leaders of MRO. Efrem Čučkov[97] was as-

[97] Efrem Čučkov (Štip, 1870–1923), Macedonian revolutionary.

signed to the Maleševo region, Todor Stankov[98] to the Radoviš region and Stojan Georgiev to the Strumica region. In fact these flying groups were the harbingers of the major military transformation of MRO.

It is true that MRO's first detachment was formed by Duko Tasev Judovčanecot as early as 1897 with the help of Pere Tošev, but its role, owing to its half-bandit character, was negligible. The first detachment which rightfully bore the epithets 'agitational and organizational' was Mihail Apostolov Popeto's detachment, which followed Goce Delčev's instructions.

In the autumn of 1898, MRO Central Committee, in conformity with TMORO's Constitution, printed and sent out a special circular letter composed of 14 articles, giving the signal for the establishment of subdistrict revolutionary detachments. This not only promulgated the new TMORO institution, the Detachment Institute, but also marked the beginning of a new, armed stage in the development of the organized Macedonian national liberation movement.

Goce Delčev took the main responsibility in the establishment and development of the Detachment Institute.

The book of Regulations of the TMORO detachments was prepared by Goce Delčev and Ǵorče Petrov in 1900, in accordance with TMORO's Constitution and the circular by the Central Committee of TMORO (autumn 1898).

The Regulations of the TMORO detachments consist of 47 articles grouped into five chapters. An exception is Chapter 1, which contains no articles but is written in the form of a preamble. It states: "In each revolutionary region a detachment shall be formed as an inseparable part of the Organization. It shall move depending on the needs of the cause and by order of the Local Committee."

Chapter 2, devoted to the goals of the detachment and consisting of 11 articles, deals with the following: (a) agitation, (b) organization, (c) executive task, and (d) final task. Among other things, it states: "The detachment, as an additional part of the local regional organization, shall clarify and spread among the population the idea, aims and tasks of the Organization, as determined in its constitution and regulations" (Article 1). In addition, the detachment "shall disseminate among the population, through persuasion and moral influence, the idea of armament" (Article 3). The detachment, as an auxiliary and executive body of the local revolutionary committees, was authorized to organize and also establish governing bodies (Article 4). Moreover, it was obliged to train its members militarily (Article 5), to

[98] Todor Stankov (Prilep, 1875–?), Macedonian revolutionary.

provide and distribute arms to the population (Article 6), "to support the managing bodies in the compulsory collection of money" (Article 7), "to liquidate, by order of the Committee, persons sentenced to death" (Article 8), to "be on the lookout for and chase bandits regardless of whether they are Turks or Christians, or any other detachment which does not belong to the Organization, and, in coordination with the local regional managing body, to take the necessary measures for their liquidation or for paralysing their activities..." (Article 9), to "carry out political robberies and hold-ups, but only with the approval and permission of the local regional managing body and the Central Committee in the name of the liberation cause and for its sake..." (Article 10), and finally, at the time of the uprising, to be the first, as an armed force, to raise and fly the banner of revolution upon the call of the Central Committee (Article 11).

Chapter 3 of the Regulations (Articles 12-18) deals with the general rules of the detachment. Among other things, it stresses that any attempt at instigating a rebellion in the villages and taking "any measures of a major character, which may draw the Organization prematurely into combat, shall be considered transgressive and treacherous acts. The culprits shall be persecuted and punished as transgressors and enemies of the people" (Article 16). Apart from that, the detachment had no right to kill people without the permission of the local revolutionary committee, except for confirmed spies and traitors, in cases of self-defence or for the purpose of preserving the secrets of the cause, and finally "in the case of liquidation of any outlaw gang or detachments which do not belong to the Organization".

Chapter 4 of the Regulations (Articles 19-26) defines the relations between the detachment and the Committee. "In general matters, the detachment shall be subordinate to the local regional managing body. It shall obey the body's orders and with regard to all its tasks and measures shall seek the body's approval or permission, and it shall notify the body of everything it has carried out" (Article 19). The detachment was obliged to submit a monthly report to the managing body, which was then forwarded to the Central Committee (Article 20). The managing body looked after the supply of the detachment (Article 21). The detachment was not allowed to abandon the region without permission from the Central Committee (Article 25), and the detachment could only be dissolved by order of the Central Committee of MRO.

The final, fifth chapter of the Regulations on the subdistrict detachments (Articles 27-47) was devoted to the composition and internal order of the detachment. Among other things, this chapter specifies: "The detachment is usually composed of seven or more persons, depending on the needs and conditions of the region. It is led by a head who is appointed by the Central

Committee" (Article 27). According to Article 29, "the choice of young men in the detachment shall be carried out in coordination with the local managing body. The detachment cannot accept within its ranks a new member without the consent of the leader, and the latter cannot impose such a member contrary to the will of the detachment." Furthermore, the detachment could offer temporary shelter to those members of the Organization who had been compromised before the authorities (Article 30). In practice, however, these most often remained within the detachment, which increased the size of the detachment and led to the expansion of the Organization's Detachment Institute. The detachments' arms were considered to belong to the committees (Article 37), intriguers in the detachments were disciplined by a warning (Article 34), and avarice, covetousness and egotism were stigmatized and punished in public (Articles 35 and 45). For repeated violations, the regulations envisaged removal from the detachment and expulsion "forever from the Organization" (Article 45). In addition, exemplary behaviour was encouraged within the detachment and in relations with the population. "In all these relations, both the head and the young men are equally responsible for the mistakes of the detachment before the Committee" (Article 42).

As far as the death penalty was concerned, it was envisaged in the following cases: (a) if a detachment member tried or planned to betray a member of the Organization, the detachment or the Organization; (b) if anyone revealed secrets which might endanger the Organization, the detachment or individuals working for the cause; (c) if anyone carried out on his own account, for personal benefit or for personal purposes, actions contrary to the objectives of the detachment and the spirit of the Organization; (d) if anyone deserted the detachment in action, endangering its safety or paralysing the action, and (e) if the detachment assessed, after longer observation, that someone deserved death (Article 46). Nevertheless, "a death penalty is passed by the entire detachment and with the approval of the regional managing body" (Article 47).

The Regulations of the TMORO detachments (1900) sanctioned the place and role of subdistrict detachments in the liberation movement at that stage of development.

With the course of time, however, the detachments outgrew the provisions of these Regulations and were transformed into "a pillar of the revolutionary movement". Furthermore, "with their emergence, the rural population joined the Organization en masse. In this way, from a propagandist and urban organization, it turned into a massive, rural and combatant one" (*History of the Macedonian People*, Book 2, Skopje, 1969).

In time, the subdistrict detachments became the chief veins of the Organization's bloodstream. After the creation of what were known as

'village militia', the military forces of the Organization acquired a massive character. Towards the end of the pre-Ilinden period, MRO took the role of a parallel authority and in fact became a "state within a state". Goce Delčev was one of the chief men responsible for this.

The creation of the detachment mechanism of the Organization was inextricably linked with Delčev's name. Goce Delčev, being the chief inspector of the Organization's armed forces, grew into a figure of impeccable reputation and authority. The most important military personnel of MRO in this period matured under Goce Delčev's wing.

What were known as 'detachment schools' played a significant part in the extension of the Detachment Institute. Delčev's close associates, Mihail Popeto, Jane Sandanski, Hristo Černopeev,[99] Marko Lerinski[100] and Nikola Petrov Rusinski[101] were largely responsible for this.

From the moment he joined MRO until his death, Goce Delčev travelled all around Macedonia. He would not be stopped even by health problems involving violent pains in the stomach. Everywhere Goce Delčev left "shining traces", inspiring vigour, optimism and unbreakable faith in the success of the Macedonian liberation cause. His name soon turned into a legend.

10. Following the Vinica Affair, the Bulgarian government tried to paralyse the activity of the External Representative Office, or to be precise, to isolate it from the Central Committee of MRO. This led to the attempts of Stoilov's government to establish direct contact with MRO Central Committee. Under the pretext of offering material support, the purpose of these attempts was to control and direct MRO via the trade agencies in Macedonia and turn the Organization into an obedient servant of the Bulgarian government in the achievement of the well-known Greater-Bulgarian objectives.

This reorientation of the Bulgarian government was speeded up by Dame Gruev's meeting with the Exarch Josif I in March 1898, when Gruev not only rejected the accusation of atheism as an artful camouflage of the true reasons for his dismissal from the Exarchate's office, but also unmasked its policy towards Macedonia, accusing the Exarchate of maintaining "close

[99] Hristo Černopeev (village of Dermanci, Lukovit region, 1868 – Krivolak, 1915), prominent revolutionary who participated in the Macedonian revolutionary national liberation movement.

[100] Marko Lerinski (real name: Georgi Ivanov, village of Žeravna, Kotel region, 1862 – village of Patele, Lerin region, 1902), prominent revolutionary who participated in the Macedonian movement.

[101] Nikola Petrov Rusinski (village of Rusinovo, Maleševo region, 1875–1942), Macedonian revolutionary and socialist.

relations with the Bulgarian government and its trade agents in Macedonia". As a result, the Exarch Josif complained to Prince Ferdinand of Coburg about the activity of MRO, "expressing his fears for the Bulgarian cause if this activity was to continue". But the Bulgarian Prince Ferdinand and Dr Konstantin Stoilov, Bulgarian Prime Minister, calmed the anxious Exarch.

Dr Konstantin Stoilov made contact with MRO Central Committee through the Bulgarian trade agent in Skopje, Dimitar Rizov,[102] who tried to arrange a prompt meeting between Konstantin Stoilov and Dame Gruev.

The Central Committee of MRO put forward the following six conditions to the Bulgarian government:

(1) to respect the independence of MRO;

(2) to prevent the further infiltration of outlaw gangs across the border from Bulgaria into Macedonia (the immediate reason being the Vinica Affair, which had the taste of a bitter pill imported from Bulgaria);

(3) "to take care of appointing as Exarchal teachers those members of the revolutionary organization who were, are or can be, teachers in Macedonia";

(4) to require from the Exarchate that it appoint three leaders of MRO as school inspectors in the Salonika, Bitola and Skopje vilayets;

(5) to give "strict and categorical" instructions to its trade agents in Salonika and Bitola in order to eliminate the existing lack of confidence; and

(6) to help in terms of armaments.

The meeting between Stoilov and Gruev took place in Sofia in the middle of March 1898. On that occasion, Dame Gruev "stated 'quite openly' the state of affairs in Macedonia and clarified the views of the revolutionary organization". According to Konstantin Pandev, Dame Gruev demanded from the Bulgarian government arms as well as finance for the procurement of arms from Greece, and as the first step, "he insisted, 'as an encouragement', on their sending them at least a small amount of money that same year". The real dimensions of these negotiations can only be revealed in documents still inaccessible for us, deposited in the Bulgarian archives.

At that time, in August 1898, the Exarch Josif met Ǵorče Petrov, and MRO succeeded in intimidating the Exarchate. As a result, the Exarchate demanded intervention by the Bulgarian government. It seems that this intimidation of the Exarchate was the main reason for the Bulgarian government's violating the fragile arrangements reached at the recent negotiations between Stoilov and Gruev, removing its mask and revealing its true position vis-à-vis the Organization. This became quite obvious when Dr Konstantin

[102] Dimitar Rizov (Bitola, c. 1862/63 – Berlin, 1918), Bulgarian public figure and diplomat of Macedonian descent. The first Bulgarian trade agent in Skopje (1897–1899). He was later in diplomatic service in Cetinje, Belgrade, Rome and Berlin.

Stoilov, in his Circular No. 39/3 of September 1898, addressed to the trade agents in Macedonia, attacked MRO, and using "the sharpest words, condemned its actions, giving some additional instructions to the agents. These instructions were in fact aimed at the total isolation of the Organization in Turkey. This was perhaps the last attempt of Stoilov's at subordinating the Organization". Dr Stoilov was categorical that "the Organization, on the contrary, is now in the hands of untrustworthy persons and its results have only been damaging. This obliges us to be sceptical towards it and full of suspicion."

In reaction to the circular, on September 27, 1898, the Central Committee of MRO sent a sharp protest to the Bulgarian Prime Minister, Dr Konstantin Stoilov. A copy of this letter was forwarded to VMK. In order to moderate the conflict, Konstantin Stoilov decided to send, through Dimitar Rizov, the promised 20 thousand lev to MRO. "Ǵorče Petrov, who found out from Gruev about Stoilov's intention of sending money, said that the Organization would not accept it, for it refused to become 'an instrument of the Bulgarian government'" (Konstantin Pandev).

After lengthy persuasion by Dimitar Rizov, MRO Central Committee accepted only a portion of this money (500 napoleons) for which Rizov was given a receipt dated November 24, 1898. But the conflict further deepened after Konstantin Stoilov threatened to arrest Goce Delčev and Ǵorče Petrov, the external representatives of MRO in Sofia (the Principality of Bulgaria). As a result, the Central Committee of the Organization threatened Stoilov: "If you do such a thing, it will no longer be the action of a Bulgarian minister, but the action of Stoilov!" (Ǵ. Petrov). This in fact emphasized the personal responsibility of Dr Konstantin Stoilov. On this occasion Stoilov came to his senses and stopped his attempts at subordinating the Organization. In any case, he was soon (in January 1899) to depart from the historical scene.

The experience with the machinations of Stoilov's Bulgarian government clearly showed how right Goce Delčev and Ǵorče Petrov had been in adhering very early to the principle: "Stay away from persons in office!" (Ǵ. Petrov).

11. Towards the beginning of 1899, with the fall of Dr Konstantin Stoilov's government and the establishment of the Radoslavov regime, a more favourable climate was created for the activity of the external representatives of MRO in the Principality of Bulgaria.

Hence Petrov and Delčev proceeded with the idea of electing a new VMK according to the preferences of MRO. This was a result of their growing influence among the numerous Macedonian émigrés in Bulgaria, and above all, in socialist circles and among the military officer brotherhoods. The Central Committee of MRO also encouraged them to take such a step. The aim was to create such a VMK as would fully serve the interests of MRO as a supportive moral and material institution of the Macedonian national liberation cause. In this context, the financial power of Macedonian émigrés in Bulgaria was particularly attractive. It was no chance that Ǵorče Petrov said: "Even if the émigrés had not created the organization headed by the S[upreme] C[ommittee] we would have created it."

Goce Delčev moved in socialist circles from as early as his training days in the Military Academy. As MRO's external representative he drew even closer to them. In 1898 he became particularly close to the representative of what was known as the 'Geneva Group', Mihail Gerdžikov. It seems that this was not by chance, as Goce Delčev once said: "I am an anarchist in soul, a social democrat by conviction, and a revolutionary in practice." He is also known for these words: "If tyranny is violence, then revolution is violence against violence" (Peju K. Javorov).

Military officer brotherhoods appeared in the Principality of Bulgaria in 1896 on the initiative of the '1895' officers, among whom Anton Bozukov and Boris Sarafov were the most energetic. They put their idea into practice through Colonel Ivan Končev,[103] Commander of the Sixth Trnovo Regiment. This act made him fall into disfavour, so he was transferred to Vidin. It was an excellent alibi for his, at first sight, disassociation from the Court. Končev duped MRO even more when he materially supported the Sabler grenade factory. On that account, in 1897 he was welcomed with pomp and entertained by the Central Committee of MRO in Salonika. The rest of the officers also gravitated towards MRO's external representatives. Here is what Ǵorče Petrov had to say: "Boris [Sarafov] was friendly with me, he made various attempts at securing money. Delčev and Boris did not get along well. As a former cadet, Delčev did not like military officers; even though he maintained contact with many officers, he was not fond of them. I protected Boris before the other officers. He was very active, vigorous and was fully prepared to serve us... The rest of the 1895 officers were like him, they would run to do a service for us with no personal motives."

In January 1899, VMK started publishing its mouthpiece, *Reformi* (Reforms), whose editor-in-chief was Andrej Ljapčev. But this did not help the existing members of VMK to retain their position. Ǵorče Petrov played the chief role in the dissolution of that VMK, in which he had the support of Goce Delčev.

[103] Ivan Končev (1859–1908), Bulgarian general. President of VMK. Provoked the Gorna Džumaja 'uprising' in the autumn of 1902.

First of all, Gorče Petrov started probing the Macedonian émigré societies in Bulgaria. He paid special attention to finding an authoritative person who would stand at the head of VMK. Having contacted many people, he offered the post to Dimitar Blagoev, but did not receive an answer. He then asked Ivan Couchev to accept the job, but he, too, refused. He also thought about lieutenant colonels Stefan Nikolov[104] and Anastas Jankov. But "Nikolov has given me the impression of a difficult man with a feeble intellect, and Jankov that of a gullible person" (Ǵ. Petrov). He finally turned to the '1895' officers. They unexpectedly proposed that Ǵorče Petrov himself accept the presidency of VMK. He refused, and finally chose Boris Sarafov. Goce Delčev, of course, also participated in the choice; he had known Boris well since school days. A list of the new VMK members headed by Boris Sarafov was proposed. Beforehand "the conditions were agreed with them upon the future relations between the S[upreme] C[ommittee] and the C[entral] C[ommittee]. The officers fully accepted our position... We organized Sarafov's committee. It was our product. In such circumstances we decided to take over the committee through people who shared the same ideas as ours; we were to be independent, and the SC was to be on its own. We intended to reorganize the societies so that they would bear in mind only the revolutionary cause. We agreed in advance with the members of the committee that we were to have the right to take part in the committee's sessions; we would not take responsibility for what the SC would do, but everything was to be carried out with our knowledge and approval" (Ǵ. Petrov).

Up to that moment, Delčev and Petrov had attended only a single session of Hristo Stanišev's VMK — in February 1898 — when they proposed a project on cooperation, which remained only on paper. And now, in Sarafov's new VMK, they demanded to take part in the Committee's sessions with the obvious intention of controlling its operation.

The Sixth Congress of the Macedonian Societies in Bulgaria was held in May 1899. Atanas Razdolov, Kosta Šahov and Dimitar Blagoev shot critical arrows at the previous VMK. On this occasion, Dimitar Blagoev put forward "the idea of the establishment of a republic on the Balkan Peninsula — a Balkan united states". But this idea was rejected. Rejected also was the proposal by Dimitar Rizov to include in the new VMK, as regular members, the two external representatives of MRO, which implied amending Article 16 of the Statutes of the Macedonian Societies. Thanks to the competent preparations and the strong authority of the two external representatives of

[104] Stefan Nikolov (Prilep, 1859–1917), Bulgarian officer (colonel) of Macedonian descent. Vrhovist.

MRO, Goce Delčev and Ǵorče Petrov, their followers among the congress delegates successfully passed the list of the '1895' officers as new members of VMK. Boris Sarafov became president, Toma Davidov vice president, Vladislav (Slavčo) Kovačev[105] secretary, Georgi Petrov treasurer, and Anton Bozukov and Dr Vladimir Šopov advisers. Aleksandar Radev was elected a delegate to the First Peace Conference in The Hague, who there made contact with a representative of the 'Troshak' Armenian committee. At the Peace Conference, they together demanded that the Macedonian and Armenian questions be considered and resolved, but their demand was not taken into consideration. Therefore, on June 13, 1899, VMK and the Armenian Revolutionary Organization issued a joint declaration underlining that they "do not recognize the decisions of the Conference as obligatory for their two peoples and that they will continue to fight for their liberation". There is no doubt that MRO's external representatives were quite familiar with this action of VMK in the Netherlands, and perhaps took part in it.

Following the aforementioned internal agreement, the external representatives Goce Delčev and Ǵorče Petrov had the right to attend the sessions of VMK, which they did regularly at first.

"In the beginning our cooperation with the committee was comprehensive. We started working on a purely friendly basis agreeing that they will figure in Bulgaria, but that we shall be their support and stronghold. The officers initially did not undertake anything without our knowledge and consent. Boris himself used to say: 'We are the firm, but Ǵorče is the Committee'" (Ǵ. Petrov).

Yet even during Boris Sarafov's first mandate there were symptoms of a rift, which clouded the initial idyllic picture of mutual cooperation.

Goce Delčev had his first open conflict with Lieutenant Anton Bozukov, adviser-member of VMK, during their joint summer visit (1899) to the Melnik and Demir Hisar (Ser) regions. Being unable to overpower Delčev, later, in the summer of 1900, Anton Bozukov, an adventurous spirit, resigned from VMK to go to the Transvaal and take part in the South African War.

A more serious symptom of VMK's attempt to take control of MRO became apparent after the mediating mission of Kamburov in September 1899, which led to the 'self-dissolution' of the 'Revolutionary' Brotherhood and incorporation of its members within MRO, in which VMK appeared in the role of a supreme arbiter. Ǵorče Petrov was quite right when he condemned this act.

[105] Vladislav (Slavčo) Kovačev (Štip, 1875 – Sofia, 1924), VMK secretary. Liquidated in 1924.

In the meantime, Boris Sarafov, Ivan Končev and their followers started holding secret meetings. Their aim was to oust the external representatives, to gradually infiltrate into the Organization, particularly in its Central Committee, and to take MRO into their own hands at a given moment. "All that was supposed to take place tactically, so that we would not notice it," says Ǵorče Petrov. Their infernal plan was directed towards instigating an immediate uprising in Macedonia. For this purpose they planned to "divide Macedonia into 14 uprising districts headed by 14 commissioned and non-commissioned officers, while... Končev was to prepare everything for the uprising here and was to go into Macedonia with huge forces from here, just as in 1895, the only difference being that this time they were to have support from the inside" (Ǵ. Petrov). This shows how quickly the old Vrhovist policy was resurrected, except that its new promoters, as military officers, were much more dangerous than their predecessors. After all, among many of them the image of '1895' was still vivid.

As the first step, VMK launched before Goce Delčev and Ǵorče Petrov the 'idea' of incorporating two officers within the Central Committee of MRO, as well as other officers in all revolutionary districts.

At the VMK session held on May 1, 1900, in addition to the external representatives (Delčev and Petrov), Colonel Ivan Končev, Lieutenant Colonels Stefan Nikolov and Anastas Jankov, Lieutenant Garufalov[106] and Atanas Murdžev were also present. Protocol No. 3 of May 1, 1900, among other things envisaged the following: to propose to the Central Committee of MRO to incorporate two members in which VMK has full confidence; after their incorporation, VMK would become a branch of MRO Central Committee, and the chief role as regards the liberation cause would be played by the latter; to incorporate military officers, sent, above all, as regional heads; all persons sent by VMK (as members of the Central Committee, regional heads, ordinary activists) were to take an oath before MRO, obey its statutory norms and discontinue "any links as regards the cause with Bulgaria"; to stop any private correspondence in connection with the cause, etc. It was clear that a compromise was in question.

Of course, all this was preceded by a long debate. Here are Ǵorče Petrov's words which probably refer to this meeting: "They came out with new demands — to include two officers in the C[entral] C[ommittee] and to incorporate 14-16 people on the inside and assign them to the districts, to take over the leadership of the Organization. Long arguments. We could not accept these as we saw their intentions. Jankov and Garufalov unwittingly

[106] Stojčo Garufalov, Bulgarian officer. Came from the Nova Zagora region. Vrhovist and participant in the 1895 Melnik 'uprising'.

revealed their cards in a conversation — the leadership of the Organization was to be transferred entirely into the hands of military men, while our civilian men would be left to care for supply services. Non-commissioned officers would be subordinate to commissioned officers, and the network would have been complete. We openly said to them that we understood the tendency and could not accept it, and that we would fight. They refused to admit that there was such a tendency, but as Jankov flared up and revealed it, they became confused and attacked Jankov. In the talks with them it became clear that they regarded our internal activists/teachers as incapable people who must be replaced by military men. The officers found it unnecessary to go on with the conscientious preparation of the people" (Ǵ. Petrov).

The Seventh Congress of the Macedonian Societies in the Principality of Bulgaria, held in the summer of 1900, provided an ostensible balance of powers; it seemed that the old euphoric atmosphere of understanding from the Sixth Congress was re-established.

MRO's external representatives, Goce Delčev and Ǵorče Petrov, were also present at the Seventh Congress. Among the people attending were Pavel Genadiev,[107] Anton Strašimirov, Nikola Maleševski, Jane Sandanski and Mihail Gerdžikov. Ǵorče Petrov remembers: "For the first time, Delčev and I attended the congress. Everyone was pleased to see us, they met us with applause. A revenue of 450 thousand [lev]! Who could oppose us... I was on top of the world... Then the congress accepted from me the revised constitution and regulations of the organization here in the spirit of the ideas expressed, that they adopted the revolutionary path and that they recognized the seniority of the Internal Organization. It was a tremendous success for the Macedonian cause; the revolutionary idea had already penetrated among the émigrés there." The amendments in the statutes were in fact made by the commission headed by Pavel Genadiev, with Ǵorče Petrov's indirect participation. Now VMK was renamed as VMOK (*Vrhoven Makedono-Odrinski Komitet*, Supreme Macedonian-Adrianople Committee). Furthermore, Mihail Gerdžikov spoke at the Congress in favour of attracting the social democrats to the Macedonian liberation cause "explaining to them that the political struggle is simultaneously a class struggle". At the same time, the total amount of the Patriotic Loan was raised from 300 thousand to one million lev. The Congress also gave a new mandate to Sarafov's committee.

The Seventh Congress moderated but failed to remove the disagreements between VMK and the Organization represented by the external

[107] Pavel Genadiev (Bitola, 1873–1959), Macedonian public figure and journalist. Close to Ǵorče Petrov.

Boris Sarafov's VMOK, elected at the Seventh Congress (1900)

representatives. On the contrary, these deepened and became even more complicated.

It is known that the revenues of Sarafov's VMK during his two mandates reached 560 thousand franks. A portion of these funds was spent on the purchase of arms: 1,000 Mannlicher rifles (bought from Austria), 1,500 martin rifles, 10 thousand Crimean rifles, 1,000 revolvers and various explosives.

The material position and supply of arms encouraged Sarafov's ambitions to play the chief role in the Macedonian liberation cause. At that time his thoughts were concentrated on the painless internal taking over of MRO. For this purpose VMK organized a 'school' for the instruction of "people who were later sent on the inside". The 'school' was managed by the officers Hristo Sarakinov,[108] Dimitar Venedikov[109] and Petar Drvingov. What was known as 'barracks for young men', managed by Drvingov, were established in November 1900. As early as August 1900, on the initiative of Boris Sarafov and Toma Davidov, and with the knowledge of the Minister of War, voluntary detachments began to be formed among the Macedonian émigré societies in the Principality of Bulgaria. This was the special responsibility of Hristo Sarakinov, adviser-member of VMK. Towards the end of 1900, however, under pressure from the international public, they were renamed as 'shooting fellowships', trained by Jankov, Nikolov and Protogerov.[110] Moreover, they tried to attract, or rather recruit, MRO members for the Vrhovist cause. Tempted by the material privileges, even the reliable Ḱustendil head of MRO, the eminent Nikola Zografov, among others, joined Sarafov's side. That is why Zografov was replaced, and in 1902 Marko Sekulički[111] came to the post.

With the knowledge of the external representatives, VMK materially helped the anarchist groups (the 'Boatmen' circle, the Merdžanov[112]-Mandžukov[113] group) in their activity in Salonika and Constantinople. Considerable assistance was given to the Merdžanov-Mandžukov group as early as November 1899, which made it possible to start the digging of a tunnel under the Ottoman Bank in Constantinople. The Central Committee of MRO was also notified of this. When the Central Committee was arrested in early 1901, among the materials captured was the encoded report by Aleksandar Kiprov informing the Central Committee of the state of affairs, which is believed to have disclosed the action.

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[108] Hristo Sarakinov, Bulgarian officer of Macedonian descent. Vrhovist.

[109] Dimitar Venedikov, Bulgarian officer of Macedonian descent. Born in the village of Banja, Razlog region. Technical assistant to Trajko Kitančev in 1895. Vrhovist.

[110] Aleksandar Protogerov (Ohrid, 1867–1928), Bulgarian officer (general) of Macedonian descent. Vrhovist. Participant in the 1902 Gorna Džumaja 'uprising'. Signatory to the May Manifesto of 1924. Liquidated by order of Vančo Mihajlov.

[111] Marko Sekulički, Macedonian public figure. Came from the village of Sekulica, Kratovo region. Associate of Goce Delčev.

[112] Svetislav (Slavi) Merdžanov (Karnobat, 1876 – Adrianople, 1905), revolutionary and anarchist in Adrianople. Associate of Goce Delčev. Sentenced and hanged by the Turkish authorities.

[113] Petar Mandžukov (village of Mirkovci, Skopje region, 1878–1966), Macedonian revolutionary and anarchist. Emigrated to Bulgaria.

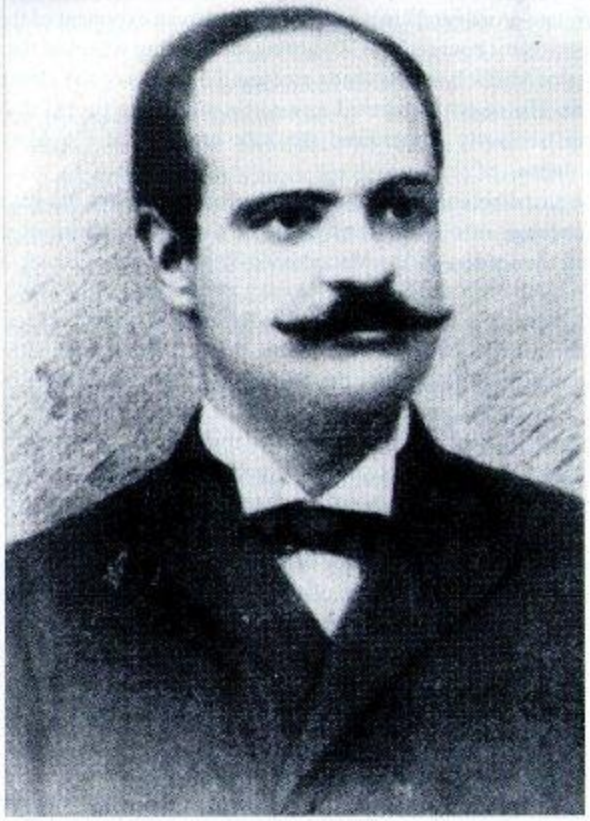
The Central Committee of MRO, in accordance with the VMK May Protocol of 1900, decided to accept only one officer proposed by Goce Delčev and Ǵorče Petrov, whose voice would have the power of advice only. MRO's external representatives chose "Captain Dimitar Venedikov, as one of the more moderate among them and also more conscientious". After a long deliberation, however, this captain refused to go there. Therefore, in December 1900, VMK sent Sofronij Stojanov,[114] under the false name of Hadžiasenov, as an agent (representative) of the 'Bulgaria' Society.

Following the Seventh Congress (summer 1900), Boris Sarafov's VMK spread the rumour that Goce Delčev "wants to become the chief commander of the uprising". The rumour about his ambition was aimed at discrediting publicly the always modest Delčev. Furthermore, in order to frighten and paralyse him, a physical attack on him was staged on the premises of Sarafov's VMK, carried out by Sarakinov. In this connection, "Delčev would say: 'Either they will tread on you, or you will tread on them'" (Ǵ. Petrov). This event "did not remain without significance for the subsequent position of Delčev towards the committee and towards the officers in general. He could no longer tolerate them" (Ǵ. Petrov). Goce Delčev stopped attending the sessions of Sarafov's VMK.

Under the May Protocol of 1900, in accordance with the concessions given, the external representatives promised to cease private communication with the Central Committee of MRO. Letters to the Central Committee were to be sent by the VMK secretary, Slavčo Kovačev, having been previously initialled by Ǵorče Petrov. But Ǵorče Petrov, certainly with the knowing of Goce Delčev and starting from the complexity of relations with VMK, continued to inform the members of MRO Central Committee independently on the real situation. One such letter addressed by Ǵorče Petrov to Pere Tošev, a member of the Central Committee of MRO, came into the hands of Sarafov's man Aleksandar Kiprov, who managed to reach the Archives of MRO Central Committee in Salonika. The captured letter was photographed and 20 copies were made; it was shown to Ǵorče Petrov in Sofia. In that letter Ǵorče Petrov thoroughly unmasked the duplicity of the officers, insisting that Pere Tošev and his comrades from the Central Committee be extremely careful.

This was the reason for the breach of relations between the external representatives and Sarafov's committee towards the end of 1900. Thus, from the beginning of 1901 to March 5 the same year, VMK sent no material

[114] Sofronij Stojanov (village of Cer, Demir Hisar region, 1871–1903), Bulgarian officer of Macedonian descent. Vrhovist.



Ivan Garvanov

support for MRO. Only after the coming of Ivan Garvanov to the head of MRO Central Committee did VMK send 10 thousand lev in gold, which says a lot about Garvanov's true orientation.

Sarafov's VMK started using terrorist methods. The strongest was the reaction to the murder of Kiril Fitovski (February 1900) and Stefan Mihaileanu, editor of the *Peninsula Balkanica* journal (July 1900) in Romania. These murders caused an international scandal and led to a serious straining of relations between Romania and Bulgaria. These acts of murder were in fact the primary reason for the fall of Sarafov's VMK.

12. The beginning of 1901 was marked by the famous 'Salonika Affair'. It brought Ivan Garvanov to light, who "was not only an agent of Bulgarian state propaganda institutions... but also an exponent of the Macedonian reactionary bourgeoisie". Usurping the steering wheel of the Central Committee of MRO, Ivan Garvanov swayed the course of the Organization to the right. His activity, directed towards instigating a forced uprising in Macedonia, seriously jeopardized the safe progress of the Macedonian liberation cause.

Who stood behind the Salonika Affair of 1901? Was it a result of an ordinary accident or of the offensive by the Ottoman authorities aimed at eliminating the leaders of the Macedonian Revolutionary Organization, as testified to by the trials in Skopje, Salonika and Bitola (all in 1901), or was perhaps B. Sarafov's VMK implicated in the matter, having no scruples in the attainment of its objectives? It seems that it was a combination of all these. Yet one thing is certain: the Salonika Affair was caused by Milan Mihailov, employed as a caretaker by MRO Central Committee, a former caretaker in B. Sarafov's VMK, a morally labile person. Anton Strašimirov has this to say about him: "A man sent from Sofia was captured in Salonika, who betrayed all the functionaries, the entire C[entral] C[ommittee], to the Turks."

The role of Sofronij Stojanov was highly problematic; he returned to Sofia immediately after the start of the Salonika Affair, symptomatically declaring that he had "resolved the question". It is difficult to say whether he was referring to the five blank, pre-stamped forms, which somewhat later VMK received thanks to Ivan Hadži Nikolov (according to Ǵorče Petrov), or was speaking about the arrangement of a premeditated betrayal (according to Anton Strašimirov).

Bulgarian ruling circles were well-informed of the course of events. Thus, for example, Atanas Šopov, trade agent in Salonika, notified Stojan Danev on February 23, 1901, that "the C[entral] C[ommittee] here has decided to authorize the Supreme Committee in Sofia to start an uprising in Macedonia if it itself finds it useful".

The Mihaileanu Affair complicated the position of Boris Sarafov. As a result, as early as December 1900, he decided to abandon the presidential post in VMK in favour of General Ivan Couchev, and to go to Macedonia with a group of like-minded persons. In fact, Sofronij Stojanov was his advance guard with the task of probing the ground for Boris Sarafov's incorporation into the Central Committee of MRO and, if possible, of preparing the ground for the achievement of Sarafov's secret desire to stand at the head of MRO. However, when, following the Salonika Affair, VMK received the five blank forms from MRO Central Committee, Sarafov's people decided not to

proceed with this step, because "they were afraid of the internal activists and Delčev" (Ǵ. Petrov).

Slavčo Kovačev was meanwhile given the task of liquidating Ǵorče Petrov. At that time General Ivan Couchev abandoned his military post in Vidin and, together with Anastas Jankov and Stefan Nikolov, he came to Sofia. Under pressure from Simeon Radev,[115] Boris Sarafov now started to incline towards retaining the presidency of VMK. It was Goce Delčev himself who dispersed Sarafov's hopes for departure to Macedonia with the following words: "We will not allow officers into the Organization and the Committee. If Couchev and you [referring to Boris Sarafov, author's note] try to penetrate, you will meet the bayonets of the Organization" (Boris Sarafov). According to Dimo Hadži Dimov, Goce Delčev said: "As long as my shoulder can carry a rifle, Macedonia will be inaccessible to a Bulgarian officer!"

Goce Delčev decisively rejected the tempting idea of forming a mobile Central Committee of MRO composed of himself, Efrem Čučkov and Boris Sarafov. Furthermore, in his encoded letter of March 4, 1901, Delčev informs the Gorna Džumaja Revolutionary Committee: "Here we have cut any contacts with the Supreme" Committee. Then he continues: "The Central [Committee] is almost entirely enchained. Utter chaos there. For the time being each district committee should act on its own responsibility, not deviating from the basic programme."

At those difficult moments for MRO, the only high forum which could temporarily play the role of a Central Committee was the External Office. It was a strong cohesive factor closing the ranks of the Organization. For this purpose, the well-known circular letter by the external representatives, Marko (Ǵorče Petrov) and Ahil (Goce Delčev), sent towards the middle of March 1901 to the leaders of the district, subdistrict and village committees as well as to all detachment heads, was of exceptional significance. It consists of 12 pages: Ǵorče Petrov wrote the first six, and the rest were Goce Delčev's contribution.

The circular unmasks the two blows: the one dealt by the Ottomans (through the affairs) and that of the Vrhovists (through their attempts at infiltration and internal taking over of MRO). The letter underlines: "In our view, the greatest crime an activist of ours can make before the people and history is to start a premature and unprepared uprising. It will be nothing else but suicide. Many revolutions have stopped halfway and proved abortive for this reason. Why should not we allow the possibility of a similar

[115] Simeon Radev (Resen, 1879 – Sofia, 1967), prominent journalist and writer of Macedonian descent. Bulgarian diplomat (1913–1940). Close to Boris Sarafov.

misfortune in our case?" Delčev's optimism was outstanding; he continues: "Our people are awakened, the general spirit is very high... Thousands of its [MRO's, author's note] activists, modest but conscientious and true fighters, [are] ready at any moment to sacrifice themselves morally and physically." Hence Vrhovist indignities were to be rejected and Vrhovist aggressiveness neutralized. "Our Organization should become more composed and more compact. Special attention should be paid to the discipline of the workers."

The chief measure to counterbalance these blows was the "temporary decentralization", by which the prerogatives of MRO Central Committee were transferred to the district committees.

Other measures were also envisaged: disarmament of all (Vrhovist) detachments which did not posses a 'note' with the signature 'Marko-Ahil', refusal to welcome any Vrhovist emissaries, strengthening of MRO's borderline points, etc.

Of course, all these measures were of a temporary character and were to be implemented only until the General Conference of MRO was held. Goce Delčev and Ǵorče Petrov took "moral responsibility" to respect this.

It seems that towards the end of March 1901 there was a brief meeting in the Batemberg (Battenberg) Hotel (Room No. 9) in Sofia, with a view to surmounting the problems which had arisen following the Salonika events. Goce Delčev, Ǵorče Petrov, Mihail Gerdžikov, Rizo Rizov, the lawyer Strezov and Dr Vladimir Rumenov[116] were among those present. The proposal by Dr Rumenov to use the funds of the Bulgarian government was interrupted by Goce Delčev, who said: "No, we shouldn't do that, never!... The Bulgarian government, which has purely aggressive goals, once it starts giving money, will know how to use the situation created inside with that 'help': it will not satisfy itself with Platonic feelings only, but will demand real concessions. I repeat, the blow will be terrible!" The conflict between the two opposed concepts was so strong that "the meeting ended in a heated atmosphere with no desire to reach an understanding — talking about any solutions was out of the question" (Rizo Rizov).

13. In March 1901 there was an open rupture between Boris Sarafov and Ivan Končev due to Sarafov's insistence, despite the agreement, on staying at the head of VMK.

Up to that moment, Goce Delčev and Ǵorče Petrov, burnt in their recent 'coalition' with the officers, stood as seemingly neutral observers, but in fact

[116] Vladimir Rumenov (real name: Naum Muševski, Kruševo, 1870–1939), physician. Activist among Macedonian émigrés in Bulgaria.

wanted to use the aforesaid conflict rationally in order to put forward a list of their own at the already scheduled Extraordinary Eighth Congress of the Macedonian Societies. "I was wrong... when I supported the officers", wrote Ǵorče Petrov. The mistake had to be corrected by Goce Delčev, as Ǵorče Petrov was in hiding as a result of the Mihaileanu Affair.

The dilemma as to which of the two officers' currents should be given priority was resolved by Petko Karavelov's government. Under international public pressure and with the obvious consent of Prince Ferdinand of Coburg, on March 23, 1901, the Government detained the protagonists of Sarafov's VMK on the eve of the Eighth Congress.

The Extraordinary Eighth Congress of the Macedonian Societies in the Principality of Bulgaria was held in the first third of the month of April, 1901. There were 123 delegates from 268 societies in the Principality of Bulgaria. Twelve societies from abroad (mostly Romania) also attended. Goce Delčev represented the Macedonian Revolutionary Organization. Nikola Gabrovski,[117] a supporter of Delčev's, managed to push through a resolution reflecting the views of MRO on mutual cooperation between the two organizations, guaranteeing the independence of MRO. Dimitar Rizov even proposed Goce Delčev as the new president of VMOK. In his speech at the Eighth Congress, among other things, Goce Delčev underlined: "The Internal Organization does not only aim to give arms to the people, but also to crush their slave spirit. Before establishing contact with the Committee of 1899, the officers helped us. Now there is no such contact as Mr B. Sarafov wanted to send his own people here to be leaders of the Internal Organization... Only if the Organization here approves of the spirit of the Internal Organization..., i.e. if does not interfere in its matters, only in that case can there be contacts between the two organizations."

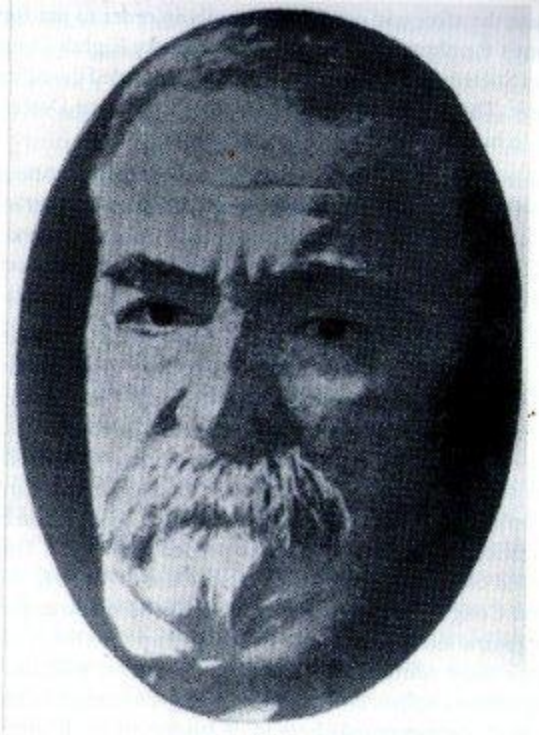
The election of the new members of VMK was a result of compromise. It included two supporters each of Končev, Sarafov and MRO. Stojan Mihajlovski[118] (Končev's adherent) was chosen president, Vladimir Dimitrov (socialist, MRO supporter) vice president, and Ivan Kepov[119] (MRO supporter) secretary. Prince Ferdinand of Coburg, for understandable reasons, was personally interested in the election of Stojan Mihajlovski. Nikola Harlakov[120] was appointed editor of the *Reformi* journal.

[117] Nikola Gabrovski (Kruševo, 1871–?), Bulgarian officer (colonel) of Macedonian descent. Close to Goce Delčev.

[118] Stojan Mihajlovski (1856–1927), Bulgarian writer. President of VMK.

[119] Ivan Kepov (village of Bobošević, Kjustendil region, 1870–1938), historian and journalist. Friend of Goce Delčev.

[120] Nikola Harlakov (Gabrovo, 1874–1927), socialist. Close to Jane Sandanski.



Stojan Mihajlovski

Immediately after the end of the Eighth Congress, Ǵorče Petrov himself reported to the Seventh Police Station, after which he was detained and later interned in Trnovo. It was a deliberate isolation. His absence of several months from Sofia resulted in Delčev's taking the chief burden in the direction of the Organization.

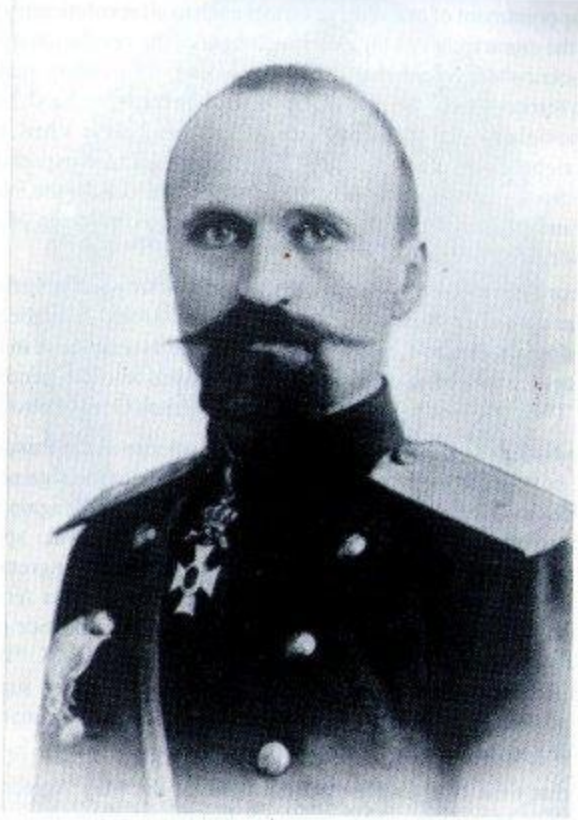
What is known as the May Agreement was reached on May 16, 1901, between VMK as the first party, Goce Delčev, Vladimir Rumenov and Mihail Gerdžikov as the second party, and General Ivan Končev and Colonel Stefan Nikolov as the third party, which was registered in the so-called 'extraordinary protocol'. This agreement was also a result of compromise and mutual concessions. In principle, it acknowledged the independent and autonomous character of MRO. Yet it envisaged the following: the incorporation within the Organization's Central Committee of two or three officers, military specialists, enjoying the same rights as the other Central Committee members; the appointment of one reserve officer each to all revolutionary regions, enjoying the same rights as the other members of the revolutionary bodies; and the acknowledgement that the warehouses with military material on Bulgarian territory were the property of VMK. On the other hand, MRO was granted the right to send authorized delegates as members of VMK, enjoying the same rights as all other members. The Agreement also expressly stated that "all border points and channels on Bulgarian territory are the inalienable property and possession of the Revolutionary Organization in Macedonia and the Adrianople region".

According to Ǵorče Petrov, Goce Delčev "slipped a little". Even though the agreement was not observed, some 700-800 Mannlicher rifles from Sarafov's committee, which he soon afterwards renounced in favour of MRO in accordance with the May Agreement, fell into the hands of Ivan Končev. "They later shot us with those rifles", writes Ǵorče Petrov.

The Ninth Congress of the Macedonian Societies in the Principality of Bulgaria, held in the summer of 1901, proceeded under the sign of General Ivan Končev's full triumph. Nevertheless, Nikola Gabrovski again managed to push through a resolution in favour of MRO. "Gabrovski spoke with Delčev's mouth" (Boris Sarafov). Sarafov attended the Congress, but the absence of Goce Delčev was noticeable. Stojan Mihajlovski retained the presidential post in the new VMK, but Ivan Končev became vice president. Stefan Nikolov and, once again, Anton Bozukov joined VMK. "In fact the chief figure in the Committee was General Končev. He was supposed to prepare and direct the forthcoming uprising in Macedonia. Ferdinand needed that uprising at the moment" (Konstantin Pandev).

At that time Ivan Končev did not think of the May Agreement with Goce Delčev. Moreover, VMK came out in favour of the abolition of the External Representative Office of MRO, accusing the external representatives (Goce Delčev and Ǵorče Petrov) of aiming to "sow discord, to spend the funds of the organization here, and to develop into a third organization, which, not responsible for anything, would be the real master of the two organizations".

At that point, General Ivan Končev believed that he could easily take control of MRO through Ivan Garvanov, with whom he shared common objectives. In August 1901, after the conclusion of the Ninth Congress, Ivan Garvanov and Ivan Končev met in the Metropol Hotel in Sofia. On this occasion Garvanov said to Končev: "I shall give you the Organization on condition that we remain independent there, and you here." But the ambitious Ivan Garvanov, already recognized by Goce Delčev and Dame Gruev, soon turned his back on Končev's adherents.



General Ivan Končev

In the subsequent period, however, Ivan Garvanov proved to be much more dangerous and more damaging to the Macedonian liberation cause. According to Ǵorče Petrov, Končev's followers were disappointed in Garvanov because he had not fulfilled the promise of delivering MRO into their hands. Therefore, immediately after Ivan Garvanov's murder in 1907, "Končev's people said maliciously of Garvanov: 'It serves him right, traitor!'".

Following the Ninth Congress, the Vrhovists strained relations with MRO. The new Ḱustendil subdistrict head, Sofronij Stojanov, took steps for the disarmament and detention of members of MRO. In September 1901, the Dupnica head, Todor Saev,[121] ordered the public whipping of Efrem Čučkov

in front of MRO's couriers. Hence the appointment of well-known Vrhovists as chief administrators of the places where the Organization's most important external points were located was not at all accidental. Relations were further strained by the Miss Stone Affair. The offensive of Mihajlovski-Končev's VMK was facilitated by the absence of Goce Delčev, who was deep inside Macedonia at the time. Finally, in December 1901, MRO's external representatives, Tuše Deliivanov and Dimitar Stefanov, announced that MRO "forever breaks contacts with VMOK in its present composition".

In March 1902, the current representatives of MRO (Deliivanov and Stefanov) stated, in a secret letter issued on behalf of MRO Central Committee, that MRO had started fighting against Vrhovist detachments.

14. Goce Delčev paid special attention to the choice and development of leaders and military personnel of the Macedonian Revolutionary Organization. He had numerous contacts and meetings, and attended several conferences and congresses. His chief meeting-place was the Batemberg Hotel in Sofia.

Goce Delčev often travelled around Macedonia, particularly in its eastern regions, and was the frequent guest of the external points of MRO. Delčev's correspondence with Ivan Beleškov, head of the L'džene point, near Velingrad, dates from May 1902. L'džene was "the chief point of the Organization lying on the channel to Ser", which made it one of the key MRO external points (in addition to Ḱustendil and Dupnica).

In early 1900, when the Novo Selo Affair broke out, immediately after the heroic battle of the Macedonian revolutionary Sando Nevenin from Novo Selo (Štip), Goce Delčev was in the Radoviš region, after which he moved to the Strumica and Petrič regions. The Affair had its court finale at the famous Skopje Trial of 1901. Goce Delčev was there sentenced to death in his absence in accordance with articles 13, 31, 43, 55, 56, 57 and 63 of the Ottoman Criminal Law. On the basis of this sentence, a 'wanted' circular was sent out for the 'winged devil' *(kanatli şeytan)* with a high prize money on Delčev's head (500 or 1,000 liras, Peju K. Javorov). The Turks had great respect for Goce Delčev as a person. Even the notorious Dervish-Effendi, the chief investigator in the Vinica Affair, admired Goce Delčev: "Tell that remarkable hero that I want to see him and bow before him: all of us, from the emperor to the last soldier, have already become tired, only he does not get tired."

[121] Todor Saev (village of Belica, Razlog region, 1872–1903), prominent Vrhovist. Participant in the 1902 Gorna Džumaja 'uprising'.

We know that in the spring of 1900 (March and April), Goce Delčev carried out what is known as the 'fiery journey' through the Adrianople region.

Roughly from October 1900 to March 1901, Goce Delčev visited the Razlog, Gorna Džumaja, Maleševo, Radoviš, Strumica, Petrič and Melnik regions.

Goce Delčev's mission in south-western Macedonia was the most important stage of his well-known 'great campaign' (end of August 1901 — March 1902), unique in terms of its long duration (half a year) and success.

Delčev's mission in the Second (Bitola) District of MRO in 1901/1902 was a result, above all, of the changes which took place in the Organization's Central Committee following the Salonika Affair of 1901.

The growing danger of crushing the unity of the Organization due to the possible infiltration of Vrhovist elements into the revolutionary districts of MRO, as well as the frequent acts of betrayal, urged Delčev to inspect some areas in Macedonia. His arrival in the Bitola Revolutionary District was also a result of his intention to consult Dame Gruev concerning the events in Salonika.

Goce Delčev started his long trip from Kustendil towards the end of August 1901 and came through the Maleševo region to Radoviš. He inspected the Organization's network in Radoviš and the surroundings. Then he moved across the River Vardar and arrived in Negotino, where he inspected the local revolutionary committee. From Negotino he went to Kavadarci, where he heard that "Miss Stone was kidnapped and that the envisaged plan was completed". Following the usual inspection, he arrived at the village of Vataša, where he paid special attention to the establishment of the village militia. In every place he visited he contacted many people, which was valuable for the strengthening of the ranks of the Organization and for the expansion of its network.

From the Tikveš region he moved to Prilep, where his inspection of the Bitola Revolutionary District began.

Goce Delčev's visit to the Second District of MRO, which lasted for several months in the autumn and winter of 1901/1902, began with the inspection of the Organization's network in the Prilep region. Together with Nikola Petrov Rusinski's detachment and with his faithful companion Ivan Manolev,[122] Goce Delčev visited the following Prilep villages: Trojaci, Pletvar, Orevoec, Leništa and Selce. Then he arrived in the town of Prilep where he inspected the activity of the Prilep Revolutionary Committee. It

[122] Ivan Manolev, Macedonian revolutionary from Kukuš. Close associate of Goce Delčev. Later, activist in the National Federal Party (NFP).

was here that the acute problem of the armament of the Prilep region was brought to his attention. In addition, Goce Delčev accepted the resignation of Nikola Petrov Rusinski from the post of Prilep Subdistrict Voivode.

In November 1901, Goce Delčev arrived in Bitola, the centre of the Bitola District of MRO, where he stayed for three weeks. Delčev's 20-day stay in Bitola was not reduced to a routine inspection of the activity of the Bitola District Committee and his two meetings with Dame Gruev in the Bitola prison, but was full of numerous contacts with the district leadership and with a large number of activists in the town and the district.

Goce Delčev was fully aware of the possibility of a forced uprising in Macedonia. Therefore, offering arguments, he tried to convince the members of the Bitola District Revolutionary Committee that "the uprising is a means, not a goal".

Goce Delčev informed the Organization's leaders in Bitola about the current situation concerning the Miss Stone Affair. At the same time he raised the question of the armament of the Prilep region and worked out with the Bitola District Committee the sending of about 80 rifles there. In turn, the District Committee explained some of its problems to Delčev, highlighting the question of the further extension of the Detachment Institute in the Bitola District and drawing his attention to the lack of intelligent commanders with military training.

On that occasion, in Goce Delčev's presence, and certainly with Dame Gruev's knowledge and consent, the Bitola District Committee was reorganized. Its new members were Ǵorǵi Pop Hristov,[123] Ǵorǵi Sugarev,[124] Ace Dorev, Anastas Lozančev,[125] Ǵorǵi Peškov[126] and Nedelko Damjanov. Ǵorǵi Pop Hristov was at its head. Furthermore, a Bitola Subdistrict Committee of MRO was established, which included, among others, Aleksandar Evtimov,[127] Kiril Lozančev and Luka Ǵerov.[128] Of course, Delčev's instructions

[123] Ǵorǵi Pop Hristov (village of Krstofor, Bitola region, 1876 – Sofia, 1962), Macedonian revolutionary. President of the Bitola District Committee. Close associate of Dame Gruev.

[124] Ǵorǵi Sugarev (Bitola, 1879 – village of Paralovo, 1906), Macedonian revolutionary. Secretary of the Bitola District Committee. Betrayed, he was killed in the village of Paralovo in unequal battle with Turkish soldiers. The people have immortalized this event in a beautiful folk song.

[125] Anastas Lozančev (Bitola, 1870 – Sofia, 1945), Macedonian revolutionary. President of the Bitola District Committee. Member of the General Staff of the Second Revolutionary District of MRO during the Ilinden Uprising.

[126] Ǵorǵi Peškov (Prilep, ?–1913), Macedonian revolutionary. Merchant who lived in Bitola. Killed in the Second Balkan War in the vicinity of Ser.

[127] Aleksandar Evtimov (Bitola, 1874–?), Macedonian revolutionary.

[128] Luka Ǵerov (Bitola, 1869 – Sofia, 1948), Macedonian revolutionary. Emigrated to Bulgaria following the Balkan Wars.

Some of the Accused at the Bitola Trial in Front of the Entrance to the Circus Tent (March 1902)

and directions were precious for the future activity of these two managing bodies of the Organization.

Hence it is not surprising that "after Delčev's arrival, one could immediately feel a strengthening of the revolutionary spirit in the district. The mood for combat grew and armament greatly increased. The revolutionary activity became more agile, more aggressive" (Ǵ. Pop Hristov).

Delčev's inspection of the network in the Bitola District of MRO included his mission to the Kostur and Lerin regions. His principal purposes were to ameliorate the consequences of the Ivančo Affair and to create a stable basis for the opening of a channel for arms transport from the Kingdom of Greece.

Goce Delčev arrived in the Kostur region in December 1901. Starting his activity in the Kostur village of Konomladi, together with the Kostur leaders Pando Kljašev,[129] Lazar Moskov,[130] Vasil Čakalarov[131] and Kuzo

[129] Pando Kljašev (village of Smrdeš, Kostur region, 1882–1907), Macedonian revolutionary. Killed in battle against Turkish soldiers near the village of Drenoveni, Kostur region.

[130] Lazar Moskov (village of D'mbeni, Kostur region, ? – village of Višeni, Kostur region, 1902), Macedonian revolutionary. Surrounded by Turkish soldiers, after a ten-hour battle, he took his own life.

[131] Vasil Čakalarov (village of Smrdeš, Kostur region, 1874 – Bel Kamen, Lerin region, 1913), Macedonian revolutionary. Killed in the Second Balkan War.

Stefov,[132] as well as with Marko Lerinski and Ǵorǵi Peškov, he tried to resolve the accumulated problems. Delčev's activities took a variety of directions. The newly-established revolutionary tribunal, whose blade was aimed at eliminating moral decadence and trivial village quarrels, showed the strength and capability of MRO to resolve problems of this nature as well. Hence no one was surprised when the newly-formed managing body, in addition to the previous competencies, for the first time was also granted judicial prerogatives. Ignoring the Ottoman judicial institutions and granting the revolutionary committees elements of authority, MRO demonstrated that it deserved the epithet of a 'state within a state'. The mass admission of members into the Organization was also part of Goce Delčev's activity in the village of Konomladi. Here we must not overlook Delčev's successful agitation.

Everywhere in the Kostur region, Delčev acted as he did in Konomladi. In the village of Smrdeš he even established a women's committee society. The new style of work became apparent everywhere. Inspired by Goce Delčev, the leaders fully embraced his methods of work and started implementing his ideas with great enthusiasm.

The conference in the village of Zagoričani, Kostur region, was the crown of Delčev's mission. It took place from January 14 to 17, 1902, with a one-day break due to the betrayal of the Grecomaniac Ilija Pop Anastasov in the village of Kumaničevo. This conference was of a local character, even though it dealt with the general situation in the Bitola District. At the Zagoričani conference, those present, in addition to Goce Delčev and Ǵorǵi Pop Hristov, president of the Bitola District Committee, were the Kostur leaders Lazar Pop Trajkov,[133] Mihail Nikolov,[134] Lazar Moskov, Pando Kljašev, Kuzo Stefov and Vasil Čakalarov, the Lerin leaders Andreja Kožuvarov and Marko Lerinski, Slavko Arsov,[135] and representatives of the Kostur village managing bodies. The Ekšisu leader Mihail Čekov[136] was also present.

[132] Kuzo Stefov (village of Zagoričani, Kostur region, 1875 – village of Šesteovo, Kostur region, 1902), Macedonian revolutionary. Surrounded by Turkish soldiers, after unequal battle, he and his fiancée, Vasilka Ivanova, took their own lives.

[133] Lazar Pop Trajkov (village of D'mbeni, Kostur region, 1876–1904), Macedonian revolutionary and poet. Murdered in February 1904. The man who committed this atrocious act, Kote Hristov, was rewarded by the Patriarchate's metropolitan in Kostur, Germanos Karavangelis.

[134] Mihail Nikolov (village of Bobišta, Kostur region, 1874–1934), Macedonian revolutionary. Following the Uprising (1903) he emigrated to Bulgaria.

[135] Slavko Arsov (Štip, 1878–1904), Macedonian revolutionary. Killed in battle against Turkish soldiers near the site of Lingura, in the Kratovo region.

[136] Mihail Čekov, Macedonian revolutionary from the village of Ekšisu, in the Lerin region. Participant in the Ilinden Uprising.

The topics covered at the conference in Zagoričani were closely connected with the aims of Goce Delčev's mission. From the rather scarce information, we know that the conference examined, among other things, the situation in the Bitola Revolutionary District. Furthermore, this conference sanctioned the new principles which Delčev had previously announced in the village of Konomladi. The most significant of these was the extension of competencies of the managing bodies, attributing them judicial prerogatives. Supply of arms, and particularly the question of organizing a channel for arms transport from the Kingdom of Greece, were at the centre of attention. The view prevailed that it was urgently necessary to organize a channel for arms transport and that the special mission of Vasil Čakalarov in Greece had to be extended. Before the adoption of the final decision on this question, the newly-arrived Hristo Siljanov[137] reported on his recent stay in the Kingdom of Greece. Finally, for a better implementation of the programme for further reconstruction and reorganization of the Organization's network in the Kostur region, the Zagoričani conference passed a decision on the restructuring of the leading forces of the Organization in that region.

On January 17, 1902, having spent six weeks there, Goce Delčev left the Kostur region and, accompanied by Marko Lerinski's detachment, moved to the village of Zeleniče, in the Lerin region.

Unlike his stay in Kostur, Delčev's visit to the Lerin region was brief. As a result, he had an opportunity to use his talent for the organization of the people only in the village of Ekšisu.

The brevity of Goce Delčev's stay in the Lerin region was primarily due to the fact that there he had found "an area exemplary in any respect: enthusiastic workers, tidy organizations, a disciplined and agitational-organizational detachment in the real sense of the word". Besides, we must not forget that the Lerin detachment had accompanied Delčev for two whole months, having the opportunity of absorbing the ideas directly from the source. Also we must bear in mind the participation of several Lerin leaders in the Zagoričani conference, where the principal directions of the future revolutionary activity were adopted. It seems that the betrayals in Zeleniče and Ekšisu had the least influence on Goce Delčev's decision to depart early from the Lerin region. And finally, me must underline that Delčev's brief stay in the Lerin region was also a result of the news that the ransom money for Miss Ellen Stone had been received.

[137] Hristo Siljanov (Constantinople, 1880 – Sofia, 1939), Macedonian revolutionary, writer and journalist. Author of a two-volume publication on the Macedonian revolutionary national liberation movement.

Goce Delčev's two-month mission in the Kostur and Lerin regions was a highly fruitful one. The role of Delčev as the chief organizer and worker among the people of the liberation movement was of tremendous importance. The reinvigorated Organization in the Kostur region best demonstrated the results of Goce Delčev's mission.

The mission, lasting several months in various parts of the Bitola Revolutionary District, was a real turning point, particularly in terms of the swifter expansion of the liberation movement in the Second District of MRO. The verve which spread throughout the Organization in the Bitola District was the best illustration of the fruits of Goce Delčev's invigorating mission.

"On his return, Delčev travelled along the channels of the organization towards the Strumica, Kočani and Gorna Džumaja regions and to Ḱustendil. There he met the chief actors in the Miss Stone Affair: Jane Sandanski and Krsto Asenov.[138] Later he went to Sofia together with them, where they formed a commission and received the ransom money for Miss Stone."

This completed Goce Delčev's long and fruitful 'great campaign' around his native Macedonia.

15. Immediately after the conclusion of the Ninth Congress of the Macedonian Societies in August 1901, Boris Sarafov, aware of the depth of his fall, once again tried to be friends with Goce Delčev and Ǵorče Petrov. He even offered to settle accounts with Ivan Končev by terrorist means. But Goce Delčev refused. He supported the view of a legal debate with Končev through the journals and Macedonian societies in the Principality of Bulgaria. Disappointed with the outcome, Boris Sarafov went on a tour around Europe.

On February 25, 1902, Boris Sarafov sent a letter to the current external representatives of MRO in Sofia (Deliivanov and Stefanov) asking them to arrange a meeting between himself and Goce Delčev in Geneva, Switzerland. In the letter he underlined that he had formerly "fully" agreed with Ǵorče Petrov and Goce Delčev, but that "now some new factor, Garvanov, is seated in Salonika, whose orders you fulfil and to whom we shall also have to light candles through you". Obviously acquainted with Delčev's inspection of the revolutionary forces in Macedonia, Boris Sarafov warned that as soon as Delčev returned to Bulgaria he had to move clandestinely because "otherwise he'll be caught and interned like Ǵorče".

As for the proposed meeting with Goce Delčev in Geneva, Boris Sarafov suggested ten points for discussion: the supply of arms, organization

[138] Krsto Asenov–Mečkata (Sliven, 1877–1903), prominent revolutionary who participated in the Macedonian national liberation movement. Close associate of Jane Sandanski.

of Serbian and Albanian channels, an alliance with the Albanian movement (an Albanian meeting was allegedly convened in Brindisi, Italy), joint action with the Armenians in Istanbul, the overthrow of Ivan Končev's committee and the establishment of a new committee in the Principality of Bulgaria, the foundation of a Secret Committee in Serbia, the "establishment of an aware and viable Central Committee" in Macedonia, etc. All these proposals by Boris Sarafov were aimed at attracting Delčev's attention. Sarafov had obviously scented the Miss Stone money and this was the best way to get closer to it. Goce Delčev received this letter, but it is not known whether he deigned to reply.

It is known that Goce Delčev attended the Plovdiv meeting of the Adrianople revolutionaries in April 1902.

In June 1902, on behalf of the Central Committee of MRO, a special circular was printed and sent into the most endangered Macedonian borderline areas (Maleševo, Gorna Džumaja and Petrič), insisting on a total boycott of the Vrhovists and aiming to neutralize the Vrhovist agitation for an early uprising. The circular was written by Ǵorče Petrov and signed by both Petrov and Delčev.

The Tenth Congress of the Macedonian Societies in the Principality of Bulgaria was held in the summer of 1902. It was the last real opportunity to overthrow Ivan Končev before he fulfilled his infernal idea of repeating the "1895 comedy". Hence Goce Delčev made efforts to ensure that delegates close to MRO, such as Nikola Naumov or Tomo Karajovov, be elected. In order to secure a majority, Končev's adherents refused to let most of the delegates who opposed them enter the congress hall used by the *Slavjanska Beseda* Society. So when Goce Delčev was asked to speak before the Congress on August 1, 1902, he refused to attend as long as the opposing delegates were not included in the work of the Congress. However, he sent a letter, which Nikola Naumov tried to read, but was not allowed to do so. Thus Goce Delčev was unable to convey his message.

The external representatives Tuše Deliivanov and Dimitar Stefanov were present at the Tenth Congress with the authorization of the Central Committee of MRO. Boris Sarafov, who had just returned from Europe, also attended the Congress. Immediately before taking part in its work, he expressed his readiness to establish authority "with a revolver and dagger", but Ǵorče Petrov rejected such collaboration.

In any event, the Tenth Congress proceeded under the sign of Ivan Končev. There was a major split between the delegates and, in addition to the re-elected Mihajlovski-Končev's VMK, a second, dissident VMK emerged led by Hristo Stanišev, with Karajovov as vice president, and Peju

K. Javorov becoming one of its members. This second committee was close to Goce Delčev's ideas, but everything ended in polemics in the periodicals.

Mihajlovski-Končev's VMK, who enjoyed the support of the Bulgarian Court, set out on an open course of instigating an uprising in Macedonian borderline areas. In addition, it was planned that Colonel Anastas Jankov start an 'uprising' deep inside Macedonia, in its south-western part.

As a result, the Gorna Džumaja 'uprising' began in the autumn of 1902. In this connection, Ǵorče Petrov says: "As soon as their first detachment went there, they had to be smashed, but elements which saw it differently were in power: Garvanov was inside, and here there were people moderate and meek, that is Stanišev's followers and Karajovov. Stefanov and Deliivanov were just like them. Could these people engage in a fierce struggle against Končev's adherents? But when these last took their positions, it was already too late... So the uprising started, it could not be prevented."

16. A new, important moment, which led to the further weakening of the democratic forces in the organized Macedonian national liberation movement — led by Goce Delčev and Ǵorče Petrov — was the arrival, in November 1902, of Hristo Matov and Hristo Tatarčev as MRO's external representatives in Sofia, the Principality of Bulgaria.

The Garvanov-Lozančev axis inside Macedonia, and the Matov-Tatarčev tandem outside, inevitably pushed events towards an uprising in Macedonia. There is no doubt that the centralist structure of MRO attributed great significance to its principal forums, the Central Committee and the External Representative Office. But as these forums came into the hands of people alien to the normal, natural process of development of the movement, in the absence of more effective instruments for the restraint of their unlimited power, they were able to impose their will in accordance with their interests. Even an authoritative figure like Goce Delčev, with tremendous merits for the liberation movement, could not alter the course of events. It was no chance that Ǵorče Petrov, known for his logical thinking, wrote: "The personal element played an important part; it was perhaps the chief one to blame for the uprising."

In this case, the personal factor was certainly not the only element controlling events, but no one could deny its role as the detonator which led to the explosion of the uprising.

Immediately following their arrival in Sofia, Matov and Tatarčev took steps for reconciliation with the Vrhovists. They proposed the creation of a new VMK composed of three members from Mihajlovski-Končev's Committee (of whom Stojan Mihajlovski and Ivan Končev were to be two), three

Hristo Matov

members from MRO (Hristo Matov, Hristo Tatarčev and Pere Tošev), and from Stanišev's committee — Hristo Stanišev personally.

Končev's adherents meanwhile launched another proposal for a new committee which would incorporate, without convening an extraordinary congress, their entire VMK and four representatives of MRO (Goce Delčev, in addition to the aforementioned three), while Hristo Stanišev, as a result, was to be left out.

Goce Delčev could only feel indignation observing these flirtatious games with the Vrhovists, which after the Gorna Džumaja 'uprising' and Jankov's 'tour' of south-western Macedonia led only to the blunting of the revolutionary blade of the Macedonian national liberation movement.

17. It is a fact, however, that these negotiations fell into the shade when MRO Central Committee initiated the question of starting an uprising in Macedonia in the spring of 1903.

By a circular letter of January 6, 1903 (December 24, 1902, Christmas Eve, old style), the Salonika Congress of MRO was convened on January 15, 1903 (January 2, old style), to discuss and resolve the question of the start of an uprising in Macedonia in the spring of 1903. For this purpose, Ivan Garvanov held preliminary talks with, among others, the external representatives of MRO in the Principality of Bulgaria, Hristo Matov and Dr Hristo Tatarčev.

There is no doubt that Goce Delčev was filled with anxiety as a result of this provocative initiative by MRO Central Committee. He could have expected it of the Vrhovists, but not of his own Organization. Immediately after the slackening of the so-called 'Gorna Džumaja uprising', Goce Delčev said: "Anything evil has its good side... The Džumaja and Petrič regions will save the rest of Macedonia." And now Ivan Garvanov brought up the crucial question of the future of the cause, throwing, in fact, the apple of discord.

In accordance with the instructions of the Central Committee, MRO's external representatives, Matov and Dr Tatarčev, convened an extended conference of the more prominent Macedonian activists who happened to be in Sofia at the time.

The brief period of one week from the sending of the circular to the date set for the start of the Salonika Congress — from the Christmas holidays to the Orthodox New Year — was a deliberate move to prevent any major action to postpone the Congress of MRO. As a matter of fact, the conference itself had to be of a formal character in order to calm down the spirits. The democratic veil and the seemingly good intentions of MRO Central Committee to hear the views of all more important members of the Organization before putting forward the aforementioned initiative to the Congress was designed to throw sand into their eyes before proceeding with the real decision. Formal support was obviously expected from the Sofia conference, and in the event of a negative reaction, the plan was to ignore it and not to mention the real position of the conference. This is precisely what happened at the Salonika Congress in January 1903.

Among the twenty or so participants at the Sofia conference in January 1903 there were: Goce Delčev, Ǵorče Petrov, Pere Tošev, Hristo Matov, Hristo Tatarčev, Ivan Hadži Nikolov, Boris Sarafov, Toma Davidov, Mihail Gerdžikov, Slavčo Kovačev, Nikola Puškarov,[139] Kiril Prličev, Sava Mihajlov,[140] Nikola Naumov, Dimitar Stefanov and Hristo Siljanov.

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[139] Nikola Puškarov (Pirdop, 1874–1943), prominent revolutionary who participated in the Macedonian national liberation movement.

[140] Sava Mihajlov (village of Mačukovo, Gevgelija region, 1877–1905), Macedonian revolutionary. Surrounded by Turkish soldiers, in a hopeless situation, he took his own life, poisoning himself near the village of Smol, Gevgelija region, in March 1905.

At this Sofia conference of MRO in January 1903 there was a visible polarization of forces with regard to the essential question of the imminent uprising in Macedonia. On the one hand there were those who opposed a premature uprising, headed by Goce Delčev, and on the other the supporters of the uprising, whose protagonists were Matov and Tatarčev. Only Pere Tošev was neutral, saying that he did not know matters very well as he had only arrived there recently.

At the January 1903 Sofia conference, Goce Delčev and Ǵorče Petrov proposed a new, more dynamic concept of further struggle: "We recommend a change in the action and tactics of the detachments and terrorist elements in towns. From a passive, purely preparatory movement, to continue with a more extensive activity, which would make it closer to an uprising, in order to prepare and temper more workers for the real uprising" (Ǵ. Petrov). As a matter of fact, they were in favour of "a permanent uprising, without the formal declaration of an uprising. We could thus have harassed the state without Turkey being able to say that there was an open uprising" (Ǵ. Petrov). In fact, "such a struggle is no less important than a proclaimed uprising, because such a struggle can last a long time... thus the uprising will gather momentum in a natural manner, we will thus come to the major struggle, which will mark the end".

In this way, according to Ǵorče Petrov, "the uprising is a powerful means of the Organization, but only as long as it is an ideal towards which we aspire. I was convinced that if it became 'real', disappointment would ensue immediately after the uprising. And that is exactly what happened."

Goce Delčev authoritatively declared that the struggle should be fought with "the greatest economy of means and forces" for practical reasons. He fully shared Ǵorče Petrov's view. "To Ǵorče's strategy of TMORO's offensive organization and of a permanent uprising, Delčev added his system of ceaseless terrorist actions against the Ottoman administrative authorities and European capitalist property."

The aforementioned Sofia conference, even though the majority of those present inclined towards Matov and Tatarčev, when confronted with the strength of Delčev's and Petrov's arguments, turned to the side of the latter. But it was only the futile victory of a losing side, without any practical effects, as Ivan Garvanov did not mention a single word about the conference's anti-uprising message at the Salonika Congress in January. When, after the conclusion of the Salonika Congress, Ivan Garvanov, together with Velko Dumev, came to Sofia — where, waving with the Congress decision and with the hearty support of Matov and Tatarčev he won the hesitant onto his side — the defeat of the democratic forces was in sight. Indeed the struggle continued, but the uncertainty as regards its end result seemed to be

diminishing. The fresh internment of Ǵorče Petrov, this time in Kazanl'k, was yet another blow. At that time Goce Delčev was already inside his native Macedonia.

There is the perplexing question: why did Goce Delčev not use the opportunity of attending the January Salonika Congress even though he had received, in order, an invitation as a mobile member of the Central Committee?

There are several possible answers, but which seems to be the real one?

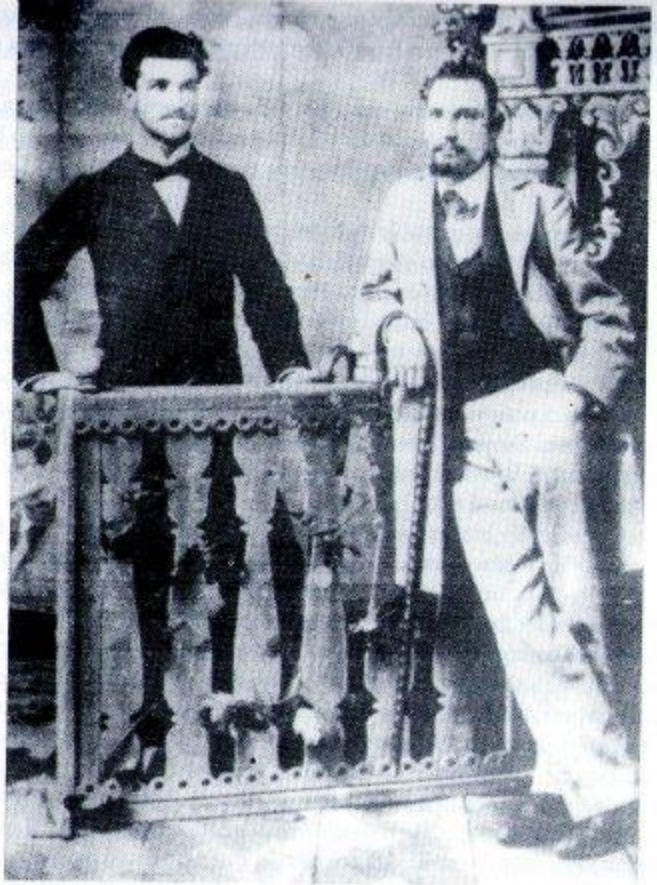
According to Ǵorče Petrov, "Delčev and I wanted to spread this programme inside and we did not believe that Garvanov's followers would be successful". Does this imply a previous agreement between Delčev and Petrov to boycott the January Salonika Congress, or, rather, Garvanov's policy? It is possible. It is known that the main proponents of the new, insurrectionist policy within MRO Central Committee were Ivan Garvanov (president) and Dimitar Mirčev (secretary), former leaders of the disbanded 'Revolutionary' Brotherhood. Could Goce Delčev find a common language with them? Of course not.

Goce Delčev himself was fully convinced that the battle had to be won on the inside, in Macedonia, by means of transforming the new concept of struggle into practice. And with whom could he have carried out this task better if not with the Ser revolutionaries who eagerly absorbed every idea of Delčev's? Therefore, sometime around January 1903, Goce Delčev went there and, with the exception of the brief Salonika episode, he stayed with them until his early death. It would have been more important, it seems, if he had been among the Bitola revolutionaries, where Anastas Lozančev, out of all control, following Ivan Garvanov's example, insolently pushed the events in the best prepared district towards the set objective. At that time the Ser District had strong supporters of Delčev's course such as Jane Sandanski, Dimitar Guštanov[141] and Taskata Serski.[142] But who could have predicted at the moment what would have been more useful in the given complicated and neurotic situation?

The news of the Salonika Congress decision reached Goce Delčev in the Nevrokop region. Even though he might have expected it, it nevertheless surprised him "like a winter thunder" (Peju K. Javorov). He immediately talked with Jane Sandanski, Dimitar Guštanov and Peju Kračolov Javorov, and they agreed to invest all their efforts to overturn the Salonika decision. "Goce hoped that several prominent workers, who were in Bulgaria at the

[141] Dimitar Guštanov (village of Krušovo, Ser Demir Hisar region, 1876–1903), Macedonian revolutionary. Killed near the village of Banica, in the Ser region, May 4, 1903.

[142] Taskata Serski (real name: Atanas Spasov, village of Vranja, Gorna Džumaja region, 1880–1923), Macedonian revolutionary. Associate of Jane Sandanski.



Dimo Hadži Dimov and Jane Sandanski

time, would cooperate in the same direction. Yet beforehand he wanted to highlight, by means of a terrorist action on the railway lines, the appropriateness of his plan of action, and only then to go to X [Salonika] for personal explanations with the C[entral] C[ommittee]." The February conference of the Ser Revolutionary District was certainly held for this purpose in the village of Karaĸo, at the triple border point between the Ser, Demir Hisar and Nevrokop regions, with some 80 participants, where Goce Delčev received full political support for the idea. Goce Delčev also spent some time in the Kape cave on Mount Ali-Botuš.

At those moments, Goce Delčev tried with all his force to show the advantages of the new style of struggle in comparison with the possible premature insurrectionist adventure, which he identified as a crime against the people. Hence his words: "I want freedom for the Macedonian population, and not for the Macedonian land." Of course, these warnings were aimed at the more aware people of the Organization, and not at Garvanov, Tatarčev or Matov, who had already turned the centralist machinery of the Organization in their desired direction. As for them, concerned only with the practical results in the field, they simply saw Delčev's new concept of the liberation struggle as a threat.

In this period, the hectographed *Sloboda ili Smrt* journal, edited by the poet Peju K. Javorov, best reflected Delčev's views of the new concept of military activities.

In the unrelenting race against time, Goce Delčev carried out a terrorist action on the railway bridge and tunnel near Angista. Then he received the good news that Dame Gruev, the coryphaeus of MRO, had returned from imprisonment in Podrum Kale to Salonika, after the amnesty envisaged in the February ('field watchman') Reforms. A new hope appeared on the horizon. Therefore, Goce Delčev hurried to Salonika to meet and exchange ideas with his "best loved friend Gruev".

Ġorče Petrov's assessment of the role of Dame Gruev contains several weak points. Yet, in view of Gruev's fatalistic statement "Better a horrible end than horror without end", his position acquired the force of legitimacy with a high degree of historical responsibility.

But where lies the truth?

Can we reach it in the absence of essential and original documentation? The answer certainly leads to assumptions which can only bring us more or less close to it.

Dame Gruev was obviously the last of all authoritative figures in MRO to take part in the debates concerning the question of the uprising, when the decision of the January Salonika Congress had already been passed, and the events leading towards an uprising had been gaining momentum. Amnestied by the February Reforms, Dame Gruev returned to Salonika in April 1903, on the eve of the Salonika Terrorist Actions. In Podrum Kale he was remote from events, and in Salonika he certainly had a limited view of current matters. Surrounded by Ivan Garvanov and his entourage, one-sidedly informed, far away from Goce Delčev and Ġorče Petrov, Gruev simply joined the mainstream which was pushing towards the uprising. Contributing to this were also the atmosphere created by the panic reactions in Kostur, the returning migrant workers, the impatience of the 'Boatmen' *(Gemidžii)* Terrorist Group, the Ottoman reprisals, the Gorna Džumaja provocation and

the impending new, even greater Vrhovist 'insurrectionist' adventure in the spring of 1903. On the other hand, the February Reforms, imposed by European diplomacy, chiefly that of Austria-Hungary and Russia, did not promise a rosy future under the gloomy Macedonian sky.

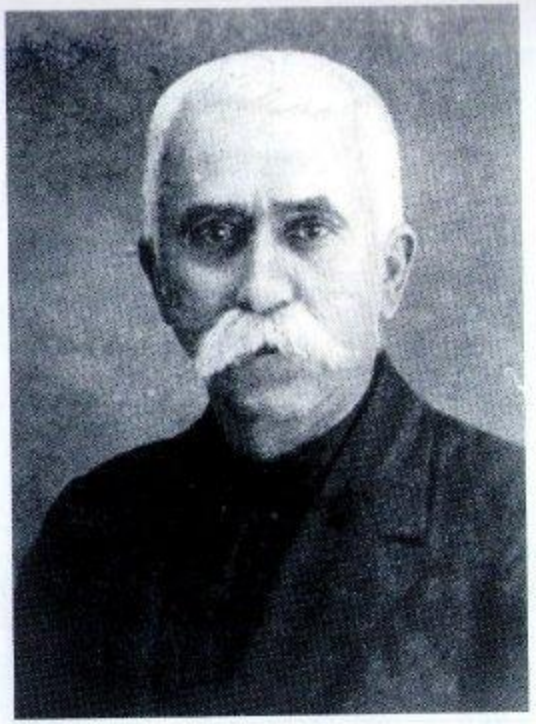
Understandably, Dame Gruev had to make a decision in such a political constellation. It seems that Ǵorǵi Pop Hristov's words in this respect contain much of the truth: "Dame Gruev himself considered the Salonika decision a hasty one, but once it had been taken and we had been faced with an accomplished fact, we had to accept it and see that it was implemented."

There is no doubt that Dame Gruev, as a founding father of MRO, was a highly respected figure in the Organization. But why did he allow himself to accept "an accomplished fact"? Why did he not associate with the agile Goce Delčev so that they could invalidate the dubious Salonika decision together? Did he perhaps consider that the avalanche had started falling and that stopping it would have been pointless? Or perhaps, as a devoted adherent to the centralist structure of MRO — of which he was the chief author — he did not want to undermine the Organization's discipline, to confront the Central Committee, or even worse, to oppose the Congress decision? Who knows?

On the other hand, Dame Gruev maintained excellent relations with the key figures supporting the idea of an early uprising. He obviously had no intention of dissuading them from their plan, even though he considered the Salonika Congress decision "a hasty one". Ǵorče Petrov writes: "Dame explained to me... that you cannot work with Matov and Tatarčev." It is a known fact that the relations between Dame Gruev and these two deteriorated while they were still in prison at Podrum Kale. But what kind of "good" relations could they have been with Ivan Garvanov, when Garvanov himself claimed that "only a little was necessary for Gruev to be liquidated" during the last, vegetating days of the 'Revolutionary' Brotherhood in 1899. And as far as Anastas Lozančev, the leader of the Bitola Revolutionary District, was concerned, he had regarded Dame Gruev as a bitter rival since his very first steps in the Organization.

The meeting between the two leading figures of MRO, Goce Delčev and Dame Gruev, held on the eve of the Salonika Terrorist Actions, was of special significance. Their last meeting, which took place in April 1903, was quite exhaustive. From its direct participants, only the meagre words of Dame Gruev remain: "Delčev came to Salonika. He objected. His main finding was that the Ser sanjak was left without arms. We consoled him, promising that the necessary arms would be supplied... Delčev calmed down."

It must be emphasized that Goce Delčev always saw Dame Gruev as the founder of MRO and had special esteem for him. Aware of Delčev's



Anastas Lozančev

exceptional qualities and his inexhaustible revolutionary energy, Gruev no less respected Delčev. There is no doubt that they acted with mutual respect at this, the last of their meetings, regardless of their views on the essential question. They even made an attempt at reaching a compromise. That is how Gruev agreed that the uprising's action should have a partisan-detachment character. In addition, they agreed on the postponement of the uprising until a later date. And finally, it was there that they decided, it seems, that Goce Delčev was to animate the congress of the Ser District, and Dame Gruev that of the Bitola District of MRO.

Goce Delčev also met the 'Boatmen' in Salonika, but failed to persuade them to postpone their actions. Indeed, Delčev had a particular weakness for them. It is known that at the time he gave them as much as 5 thousand lev from the Miss Stone Affair money. But now the 'Boatmen' refused to listen to him, and when Goce Delčev left Salonika, the famous Salonika Terrorist Actions were set in motion.

V. EPILOGUE

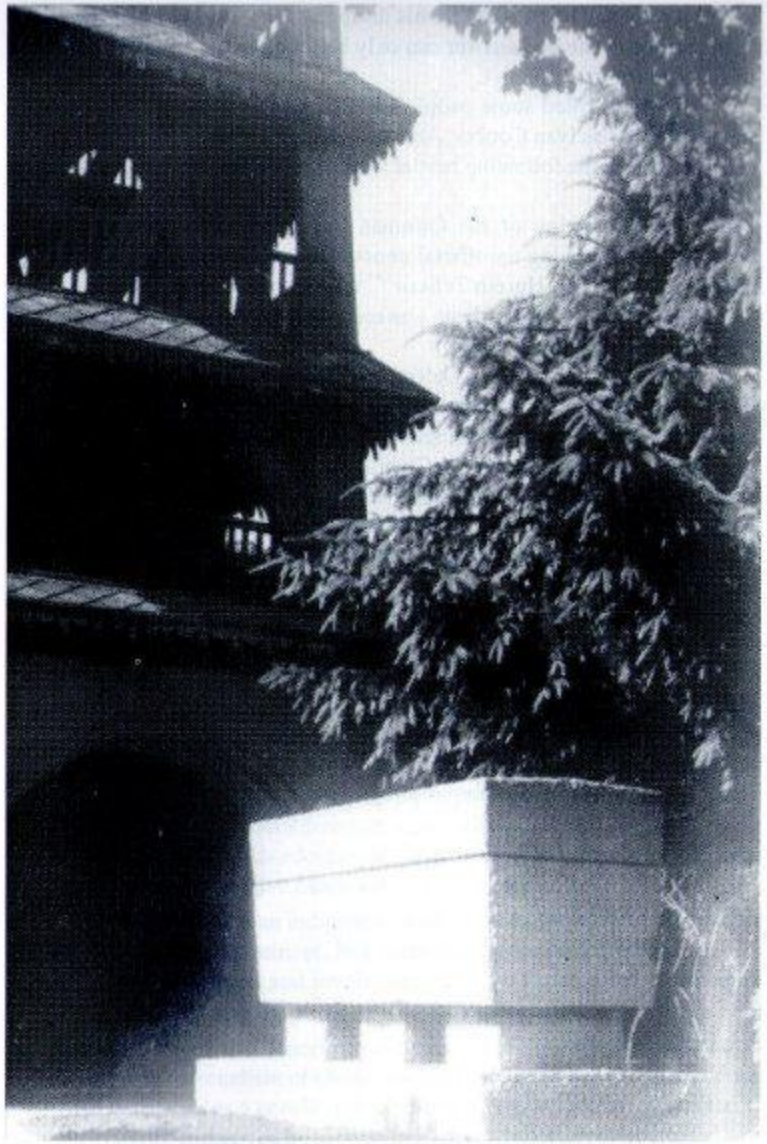
On his way to Lovča Forest on Mount Ali-Botuš, where he had convened the congress of the Ser District of MRO after St George's Day (*Ǵurǵovden*, May 6), Goce Delčev stopped at the village of Banica, in the Ser region. There he met the detachments of Dimitar Guštanov and Georgi Brodilijata.[143] Dimo Hadži Dimov also happened to be there.

On the evening of May 3, in the village of Banica, impressed by the Salonika Terrorist Actions, Goce Delčev said the following: "We made Moslem wives dance in their baggy trousers in Salonika. We shall likewise shake the entire rotten Turkish empire to its foundations." These certainly were not the words of a man who had gone "into the Ser region 'to give his head'" (Ǵ. Petrov).

There is no doubt that Goce Delčev departed from Salonika somewhat disappointed, not with Dame Gruev, but with the current situation. Yet, being highly realistic, Delčev looked forward to the future, to new victories. His last known words, mentioned above, were also full of optimism in the liberation struggle. But Goce Delčev's tragic death interrupted all his far-reaching plans connected with the Macedonian future.

Dimo Hadži Dimov, Delčev's close friend in arms, himself a participant in the battle near the village of Banica, Ser region, has left the following dramatic testimony: "For fifteen hours we watched dead Goce, who seemed to be leaning over the back of Macedonia. And for fifteen hours our hearts were torn apart...".

[143] Georgi Brodilijata (real name: Georgi Radev, village of Gorno Brodi, Ser region, 1857–1942), Macedonian revolutionary.



The Tomb of Goce Delčev, Churchyard of the Church of the Holy Salvation (Sveti Spas), Skopje

It seems that Goce Delčev's death was not accidental. All roads lead to betrayal. Many had wished for his disappearance. But who was the traitor or the traitors? The real answer can only be found in the archives which are still closed for us.

His death filled some people's hearts with joy, as was the case with such Vrhovists as Ivan Končev, Anastas Jankov, Sofronij Stojanov or Protogerov, to whom the following bestial words are ascribed: "We finally got rid of that hound."

The satisfaction of the Ottoman Turks was also great. Thus, the Sublime Porte, issuing an official announcement, put special emphasis on the event. Moreover, Husein Tefikov[144] was promoted to colonel.

Goce Delčev's tragic death was recorded in the diplomatic reports and the European press of the time.

The tragic fate of Goce Delčev filled Macedonia with profound grief. His early death was an irreplaceable loss for the Macedonian people. It was especially painful for the participants at the Smilevo Congress.

The death of 31-year-old Goce Delčev removed from the historical scene the most dynamic personality of the Macedonian national liberation movement of the pre-Ilinden period whose heritage in the more recent history of the Macedonian people is of paramount significance.

[144] Husein Tefikov, Turkish officer. When he was at the military academy, Goce Delčev was friendly with the cadet Husein Tefikov, known by his nickname 'Pomak', as he came from the Rhodopes. Delčev's death near the village of Banica therefore appeared as a bitter irony of fate.

Goce Delčev built his revolutionary credo on the progressive ideas of his time and on his own study and exploration of the enduring aspirations of the Macedonian people for freedom and a better life. His concepts were also imbued with profound humanism.

Goce Delčev proved to be a highly dynamic figure on the Macedonian revolutionary scene. With his work and a hitherto unseen verve, Delčev inspired the activity of the organized Macedonian national liberation movement, expanded the base of that movement and introduced a democratic freshness in its environment. In a relatively brief period, almost overnight, Goce Delčev emerged in the front lines, growing into an ideologist and strategist of the Macedonian national liberation struggle. Hence Delčev's ideals of national and social freedom were swiftly embraced by his ideological associates in the Macedonian national liberation movement and future generations of progressive Macedonian revolutionaries.

Goce Delčev was an indigenous leader of the independent Macedonian national liberation movement. Not surprisingly, the distinguished Macedonian journalist, theorist and revolutionary, Dimo Hadži Dimov, designates Delčev as the first apostle of the Macedonian revolution.

Goce Delčev is a Macedonian national revolutionary of Balkan proportions. Any nationalism or chauvinism was alien to him. He said: "I do not hate the Ottomans as a people; I am fighting against Ottoman tyranny as the ruling system." Moreover, he aspired to a Balkan federal republic as the acme of the brotherhood between the Balkan peoples. Delčev identified the chief impediment to the achievement of that idea in the Balkan monarchies, for

which Macedonia was the apple of discord. And this was not all. What sets Delčev high above his contemporaries is his international cosmopolitan outlook: "I understand the world solely as a field for cultural competition among peoples." Undoubtedly this lucid thought admits Goce Delčev to the ranks of progressive humanists of the world. Its profound message has lost nothing of its pertinence up to the present day.

Goce Delčev is unquestionably one of the pillars of the independence of the Macedonian liberation cause. He always stood uncompromisingly on the bastions of the independence and individuality of the Macedonian national liberation movement. Therefore, according to Hristo Andonov Poljanski, Goce Delčev was the tribune of Macedonian independence and individuality. Delčev's ideal was "a free and independent Macedonia with broad rights for the poverty-stricken population". He was the author of the maxim: "The liberation of Macedonia with an internal uprising. Whoever thinks of liberating Macedonia in any other way is mistaken, lying both to himself and the others."

In order to reach the desired goal, according to Delčev, "everyone should build up his energy, strain the slumberous bonds of the slave, animate his feelings for sacrifice". Hence Delčev considers that "the moral revolution — the revolution in the mind, heart and soul of an enslaved people — is the greatest task of all".

Goce Delčev clearly saw the huge danger overshadowing Macedonia in the face of the Balkan monarchist states, as a result of their open ambition, so plainly pursued by their propaganda agencies. In particular, Delčev bitterly opposed with all his might the most aggressive among them, the Bulgarian propaganda, and its chief instrument, Vrhovism.

Goce Delčev was against any interference of external factors in the liberation cause of the Macedonian people. Hence he rejected any outside help connected with ambitions to manipulate the Macedonian national liberation cause. He stressed: "The Organization of the Macedonian people is necessary in order to overthrow its slavery, and not for the sake of bargaining." Therefore Delčev believed that the revolutionary struggle had to be fought exclusively with one's own forces. He appealed: "Let us preserve the purity of our liberation movement and of the Organization — this is the foremost condition of our success!" He further underlined: "If we fail to do that, Macedonia will fall under some other of the Balkan states or will be partitioned among them." What farsightedness, what clear vision! Only a decade after his tragic death, Macedonia was dismembered and divided among the Balkan allies.

In contrast to his strong negative attitude towards any quasi-help from the outside, Goce Delčev strove for the expansion of the base of the

Macedonian national liberation movement by seeking internal allies for the Macedonian liberation cause. It is an established fact that MRO was open to all discontented elements, regardless of ethnic or religious affiliation. Furthermore, Goce Delčev was among the first to support the participation of women in the revolutionary struggle, endowing the liberation movement with a broad and comprehensive human dimension. Goce Delčev also played a positive role in the incorporation of the socialist group of Nikola Petrov Rusinski and Vele Markov[145] within MRO. He also contributed significantly, among other things, to the affirmation of Nikola Karev[146] as the leading figure in the foundation of the Kruševo Republic.

Goce Delčev also showed himself to be a great realist. He was one of the protagonists of the idea of the active participation of the village in the Macedonian liberation movement. In this way he not only expanded the base of the movement, making it widespread and democratic, but also created the chief prerequisite for the establishment and maintenance of the military force of the movement — known as the Detachment Institute — whose founder was himself. And it is a well-known fact: without the military factor there is no revolution.

Goce Delčev was strongly opposed to any discrepancy between the word and the deed. He underlined: "You are very naïve if you believe our words, you should watch our deeds!" He was even more categorical when he said: "The revolutionary rises in the consciousness of the people through his deeds." He was a supporter of the unity between words and deeds, confirming it through his personal example. He proved to be an excellent organizer and worker among the people of the liberation movement. Hence his enormous popularity and firm authority among the masses of the Macedonian people. This has endowed his name with the halo of a legend.

Delčev's optimistic, visionary outlook was permanently directed and oriented towards the future. "The morning will dawn for us as well...", he said, no doubt yearning for the dawn of freedom.

Goce Delčev's ideals, intertwined in his impressive work, became an inexhaustible inspiration and beacon light for his and the following generations of Macedonian revolutionaries.

Delčev's ideals have been incorporated into the historical consciousness of the Macedonian people. The two Macedonian Ilinden events and the referendum held on September 8, 1991, are the best illustration in this regard.

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[145] Vele Markov (village of Selce, Kruševo region, 1870 – village of Rakitnica, Demir Hisar region, 1902), Macedonian revolutionary and socialist. Killed in battle against Turkish soldiers.

[146] Nikola Karev (Kruševo, 1877 – village of Rajčani, Kočani region, 1905), Macedonian revolutionary and socialist. Founder of the Kruševo Republic. Killed in battle against Turkish soldiers, April 1905.

The viability of Goce Delčev's work demonstrates the indisputable continuity of the revolutionary pulsation of the Macedonian people. His is a crystal-clear, impressive work, fully dedicated to his long-suffering Macedonian people and to the "cultural competition among peoples" of the whole world.

Hence the work of Goce Delčev has far transcended his time, growing into a permanent historical heritage of the Macedonian people.

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