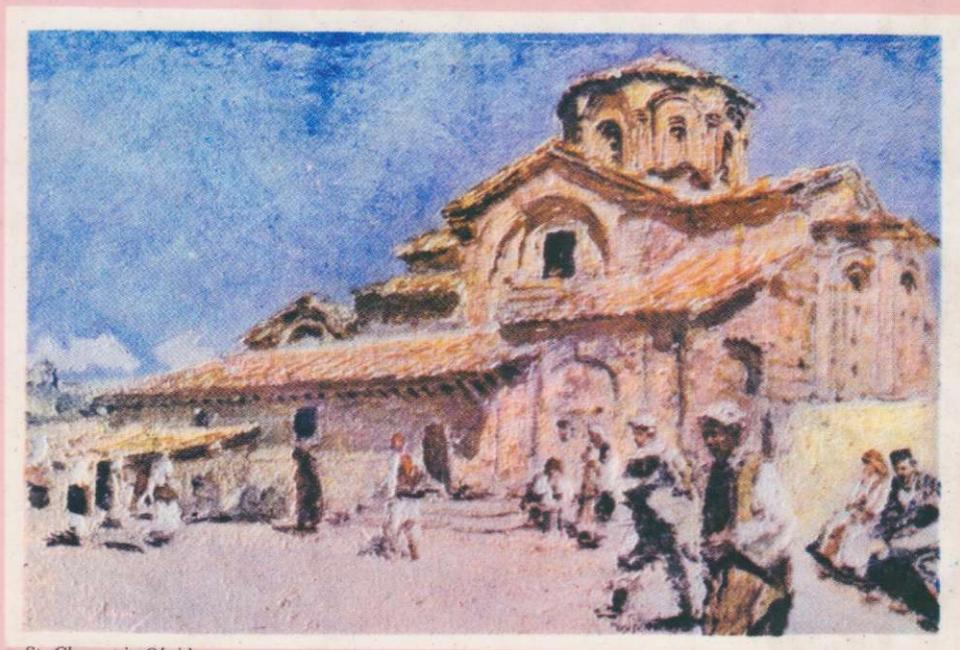


A BOOK ON MACEDONIA



St. Clement in Ohrid

LUDWIG KUBA

More than 2000 years have passed since then, but the name Macedonia has been preserved in the memory of all mankind. It's territory is not large (approximately 60,000 sq. kilometers). It consisted of valleys of the three major tributaries of the Aegean-Varder, Struma and Mesta and had natural sea and mountain borders. To the east the Rhodopes and Rilla, where to the north Karadag, also called the Skoplje Cherna Gora with the Shar mountain, to west the Albanian mountains and the Greek Pindus and Olympus.

From the ethnographical point of view, Macedonia is a continuous Slavic territory, pierced by small ones are: Turks, Greeks, Albanians, Wallachs, Spanish Jews and Gypsies. The majority of the local Slavs, with the except of an insignificant Serbian colony, have always been considered as a branch of the Bulgarian people.

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I. IN OHRID AND ITS VICINITIES TALE ONE

It is unbelievable: of all Slavic lands, Macedonia and Czechoslovakia, which joined hands for a great cultural cause, at the very dawn of our histories today are completely alienated. Our relations date as far back as the year 863, thanks to the Equal-to-the-Apostles Saints Cyril and Methodius, and their disciples Clement and Nahum.

These ties are now being renewed, not till a thousand years later, thanks again to the Macedonians. But instead of the Slavic Liturgy, now they employ different means, which are more consistent with our times. First, they tried to glue together the damaged cause, using Turkish honey and "rakhat lokoum" (a relaxing Turkish delight and a sticky eastern sweet), then they used sheep's guts, which were sold partly to the sausage makers, for the production of sausages, and partly to the string producing factories, which pleased the harebrained idealists too. All the time, the Ohrid lake offers us otherwise tempting necklaces, made of artificial pearls, which might sooner stand for Czech-Macedonian cooperation, since for their production our town of Iablonets supplies glass scales, as silvery and opal as the scales of the small fish (*Alburnus belvica*), and Ohrid is already full of them. But I feel that in this way, the cause will not be led off in a false and artificial direction, despite the fact, that we have sufficient quantities of artificial pearls.

In 1925, the Czech-Macedonian relations embarked on the third, essentially new period, and our sympathies turned into actions. First of all, Dr. J. Komarek arrived there, to study his namesakes*, which together with tropical malaria caused many evils, and secondly, I

*In Czech Komarek means mosquito.

myself arrived, to collect folk songs. Even though we felt on our own skins that the above-mentioned scientist was studying quite a burning issue, I believed that my task was more important, since it was also more urgent. Domestic and American capital was taking the utmost care of the mosquitoes, in the numerous, and sometimes magnificent tropical institutes and malaria stations, but I doubted that anyone had shown any interest in the songs until then. And, after all, they have been the only practical result of all scientific research. We were under the impression that we could catch malaria only from those mosquitoes, whose hind parts were raised when they stung. And who could possess enough calm and enough bad taste for such observations as these?

Therefore, there was nothing personal in the fact that I attached greater importance to my project, the more so as some events which occurred upon my arrival allowed me to do so. I was famous. At least along the Nish-Salonika railroad, almost at all stations, where the express train stopped at, I was cordially welcomed by gypsy brass bands, drums, and castanets. My fellow travellers assured me that the attention was meant for them too, and that this habit had been firmly rooted here ever since the World War I, but I stole it all for myself. I produced a notebook and took notes. As far as the melodies were not a foreign echo, it was worth it, especially the rhythm.

At that time I was on my way to Ohrid. I only stopped for three days in Skoplje, so that we (I and my son) could get used to the heat. We kept crawling in the thin shadows along the walls: we, the local people, the soldiers, the cattle and the dogs.

But our compatriots kept urging us on. "It might get even hotter," they said. "It ought to be hot here! It is situated very low, and in a hollow at that. Just hurry on to Ohrid. The altitude there is 700 meters and there is a large lake. It's pleasant. Even the ancient Romans...."—"and the young Roman ladies," I intervened—"went there for their holidays. On some days the temperature here goes right up to 60°C."

My eyes popped out (in Macedonian, the only thing you do with your eyes is: goggle), and asked fearfully: "I guess, you mean, 30 in the morning, and 30 in the afternoon?"

"No, at a time"

We sped along by car, for ten hours on end. It is difficult to use the word "straight", though. The road, with its many curves, wound like a lashing whip around mountains and valleys. The numerous stones

and holes threw us up into the air, and instead of sitting down again, we crashed down into the seats which despite all their softness seemed to be made of stone. At the curves, between Gostivar and Mavrovo Polle, we passed through the clouds of the same dust that we had raised below. When we finally saw the glittering Lake Ohrid, embraced warmly by the blazing mountain ranges, spiritually, we were cheerful admirers of their grandeur, but physically, we were dead beat. In the evening, it was easy to understand the joke, which was meant for us, from the next table: "Our roads are excellent, for aeroplanes."

The joke gave us the courage to ask, what those big fires were, that twinkle like stars in the Albanian mountains?

"The Albanian shepherds are cooking their supper."

It was difficult to go to sleep that night. On the one hand, while dozing off the car would keep racing violently, again and again, swerving over and along the steep edge of the precipice over the Radika river, and with a shudder each time, I would shake the nightmare and the uneasiness off, and on the other hand, my small room faced south and was like a crematorium, which made me start a mental argument Skoplje friends: "So it's cooler here, isn't it?"

In desperation, I lit the gas lamp, took out a list of addresses, and while crossing them out one by one, began writing postcards, sending my warmest greetings to friends of mine (those were the only greetings I could send).

Dead tired, I fell asleep late, with a lot of unanswered questions such as: how was I going to complete my work in this heat? What about the drawings and the songs? Could one do anything else here, except sweat?

But on the next day, when I was climbing up a steep street, under a vine arch and the bluish azure, which had found a place to show off, and was ploughing across the lake, visible through the houses, with their jutting out upper storeys, all my passions were quickly forgotten, and my spirits became radiant like the local sunshine especially so when presently I heard a song coming from somewhere. My first Macedonian song! I drew nearer stealthily, so that I wouldn't start the singer, and listened carefully to the notes, almost subconsciously, and in a short while I identified the melody and the words:

Oh, my mountain, you're so high,
my dear, you're so far . . .

I was amazed: that was one of our own songs! A song of which famous Czech scholars have been writing about for years, and still do, as of one exceptionally and purely Czech.

At that moment however, the fact that the song was neither only Macedonian, nor only Czech, did not disturb me at all, (since as early as 1834, it had been published in Moscow, in Maksimovich's collection of Ukranian folk songs, in 1863, in four versions, in Roguer's Polish collection, afterwards, it was sung in Rumania, and may be elsewhere). At the moment, I accepted it as a special attention from this Slavic land, neglected by me for so long. I was not sorry that my notebook had remained unused. I would find another time to make up for it.

In Curid

It was easy to get up early. The cock, which at daybreak announced in its esperanto the approaching sunrise right under my window, had enough strength only to unglue my eyelids, while shortly, the snow-white mosque, next to my window started glowing and the air quivered with the drawled singing of the muezzin, and through the open window I could clearly hear how he frequently drew breaths, in order to sing each sentence at one go and draw it out as long as possible.

I could not restrain myself. I went near the window and watched the priest; not that it was something new to me, but it had always been a pleasant delight. I experienced the efforts of the crier. The instant was marred only by my regret, that not being a Turk, I could not do it instead of him. I knew of no better human greeting to the playful day. True, our bell-ringing, as long as anyone does it anymore, also possesses grandeur, but what a performance it is, pulling the bell rope like a pig's tail or shaking it like a foot during a soccer game! The skillful Russian ringing, where the sexton stands on all fours, as if swimming in the air, and leads a whole "flock" of different sized bells, above him, below him, and around him, is still acceptable. So what can bring greater delight, than walk up the slender minaret and stand up in the peaceful calm of the night air, eager and happy to greet the waking world and the endless unknown?

The muezzin fell silent and I started dressing. In the meantime, his singing was substituted with similar melodies by the boys that carry

around the fresh bread: "Yes, buns, yes, warm buns, yes, yes . . ." Added to this counterpoint of quarter notes was the faraway braying of a donkey and the piercing barking of a dog, the result being an uneven three-voiced singing that was no match for the magnificence of the glorious moment, but was a nice transition from the religious mood, which breathes each morning, to the daytime clamour, the din of everyday life, consisting of perpetual petty squabbles or more whopping scrimmages.

I saw no one when I went out. The "charshiya" (market place) was deserted. Only the coffee shops were beginning to open. An old "effendi (or gent)," whose asthma, most probably, did not allow him to sleep, was already sitting in one of them drawing on a long chibouk, with a cigarette stuck on one end, and occasionally sipping black coffee. A pig was rooting about in the deep holes of the ruddy street, looking for goodies. It paid attention to nothing and no one, as I will, when I begin reading the proofs of this tale. A chicken, with carefree ease, without any fear of donkeys, mules, and people, and with scientific concentration and knowledge, was studying everything that could be subjected to analysis, which was in abundance, especially in the early morning. A few dogs, with the purposeless shyness of the unemployed, were wandering from corner to corner, as if looking for some "place". They lived in want, the poor souls. None of them had a master, and all they could do was to enjoy the happiness of freedom, which none of them thought of at all happy. Tempted by a boy's voice, a veiled Turkish woman, hiding her face with her yellow coloured fingers, opened the uncomfortable gates and had difficulty in choosing a loaf for her children, who were stretching their hands towards her. Otherwise, nothing much happened. Only the first rays, as arrows through a shield, spreading over Petrin, spyingly penetrated through the narrow streets, where, with a divine, unprejudiced equity, they clothed everything they penetrated in a golden fleece, including those things, which man, owing to the narrow-mindedness of his miserable attitude, calls disorder. And he would overgild and make an enchanting poem out of it, because the principle of reality is unknown to nature, and nothing makes any difference to it.

I succumbed, as a child yearning for everything, and did not know what to begin with.

We arrived last night at sunset and I already felt, that I *did not know* where to start from. Everything was beautiful! I could have gone to

the nearby beach and contemplated the lake, which under the veil of the early morning mist still dozed in its bed among the mountains. In the town, I could have walked among the antique houses, that looked so youthful in their southern style, perched one over the other. I could also have climbed up, above them, to the ancient, scarlet, brick temple of Saint Cyril, from which a marvellous view of the whole lake opened up, and from where I could see the pear shaped Ohrid peninsula stemming from the lake. The uneven cobblestones threatened to make me reject the thought, but I hoped that among the tall houses, crowned with vines, I might be able to find gaps, through which the malachite lake glistened. It would be a pretence for a rest, since the climbing was quite inconvenient. I also felt like running towards the western end of the town, protruding from the rocky island, on which the poetic church of Saint Ivan Bogoslov stood out, like an old and wrinkled falcon and where I could carefully listen to the great, divine silence, which reigned over the surface, and I could look down into the precipice, towards the famous lake Ohrid springs, where people always went for water or their washing, as the folk song "Beliana was bleaching a sheet at the Ohrid springs" said.

I was also tempted by the dew — sprinkled valley, connecting the town with the foothills of Petrin to the east, and forming real garden, full of branchy trees and lush vegetation, so rare in late summer, that just the sight of it in the heat was like a refreshing drink — at least for the eye.

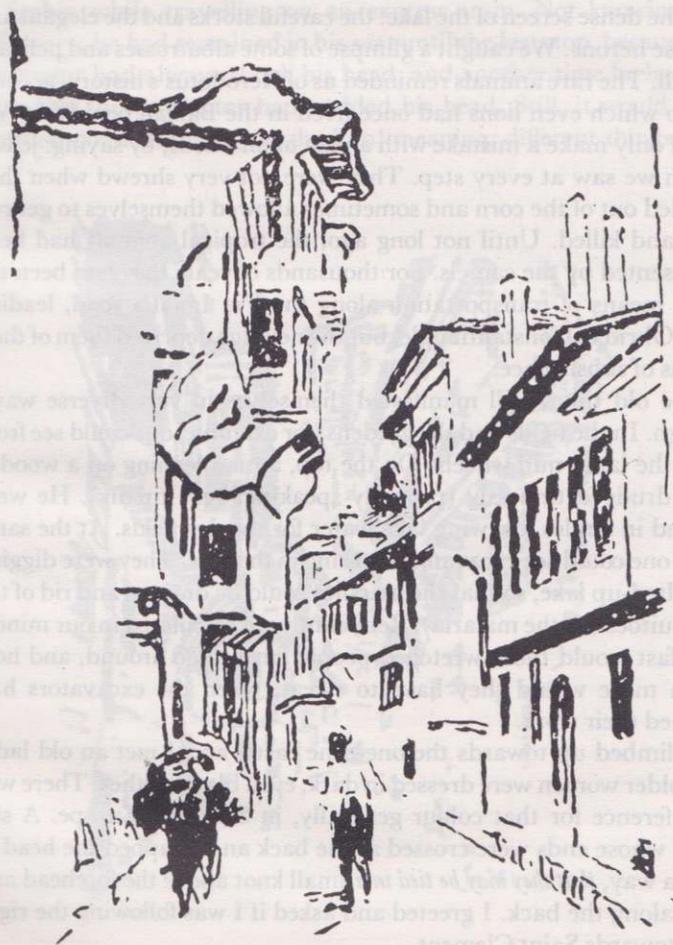
Whither then? The sun advised me: hurry upwards, the earlier the better!

I decided to follow its advice. I stumbled in the narrow streets, where light-footed peasant women were hurrying with their burdens to the market, and at the same time, without stopping, were knitting socks. I found myself on the northeastern side of a two-humped peninsula, densely forested on its southern side, and barren, bald, and dry on the northern one. Its beauty was not marred, though. I looked to the north and to the east. The lake was edged on all sides by fields, still partly shaded by the mountains. I took the road by which we had arrived from the smiling town of Strouga, which was gleaming out white in the distance, below the Albanian mountains. That was the northern-most point of the lake.

I remembered all the details of yesterday's trip. A magnificent feeling recurred in me: when after a whole day's trip we turned into



the Strouga valley and glimpsed at the enormous lake! Cherni Drin, the wide mouth of lake Ohrid, was calmly flowing against us amidst the fresh alfalfa and the reed swamps. It was enjoined to flow into the gorge, which we had just left, but it had shyly reflected for a moment, wound, and divided into arms. Its "mouth" (that was what it was called there), by which it separated from the lake, was in Strouga. A wooden bridge, which once, while it had still been decorated with shops, could have been compared to Venetian and Florentine bridges, served as its Arch of Triumph into the town.



A street in Ohrid

On the other hand, the rows of antique shaped barks still stood at salute; they stuck out of the water as antedeluvian hippopotami. They did not look very lively. Their sides were widened with beams, so that the fishermen could run to and fro when they cast or pulled up their nets. They raised their front parts inquisitively, like wooden rafts, reminding one of the local water-buffaloes, which raised their muffles, while bathing, in exactly the same manner, so that they would not swallow any water.

Our car shaking all over scared away the aquatic and wading birds into the dense screen of the lake: the careful storks and the elegant and diverse herons. We caught a glimpse of some albatrosses and pelicans as well. The rare animals reminded us of Herodotus's history, according to which even lions had once lived in the Balkan peninsula. We could only make a mistake with a play upon words, by saying: *je lvi* which we saw at every step. They were not very shrewd when they crawled out of the corn and sometimes allowed themselves to get run over and killed. Until not long ago, the tropical animals had been represented by the camels. For thousands of years they had been the main means of transportation along the Via Ignatia road, leading from Ohrid to Constantinople, but the new age deprived them of their means of subsistence.

The old times still manifested themselves in very diverse ways, though. In the fields and the gardens, for example, one could see from a far the large mill wheels. On the top, a man leaning on a wooden door drudged tirelessly (properly speaking: very tiredly). He went around in circles, drawing lake water for the dry fields. At the same time, one could see excavators working in the lake. They were digging the silted-up lake, so that the marshes could be drained and rid of the mosquitoes (or the malaria). Reluctantly we calculated in our minds, how fast would those wretched people have to go around, and how much more would they have to sweat, when the excavators had finished their work.

I climbed up towards the one-time castle and I met an old lady. The older women were dressed in dark, even black clothes. There was a preference for that colour generally, in Southern Europe. A silk scarf, whose ends were crossed at the back and wrapped the head in such a way, *that they may be tied in a small knot above the forehead and drop along the back*. I greeted and asked if I was following the right road towards Saint Clement.

"Yes, of course."

I thanked, and was about to continue, looking to my right and left, when the woman asked: "Bendisash Ohrid?"

I didn't know what "bendisash" meant, but I knew the word "benegisvan," which comes from Turkish and means: to like. So I had no difficulty in answering. My only thought was, should I shake my head or should I nod it, when I pronounced the word yes? In the Balkans it is done in the oriental manner-in exactly the opposite way. Nothing serious could have happened here, as it did to one of my compatriots in Serbia while travelling on an express train. Not knowing the difference, he had remained in his seat until the last stop, because the conductor had always shook his head, and another time he had got off, when the conductor had nodded his head. Still, it would have sounded comical saying, in the local meaning, different things with



Ohrid Architecture

my lips and my head. I managed my performance delicately. The old granny smiled happily. The people from the South, more than anywhere else, listen with pleasure to someone who is praising their native land. Immediately, she started a quick dialogue, which seemed to me a lecture in the local dialect, and I welcomed it. It was a pity that the neighbours soon took away the woman who was passing by me. "Sadi se zdravlye" (good health), I parted with a greeting, learned quickly yesterday. "Aerliya ti saat!" (happy times) answered the granny.

I neared the platforms stealthily, that connected the two parts of the peninsula, which in the past, at times of war had been converted into an island. Undoubtedly, the foundations of the medieval fortifications were much older, because the ancient fortress Lychnidos had been situated here, as far back as the third century B.C. For a hundred years it had belonged to the Romans. Christianity was introduced in the third century A.D. by the legendary martyr Erasmus, the first Bishop of Ohrid, whose success forced the Emperor Maximillian to kill 20,000 of his followers.

After that, the fortress had been revived by the Slaves. The great Bulgarian Tsar Simeon had his second capital in Ohrid, and a hundred years later, Tsar Samuilo (who believed himself to be a successor of Alexander the Great) raised Ohrid to the highest pedestal of glory. He had conquered almost the whole Balkan peninsula and had established a Bulgarian Patriarchate with 30 Metropolitans here. The wars, which he had constantly waged, had not prevented him from taking care of education, in all its spheres. He had tried to drain the drenched and malarious region, he had built roads and bridges, and had taken measures towards a flourishing economy.

Those were Ohrid's most glorious days. After that, neither the Bulgarian Tsar Assen II, nor the following (for a hundred years) Serbian domination could bring them back. Ohrid had declined, and it was a decline in the national sense, as well. Greek culture had increased all the time and had acquired greater power, which it had managed to preserve during Turkish times.

I walked around a Turkish tulba (grave), looking like a stone alcove, overarched over four pillars. It was desolate. A wandering swine was rooting in the dense weeds that were now taking care of the forgotten grave, as if with malice towards the deceased, for whom it had been an "unholy" (sinful) animal. For 504 years the crescent had

ruled here, and now this contemptible creature should dare do such things! The deceased did not resist. He couldn't. But such is the meaning of the Koran: submit to the new authority. One epoch devours another. Time is its own enemy, as man is of man, and the new generation of the old one.

The proof was everywhere. A square-shaped ruin, whose walls had overgrown with wonderful ivy, was standing in front of us. Its scratched face, at least the unveiled part, was begging for sympathy. But we ignored it. Not because it was the ruin of a mosque, which before that had been a temple of Saint Pantheleimon. Saint Clement himself had founded the temple, and in accordance with his will, he had been buried there. When the Turks arrived, in 1408, the Christians had to move the Saint and make place for Allah. They had first moved the relics in a temporary grave, but later they were laid to rest on the hill above, with the Virgin Mary, who had received the holy relics, but had lost her name. The church has been called Saint Clement since then.

At this point, the town descended down the steep slope, towards the shores of the lake. The millennial basilica Saint Sofia could be seen below, founded no one knows when, towards which men had always behaved as real masters, as they had behaved divinely towards the thousands of tenants, without ever evicting them. When the Turks arrived, the Christian God had to step aside, only to return half a millenium later. Gods are not supposed to loathe living one after the other. Mankind demands greater patience from them, than it demands from itself. And with full light, since it allots them more wisdom.

I walked past the palace, which had been destroyed, like everything else around. I saw the seat of the local bishop (boyar), the place from where until 1872 the Greeks had led the fiercest of battles against the Slaves. The danger nolonger exists, thanks to the Bulgarian patriots, and especially to the Miladinov brothers, who helped win the battle in the sixties of the past century.

Following Greek fashions had vanished, because it never was significant, except on the surface. In the marketplace, one could still see a small shop which resembled an office. The sign suggested that it was used by a lawyer with the Greek family name of Demosthenes. I remembered that yesterday in Strouga we found another such sign - insignificant in size, but with a great name on it - Aris - totles. Hail, if

you are descendents from your famous namesakes! You must be busy enough carrying the burdens of your names! It should be comparatively easy for the first one, if he has decided to surpass his glorious namesake in his early period, when he was rather clumsy and couldn't make a decent speech.

Lake Ohrid

A description? How on earth could one describe a mirror? It was only an image of the opposite side, wasn't it, and this one was just the light blue nothing of the vault of heaven. Therefore, we shall speak only of the frame of the mirror. In the distance it was blue—violet, while nearer brownish—yellow or grey—green, richly modelled by the famous masters of which we learn from geology. Time, unworthy of praise itself, had taken care of the finer decorations, since it could engulf anything, except itself. Here, it had managed to carve out a blend of exquisite lines, and, one must confess, with a worthy of recognition national and political impartiality (the western coast is Albanian, while the eastern one Slavic).

The natural amphitheater, stretching for 20 kilometers, is majestic. The azure surface smells of the sea and resembles a gulf. One's eyes wander along it without any obstacle. Why, if it was just an image of space? Our thoughts penetrate through it and disappear. They escape reality and wander in the past. They escape local boundaries and flow off towards all Slavdom. They flow to our native land, to the motherland in the north, from where they dream coming back here.

There was nothing odd. Two men, who once, as disciples of the Apostles Cyril and Methodius, had worked laboriously in our land for 15 years and had had the intention of becoming our compatriots forever, and could not have done so only because of Svatoplouk, rested here. Afterwards, for a quarter of a century, they had worked in this enchanted retreat and had developed the seed of Cyril and Methodius's language with such zeal, that they had laid the foundations of the Slavic — even the Pan-Slavic-alphabet.

The grave of one of them, the Temple of Saint Clement, rising above Ohrid, offered us a shade to rest in; the grave of the other, the Saint Nahum monastery, could be glimpsed at for a moment, immediately vanishing in the next, as a white spot on the opposite (southern) side of the lake.

We pressed close to the wrinkled walls of the old building, whose ancient tiles shone with all the colours of baked clay and variegated lichen. It was like a tangle, with its octagonal vault and interlaced bricks, and its appearance was moving, like an affable old lady. With its past, it was an age-old chronicle, which Byzantine architecture had supplied with a rare binding.

We remembered the fateful summer of the year 885, when Saint Methodius died in our country. After his death, his disciples had either been jailed or banished from the country. Three of them: Clement, Nahum, and Ahghelarii had started via the Danube and Belgrade for Bulgaria, towards its capital Preslav, where the newly converted Tsar Boris had happily accepted them, and a couple of years later, without Ahghelarii, who had died in the meantime, had sent them to the westernmost boundaries of his country, to Ohrid.

They had remained in the apostolic mission, which the Eastern Church respected as Sveti Sedmochislenitsi* (since, plus Cyril and Methodius, it added Sava and Gorazd), as first after the founders. Clement had been fated to perfect the written Slavic language, created by Cyril, and to strengthen and spread it around to such an extent that it would sound forever in the churches of Southern and Eastern Slavs (even in Rumania the Old Slavonic language had been dominant in the church and the state until the 16th century, and in literature until the 19th).

Had Clement anticipated the greatness of his cause?

Did Slavdom respect him properly?

In our country, in the Emausi (Na Slovaneh)**monastery, Church Slavonic already existed during Charles' IV reign, and in the land of Lugiicka, in the beginning of our century, Dr. Aronost Mouka found an Old Slavonic manuscript in the Germanized community Goswar, in Lower Lugiick, dated from the 16th century. Therefore, with the exception of the Poles, Cyril and Methodius' language was an All Slavic language.

Such was Clement's cause. And if Salonika had been the birthplace of the first literary Slavic language, Ohrid had become its cradle. If Cyril had been the one that had planted the seed, Clement had cultivated it. He had had 3 500 pupils in Ohrid, who had copied and spread the holy books among the whole Slavic world.

*Sveti Sedmochislenitsi — *The Holy Seven. Transl. note.*

**Na Slovaneh — *At the Slavs'. Transl. note.*

The credit for substituting the difficult, original alphabet, the Glagolitsa (which is still preserved in the western, Catholic parts of the Southern Slavs, the Croats), with a more convenient one, later called Cyrillic, was ascribed to him. But further research showed that it had occurred in the eastern part of Bulgaria, in the court of Tsar Simeon.

Five branches had stemmed from the trunk: five modified provinces: Czech, Slovak, Serbian, and Russian, plus the original Bulgarian. History is still full of mysteries and unanswered questions. Some of the scholars maintain the view, that Church—Slavonic does not belong to any of the present Slavic nations, while Kopitar and Miklos claim that it is the language of the extinct Panonian (Hungarian) Slavs. They arrived at that conclusion, because of the closeness to the Sloven language, on the one hand, and on the other hand, because by chance, the holy brothers at Prince Kotsel's court on lake Balaton, had won over Clement, when stopped there during his journey to Rome. But the overwhelming majority of scholars believe that it was the language, which had been spoken in Cyril and Methodius's birthplace, Salonika, therefore the language of the Macedonian Slavs (Sloveni, who later on, together with the rest of their co-tribesmen, had adopted, according to their country, the name Bulgarian. That is why, the Old Slavic language is also called Old Bulgarian.

These mysteries are a constant subject for the research of scholars — linguists and historians, but they arouse the curiosity of non-specialists as well. The Polish Slav scholar A. Bruckner believes that one of the greatest and wisest acts of Svatoplouk, has been the rescuing of his country from the Eastern Church in favour of the Western, but he is probably too far carried away by his catholicism; it is obvious that the Catholic Church, with its results among the Polish people, cannot be placed higher than the Orthodox priests. The friendly attitude of the Orthodox priests (clergymen) and believers has always had a beneficial influence on the souls of the people, in a democratic sense, with which the Balkans have always had a superiority over the rest of Europe, and which is one of its advantages and attractions. Even though Bruckner's view is controversial, one thing is certain: Cyril and Methodius' books had come earlier to us than they had to the Bulgarians; and if Clement could have remained in our country and worked without any obstacles for the same cause, as

in Ohrid, it meant that he would have worked in the center, and not in the periphery of the Slavic world, for the Slavs at that time had lived as far as Hamburg and the Rhine. And it is also quite clear, that the Panonian Slavs, bordering the Slovins, would hardly have vanished forever, and that the Elbe Slavs would hardly have been assimilated so quickly, so that the continuous German territory can today reach a point, which is only five hours by foot from Prague. Our language would have acquired a different sounding — most probably it would have been the real Czechoslovak language, and undoubtedly, the Polish language would have been influenced, and the language division would have been smaller.

Such thoughts were haunting me, while my eyes wandered over the lake's surface.

Clement had been of an exceptional spirit. With his assistant Nahum, he had taken care not only of the schools and churches, but also of the mundance aspects of life: agriculture, fruit growing, the economic development of the country. The memory of him is so vivid among the people, that they think of him as the First-After-God. Even now, the local people are sworn in his name.

In the region of Ohrid, which had already been populated with Slavs for 200 years, the proper Slavic period, which had reached its zenith a hundred years later, under Tsar Samouil, had begun with Clement. The partiarchy, established by Samouil, had been entrusted to the born in Debarsko St. Ivan Bigorski, serving in the famous monastery of the same name, north of the Drina river, on a woody, steep mountain slope. Ohrid's glory as a tsar's capital had not continued for long. In 1018, the Greek Emperor Basil II — Bulgarslayer; had destroyed Samouil's state, liquidated the patriarchy, and allowed only the privileged of independence to the Ohrid church. Since then, Ohrid has not had Church—Slav leaders (until 1872, when the Bulgarians had acquired an Exarchate).

But Slavic literary tradition had been maintained. The famous Ohrid Gospel is an important record of Slavic linguistics. The Bologne Psalter was written during 1230–1241, and the Psalter of Branko Mladenvich in 1346 (during the reign of Doushan). As far back as the 16th century, the famous local Archbishop Prochor, a Greek, had allowed the copying of Slavic manuscripts. The Greek language here had played a role similar to that of the Latin language in our church, and no other meaning can be ascribed to Doushan's

words, when he had called the local church "Greek". The accelerated Hellenization had started only in 1777, but it had been unsuccessful. The area, with minor exceptions, was Slavic, as was half of the town with its 15 000 inhabitants. The other half were Albanians, converted to Mohammedanism, a few Rumanians (Tsintsars), and least of all Greeks, who only provided the town with lustre, owing to their schools. Two young men, the Miladinov brothers from nearby Strouga, had managed to erase it quite quickly, when they had won over the craftsmen and the richer families, followers of Greek fashions. One could read an interesting sign in the church of our saint. Among the rich decorations, which filled the inside of the church from the floor to the dome, under the portrait of Ostoi Raiakovich, it was written that he had been a relative of Krali Marko.

A treasury, with rare antiques, may be found in the church. One is fascinated by the dimmed with old age shades of the frescoes, the golden iconostasis, the fantastic outlines of Archbishop Prochor's throne, especially if the Archbishop, in his majestic, violet uniform, is sitting on it. The frescoes, the icons, St. Clements coffin, the valuable embroideries, and the wooden statue of the saint — all create a pleasant atmosphere. The library, containing over 120 old, printed editions and manuscripts, is a permanent subject of research work for many scholars. Two of them are well known in our country. Both of them are Russians: the scholar and politician P.N. Miliukov, who had sometimes visited us as an emigre after the war, and the Byzantologist N.P. Kondakov, who had fallen in love with Czechoslovakia as a young man, during his first visit, and after the Russian revolution had sought here and found refuge and a career, and again three years later—his grave too, in our country.

Today, only modest traces are left of Ohrid's glorious past, which had belonged to the whole Slavdom; And no wonder. A thousand years have passed since the Christmas tree of Slavdom, lighted by Clement, had glowed here. When he died in 916 (six years after the death of his associate Nahum), the glorious light was already on the wane. Today, what is left is but a crematorium. A pile of ashes after the fireworks, that had cast its light far and wide.

I left Clement's grave and fixed my eyes on Nahum's in the distance, not noticing the beauty of the lake.

Jemmo Birdianin's "Chinar" (or Plane-tree)

'Chinar' is a Turkish word and means sycamore (or plane—tree).

There were two of them in Ohrid. That is, there may have been more, but these two were so big, that even Trieste's and Dubrovnik's famous sycamores, prescribed to the obedient tourists in Baedeker, could not rival them.

The larger one covered a whole square with its shadow. Those of you who are familiar with the South may exclaim: "We know what a square down there is like, like Piazza Grande in Corchulya, for example, which is no bigger than an anniversary postage stamp. I agree that Ohrid's square can hardly be compared to Place de la Concorde, but you would probably be surprised, if I told you that the carved hollows of the Ohrid giant had until not long ago accommodated three cafes and a shoemaker's shop. Now, three very decent water fountains, which were constantly surrounded by thirsty people, had been built in, while on the northern side of the fabulous trunk the cafe-keeper from across the street had a subsidiary of his company, where one could sit down and drink black coffee quite pleasantly, if it was early morning or late afternoon, when the numerous crows, inhabiting the hospitable crown, were still (or already) asleep. Otherwise, something very wet could start dripping from the branhy tree, which served as a public umbrella when it was raining, and the inexperienced foreigner could not avoid it, or might even not notice it, except if the bird decided on its own to sweeten his coffee.

But even such an inappropriate joke from the evil bird did not make us hate that harbour, open for all kinds of elements, a mixture of different patterns and costumes, a chaos of most colourful figures, from the lively seller to the tall dervish, with the high, white hat. The horse caravans, and especially the stubbornness and obstinacy of the donkeys, sweetly (at least for those watching) increasing the chaos around the Sunday market, because the thirst had lured every creature towards the green fountain.

That was what the first sycamore, the heart of Ohrid, was like.

The second one, I agree, was a bit smaller. But what a past it had had! It was called Jemmo Birdianin, the alleged one-time master of Ohrid, and the event connected with it was real, since it had been published in such a famous book as Vuk Karadjich's collection of Serbian folk songs.

That sycamore was also carved out, but an old lantern was suspended (aslant, as if hanged) inside, and its light twinkled shyly.

It twinkled because of Jemmo Birdianin, who had been hanged on the tree by Krali Marko's own hands. The song, which told of this, had originated in Herzegovina, and presented us with basic data of Ohrid: that its lake boasted a lot of fish, and that the fish boasted with its taste, famous even in faraway lands.

The action started in the castle of Prillep, 120 kilometers to the east (we shouldn't be frightened by such distances; as we shall see, they mean nothing to Marko and his horse Sharkoliya).

It was St. George's day, and Marko was celebrating "krusno imme", the patron saint's day of his home. Such guests as befitted him had gathered:



The Chinar in Ohrid's Square

Two hundred priests and three hundred monks,
also twelve Serbian voivods (chieftains)
and other guests uncounted.

There was "a lot to drink and different guests", and only one shortcoming, which was soon noticed by a greedy monk with the words:

There is no fish from Ohrid.

This angered Marko. He ordered that his guests be given enough food and drink, while he went to prepare Sharkoluya and himself for the trip.

Mother Yevrosima, when she saw how he was girding himself, said anxiously: "Don't take any weapons with you! You are too used to blood. You may desecrate your patron's day".



Jemmo Birdianian's Chinar in Ohrid

It was difficult for Marko to start off without any weapon, but it was even more difficult not to obey his own mother. He started off bare-handed.

He was nearing the river, when a horseman stepped on the opposite side of bridge. He crossed his legs and started toying with a heavy mace. He threw it up, above his head, and caught it "in his white hand".

They greeted each other. The foreigner asked: "Unknown hero! Aren't you from Prillep? Aren't you from the suite of Marko Kraleviti? Is Marko home? Does he have many guests?"

Krali Marko answered: "Unknown hero! Early this morning I was in the Prillep castle! Marko is doing honour to his saint, and glorious guests he has, uncounted!"

"Let him have them. I will cover his table with blood, and him, I will hang on the door! He has killed Mousa, my brother."

Marko was astounded. It was Jemmo himself! And now what? If he revealed himself to the Turk without a weapon, he would be killed, and if he allowed the Turk to go on, his guests would die. So he shouted: "I am Marko Kraleviti!" and he spurred his horse, so he could run away.

Jemmo turned his horse around, threw his mace, and Marko "fell on the green grass".

Jemmo tied and chained Marko to the tail of his horse mounted Sharkoliya and led his horse with Marko towards Ohrid. He wanted to hang him there. When he started preparing the gallows, the Christians pleaded with him: "Don't hang Marko! Our grapes will not yield, and neither will our wheat! Take three loads of gifts instead!"

The idea appealed to Jemmo. His greed prevailed over his heroism, so he took off for Valchitran (another 200 kilometers beyond Prillep, but, of course, neither the singer's head, nor his feet ached from them), raised the gallows as a fair merchant's shop, received the ransom with deception and started for Mitrovitsa (which is not so far), in order to continue his trade. It is difficult to say how long he would have been occupied with this pleasant and profitable activity, since according to folk songs, Marko lived for 350 years. But once he was very thirsty. "Show me an inn!" he said to Marko.

"Heroes do it another way," Marko said. "They kill a falcon or slaughter a horse and drink hot blood from their throats".

Poor Marko! His advice was ill-fated. The Turk drew his sword and shouted: "I shall cut your throat and drink from it, instead!"

Marko could use nothing but cunning. "I know an innkeeper, the cursed Yana," he said. "But she will revenge me. I have never paid when I have drunk at her inn."

Jemmo hurried towards her inn. She was standing at the door and Marko winked at her. She understood. She shouted happily to Jemmo: "Welcome you hero of the heroes! Oh, I thank God in heaven, that you have captured Marko. I will wine you for nothing, for three days and three nights". And she was already fulfilling her promise.

Thirstily drank his wine, Jemmo the Turk,
Always raising his glass to Marko Krleviti.
Raising it, but never letting him drink.

Yana constantly refilled his glass. She brought better wine, all the time, and mixed it with some herb, until the Turk was fast asleep. She then released Marko and the two of them tied up and chained the Turk. Marko started drinking himself. He kicked Jemmo with "his shoes and his spurs," and said:

"Get up Jemmo! Let's clink glasses!"
Now Marko was drinking red wine,
Always raising his glass to Jemmo Bidianin
Raising it, but never letting him drink.

Then, they started back the same way. Everywhere the people "offered him three loads of gifts" to hang Jemmo, but Marko, who never takes anything, returned the ransom.

For Jemmo, the journey ended in Ohrid, at the sycamore by the road, leading to Strouga. While Marko was hanging him, he looked for the last time towards his seat, the Ohrid Castle.

The Turks still respect his memory and light the lantern in the sycamore. Of course, after they had ceased to be masters here, the lantern often met some obstacles in its activity. When we arrived, at dusk, it was lighted by chance, but the small flame quivered before us, as if shaking with fear.

The song adds, shortly, that Marko returned back to Prillep on time to celebrate his saint with his guests, but it is difficult to believe, even if one is disposed to, except of course, if St. Georges day wasn't continued at the expence of the other saints.

He also brought fish which he caught himself. He was luckier than we were. We also looked for it immediately, like that gluttonous monk. We even ordered it every day to the waiter, but in vain. The answer was always the same: "There is no fish."

If they weren't afraid of Marko, the way they weren't afraid of us, he also wouldn't have received any fish, because then, as today, it was sent further on immediately after being caught, even though there was no state monopoly on the fish, as there is now, when it may only be bought secretly from poachers.

Luckily, we found compensation (although not full). We bought a picture book with pretty and clear lithographic picture of all 17 kinds of local fish. We admired them with such interest, during lunch and dinner, that we could name all 17 of them, and in Latin at that. We knew, of course (from the text), the taste of each fish. I remember none of them now. The monk's verse, still rings in my head whose first half our waiter always managed to repeat with admirable consistency:

There is no fish from Ohrid

A Fire in Strouga

It was a fire of the old type, of a decent calibre, without insured foundations, and without the participation of uniformed firemen. Things here burn in their natural, undistorted way, without the excessive piling up of artificial obstacles, that resist not only the raging flames, but according to the fantastic law of philisophy, of the ruling until not long ago crescent — the will of the almighty Allah — and therefore are a sinful creation.

A man like me could only stand abashed. I didn't understand. I came and saw how the youth of all local tribes and religions played soccer. Occasionally, with brisk movements, the young Turks aired their "shalwars" (Turkish trousers) in the shadow of the melancholy mosque, which watched the parabolic movement of the ball disparagingly, with the calmness of a sage, but gave immediate advice: "What would happen if instead of sports we set up a fire brigade!" It was right. Everything seemed to be built for a fire on purpose, only of boukhta* and wood!

But it didn't know that its undoubtedly sensible counsel was at the same time useless. A fire brigade, as a group for mutual assistance

*boukhta — a type of Czech building material. Translator's note.



among neighbors and fellow-tenants, was impossible. Only a hired fire brigade could have existed.

The reason wasn't in any moral failure of the local people. It was in their composition, where social differences were not manifested as clearly, as tribal, national, and ethnographical ones. The numerous elements, living together for centuries and millenia, thanks to the differences in language, dress, customs, and religion, had remained permanently alien to each other, the more so that no political idea or state independence had ever united them. They did not lack feelings of humaness or unity, but a gulf of all sorts of prejudices had been created between them throughout the centuries and it hindered the cultivation of social relations. In addition to the Slavic majority, living predominantly in the villages, Albanians (former Illyrians), Tsintsars or pseudo-Rumanians, Greeks, Turks, Spanish Jews, and Gypsies had lived here for a long time. They all showed their different social status and different external attitudes, with identical internal pride. In a general sense, with the exception of the old guilds, they couldn't depend on a united life. And in no way was any reform or any modernization of anti-fire technique (as far as the setting, burning or the extinguishing of the fire was concerned) possible.

We witnessed, by God's will, such a respectable fire in the town of Strouga. On the outside, there was nothing special about it, for those, who remember the fire-fighting tradition at home, before insurance times: the mixup (from the mothers), the shouting, the wringing of hands by the (sometimes prematurely) desperate women, the unpractical passing of water in unsuitable vessels, done with feverish speed by some and with icy indifference by others, the squabbles as to who should sprinkle with the hose, and so on. The houses, just as it used to be at home, quickly, by themselves, emptied out their colourful insides in all directions. I even saw a phenomenon which once, in Koutha Hora, had made us, students laugh, without considering the tragedy of the moment. Our teacher, who had been a little exalted, had rushed into the first floor of burning building and had tried to save everything that had come handy inside by throwing it out. This included some plates. And he had had such a presence of mind that he had first looked downwards, to make sure that they would fall on the ground and not on someone's head. The fire in Strouga was put out in the same way.

So everything occurred as at home, with a little local burn. The moving out here, for example, was easier, since the household belongings consisted mostly of clothes, carpets, rugs, and pillows. Thin women, who were invisible under their burdens, dragged them in huge bundles. The heavy, long chests, in which the things were kept, remained inside, since there was no one to carry them out, because the local men went abroad in large numbers to earn money. So when I and my son helped a few women to carry out their bundles, we were turned back into the burning house, with tears and pleas, and had to carry down, from the first floor, a two meters long chest, with which it was difficult to make a turn on the collapsing staircase.

The main spectacle was at the nearby marketplace, where the small shops spewed out enormous quantities of goods that had no end. Everything that could be saved, was carried to the bridge and the river, and in the night after the fire, the spilled coffee and rice in the crystal clear waters of Drina had so swollen up, that it looked like countless sea shells.

During the fire, the view from the bridge of the Turkish quarter on the other bank, was also interesting. All the Turkish women were dressed in dark, hooded cloaks and were twisting their heads like chickens, so that they could have a better look of the fire, through the slits of their veils.

A military detachment arrived from Ohrid with a sprayer, but only the heavy roof-tiles (Greek type) were to be thanked, in the heat and drought, that only four buildings were burned down.

I might have forgotten all this, had it not been for the old house of boukhta, whose peeled walls of unbaked bricks were swelling, because the rotten beams, placed crosswise and slantingly, were giving in to the weight of the Turkish tiled roof. The two Bulgarian scholars and writers, Dimitar (1810) and Constantin (1830) Miladinov had been born here. Also here, because of a report on him by the Greek bishop Mellenthus, Dimitar had been arrested by Turkish policemen, chained, and sent off to Istanbul. It happened in 1861, the same year that had promised to be a very happy one for the two brothers, since thanks to Bishop Strossmayer, their common work, the first of its kind in Bulgarian literature, with great importance for Slavic science, had been published in Zagreb.

"Bulgarian Folk Songs, Collected by the Miladinov Brothers", was a book, with whose partial translation Joseph Holecck began his work in the field of South Slavic themes (the heroic songs of the Bulgarian people).

The life of the Miladinov brothers, even though they had not fought with a gun or a sword, belongs to the great epos of the Balkan Slavs of the past century, because they are one of its cornerstones. They are among the first, most skillful scholars in the farthest removed Western Slavic region, on the Greek-Albanian border, where a means for liberation had yet to be found, since the usual formulas of a Southern revolt or guerrilla warfare had to be excluded. Here, plus the Turk as a political enemy, there existed another, more dangerous one: the Greek, who had the Church and the schools in his hands, and for centuries had Hellenized the Bulgarians from Epirus to the Danube.

The same fate awaited the two brothers, the oldest and the youngest of the six children of a local potter. Dimitar's daughter, now living in Sofia (an orphan since the age of six), says that her father would have most probably been Hellenized, had it not been for the fact that as a gifted child he was given, while very young, to the St. Nahum monastery, on the southern shores of Lake Ohrid, where thanks to the reading of Church Slavonic books, he had become conscious of his Bulgarian origin. But his real awakening had come later, when he, a grown up young man thanks to his savings and other support, was able to continue his studies in Yanina, the then cultural center of the Epirus Greek. The same thing happened to him, that had happened to Jan Kolar in Jena (and almost at the same time): the Slavic names of the rivers, mountains, and communities in this Greek region, reminded him of a sorrowful condition of the vanishing Slavdom, and his ties with expelled Italian immigrants helped him mature, a process which occurred in his soul. Dimitar returned from Yanina as a great Hellenist, but at the same time as a convinced fighter for the salvation of the oppressed Bulgarian national spirit.

At home, in Macedonia, he had worked as a Greek teacher in different places. He reminds us of our revival leaders, who officially, had been exemplary German teachers, but privately — enthusiastic fighters. He had taught the Greek language at school, but Bulgarian language and national history and geography at homes, households, and shops, for which, with a full lack of books, he had had to prepare all by himself. Under his enchanting figure and apostolic zeal, Hel-

lenism had melted away in Macedonian towns and villages, as spring snow.

At the same time, Dimitar had become educator and guardian of his favourite, 20 year younger brother, the gifted Constantine. He had made an associate of him, but also, unfortunately, a comrade in the suffering and the martyr's death. Its reason had really been tragic. It was the Hatred of the Greeks, reaching its highest point, when to the Bulgarian consciousness of the two brothers, the Slavic one had been added as well.

In this sense, the year 1845 was fateful for them. The Russian scholar V.I. Grigorievich, went to Greece that year, to study the traces of one-time Slavic settlements there. While travelling through Macedonia, he had met Dimitar in Ohrid and had been amazed by his Hellenistic knowledge. Dimitar had become a conscious Slav then. He had travelled through Herzegovina, where in the town of Mostar he had been enraged by the haughtiness of the Greek clergy, and afterwards in Bosnia and Serbia. He urged the young people to go to study in Russia, and had later sent his own brother there. His view, that first an independent church and school must be won, had already become dominant and his belief grew stronger. That was why he worked most zealously in Ohrid, the seat of the Greek Metropolitans.

The famous Serbian writer Branislav Nushich, who visited Ohrid in 1892, wrote the book "A Region, Enveloped by Lake Ohrid" afterwards, in which he pointed out that he had found only twelve Greek homes there, with one boys' and one girls' Greek primary schools, while the Bulgarians had four boys' and two girls' primary schools and a high school as well. Nushich described Dimitar's great merits, and his flexibility, with which he had managed to win over the guilds and the rich Greek-following families, and acknowledged his efforts for the appointment of Bulgarian clergymen and the creation of an independent church. He added that Dimitar's activities had been facilitated by the awful attitudes of the Greek clergy, and especially the atrocities, performed by Bishop Melenthus, of whom the people had said that "he makes Ohrid's stones and Resen's families cry". Nushich said that "the people were horror-struck with fear". Melenthus would make slanderous reports to the authorities, and afterwards would ask for a bribe, in order to help release the person from dungeon. He had made a lucrative business out of it with the Christians. The people had sent message after message to the Patri-

arch, but nothing had happened. The Turks, themselves were sorry for the Christians, and had sometimes taken them under their protection. But the voice of the people had not been heard, since they had no leader. Nushich went on: "Dimitar took that task upon himself and performed it excellently". I would have added: heroically, as well.

But we must correct Nushich, since he used, perhaps by oversight, the Serbian spelling Miladinovich, instead of the Bulgarian one, Miladinov, and it is necessary to add that Dimitar had not only fought for clearing the church away from the Greek influence, but, and it was more important, he was a Slavic Revival leader of the Bulgarian people. And for that reason exactly, together with his brother Constantine, he had paid with his life, slandered as a dangerous element to the state who maintained ties with the Russians.

Milenthius otherwise known as a lecher, had performed his vile deed in the beginning of 1861. Dimitar was staying with his family in Strouga, when a warrant for his arrest had been issued, and through Ohrid, he was sent to Istanbul. He had already been tied up, when he had parted with friends and students, and as we heard, he had stated an assumption that he would never come back.

At that time, Constantine was finishing his studies in Russia, without any foreboding for what had happened. In the spring he started homewards via Vienna, where he met Strossmayer, whom he had shown his collection of songs, ready for printing. But it was written in Greek, while Strossmayer wanted to publish it in the Bulgarian alphabet. So Constantine went with him to Dyakovo and for three months wrote the manuscript. When it was published in Zagreb, in the summer, he presented the first copy to his well-wisher and hurried to Belgrade with the other one, to present it to the Bulgarian politician Rakovski, who was staying there at the time.

He was happy until he arrived, but he had heard from Rakovski that his brother was in an Istanbul prison. He hurried to Istanbul and asked to see his brother. Instead, he was arrested himself. He did not meet his brother until they were finally transferred to a military hospital, both seriously ill, some time in the end of December. Both of them died there. We don't know if they were able to recognize each other, as we don't know when exactly they died whether in the end of December or in the beginning of January, or where they had been buried.

Strossmayer heard of their arrests in October and immediately wrote to the Austrian Foreign Ministry and to the Embassy in Istanbul, and also intervened with the Russian Ambassador. But the insidious poisoners had anticipated it. To this we must add; probably. But we will not be unfair if we fail to do so. The Miladinov brothers' death, even if it wasn't caused directly by the Phanariots, among which we must include Mellenthus, was at least a result of their actions and a goal of their aspirations.

Who are the Phanariots?

Phanaer is a Greek quarter in Istanbul, where the Patriarch lives, and a Phanariot is a type of Greek, who began developing after the Turks' arrival in Europe, and means a sum of all possible human evils. It is necessary to state that to a large extent the Turks are to blame for his evolution. It had been beneath the Turks' dignity to study the languages of the conquered peoples, and so they had needed interpreters. The Greeks had served as such. The proud Turk had never concerned himself with financial questions and had never collected interest; the customs, the levies, the taxes, and later the monopolies and the leases had become to a certain extent a Greek privilege. So the real material oppressors, blood-suckers, and tormentors of the Christian population were the Greeks and not the Turks. Since the Sultans had not been able to imagine the Christians in another way, except as a unified church, like the Muslim one, they had presented the Greek Patriarch with total powers over all Christians in their Empire. It might be useful to determine one day, how much of the so called Turkish tyranny, may be attributed to the Turks, and how much to others.

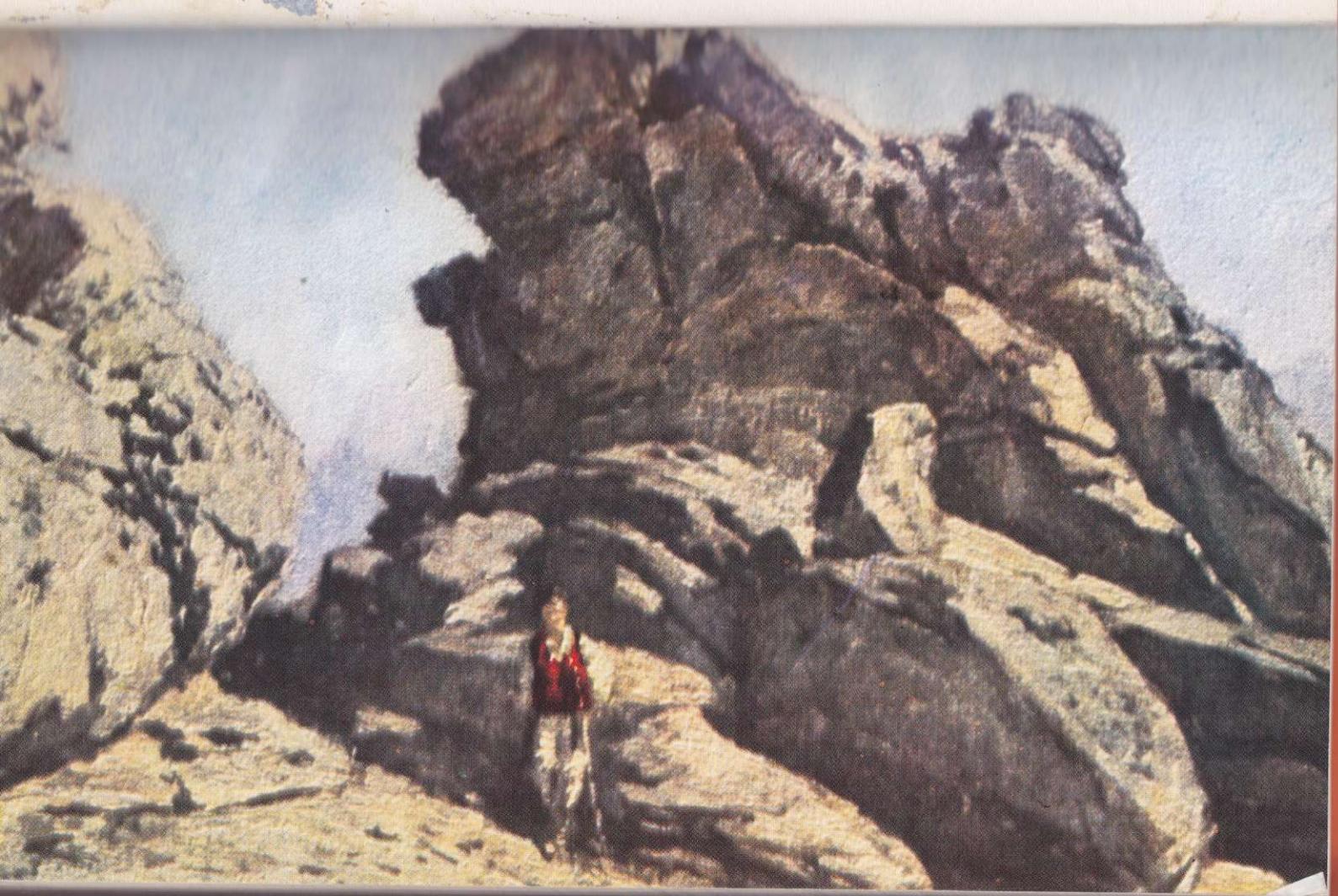
The Serbian scholar J. Tsviich, while explaining that the Slavs in their majority had been shepherds and peasants, i.e. common people, says that the charshiya (the town marketplace) had been possessed by the Geeks, and he adds that the Turks, had been the ones to introduce honesty in trade.

So it should not amaze you, that when I arrived in Strouga, I immediately tried to find the Miladinov house. The man from Strouga, who promised to show it to me added unexpectedly, "But not before sunset".

"Why can't we see it now?"

"We can, but someone might see us."

I was surprised. "What do you mean?"



He raised his shoulders and said, "In Turkish times, we could celebrate the memory of the Miladinov brothers every year, but now Belgrade doesn't allow it".

I was troubled and shocked, How could it be possible? Their suffering, and their martyrs' death is respected by all Slavdom. Most probably, there is some administrative misunderstanding as a result of the last war, which will be removed, when the tension between Serbs and Bulgarians decreases.

I was a bad prophet. Four days later, on August 3, at 2 P.M., a fire broke out exactly in the same house. I can still see how one of the descendants of the Miladinov family was helping his pale and fainting, beautiful wife, out of the burning building.

From Ohrid to Bitolja

One had only to negotiate a couple of ridges, Boukovo and Giavato, which separated the Ohrid valley from the eastern, Ressen (Prispan) valley, and the latter from the Bitolja valley, and the whole distance was just 80 kilometers.

When in the evening, we reserved a seat on the postage car, for the next morning, we asked once again, to make sure, when would we start, and the old postman, from whose bumptiousness it became clear that The Vienna Reparations Commission, Austrian Heritage, had assigned him from somewhere in Slavonia, smoothed out, without stopping his work, his huge moustache, unnaturally large for his small height, and added abruptly, "At five." Then, Raising his stern eyes, he added with an even sterner voice: "Come earlier! The car doesn't wait!" The last word he either cut into pieces, or accented.

At that moment, we didn't feel what a great truth that small man had uttered. The automobile really didn't wait, but we did, for two and a half hours. It was being repaired from the morning; not without reason and not uselessly at all, as we soon saw on the road.

When that contemporary coffin, with eight passenger seats (and certainly not for "wiser" passengers), finally arrived, among the eager candidates for free seats there ensued such a scramble, that we understood nothing. Why should one run in this hot climate towards the inconvenient circumstances which await him inside? No one will reach his destination faster. Why then hurry to get into the car?

But the moment the doors were shut behind me and the car started eastward, my joking mood left me. I had found the answer: in the constant collisions with the numerous stones, in the inevitable holes, the long vehicle, according to the law of the lever, jumped much more in its back part than in its front one. In the front it just hit you, but in the back it threw you up into the air. We fell very hard each time, as if we had neither artificial, nor natural cushions beneath us, the latter created farsightedly by nature. During the flight, our legs lost their support and couldn't soften the fall with any resistance. And this intermediate form between motoring and aviation would go on for five hours! Our first stop would be somewhere around Boukovo! Wonderful!

Under the circumstances, it wasn't surprising that we forgot to say farewell to the magnificent picture which Ohrid presented with the lake, from the eastern heights, and which we had admired during our outing to the St. Petka monastery, which was pressed like a swallows' nest to the mountain wall. On the other hand, while speeding along the encircled valley of the Kriva Reka river, we suddenly remembered that a disaster must have befallen the succulent peaches in our pockets, in the jostle during our rough journey.

The empty paper bag, by now containing almost only marmalade, created new difficulties. What could I do with it? It was impossible to throw it out, since the windows were closed, in order to protect us from the dust. And it was impossible to eat its contents, because of certain technical reasons. Who could guarantee that I wouldn't miss my mouth? And if I didn't, who could guarantee that I wouldn't bite off my tongue? Why, it was precisely because of all the jolting that we couldn't utter even a word!

The only thing left was to hold the treasure uselessly in my wet and trembling hand and to wait for a stop. Actually, we couldn't even think of eating. The land version of seasickness was trying to affect us all. It even succeeded with one of the passengers, because, whether he liked it or not, he quickly confessed to us of his breakfast or supper (which, of course, none of us had even dreamt of).

Such was our journey along the famous Via Ignatia. It wasn't built for us, of course, but for camels and mules, on which probably, the whole journey from Drach, via Ohrid and Salonika to Constantinople and back again was comfortable. For cars, it had great shortcomings, created only by our hurried decision.

We hadn't travelled more than half an hour, when the valley was filled with a loud sound, which seemed like a gunshot. The car stopped and we jumped out quickly and happily.

Strictly speaking, we didn't act correctly. It was widely known that attacks were quite a normal thing here, and therefore we should have crouched fearfully inside. Instead, we were all yawning and stretching ourselves outside. The driver announced that we had a flat tire and someone angrily, and I think quite frankly asked, "Isn't it a bit early for that!"

The conductor and the driver started working, while we scattered lazily beside the road, in the smoothed grass. We hid like a flock, which probably also rests in midday after grazing all morning. It must be very tiring to find something worth grazing here, for all the grass has withered, and the only things that haven't are the stones. The hot days can be endured only by the enormous sheeps' tails (babiak), diverged as candles from the Old Testament and glowing in the blazing sun.

We were not ashamed to steal mental property, so we comfortably imitated the postures of the four-legged creatures, as we watched, together with them, how the angry driver threw himself under the car, and lying on his back raised the lever, in order to be able to take out the wheel. He rolled about in the thick dust, as in fluff, and resembled a small animal sucking its mothers teats. The cows watched his actions with understanding, and probably, the only thing they wondered about, was the fact that when he finally came out, he was not refreshed and strengthened, but on the contrary, the poor man was very tired, and in the short while, with the exception of his hair and moustache, had turned white.

A shepherd came down the mountain slope, stuck one end of his staff in the ground, pressed his back on the other one, and watched the repairs quietly for half an hour. He received an award for his patience.

"Here! Make yourself a pair of rubber sandals!" said the driver finally, throwing him a piece of the torn, rubber, outer tyre.

We began cramming in car, and someone mentioned with a quiet sigh, "Yesterday they had flat tyres twice". No one reacted to this, not even with the quietest sound. It was not in our authority to decide, whether we would finish the journey at one go or with stops, and I swear, it was difficult to say which was preferable.

Soon, the car reached the curves and started upwards with a pitiful

whine, which increased proportionately with the distance, until we reached the top of the ridge at Boukovo.

We stopped there, this time not because of any reason of ours. A policeman asked for our passports. We were near the three borders: the Yugoslav, Albanian, and Greek. The representative of law and order took pleasure in our faces, while comparing them critically with the photographs, and we were delighted with the even more beautiful view: the enormous Prespa valley, towards which the road wound like a snake and stretched out into the hazy distance, where we recognized the center of the panorama, the town of Ressen. An enchanting stop!

But not for everyone. Our friend from Bitolja, not long ago, had gone through something quite different. He had started for Ohrid, and by a fatal accident, had forgotten to take the necessary identification papers. The policemen, with lengthy insistencies, had offered him hospitality, which our friend had been reluctant to accept. Finally, on the driver's advice, they had phoned Ohrid, after which he had been regarded as an incog in the car, and almost ceremoniously, had been sent straight to the superiors. So one of our not very shrewd compatriots had become a guest of the Yugoslav state, and in order not to bother with the officials' sleep, had spent three days as such.

None of us, though, was surprised by such mysterious circumstances, which gave us a feeling of greatness. So we were soon allowed to continue with a gesture of cool respect.

We squeezed together, as mosaic pieces, in the car, and allowed ourselves to be rushed towards the precipice, each one calculating quietly, approximately when should we arrive in Bitolja. There was some erroneous naivety, since we didn't include any accident in our calculations.

But after Ressen we again heard a shot, and the consequences were well known this time, the only difference being in the details. This time, it wasn't just a replacement of the inner tube, since there was no spare one, but its difficult mending. That was why the conductor and the driver arranged their instruments as in a field kitchen. A little later a policeman, who had thought it was a gunshot, came. He was disappointed, and before he left, he said sympathetically, "You have 27 kilometers to Bitolja".

"Are we ever going to arrive," remarked an anonymous passenger, looking desperately towards the conductor and the driver, who looked like cooks, and now even like bagpipers.



The driver himself, when all was ready, thought it necessary to comfort us a little. He swore to his soul that we would arrive safely. The wheel, according to him, was double. It had two tyres, one beside the other, and the second one was still all right.

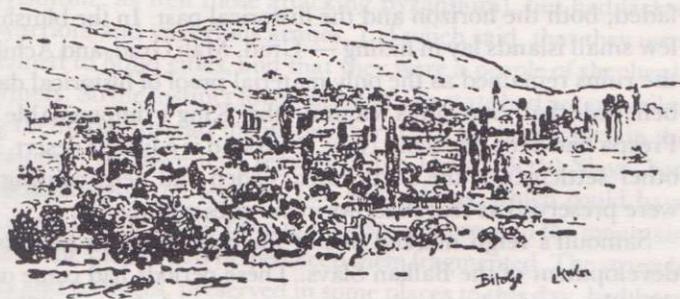
The car drove off, leaving a heap of cut off pieces on the road, like a travelling cobbler.

Just below the 2400 meter high Pelister peak, we topped the Giavato ridge without any incident, and arrived safely in the millionaires' village of Kozhani, whose sons assiduously earned the bread, and if fate willed, some capital, with which they improved their place of birth. With revived hopes, we continued towards Bitolja. A cheered up, young Turk heightened our spirits when he offered us fruits, which he had received from his mother (without a veil), after which he began singing passionately. He was helped by his desire and his high spirits. Suddenly the Turk's song stopped. There was another shot! But the car didn't stop. Only the conductor asked us to sit on the left side. We could fulfill his request, since half the people had got off at Kozhani. Only 15 kilometers were left. Still, were we going to reach our destination? I was asking myself in my heart.

We reached it!

The second tyre was punctured just before Bitolja. The car leaned sideways and stopped. The heartbroken conductor asked us to walk to the post office, where we would receive our luggage.

It was noon, exactly, when wobbling beside the crippled automobile, along the muddy Bitolja streets, we arrived.



Bitolja

Lake Prespa

We almost missed it. Partly because in Ressen, the postal car only exchanges the mail, and partly, because the nailed windows were covered with a thick, impenetrable layer of dust.

Fortunately, soon after Ressen, before the lake had vanished from the horizon, we had a flat tyre, and while the driver and the conductor were heating the glue and cutting the tyre, as if they were preparing goulash, and were testing, repairing, and blowing what not, we, comfortably situated on the slope, managed to devote ourselves to our impressions of the magnificent view, and to historical memories, thankful to the accident, which the others cursed ceaselessly.

The poor present did not correspond with the great past of this Slavic road. Almost everything, made by human hands, was from the glorious age, which nine centuries ago had spanned over the whole Balkan peninsula, and had brought fame to the miserable and great Bulgarian King Samouil. We viewed the lake from the north. The valley merged with it, with an intermediate green strip, from which numerous branchy trees stemmed attractively.

The 15 kilometers long and 20 kilometers wide surface was shining, two and a half hours away from us by foot, surrounded by mountains on all sides.

To the west was the Galichitsa ridge, cutting off the neighbouring lake Ohrid, and to the east was the almost 2500 meters high Pelister, on whose slopes we were resting.

The lake was divided almost in the middle by the Greek border, and behind it was the real historic center. But in the fog, everything faded, both the horizon and the historical past. In the bluish haze, a few small islands lay in hiding — Grad, Mali Grad, and Achil, where the ruins remained as the only material proof of historical data. It is believed that Samouil's capital, the King's impregnable retreat Prespa had been on Achil. Now, the island is a lifeless desert. His two other settlements, the small town Voden and neighbouring Ohrid, were preserved as real shadows in our present time.

Samouil's reign marked one of the most brilliant periods in the development of the Balkan Slavs. These periods had come one after the other, every hundred years or so. Around the year 800, Kroum had shaken Constantinople's gates; a hundred years later, Simeon

had proclaimed himself Tsar of Bulgarians and Greeks; and around the year 1000, Samouil had united the Balkans — to the north, as far as Sava, to the east, beyond Sredets and Preslav, and to the south and west to the seas, with a Patriarchy and 30 episcopates.

But let us imagine the situation in the Balkan peninsula at that time.

According to the Greek concept, until the arrival of the Turks, the peninsula had always been theirs. By giving priority to cunning before wisdom in politics, the Byzantines had readily turned misfortune into success: when defeated, they had left “the territory to the enemy, as a willing gift”, and when victorious, they had assumed that they had only an apparent vassal and whenever, as in the beginning with the Bulgarians, they had been forced to pay them tribute, they had considered it only as a redemption for peace. The “vassal” relationship had depended, of course, on how much luck the Greeks had had (or had not had) elsewhere.

Their cunning had not been advantageous for them. To the Bulgarians and the Serbs they had consigned the historical role, by all means to try to defeat and conquer the Byzantines.

The fact that the Bulgarians had made the first attempts in that direction, may be explained by a number of circumstances, of which the proximity of Constantinople was neither the sole, nor the decisive one.

When in the seventh century, the Emperor Heracles had ceded territories to the Slavs in the Balkans, he hadn't done it out of love, but because he had needed buffer states to repulse the raids of the nomads. However, the Slavs had served as mercenaries in the armies (the Byzantine, as well those attacking Byzantium), but had lacked great warriors and victorious armies. J. Tsviich said, that they were not inclined to build cities, and that they were a people of shepherds and farmers. So the instinct towards creating a state had not prevailed among them, but instead the instinct for tribal life had, which in the mountainous, northwestern regions of the Dinar (Serb) Slavs, had been facilitated by the terrain. The wide plains, which could have united them together, had been non-existent there, and the mountain peaks and the valleys had helped keep them fragmented. The struggle for land and pastures, preserved in some places to this day, had been predominant, and already by the end of the millenium, when Serb statesmen's names, such as Cheslav or Iovan Vladimir, with a con-

scious goal towards unity had begun to appear.

Things were quite different with the Bulgarians. The original Slavic tribe on the fertile lower Danubian Moesia, and the wide plains of Thrace and Macedonia, interrupted only by two mountain ranges, the Balkans and the Rhodopes, otherwise, enough territorial conditions for the unification of the people of eight tribes had existed. And when the alien, not numerous, but belligerent tribe of the Tartar Bulgars had conquered them, and afterwards imperceptibly merged with them, a new whole, refreshed by the bellicose element, capable of creating a state, and supported by nature in its enterprise, had appeared. They had widened their authority over Thrace and Macedonia with comparative ease, but when they tried to conquer the northwestern, mountainous corner and to subject the Dinar Serbs, their attempts were less successful and lacked constant results. In the ninth century, Mikhail Boris, the father of Simeon the Great, had already reigned over Ohrid, where he had sent Clement and Nahum, banished from our lands, as Christians missionaries.

When, by the end of the tenth century, Simeon's Empire had begun to decline, through the fault of his successors, the Greeks had managed to subject the eastern half, while in the western a ferment had remained, in the person of the mysterious Voivoda Nichola, chief of the Birzatsi tribe, which has preserved its name to this day and whose southern territory we had just pass through. Living just north of Lake Prespa, Nichola and his four sons started rebelling when the Empire had begun declining, and at the most difficult moment, the young Samouil, who had miraculously restored the great Slavic Empire, was enthroned. Its nucleus was in Macedonia, but the state had stretched from Greece to Sava, and from the Adriatic to Sofia. If Macedonia had ever become a political term, it would have been then. The moment had been ripe for the creation of a unified South Slavdom.

But it had never happened. During Samouil's reign, in 1014, his Empire received a heavy blow from the Greek Emperor Basil II Bulgarslayer, and in 1018 (during the reign of Samouil's third successor) it collapsed.

A story, starting well and ending painfully, often interpreted by poets, is connected with its downfall. In Zeta, later known as Montenegro, the Serb ruler Vladimir had lived. With Samouil's aggressiveness he had naturally taken the Greek side. When they had

met in battle, in 989, Samouil defeated him, took him as a prisoner and locked him up in Prespa, the island capital on lake Prespa.

According to the custom of the time, the Tsar's daughter had her father's permission to visit the prisoners together with her maid. When she met Vladimir, she fell in love with him, and by entreaties was allowed to marry him. The Tsar granted the region of Drach to the couple, who governed it as real benefactors. Their memory is still honoured in Albania, and Vladimir has been proclaimed a saint.

Of course, he had to earn this honour dearly.

After the one year reign of Samouil's son Radomir, the sly Vladislav had managed to get hold of the throne. He had decided to get rid of Vladislav, so he had invited him.

In those times invitations were a risky business. In the old songs that praise heroes, we never hear of the heroes crying, except when fate uses its smiling mask — disguised hospitality. They always asked for their wives advice, while hiding their tears.

So Vladislav was careful. First, he had feigned, that he would be happy to see his cousin, the Princess. He had entrusted the invitation to the Bishop (according to other legends to three persons) and had sent a gold cross as a present to Vladimir. But Vladimir said, "Christ died on a wooden cross". So the Bishop came a second time, bringing a wooden cross. Vladimir had finally responded to the invitation. He had gone to Prespa with his wife. When he had arrived, he had gone straight to the church to pray. But he had not escaped his fate. The fiends had surrounded the church and death had overtaken him at its gates, just as our St. Vaclav*. He was buried in Prespa. Later, his wife had ordered that his grave be moved to his home. She entered a monastery herself, performing only good deeds as always.

Vladislav outlived his act only by four years. He was killed during the siege of Drach, in a battle with the Greeks. Basil II had burned Samoil's palaces in Ohrid and had taken away all who were left of the sovereign's family to Constantinople.

Few records of Samouil's time have remained in the area. Most valuable from the historical, point of view, are the discoveries of the archeological expedition of the Russian Constantinople Institute of the past century. Its members T.Y. Uspensky and P.N. Miliukov found an inscription on a demolished tombstone in the village of Gierman, which read that the tombstone was placed by Samouil, in

●A Czech king. Translator's note.

memory of his father Nichola, his mother Ripsimia, and brother David. The inscription is the oldest record in the local Slavic language.

We could have daydreamed for a long time, caught in the spider's net of ancient images and illusions, peering into the haze, if the snorting motor and the shout "All abroad!", hadn't drawn us out of our trance.

We looked northward, and the image of the present Resen came before our eyes. It reminded of its own events. They were of most recent times. First of all, there was the founding of the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation in 1893, which carried out the glorious Macedonian uprising on St. Illiya's day in 1903, and secondly, the beginning of the Young Turks Revolution, when on June 6, 1908, Nyazi Bei born here formed a group of infantrymen, and with some local Turks went into the mountains, and so gave its initial push, which culminated with the mutiny against Sultan Abdul Hamid. In such a way, he opened one of history's locks, whose current started flowing slowly at first, until it finally overflowed with the bloody inundation of the World War.

Jammed in the hot compartment, we forgot the past disturbances, because of the present ones.

II. In Krali Marco's Land

Prillep, Krali Marko's Birthplace.

One understands three things from those words. First of all, Marko's fortress, the huge ruins over the basalt, two-humped ridge, which in the beginning of the Pelagonia plain ends the mountain range with Babouna; secondly, the old Prillep, stuck in the rocks, under the ruins, now called Markovgrad* or Markov Varosh; and finally, present Prillep, a town with 20,000 inhabitants, founded by the Turks at a half hours walk away, down in the valley (Turks have never liked climbing hills unnecessarily).

I was nearing it-stirred, mentally and physically.

Physically, owing to the narrow-gauge line Bitolja Gradsko, built in six months' time during the World War, so solidly, that even though it was still temporary, it had served well enough, without any basic repairs, and at the same time, so poorly, that the train whirled like a trinket and shook like a toy. "Are you going to travel with that Samovar?" I asked before I left Bitolja. "Why, it can topple over any time!" One shouldn't be afraid, because in such cases, with its slow velocity, it will just pour out its passengers carefully, if they don't jump out by themselves. But at least, the phournitsa (a small stove) created a happy mood, reminding us of Marko and his childhood, at the time that he had united the charm of a good-hearted child with such a strength, that God had had to take away half of it, "so that he wouldn't do anything to the world". The locomotive, looking quite new, attracted all sorts of animals at each station (at one, I counted 8 pigs, 5 ducks, a lamb, and 4 chickens). The bravest of them entered, or rather dashed, into the car, lead by the knowledge, aquired from experience, that after the feasts of the passengers, they could always find plentiful scraps. Just as Marko, who had easily pulled the huge stone, after sucking from the miraculous breasts of the wood-nymph, the little machine moved off with such a jolt, after being filled up with water, that everything inside lurched. The chickens fell off the car, like ripe, early pears, while the other frightened animals scattered in

●Marko's town.

all directions, and we, like beans in the palm of a naughty boy, jumped around the car. We were subjected, not for the last time, to the humorous mood, towards which Marko had had a weakness, and which had found a good reception in his native parts.

Mentally, because of some fears. I wasn't afraid that I might meet the famous hero, since I didn't believe in the legends that he was still alive, but even if I did, I hoped it would happen when I could show him the songs of him, which I had collected, or when I could ask him to pose, so that I could draw his picture (one could imagine how he would sham, since we know how he had looked from the songs, when he had stood face to face with the incomprehensible human stupidity. "Mrke brke nisko obesio" — his black moustache is drooping, of his black moustache is falling on his shoulders.

I was afraid of something else: wouldn't Prillep disappoint me? Fate Sometimes delivers disappointments together with pleasure. The Balkans have always been treacherous, as Saturn, who ate his own children. Only a few of the ancient towns had remained. Each people that had arrived here, including the Slavs, had readily destroyed whatever they had layed hands on, and what had been left, had been finished off by the medieval and contemporary crusaders. The flood of history, which worked here, was still going on like a ceaseless steam-roller. All the traces of the Turkish domination were constantly being destroyed everywhere, even the beautiful things that had been created, with a blind prejudice.

But we still had a long way to go, when my doubts started to vanish.

The Pelagonia valley, a compact, green corn area, between the magnificent limestone ridges in the distance, was barred by basalt rocks, which like an indented steel rasp, were stuck in the grey azure of the sky. The irregular ruins of the teeth resembled lined up soldiers. A white point gleamed on the height — the Treskavets monastery. Later, from the village, the features of the castle could be discerned. In the lowlands, enclosed by a huge amphitheater, the railroad coiled and twisted towards Gradsko, and on the green carpet below, we saw the smiling face of the town, a garden, which was a magnificent contrast to the gigantic rocky surroundings. A few broken down minarets, with clock and church towers, were sticking out of the dark-green surface of the dense trees, among which the familiar, charming, Greek-type houses, with their eaves hanging low, lay half hidden (they had numerous large windows, spacious verandahs, and wide, shady eaves).



The whole town was like a park and that's how the Turks had wanted it. We looked over the enormous frying pan, open to the southwest. The place resembled the mountainous Italian towns, with its broken up rocks and dense shadows in the scorching sun. We foolishly asked, about some large rocks, believing them to be castles, which we couldn't find on the map.

There was only one castle, above the town, as a last bastion for the wild mountain range, spreading its gilded peaks, decorated with all sorts of bizzare heads (renamed into granny, frog, etc.), to the north. That was Krali Marko's castle.

We relaxed contentedly, Yes, the great hero, whose name and deeds filled the minds and the hearts of all South Slavs, could have been born here, the soil was as he had wanted it (he had refused to plough in a soft soil). As it is said in the song, he had helped his father (King Vulkashin) to clear the forests, and while the father had gone home at noon, to fetch a pitcher of water, the son had cut all the trees. We agreed that the castle, with its sharp, pointed rocks, whose enormous walls resembled fairy-tale dragons, was quite appropriate for the wood-nymphs that had followed Marko, mounted on stags, which they had lashed with poisonous snakes.

The image of the insidious King Vulkashin, who according to tradition had killed the entrusted him son of Doushan, Ourosh, emerged from the bluish shadows. The glorious Bulgarian Tsar Samouil appeared. In 1014, his great life had ended here, when after losing the battle, he had seen the 15,000 blinded soldiers returning home and his heart went to pieces. And what was the history of this place? No one could tell for sure. Yet, it seems, that it became important from the moment, when the wretched mankind had invented weapons, as a cursed proof for the fact that our souls lack the necessary goodwill, and our speech the necessary clarity, so that we may live on good terms in this wide world.

A brisk gypsy boy picked up our bags. We followed obediently, while the garden town seemed to be showing its reverse, and not its facade. Its charms, hidden behind the garden walls, it offered only to its own, local people, while the streets were covered with a thick layer of dust, in which we were half-hidden. The innkeeper consoled us, poor fellows (and himself, along with us). "Wait till you've seen Skopje!". But he soon understood that here also, we, the prodigal worshippers would be remembered by nothing.

A very small area in the town center, whose lawn, white as straw, urged upon us the thought "why is it exactly under the sun that one tans?", was encircled with thick barbed wire, which could be seen everywhere—rolling about in the fields and mountains, together with sharpnels and other leftovers from the World War. The small padlocked gate barred us from seeing, whether it was a trench, kept as a memory of the military hurricane. But the huge board, nailed on high poles, notified us that it was the Wilson Park. Some flowers, which couldn't be found below, were drawn around the sign. We now understood what the padlock was for: to defend against the sunstroke, which the simple-minded foreigner might receive in the "Park".

It was not for the locals. They had more than enough natural pleasures at home, as we noticed whenever we looked in impertinently and greedily through the half open gates. The yards were fabulous gardens. Roses, basil, petunias, gloxinias, oleander, sunflowers, babiaks (sheeps' tails), mallows, sword lilies, creeping beans, clematis — all these were crossed and interwoven in the most charming fashion with grape-vines and tree branches, creating an enchanting garden, which merged with the houses through their balconies, alcoves, arbours, and most of all through their porches — rooms without outside walls, where one lived, slept, worked, feasted, and at the same time recieved and entertained guests. Everywhere one could see exquisitely arranged groups of people, covered by lights and scorched shadows, while the wonderful thickened ends of their distaffs, glowing like torches, were most impressive. It was like an instant kaleidoscope.

Why was it so fresh there, while in the American thinker's "park" it was a real Sahara?



Priliep

Priliep

The "park" was a product of modern times, while the other of old, Turkish times, when the cult towards water had been everyone's credo. Everywhere around the buildings, thanks to the brisk Prilepets and Dubnishte streams, which joined in Prilep and divided it into three parts, abundant brooks flowed in paved ditches, deviating into each house.

There was enough water in the marketplace, as well. That was why the local "charshiya" was so charming, the cleanest in the Balkans. Everything shone. The multi-coloured products of nature glowed as if they were made of coloured glass. The red and carmine peppers and tomatoes looked as if the gypsy shoeblacks had shined them with the same virtuosity and care and with the help of the same polishes, waxes, pastes, deerskins and cloths, with which they gave an unbelievable lustre to our shoes.

When one adds the small shops with the copper cauldrons, braziers and brass querns, the silverware merchants, the embroidering tailors, the shoemakers, the saddlers, all arranged in lines according to their professions, so that (as we believed) the impression would not be spoiled, one could understand the joy with which the kids ran to and fro, the pride which each shopkeeper pointed towards his shop, and the pleasure, gleaming in the eyes of the inquisitive peasant, who walked around with his family and his horse, and with his costume enriched the picture of swarming Turks, Albanians, Rumanians and gypsies. All was an endless carnival and the shouts and the roars were its spell-binding fanfares.

We were amazed by that astonishing town. We couldn't stop wondering. A Serbian sign, placed upside down on a kiosk, which read: "Available Douvana No: 10", showed the unexpected (unusual in our country) readers' interest. It was not necessary to push up the little window in the post office, since one could easily get his stamps through the broken glass, without cutting oneself. In the district government's offices, my attention, as a gatherer of folk songs, was quite insistently called to the glorious Vuk Karadjich's collection, written "in our beautiful, state language" and published a hundred years ago. Later in the evening, in the Turkish bath, we faded in the twilight of the marble cell, resembling a Byzantine temple with its columns and arches. We poured water over our sweating bodies and absorbed the rich impressions of the interesting day, and at the same time expected the new one.

Marco's Town

Sat Marko in a golden castle.
Its gates
were really exquisite,
decorated well, and very white.
The eaves of pure lead,
the windows shone lime mirrors,
shone afar, my son!
All gates were strong, of iron,
with gold ducats they were covered

The ruins of this Balkan castle, the largest and with the thickest walls, were merely the coarse edge of the bluish-grey basalt ridge. They still overwhelmed and petrified one with their proportions, but did not fascinate him with their magnificence, now preserved only in the Bulgarian folk song. By 1670, when the Turkish historian Evlia Chelebi had visited these places, the castle had already been non-existent. Only in the barn there had been grain in abundance, mainly millet (traces of it were still visible) and in the three preserved buildings a watchman had guarded the villagers' implements.

Inside the castle walls there were: the building that could be seen from far away, called The Loom, the destroyed church of King Vulkashin with mural paintings of angels, part of a chapel on whose walls the knights had scrawled illegible inscriptions, parts of columns and capitals. Everything had been so enormous that the decayed castle had a large free space in the middle, called charshiya (market-place) even now. Everything had been gigantic, as Krali Marko, of whose so far recorded songs a whole library could be compiled.

We weren't surprised by the vast ocean of legends and myths, whose creators had always lacked strong enough exaggerations and words of praise. One could not be surprised by their imagination in that turbulent sea of rocks and stones that rolled together with the steep ledge towards the northern slope and stopped just before the place, where once the glorious city of Prillep had stood. Now it was an ordinary village, called Marcovgrad or Markovvarosh. One could only wonder that for the person of whom the song had such vast knowledge, history had almost none. We, who were standing in the heroic surroundings, felt the contradiction most keenly. The spot that

we stood on was a natural ruler's capital with its location, height and appearance. One could sweep with a glance and watch, even in the dark, the wide Pelagonia plain, and the majestic, surrounding, mountain ranges. Armed force had probably been present here from pre-historic times. We could not but assume that the ruins were not a record of the mythological hero, but that he, i.e. his imaginary figure, was a record of the place, which for a long time had been not only a natural military defensive point or springboard of aggression, but had also been endowed by nature with beauty and rich decorations, so that it could torment human imagination. We were ready to believe everything that we heard in the folk songs, which had always kindled their listeners' imagination, often giving them an impulse to create new ones. The vagueness of the historically obscure Krali Marco had facilitated the birth and the evolution of the legend.

The village, the one time Prillep, wasn't just an appendage to the mountains, but a city of which, as of Ohrid, it was said that it had had as many churches as were the days (i.e. the saints) of the year. We tripped over their abundant remains. Nine rare buildings, even though they were half destroyed, were a museum of art, presenting the transition from the Greek-Bulgarian architecture, from the time of the Assens (or before them), to the Serbian-Macedonian period. The archless basilicas passed into arched ones, trying to reach the cruciform Byzantine plan. The thin Greek bricks, which had taken a lot of the builders' time, had created different, as if woven, decorations and had joined the stone elements. Stones, cut in smooth lines, alternated with double rows of bricks, while the wide lines of the marble lime were not only an uncomparable weld, but also an element, which decorated the St. Nichola church, whose wonderful facade was probably the oldest, St. Peter enchanted with its wonderful brick apse. The monumental, semi-demolished St. Anastasius, built of stone and brick, undoubtedly belonged to the Serbian period. St. Dimitar could be singled out with its preserved condition and slightly ascending dome.

The local Serbian teacher took us everywhere. We finished our tour in a shady shop, where we eagerly quenched our thirst with soda water. The lively man had travelled a lot. He had been to America and he introduced us to his neighbour, who had also returned from there not long ago. He earned his money abroad, like many of the local men, returning from time to time with some savings, in order to

use them for the good of his family and to repair his house. The neighbour greeted us affably, since in America he had met some Czechs and had liked them very much. He told us of the happiness he had felt abroad, when he had come to know them more intimately.

This provided an occasion to talk of the Czech people, since the teacher also loved it. He was interested in Slavdom in general. He had arrived at a certain view for our common future, "You, Czechs, are most educated among the Slavs, while we are most belligerent. If we unite, we can lead all Slavdom."

We thanked him for the compliment, but pointed out that the first delicate point of his theory was the unilateral answer that he had given to the question, what the priorities of his own people were. Then I added that he should distinguish between the state and the people, as differing concepts. The army was a state body and it could be of use to the people only if the cause had any cultural significance. Even though many present events were disappointing, mankind, on its own, was moving the center of gravity of its struggle in the cultural field. The Czech people was unanimous in one thing. Militarism was not its goal, but just a means of self-preservation. Even though it had been educated in an anti-militaristic spirit in Austria, it had shown during the World War what it was capable of on the battlefield. I even marred the teacher's happiness by saying, "Even though the military operations of the Serbian army during the World War received world-wide recognition, I cannot but place our actions higher. You have always had a military spirit, and an army for a whole century, while a military spirit we have never had, and our army had to be raised hurriedly in different parts of the world. Nevertheless, it performed wonders in Siberia, in France, and in Italy, as well". I also added that if we were going to speak of all Slavdom, we could not neglect its largest representative, the Russian people. "It is the largest mystery on the globe today, an enormous question mark, and the whole world is watching it intently ..."

A bit surprised and shocked, the teacher sighed, "Of course, Russia! But only at home. It doesn't even want to hear of us, abroad, immersed in chaos and need".

As if trying to excuse himself, he added, "How many of them we have here! We don't know what's going to happen to them. You'll meet one today, an abbot in the monastery, stout, frowning, gloomy, a grumbler. It's difficult to talk to him!"

We went towards the monastery, the only item that remained on our list.

It was the St. Archangel monastery, founded, according to tradition, by Krali Marko. It attracted me chiefly by the paintings of King Vulkashin and his son Marko.

We walked along the buildings, adorned with golden garlands of dried tobacco leaves. Bare rocks towered above the town and allowed us only an occasional glimpse of the castle walls. But a few minutes later, the rocky confusion passed into a smooth wall, on which, like an eagle with outspread wings, the monastery gleamed; a white temple, resembling a birds carcass, stood in the middle, while the wings with cells and balconies on both sides, were like the wings of a bird.

I didn't know what the basis of the legend, was, that the hero of the South Slavs had founded the monastery. But if the building with its appearance didn't represent its patron, the winged St. Archangel, then it must have been an involuntary expression of the flight of the essence of Marko's poetic image. The impressioin could not be diminished even by the images in my mind of Ostrog in Montenegro, St. Petka in Ohrid, St. Illiya in Skoplje, and other southern monasteries, which also resembled aeries hanging from the rocky walls. This one, though, resembled an eagle about to fly off.



An outing from Priliep to Krali Marko's Castle

Two painted figures stopped us at the entrance of the temple. They were damaged (how couldn't they be, when for half a millenium they had been exposed to sun and rain) and redrawn, but most amazingly, the picture and its separate parts were preserved. The figure on the right was of a young man with a king's mantle and a large cross in his right hand, and a scepter in his left. The deacon's stole revealed that he was the patron of the church, while the short sign read: the pious King Marko. The figure on the left was of an old man with a majestic garb. The sign was illegible, but it was rightly believed to be that of Marko's father King Vulkashin.

Marko had come here to fast, to repent for his sins, to confess, and to take his Eucharist. Whenever he had prepared for his prayers, he had ordered his wife, "Prepare my church garb and my lithurgical books!"

The voice of the abbot, who was singing his prayer, echoed from inside.

The singing stopped abruptly and the clergyman came out. He had a tall figure and a gloomy appearance.

The teacher introduced us, myself and my son, adding, "From Prague".

"So you are Czechs?" uttered the cleric unexpectedly, in a cold voice. At the same time, as if he had just come to his senses, he added reproachfully, "Yes, Czechs! You Czechs now want to play a leading role among Slavs!"

I was amazed. Not because of the content of the words, which I hadn't even dreamed of hearing, but because of the impoliteness, and the fact that they were coming from a Russian, a representative of a nation always known to be gentle and polite in society. And finally, the reprimanding, even hostile tone of voice stupefied me.

I did not hesitate to take an instant position, which suited the present moment. I answered firmly, "It is not true that we want to play it, but at the moment we are playing it!" It was a sentence which I would not have dared utter if the bitter man had not himself placed it on my lips.

The abbot was astounded. I took advantage of the situation and added, "It is not our fault that it is so and that the leadership has passed into our hands. We prefer Russia to take that role and play it well and with understanding. Our ideal will be realized if Slavdom in general can advance so much that the leading role can be picked up by one people after the other."

The abbot softened. He showed us around the church, whose interior, owing to the frequent restorations, was damaged, and once again proved the well known truth that the cares of enthusiasts often inflicted greater damages to cultural monuments than the enemies' raids or the influence of time, often slandered unjustly.

We started back towards present Prillep, founded by the Turks in the lowlands, "a cannon's shot away", as Evlia Chelebi had written.

On Treskavets

Those were unforgettable days!

I woke up in a wide, spacious room, in which the first rays of the morning sun entered from two sides (directly from the east, and after being reflected by the orange coloured mountains, from the west), while my astonished ear heard an unusual melody. The golden tones were drifting in the air. what was it? A music clock?

I was still drowsy and couldn't collect myself. Truly, I was the victim of that vice, since each day we wandered from one place to another. The unknown world around was like a merry-go-round and



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Skriba

Krali Marko's Castle

in the morning it was difficult to tell right away where chance had allowed us a brief refuge. But here the doubts were greater. The incredible silence, mysterious and penetrating, increased them. And in its abyss, the sounds echoed even louder and I couldn't guess whether they were coming from metal strings or from bells. The alluring impression sooner lulled than cleared the senses.

Nothing was left to me, except to recount yesterday's events.

We had left the village of Dabnitsa, situated in a deep rocky valley, early in the morning. We had spent the night at the mayor's house, whose grey walls had been decorated with green fig-trees and chestnut trees. He had given us a dinner which had begun with a ritual — the washing of our hands. In the morning each of us had mounted one of the beasts that Christ had preferred to ride. The excellent animals had more intelligence than we had courage; it was enough to set them onto the path and they would start walking bravely along the rocky mountain slope towards our destination. The riding had otherwise been wonderful. Nature had frivolously squandered picturesque confusions of rocks, opening wide views towards the foggy ravines and the magnificent mountain slopes. Two hours later, very thirsty, we had arrived at the monastery; perched among basalt giants having the wildest forms, at a height of 1500 meters. A polite abbot and a gentle and pleasant monk had greeted us with a calm and frank affability and had asked us immediately if we had any wish.

"Some milk."



St. Archangel below Krali Marko's Castle



"We have none but we will provide it," they had answered.

And they milked a sheep. Then they gave us bread and we ate and drank. When they left us to take care of their duties we did not remain alone. A turtledove flew over to our table and started pecking with us. A lamb rubbed against us and licked our hands with its soft lips. The cook, a Don cossack with a giant's body and a kind-hearted appearance sat opposite us, leaned his elbows with rolled up sleeves on the table and with the palm of his hand propped against his wide jaw and happily watched us eat greedily, not knowing how authentically he resembled Repin's hot-tempered cossacks, prompting their answer to the Turkish Sultan, to the clerk.

These memories were accompanied by music. I already knew where I was, but I still didn't know what the ringing of the Loretan bells meant. Where were they coming from?

Out of curiosity I went over to the bay window, which was more than a meter deep. I could see the Shar mountain, which was slowly dropping its bluish night garment and was putting on the orange brocade of its morning garb.

I looked down and I saw a carnival. A procession of cows was walking with dignity, as if during a religious service. The bells on their necks were swinging as if they were in the hands of ministrants. Could they comprehend that they were turning the everyday moment into a holiday?

I wanted to be on the porch where a wash basin was ready, but I stopped on the threshold, before a new glorification of the resurrected day. The eaves with Turkish tiles on the old church with four towers, immersed in the shade of the round yard, glittered like silver and gold fish scales and flirted with the colours of sea shells and pearls, and the colours of the rainbow. It was triumphant, optical symphony of the elements!

Everywhere there was silence and its likeness, since the dark spot — a monk — walked silently towards the church for his morning prayers and merged with the shade of the deserted yard. The blackness of his kamelaukion and monk's cassock did not come from a lack of dyes, as silence was not a lack of sound. I washed and dried myself in the blazing sunlight. Then I started my tour in the unknown surroundings.

It was as if I was in a bastion. The group of monastery buildings seemed to be a bastion of the Church, rather than a cloister for human

beings. Only the wooden balconies, encircling the yard as a cart basket, softened the impression.

The numerous doors of the guest rooms were silently closed. There were no guests, with the exception of two monks. It wasn't the anniversary of the monastery's patron day, when the place filled with people and was like a boiling cauldron. A fascinating hubbub would reign then and the monastery would need a whole year's rest to return to its everyday routine. That was why it was so violently silent. The hushed singing of the monks, which was coming from the cells as from a dungeon and was becoming excited, seemed only to make the silence more expressive.

I toured the century-old walls of the church, of which it was known that King Miliutin had renewed it at the beginning of the fourteenth century. The plaque, which had been built in the northern wall, read: In the month of January died God's servant Dabizhiv, Enochiar (manager of the roads) of Tsar Ourosh (Miliutin) of all Serbian, Greek, and Maritime lands. 6870 (1362).

What had been before that was not known. It was certain only, that the church and the whole monastery were much older. During Miliutin's time the churches had been built with a nave and two aisles. Here there were actually two basilicas, whose relationship was mysterious, since one was smaller and should have been, according to practice, older. But it was of a later period. The window of the older church was cut from a single stone, showing an Armenian influence found before Miliutin's time and maybe even before Slavic time. Some common characteristics with Bulgarian churches, as for example those in Stanimaka and Bachkovo, indicated the time of the Bulgarian Tsars, the Assen, whose authority had covered the region. The narthexes, originally designated for the "repenting" and chiefly for newly christened pagans, had already been included in the original plan. The mural paintings were from different ages. In the small church they were from the sixteenth century and in the catacombs (in the southwestern corner) from the fourteenth century. The mural paintings in the central dome were new. The shepherd filled in the scant data by telling me that the monastery had been empty and deserted for seventy years "because the Turks slayed the djatsi and the vladalye (the monks and the high-ranking)". The bloodshed had been awful. An animal had been created from the blood and no one had dared come near because of it. But once lightning had struck the

animal and had killed it. Nevertheless, no one had dared come for a long time, until one day a shepherd settled here and had become a monk.

Roman architraves with pieces of cornices and marble busts, and well known Roman sepulchral figures with broken off arms stuck out from the unplastered walls. The speculations that they were remains of Greek or Roman pagan deities did not seem odd to us, the uneducated. The place was so fantastically situated that it was equally appropriate for the religious sages and for the prudent servants of the pagan temples. Human nature worships the mysterious and strong effects, and under their pressure it is more susceptible to all religious flames.

Of course, the remains of classic buildings and statues were not a rarity in the Balkans and may be found not only on the walls but also buried in the ground. The Prague professor L.N. Okunjev recounted that he had found a graveyard in Macedonia, in which a peasant had used a Roman statue for a tombstone. He had only changed the name, because the existing one had not pleased him, but had been content with the resemblance.



The Treskavets Monastery

Everything was mysterious and unexplored. Some openings with plaster remains could be seen in the high, inaccessible walls. Maybe they had been death chambers for the condemned or for the willing hermits, or were remains of fortifications, since the monasteries had also been fortresses. Some inquisitive people had found out that human bones were withering away inside.

A few seats had been cut out into the rocks in front of the monastery. We sat in them after supper, with our hosts, and continued our great silence, which was an all powerful ruler here. Dusk was closing in on the mountains, but they took a long time to immerse fully in it.

We spoke almost in whispers, of King Miliutin's chainmail, which had been shown to us in the catacombs, or of King Doushan, whose royal decree was one of the rare records of the monastery's past.

Otherwise, the law of silence could be interrupted only accidentally, as when an irritated bull stuck his horns into the thigh of an innocent ox. Immediately, of course, a great din (human and animal) set in throughout the whole monastery. The ox groaned as if it was dying. While the cowherds yelled for help and ran to and fro with lanterns. The monks hurried to the barn, where the miserable animal was jumping on two legs, with raised hind parts, in front of the bull. This continued for quite some time until the ox was relieved of the inconvenient condition and Its Majesty Silence was again placed on the throne.

Its authority was pleasant. It excited us only in the beginning. Our nerves were used to seeking tranquility and once they had found it, they were left with no purpose and became confused. But they soon adapted to it, found their place in it and got used to it. Afterwards they felt as if they were in heaven.

The conditions were excellent for artistic preoccupation. Nature seemed to have opened its fathomless treasure-house; everything was animated. The goats, wandering around the mountains in picturesque groups, arranged themselves in coquettish poses on the rocks, looking towards the artist as if they wanted to say: "Paint!" They seemed to care so much for the artist that they sprinkled the road beforehand with small pellets, their own of course. Or was that a reminder that the road of art was slippery?

All this had quite a different meaning for the young Serbian artist, who had arrived almost at the same time as myself, and had brought twelve canvases on a donkey. When the mountain winds knocked down his model and shattered his easel on the rocks, he hurriedly left us and the monastery, leaving everything behind.

III. THE MIGRANT WORKERS

An outing to Smilevo.

On a wonderful morning in Bitolja, at around five o'clock, I was inserted into the only empty space, narrow as a sitting tub, in the back of the tiny car.

The vehicle was like a small fish. The two front seats were occupied by the young, curly-haired driver and stocky Kocho born in Smilevo, (my voluntary guide).

The precautions, which the two had taken against the August heat, were quite different, but nevertheless, they suited them both. The pretty straw Girardi fit the lively young man well, while the dark, leather hat almost merged with the dense, stubby beard of the plump Macedonian, both ends of whose short, thick, and bristling moustache were removed away from each other, towards each end of the pole, as two rivals after an argument. Because of the dense as bushes brows, his eyes looked like a heap of oak branches, divided by a protruding rock — his nose. No other type of nose could be found here.

We spend on, while our heads were occupied with . . . women.

I unwittingly betrayed not only the secret, but my clumsiness as well. Even in such travel-notes the reader prefers to be kept in suspense. And why should I share right away something that I did not learn all at once myself? I know that I awaited Sundaý's Smilevo trip eagerly, since I had heard that the most beautiful Macedonian costumes were worn there. I also knew that the good Kocho M., otherwise a contractor and a builder, was going to see his wife and his daughter. But I knew nothing of the young driver. My curiosity had been aroused by his dreamy eyes and by his words, before we had started, when he had refused to have a cup of coffee with me.

"Thank you," he had said with a smile. "I can't. I haven't slept most of the night. I had awful nightmares. During our trip the benzine burst twice into flames. I don't dare increase my excitement."

I hadn't been surprised by what he had said. It wasn't for the first time that a driver refused something stimulating or refreshing. The tough local boys were forced to drive like evil spirits (the roads didn't allow them to drive like evil spirits (the roads didn't allow them to drive in any other way) and no wonder that their excited minds flew forward in the distance, even at night, when they were sleeping.

This time I was probably mistaken. The young man had not slept for another reason, which only he, who allows himself to be patiently lead across the desert of landscape descriptions, can learn.

We finally lost Pelister, whose wide, and beautifully modelled and painted slopes, with the drowsing Bitolja and its slender minarets, presented a harmonious background of gentle hues and whose end, thank God, was visible only with its large proportions, and not in detail, which would have delayed us. We were speeding towards the northeast, under the bare, dry mountain slopes, glimpsing the Pelagonia plain, which was transformed into a sea of corn, to the right. In the distance ahead, the valley was enclosed by a group of basalt peaks near Prillep.

We covered everything that we saw with clouds of heavy dust.

We turned left, to the northwest, in an elongated valley, in which there wasn't even a trace of a forest. Burnt grass merged with the light stubble-field and the dried up soil. A great sadness had covered the otherwise pleasant picture. Thousands of golden-grey shades glittered under the blue-green sky. The outlines of a shepherd and his flock were disappearing; everything was covered with the same colours and shades. If it weren't for the alert dogs, or rather their noisy manifestations, may be we wouldn't have noticed anything.

We passed through the village of Koukourechani, where girls, carrying water in the early morning, unwittingly formed sweet groups. We passed through the next village (with a small number of inhabitants), speeding on the wide, comparatively good road towards the bluish, afforested mountain, whose ridge was gilded by a small, ripened field.

Kocho turned around and said, "Smilevo is over there", and his eyes sparkled.

The road became narrower and turned towards a narrow, overgrown valley. Its bottom was a lush meadow, its slopes thick coats of shady trees. We crossed a narrow-gauge rail-road, built quickly and not badly during the World War by the Germans, of which the people

in Macedonia, from all the armies that had passed through or had stayed there, had the best memories. We regretted that it had been left to the mercy of fate (in some other places the same rail-roads worked excellently).

We passed through a Turkish village, in which only a single minaret had managed to pierce the dense trees, and on the by now broken down road, with the sad moaning of the car, we started climbing up towards Smilevo, which glistened up in the distance. We arrived at the end of the valley, surrounded by a few deep ravines, in which an interesting, terraced village was embedded. We looked towards Smilevo as an actor looks towards an audience. All the houses, without an exception, were one-storeyed. It was a village like a town, the more so as there were no fields, and consequently almost no farm buildings.

It was the typical local picture. The whole male population was scattered all over the world, seeking bread for itself and its family. Smilevians were by and large "masters"—master-masons, master-carpenters, and sometimes, when someone showed greater skill, builders, or even contractors, as was the case with Kocho. In such a way, someone might earn a fortune, which would not alienate him from his home or his family. They would always return, and not only to improve their houses but to contribute with their savings for the construction of churches and schools as well. Everywhere in the Balkans one met "Macedonians". Some, who worked as lumberjacks, carried bucksaws on their shoulders and axes in their belts, while others opened shops. Others even crossed the Atlantic Ocean. I met some who had travelled to quite a few places. They called it profit. "Going on a profit" was a typically Macedonian expression. It reminded one of the Russian word "pechal"* , which meant sorrow or grief. Kocho was constantly "gone on profit", but not far away — he worked in Bitolja. He was coming to see his family, which was not on vacation but lived in Smilevo permanently.

After the bridge, the car stopped and Kocho picked up the provisions, which he had bought in Bitolja and led the way to his house. We climbed vehemently, but not very quickly.

We stopped in front of a one-storeyed house. The old father and the young wife, with one of the children in her hands and the other in a

●Profit=*pechalba* in Bulgarian. Translator's note.



“kroshnya” (cradle), happily greeted the head of the family. The “batsuvane” (kissing) was endless. The little girl “batsila roka” (handed out her hand) to her father.

The two of us, myself and the driver, formed a silent background to the whole scene. Finally, we also “batsime roki” with the others, greeted by the hearty “zdravo”!

We entered into the ground floor (the “pondil”, where different tools were kept) and climbed up the stairs to the first floor, where a “razboy” (loom) and a chest with clothes and different other objects were to be found in the anteroom. Kocho guided us to a bright room with an excellent view of the amphitheatrically situated village. The main piece of furniture in the room was the huge, wide bed. The “mindhers” (low divans) with cloth and reed carpets were along the walls. In the middle of the room there was a table with a couple of chairs.

Kocho devoted himself to his family and his house duties, while I remained in the room with the driver. We walked over to the window and watched the landscape. The air was fragrant and our hearts melted. The young man stated his admiration for the beautiful picture before us. We started talking about each other. I liked his young eyes and the enthusiastic and cordial voice with which he spoke. He told me about himself. He was a Serb from Shoumadia (in the southwestern corner of the former Serbian Kingdom). Still a child he was drafted in the army. When he returned, he found no one. Part of his family was killed and the other part had scattered away. He had heard nothing of any of them. He was alone in the world (maybe that was why he trusted me, the foreigner, so much). His name was Stahne and that was how he wanted me to call him.

Kocho came back to show us around the village. He was proud of it.

First he took me to the church, which the inhabitants of Smilevo had built not long ago by themselves, using their own savings. I was most interested by the ritual, which was being performed inside. There was a baptism. The married women with the infants and their godmothers were alone responsible for the preparations of the numerous baptisms. They handed out sweetened wheat, which everyone present had to taste.

I was amazed by the magnificence of the dresses and the artistry of the local embroidresses. The yellowish-white woollen dress was decorated with wide crimson strips and high, heavy, overlaying em-

broidery. The light veils merged with their heads. Large silver coins glistened on their foreheads, their breasts, and their aprons.

Before asking Kocho to lead me further, to show me the "charshiya" (square), I was presented to his neighbours, who were so proud of the fact that they had been dreaded enemies of the Turks. Smilevo had twice been destroyed by them, the second time during the glorious Illinden uprising in 1903.

It was a subject of which no one spoke, of course. The uprising, kindled by the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization, had had a goal to liberate Macedonia, as a land whose Slavic population, with the exception of an insignificant Serbian minority, considered itself Bulgarian, and now, when the land belonged to Yugoslavia, no one dared even mention of the past. (Of course, in our country it is well known that one of the founders of the IMRO, Damian Gruev, killed by the Turks in 1906, was born in Smilevo, and that during the uprising, its headquarters had been situated there).

After a visit to the mayor, we went back home. An excellent soup had been prepared from the beef that we had brought. The meat and vegetable dish was also wonderful and so were the Bitolja bread and the watermelon, while the excellent wine gave a special flavour to the feast. Afterwards, Kocho contentedly flung himself on the very wide bed and offered both of us to join him. There was more than enough space, but we refused. Stahne said that he wouldn't be able to sleep, while I wanted to jot down a few notes what I had seen today.

I took out my notebook and was almost ready, when I had to stop, through no fault of my own, though. Stahne sat beside me and started talking. He spoke of all sorts of things, but when Kocho started snoring he became peculiar and gave way to his feelings. When he was finally certain that Kocho could hear nothing, he sat closer and started revealing his innermost dreams to me, as to a father-confessor. It turned out that he was in love and that he trusted me so much, that we wanted to confide his sweet pain to me.

"I will tell you something, sir," he started excitedly, "but please, don't ever mention a word to Kocho." (As if we had been long-time friends with Kocho and met every day!) He went on, "Don't give me away! I have a girl. She's a beautiful and good girl. Educated as well. She has studied in Istanbul. She's a baptized Turkish girl. She sings wonderfully. Maybe you've seen her. If you've been to the Moscow restaurant some evening, you've probably heard her sing. She also

loves me. She said so herself, frankly, and I believe her. I will be very happy if she stops singing. But she doesn't listen to me. I want to live with her in a beautiful place, like this far away from the whole world! I've decided for a long time to propose to her but I always lose my courage. Day and night, I always think of her. That's why I have nightmares. When I saw you writing, it suddenly came to my mind that it's better to write all this to her. I decided to write a letter to her. Would you lend me your pen and a piece of paper. I'll write all this to her right away. And please do come tonight! I will be very happy if you see her and tell me your opinion . . ."

I was surprised, almost dismayed. I could have given my opinion to the young man right away, but I was certain that it would not have helped him. Like everyone who is in love, he wanted me only to agree with him. I did what I could. I gave him a piece of paper and my pen, flung myself beside Kocho and fell asleep immediately.

I don't know how long I slept and whether it was I who nudged Kocho or the other way around.

But both of us stood up. Stahne was standing pensively by the window. The inkpot and the pen were on the table. It was three o'clock. Kocho motioned that we should be on our way. He went to see his child while we prepared ourselves. Stahne whispered pleadingly, "Please, not a word to Kocho!"

We thanked the family for their hospitality and went to prepare the car.

Suddenly Stahne stopped. He pointed towards the opposite slope. Some girls were singing and playing in the garden, their red scarfs were clearly visible on the green background and their beautifully lined veils were waving from their heads. "What beauty!", shouted Stahne. "I want to live with her so much!"

He was woken from his daydream by the sound of footsteps. Kocho was coming behind us. We moved on. Stahne only added, "Come some evening, if you can."

Soon, the car was speeding across the bridge and we all turned around to say good-bye to Kocho's family, by waving our handkerchiefs. And Kocho touched his eyes several times, as if something had gotten in them.

That evening, I was walking with some acquaintances in Bitolja, when someone greeted me. It was Stahne. "Good-bye," he said. "Good-bye," I answered.

Unfortunately, that evening my friends would not relieve me of their company. I regretted it, but I decided to excuse myself to Stahne the next day. But I didn't find him. The devil had taken him away again. The next day I left the region and so my memory was left without an ending.

UP Towards Galichnik

Upwards, of course, and at a height of 1500 meters!

When on the ninth of July, 1927, at dusk, we arrived there from Skoplje (150 kilometers away), I whispered, "At last!" and came out of the car battered and shivering from the cold, since the latitude, the same as *Naple's*, had little value at such a height.

And when I looked over the rocky surroundings and the unfathomable precipice, in which 400 shabby houses with slanting by 45 (and more) degrees foundations stuck out, I whispered the same words for a second time.

I had two reasons to do so.

We started early, at nine o'clock, and therefore had enough time for our journey. But at first we had travelled in an awful wind, in which we could have even turned over, and then through the Tetovo-Gostivar valley, which was more than thirty kilometers long, with a road, taut as a rope, which was well below the height of the surrounding mountains and was therefore covered with dust. Secondly, we had constantly passed by cars, and with philosophical calm had watched the angry drivers, who were mending their inner tubes or inflating them, and whose poor example, unworthy of being followed, attracted our own vehicle irresistibly. It was so run-down, by the way, that after each jolt it limped a few times and stopped. We got off and noticed that the driver also limped. Nothing could calm him down. Looking at the two cripples helped us accept the facts more easily. And it was the only sensible thing to do, since the next mishap came soon. After Tetovo, the tyre were punctured for the second time, and after a "short interval", for the third time. We could do nothing, except to leave everything to fate and to the driver, and sit down in the dirty ditch by the road, in order to wait helplessly for the good fortune that would rescue us from this miserable situation.

The 2700 meter high Shar mountain had endured watching us mercilessly for more than two hours. It must have been amused when



cars shot by without reacting, in most cases, to the signs we had made.

What a pleasure it would have been to sit there under different circumstances, surrounded by the high mountains, at whose foothills, among the dense trees, Moslem villages with slender minarets nestled as a group of wood-nymphs, and to watch the Albanian caravans and the tanned faces, and the variegated, although mostly white, costumes. Our sad Czech song pressed itself upon our lips: Oh, there is not, there is not!

A Turk came towards us. He was going in the opposite direction, in an ordinary manure cart, but my comrades had flung themselves at him, with entreaties at first and with insistent persuasion after that, until they had made him turn around and take us with our whole luggage. My heart was beating, my limbs trembling and my teeth chattered every time the cart jolted, but the thought that we could not puncture a tyre made everything easier. After two and a half hours we reached Khostivar (why should we exert ourselves instead of using the Czech Gostivar?) uneventfully, and when we found another car right away, our greatest concern was removed (how were we to continue our journey).

Of course, very soon, another one came up: how were we to overcome the last twenty five kilometers? Two years ago, it was possible to cover half the distance along the winding road, until Mavrovo Pole, with a team of horses and the rest on horseback or by foot. That part was adapted for motor cars, but very hurriedly, since it crawled upwards with numerous hairpin bends. It also passed through deserted places. In the eighties, Gopchevich was armed to the teeth when he travelled in these parts, and really, after the war the neighbouring Albanians had often made raids, not hiding their evil intentions towards the local people. And what would we have done if it had happened to us? Had we set off in order to pop off again (this time not our tyres)? What would we do in dark? We started at half past five!

Islam Ouseinovich, who fortunately kept his car under the enormous tree in the center of the square, naturally praised it (it was really beautiful) and assured us of his dexterity, which he really possessed. But he was only fifteen years old!

But what could we have done? We got into the car. Thanks to God and Allah, we arrived without any accident. The young man and his car proved equally excellent. On the sharpest bends, whose radii were

insufficient, he had to maneuver three times in order to align with the road's axis. He had only laughed whenever we looked down into the greedy precipice. He had even remembered, the vagabond, to show us the place where a week ago a car had fallen off the road into the precipice, so that he could manifest his skill better.

My first "at last" was for all this. The second one was for Galichnik itself.

For the last two years everyone had recommended it to me. It was the center of the Galichnik Srez (district), whose population was quite unusual, with incredible contrasts and endless frivolities. The cosmopolitan men, in addition to their Macedonian dialect, spoke many of the world's languages. Every year they returned back home, where pride and magnificence radiated from their ancient costumes, and where the costumes and the rites were preserved, as maybe nowhere else among the Slavs. The region was poor. It had neither fields, nor gardens, since it was at the very end of the vegetation zone. It had no beggars, but it had maybe twenty millionaires. The rocky town looked like a small village, especially now, when the district government was moved below, in Rostousha.

"At which inn should I lodge?" I had asked two years ago, intending to come here.

"There aren't any inns."

"Who will put me up, then?"

"Anyone. Whoever you go to. But there's no use of your going now. You must come on St. Peter's day (June 29). Then the Galichnik men return from abroad and the weddings begin (once a year), sometimes as many as thirty or forty. There is a lot of revelry, with rituals, which goes on for a full week."

So here I was, two years later, heading for that day. I didn't know where I was going to stay, but when I got off the car I was surrounded by such affable people, that I will never, until the end of my life, forget their faces. In a moment I found myself under a friendly roof. The next morning, the district clerk arrived from Rostousha to offer me his assistance while I stayed here.

That was how my week-long visit began in this worthy of wonder place, of which I had dreamed so much and of which my memories are like a fairy tale.

Galichnik

If we had arrived from the south, i.e. from Radika, a tributary of Cherni Drin, and along the steep valley of the Galichnitsa river, we would have seen Galichnik from a height, as a chandelier, stuck on a wall, shining on the huge rocky ledge, whose eloquent name Govedarnik served the wide mountain slopes as an advertisement in a big city. Only it wasn't necessary. The excellent dairy products had managed to find their own way throughout the world (as far as Africa and America).

The Czech meaning of the name should not confuse us, of course.* There were no cattle here, just as they were scarce all over Macedonia. And the meat wasn't of very good quality either. A cow in Galichnik was a rarity, one might say a real diamond. And its hardness and size were that of a diamond too. A fellow countryman of ours, from Skoplje, had been hunting in the region once. He saw a deer, but when he drew nearer he found out it was a car. When he came still nearer saw it was a cow.

Only sheep were raised here. Before the war Galichnik had 70 000. The pastures were spread over the ridges for more than twenty kilometers, as far as the Shar mountain. Milk, excellent cream (smetana), and two types of cheese: yaflia (a sweet cheese) and yako (a sharp, salted cheese) were produced in the mountain dairies. Hard kashkaval (a yellow cheese) was produced in a few factories (by Greek workers) and exported overseas. Suet, which was consumed in Greece, was produced here as well.

Otherwise, the harsh environment gave its inhabitants nothing but fuel, excellent water from the abundant springs, and healthy air.

Galichnik's foundation were built in amphitheatrically, in the steep rocks over the 400 meter wide slope, but its bases were the soft, wide pastures, with which we were partially acquainted when we topped the 1600 meter high ridge Bister, which left an unforgettable impression on us with its view.

For a long time we were driving through a gorge sometimes shallower and sometimes deeper, of whose dimensions we had no idea, since we had nothing to compare it with; there was not a tree or a building in sight. Everywhere, there was only short grass, resembling goats' hair. The undulating country seemed to be coated with green velvet. The green had almost no shades and we were not able to

distinguish the horizon from it. Here and there, a dwarf pine could be seen.

The quietness of the country had overpowered the noise of the car and penetrated our souls with its absolute monotony and desolation. We were so overcome by grief, that a burning desire to remain there and erase the solitude welled up in us. But at the same time, an opposite feeling was aroused by the question: what were we to do there? The demonic power of solitude had played with us, shifting our thoughts from pole to pole: it had awakened nature's law of settling and at the same time, the instinct for self preservation. Oh, hypocritical Horror Vacui! We had left behind silent places, which seemed to be calling to us: "Do not leave us." But the car heard or saw nothing. It kept racing on. How we had relaxed when we had glimpsed a flock! The immovable figure of the shepherd turned its gaze towards us. What were his thoughts? What were they telling him of us?

The shepherd held a wooden flute in his hands. The music was a real gift for the young man. It meant that he was not alone. Thanks to the flute he had someone to talk to. It was probably his own soul, to which he listened. But was it not in it that one saw the image of all mankind? Wasn't the soul of all mankind always one and the same and just because of that common to all (since as it passed from the matured bodies into new ones, the old soul made way for the renewed one and it continued further on, new, fresh, eternal). And didn't it always converse alone with itself, often with a fateful misunderstanding? Wasn't the whole spiritual activity of mankind only an amazing, endless monologue of the entire human soul, a sum of melodies, whose mysterious rhythm and harmonious and disharmonious intervals cultural history has sought to appraise and to understand?

And here, in this world, doesn't this uniform human soul, just as the shepherd's, feel its abandonment, which makes it look around, just as the shepherd had looked after us, and light the universe in search of a friend, a strong and powerful one, and when it thinks that it has found him, it calls him God?

The Galichniks had only that one pasture now. Once they used to have many more. During Turkish times they could go down to Salonika, while the Greek shepherds, when their lowlands had dried up in the summer, could come with their flocks up in the mountains. This magnificent migration of the countless flocks, with hundreds of thousands of sheep, took place in the autumn. (Poor soul, he, who

chanced to meet them on his way!). After the war everything had changed. But only onesidedly. The Greeks could still come freely here, while the local people couldn't go there any more. The Serb Rista Stoyanovich, in "Sbornik Professorskago Drouzhestva" (Skoplje, 1922) criticized the Belgrade government that it paid more attention to foreign policy than to the economy of the country, which it had left to the arbitrariness of Greeks and Albanians.

Maybe Galichnik itself owed its founding to this millenia-long movement of shepherds.

The people of Galichnik believed that its name was derived from the Galik river near Salonika, which was allegedly called so because of the Gauls, who had originally lived there. They had gone up to present Galichnik with their flocks. During such journeys, many of them had preferred to remain in the mountains. So the people of Galichnik were proud to be the descendants of the same Slavic tribe whose speech the brothers Cyril and Methodius had made the first written Slavic language. The Salonia dialect was really its base. It is a region which should interest us, Czechs, since the Macedonian speech contains many Czech words and peculiarities, not found in the Serbo-Croatian language.

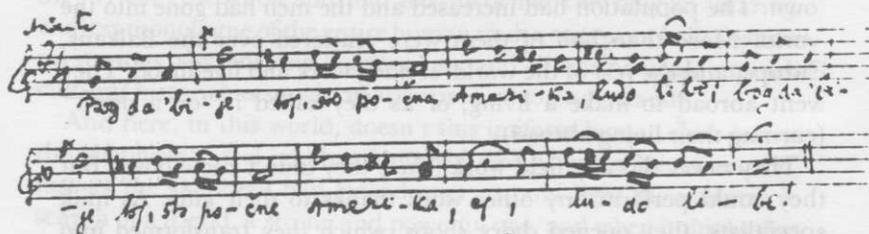
Many necessities had to be imported from outside. Until not long ago it could only be done on horseback. The number of horses had reached 1200.

Time had passed and Galichnik ceased to be only a shepherds' own. The population had increased and the men had gone into the world. More than half of them were scattered over the Balkans, Europe, and the rest of the world, seeking work and livelihood. They went abroad to make a living, or as they called it "on a profit" (earning their living abroad).

They never did any field work (since they didn't know how). But they could perform any other work thanks to their gifts. As milk specialists, they opened dairy shops, which they transformed into cafes or inns, or made oriental pastries, or became bakers, or carpenters, or masons. In that respect they were the Balkan's specialists. The chimneys and the built-in stoves in the Balkans were made only by Macedonians. The natives of Galichnik were also famous as artists. The nearby monastery Ivan Bigorski was well known for its grand and magnificent iconostasis, made of wood, with exquisite taste, by the local master Makari Filipovski; in Skoplje, one

could admire the iconostasis, amazing with its splendor made by the wood-cutter Marko from nearby Ghare. The local zographs (icon-painters), among whom the Fruchkov's family was a real dynasty, was well known. Their last descendant, who for many years had worked in Rumania, had drawn the mural paintings of the new Skoplje church on the order of the King of Serbia. I met him personally in Galichnik. The natives of Galichnik were also justly proud of their fellow townsman Parthenii Zographski, who in 1859 had become Bishop of Koukoush (now in Greece) and in 1872, when the Sultan had approved the establishment of a Bulgarian Exarchate (an independent Bulgarian Church), he had become Metropolitan of Nish, seated in Pirot, in the region of the former Serbian Kingdom, which after the Russo-Turkish war had been allotted to Serbia and was already Serbianized.

If the natives of galichnik surprised one with the smooth transition from individual shepherdry to cosmopolitanism, their third quality closed the triangle in another surprising way: they travelled abroad, but they always returned home, to their families, with the fruit of their work. Sometimes, as on St. Peter's day, for a short while, and sometimes, if God willed it when they grew old, forever. Great happiness would ensue for the families then, quite unlike the grief at parting, which was expressed in the local song God punish him, who first went to America!



God punish him, who first went to America,
 my dear, God punish him, who first went to America,
 O, my dear, my dear!

At home, they quickly took off the "European" clothes and put on the narrow, white "bechvi" (trousers), the red, wide belts, the brown coats, the hooded cloaks, and the black hats, and started visiting friends and neighbours from house to house. Picturesquely dressed, they stood out beside their women.

One could speak any language here, Albanian, Turkish, or Greek, but also German, French, Spanish, Italian, English, and even Czech sometimes.

The Skoplje theater had decided, not long ago, to give performances in different Macedonian towns, but had been uncertain whether to go to Galichnik. It had been said that no one would understand the theater. A friend of mine, with whom they had negotiated, had answered, "We were able to watch operas and performances in Athens, Bucharest, and Paris, so why can't we see a performance from Skoplje." We were at his house and he showed me a picture of himself, a wide-brimmed hat on his head, riding a camel, with the pyramids in the background. We were at a wedding where congratulatory telegrams from different European cities and from Egypt (Alexandria) were read.

Such were the Galichnik people. Only God knew where they owned property (houses, hotels, fields): in Salonika, in Sofia, or in Rumania. They had ties with the whole world, but were attached to their homes. This loyalty was their moral basis. While they had become advanced and educated, they had been preserved both internally and in external appearance. They dressed as their ancestors had, they lived as one family, they did not go to law courts, and they placed promise above anything else. Such was Galichnik.

Now let us look at this archaic society in greater detail. Three young, pretty ladies, in most modern and economical (as far as the quantity and not the quality of the fabric was concerned) dresses and mikadas*, had come with two officials from Skoplje, and while the men were taking care of their affairs in the village, they went to see the same family that we happened to be visiting.

They sat on the colourful divans capriciously, while their ideally kept hands were trying to hide their knees, outlined with anatomic accuracy beneath the high silk stockings, with the ends of their skirts. Maybe the mountain climate assisted this coquettish imitation of shyness with its cold reality.

All the womenfolk came to greet the guests. A whole line of heavy and grand old-time costumes stood as a wall against the strangers. Two different worlds were being opposed to each other.

With a trained sweetness and with the ease of dragonflies, the young Skoplje ladies greeted the Galichnik women, and after the

● *Mikada* — A type of Japanese hairdo. Author's note.

ordinary eccentric questions, sat down on the divans in elementary postures, copied faultlessly from fashion magazines and from the theater, while the local women, matrons, with hands crossed on their wide, silver belts, continued standing freely, in a ritual pose, dignifiedly, calmly, and grandly, imitating the local customs. That is, they imitated nothing, because they had no intention to. They were obeying the command of centuries and ages with an instinctive obedience. The ladies, of course, were also obeying a command, the command of our present times, the contemporary curiosity and impatience, which were already dictating the motto of tomorrow — disregard. It was a far too quick overthrow of models, i.e. of modes, a constant revolution with all its cruelty, since one forgives everything but outdated fashion.

The immovable everlasting had met the fleeting instant. The basic difference between the two sides, though, was not the difference in clothing, but rather the difference in the personalities themselves, and this difference seemed to point out ostensibly, the lack of freedom in one of them and an independence in the other. But the strength of imperative and susceptibility was the same for both sides, only for one of them the command had been valid for centuries, while for the other only for an instant. That was why the outward appearance of the first could, and was, coalesced with the inner self in a whole, thus creating a greater individuality, not limited by the separate individual, but common for all generations, while in the second case no such period of time existed. Everything in it was changing quickly and the outward appearance remained independent of the inner self, and at the same time nothing occurred; at least nothing permanent. The conclusion from the first system was duration and grandeur, and from the second, ephemerality and short-lived temporariness.

Those that look upon the folk costume as just a fabulous dress, know nothing of it. The dress becomes a "folk costume" only then, when internally it is an inseparable part of the individual, and not just the personality of one person, at that, but of an abstract individual, well considered and fully created by time in its home atmosphere. Otherwise, the "folk costume", as primitive as it may be, is nothing but a rented masquerade costume, and he who wears it is nothing but a mask, notwithstanding that it may be beautiful or tasteless.

My words that the "folk costume" must arise from the personality itself and that it must be its internal component are not just made up.

In Galichnik, the young girl begins preparing her trousseau with her own hands from the age of eight. It is a "must" that by the age of sixteen she can sew and embroider eight shirts.

Such is the number of shirts she will need until the end of her life. Afterwards, she will change only the lower parts, while the breast part and the sleeves, with the embroidery, will remain. Plus that, she must possess "attires" (different types of clothing) of which the "wedding attire" alone costs 7000 dinars.

Therefore, the tender girl makes her clothes by herself. It embroiders according to the models, but also according to her skill and feelings, therefore with love and with all her artfulness. She works for her own future, and since she always does it in the company of older girls, who advise her, the girl is in a way in an art school. So no wonder that if in any of them there should be talent, works of art are produced, but still on the basis of the established school.

The girl here is a molecule of the whole. She is like a silkworm, which spins its own cocoon about itself. She is like the animal, which builds its own shell, like the fruit, which creates its own kernel. When later on the girl from Galichnik adds to her shirts a mintan (an undergarment), a klashenik (a dress with hanging sleeves), a koparan (a ladies' jacket), and a kittena skoutina (a bride's apron), all she had to buy is a wide silver belt, which she will need when she becomes a fiancee or a svirshenitsa (a betrothed). Will she not represent an organic whole and a single creature with all this? Will not everything that shines on her be only the end product of her inner essence?

In Smilevo the costume is basically the same as in Galichnik, only it is more perfect and richer. Someone in Bitolja told me that Belgrade was considering the possibility of sending a teacher there. So that he could learn something maybe? That also. But he will go there, officially, to raise and improve the level of art. And if he possesses any talent, he can only spoil everything, deprive it of the raw and individual charm what it possesses, and destroy the style, while the product will be mechanized, and therefore devalued.

Such a view on folk art is not, of course, a privilege only of Belgrade, but the intelligentsia of the whole world as well. It is not by chance that the expression "common people" is used with benevolent condescension and what it replaces the word nation in inappropriate cases, although it is the common people who are really the nation (i.e. the tribe, the clan) and create its essence.

Or are these international casts of Paris models, who have reached Galichnik, more representative of the nation than the local women?

IV. A WEEK OF WEDDINGS IN GALICHNIK

St. Peter's Day

It was the greatest day of the year of Galichnik. And the longest one, as well. Twenty four hours were not enough for it. It started God knows how early, and only God knew how long it continued, since it meant, first of all, that those "on profit" had returned for a very short while, and secondly, that the period of the weddings had begun. The weddings here were made once a year, all at the same time, and each one needed a whole week for itself, both with its prologues and its epilogue. And all this was called St. Peter's day.

These were the best days of the year, the longest and the warmest. For Galichnik, where the last trees grew, it was quite important. There were no farms or gardens here. The high-spirited autumn, with the cheerful gathering of the corn, the wine harvest, and the songs was unknown here. The boisterous festivities, marking the end of the harvest else the farmers could calmly await the winter, were completely missing in Galichnik. Very soon, winds from all directions would start blowing and no one would be delighted by winter, not only because of the snow, which would isolate Galichnik for a long time, but also because winter always meant that the men, who couldn't earn their living here, would have to leave their families for at least a year, to return on some future St. Peter's day.

Maybe that was exactly why all the weddings were held at the same time. The reason was not just the rejoicing and sunny nature, but the coming home as well. Only as an exception could a wedding be held in September, on St. Illiya's day.

Of course, he who knows Galichnik's people, their enterprise and taste for carrying things off with verve, as rich factory owners, might think that the group marriage ceremonies were a result of them. But he would be mistaken. It was true that they had tough standards and

detailed prescripts both for the production of kashkaval (a type of yellow cheese) and for the celebration of their weddings. But economy was the goal only in the first case and not in the second. A man from Galichnik saved all his life, except at his wedding. It went on for a long time and cost more than 20,000 dinars (according to some the sum was as high as 100,000 dinars!). The suspicion that having all the wedding ceremonies at the same time was aimed at bringing down the number of guests was groundless, since they all lived as one family. The houses with weddings were transformed into common dining rooms and all, except the women whose husbands were away, could join the festivities.

The only profit made during the ceremonies was the priest's, but we could not reproach him, since he had to lead as many as forty couples from the low, stuffy church!

During our stay, St. Peter's day was on a Tuesday, and the wedding ceremonies were to be performed on Thursday, so we arrived earlier, on Sunday. But still, we hadn't come on time. The preliminary festivities had started on Thursday at the bridegroom's house, followed by a few different types of invitations. The bridegroom invited his in-laws personally "na stroi", i.e. on horseback; the bride's family invited "na voda" (for water), i.e. when the bride went for the last time to fetch water for her parents, and "na svakiu", i.e. for baking the wedding loaf of bread, which was used when the groom sent match-makers to ask for the girl.

We received our first impressions of a wedding on Monday morning. We had gone out early and were captured by the town's panorama, which seemed to be collapsing in the precipice of the Galichnik river, all the way down to the Radika valley. The Korab mountain was sticking out behind it, to the west, together with the numerous Albanian mountains. We were comparing all this with our map, when suddenly the air was shaken by powerful blows that were magnified to an incredible roar by the echoing mountains. "Probably a passage from the overwhelming symphony on the World War, "Drumfire", would sound like that", I thought, and wasn't altogether wrong. "The drums have started beating" as a local folk song went. Gypsy orchestras from Kichevo, Gostivar, and Tetovo were playing in front of the houses of grooms, brides, and in-laws. They were composed only of two elements: two or three large drums and two or three oriental clarinets, called "zourla". The drums were beaten with

the greatest possible skill, but also with the greatest possible force. When the sharp and piercing "zourlas" joined in with oriental melodies, I imagined that may be the music from the Old Testament, which had brought the walls of Jericho crumbling down, had sounded like that. The music didn't seem gay, whether the tunes were drawn-out or fast, sad or playful. They were moving, cutting into the soul, and certainly not cheerful. They merged with the surroundings, with the hard, sharp rocks. That alone was astounding.

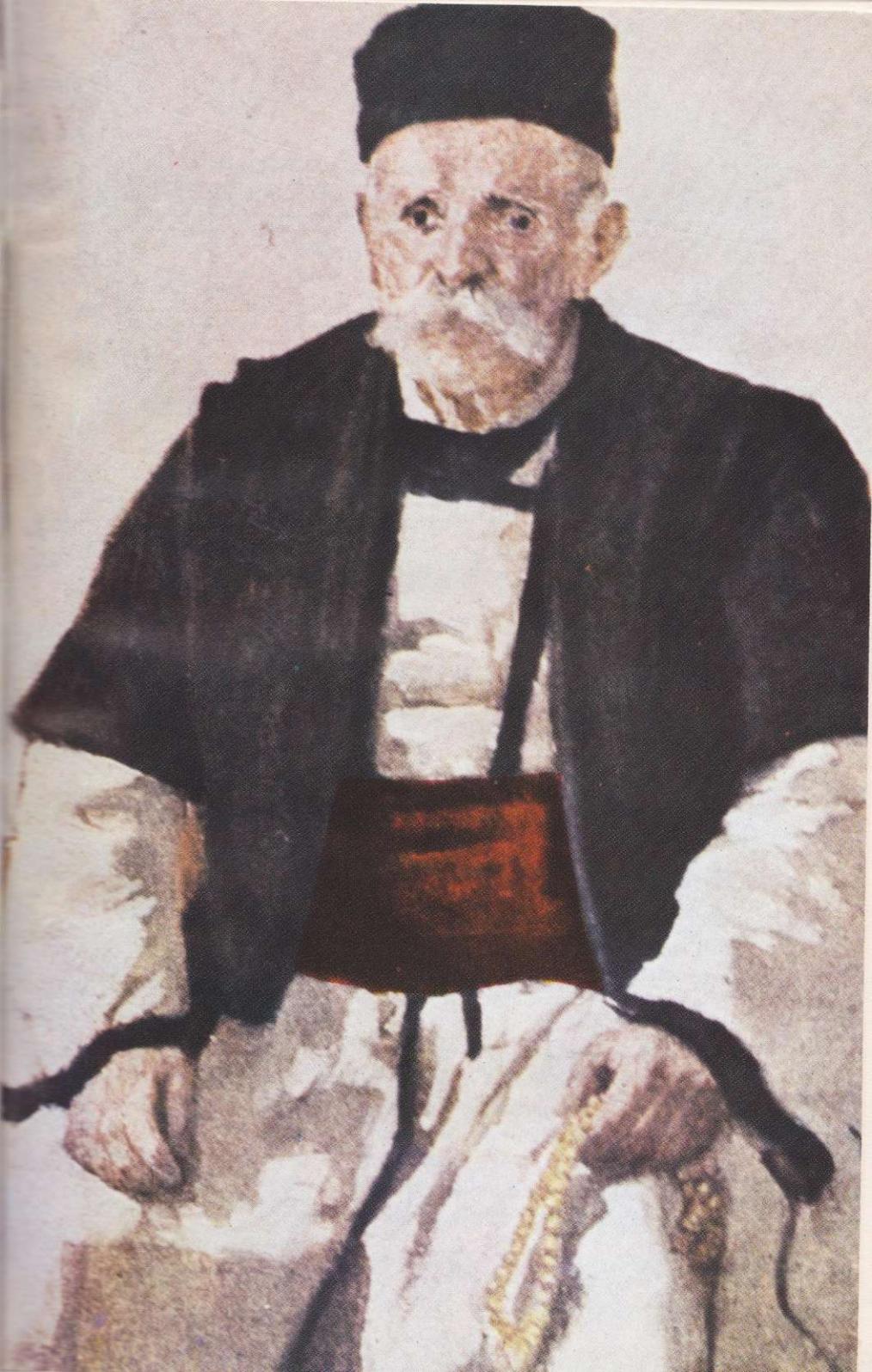
Seeing me lost in thought, my companion smiled and said, "This year is nothing special. We have only twelve weddings and only four orchestras came. Other years as many as eight or nine may come. This summer only the grooms have bands, while in other summers the brides do too."

Images of the apocalypse shot through my mind. I imagined that the final call for the Day of Judgement would sound like that.

I was also thinking of the newlyweds, or as they were called "The young ones". The bridegroom was called "the just wed", and the bride "the just wed" or "the young one". She was called so for a full year after she had been married. But what did their souls feel? (The young men married not later than the age of twenty two and the young girls not later than eighteen). How did these sounds, resembling thunder and blizzards, affect them.

Wasn't the effect actually suitable for the significance of the moment? Was it not an invitation for a funeral bell-ringing for the lost carefree youth. Was it not an introduction into one's own struggle in life? Wasn't it the moment when one struck a balance of the first period of his life, so that he could enter into the next one with a clean sheet, where the laws of nature (therefore, God's laws as well) made their demands with all their severity and inexorability? Wasn't it a call for the Day of Judgement, albeit a temporary one?

I was reproaching myself for perceiving it all so tragically, but later, when I listened to the women's and girls' chorus, which was accompanying the simple and at the same time grand rituals with archaic singing, like that of a monks' choir, and wrote down the classical tunes, I found out that I had not been mistaken. The creators of the cult, in times long past, had also perceived it as the end of one and the beginning of another period of life, as a fateful turning point, where family branches were broken, as the following song expressed it:



ce - kes - 7a se

ko - ren kor ne - e se

e - kes - na se -

A cherry tree was being uprooted,
 A young girl — parting with her home.
 The tree was being uprooted,
 the girl would not part with her father.
 The top of the tree was bending,
 the girl would not part with her mother.
 The tree's branches were falling,
 she would not part with her brother.
 Its wide leaves were falling,
 she would not part with her sisters.

Yes, that was an ode of grief! It is a song of a parting, but not of a separation. And this is possible in the family tree, in which the whole secret of kinship, as a source of attracting and repelling forces, in their constant, undying struggle, is contained. Such is the content of life, since the eternally repeating themselves attractions and repulsions of separate individuals are nothing but the breathing of mankind as a whole.

We went near the gypsies. The echo was gone and the performance sounded simpler, even though it wasn't quieter. The "zourlas" pierced our ears still more violently. The faces and the necks of the players were about to burst, while the drummers were beating the drums with the most savage movements. We admired their muscles and their chests, but the skins of their drums deserved admiration as well, since both they and the muscles were not yet torn. The musi-

cians turned towards us, without stopping even for a moment. They were eager for our compliments and our admiration. We expressed them with a smile, but our mood did not change even with the most lively melodies. The refrain of the raven, which cawed "never more" in one of Edgar Allan Poe's poems, sounded all the time in our minds. Here, it was for the end of childhood and youth.

But the people knew that they could do nothing, but step into the new life with happiness showing in their eyes, at least, if they did not feel it in their hearts.

That was how St. Peter's day was celebrated.

The Weddings Begin

I don't mean to scare you when I tell you that during the second night, at four A.M., I was awoken by rapid shots and I remembered at once the stories I had heard from local people, how their region had suffered for a long time after the war from neighbouring Albania. While the Belgrade government flirted with it, for political reasons, the highwayman Kalyosh was able to make frequent raids into Galichnik from the nearby border and to carry away, without being punished (since local residents were not allowed to carry firearms) 15 million in gold. That is why I will quickly add that the shooting was followed not by an Albanian raid, but by a gypsy raid. The drums of the gypsies assisted the guns quite well and together with them prepared the transition to the shrieking "zourlas". So the wedding ceremonies began for us, who were tired and sleepy, not very pleasantly, but quite impressively.

I couldn't sleep much, even though I had tried hard to do so. In order to fall asleep, one has to fix his eyes on a certain spot on the ceiling. But I had found out suddenly that my room had no ceiling. I knew, of course, that as a guest I was under a friendly roof. I must add that my bedroom was not called a room, but a "chardak", which meant an open room or gallery, dug into the house. In this cool climate it was not an open room and the only thing in common that it had with the "chardak" was that it had no ceiling.

I don't deny that the beams (from the roof structure of the rest of the house) offered enough lulling spots, but the dried mutton which hung from them, and which was the subject of study of the numer-

ous flies, did not allow my eyes to concentrate on one single spot undisturbed.

After a prolonged tossing (spiritual and physical), I got up from the otherwise excellent bed, offered my eyes a divine breakfast by looking at the precipice, over which the late moon, chased by the early rising morning star, was hurrying away, and went out for an early morning stroll.

Nine flags were waving happily in the morning wind, above the wedding houses.

And why shouldn't they! They were brought out into the fresh air, after staying God knows how long in some stuffy closet. Just like a puppy or a clot that have been set free!

I walked from flag to flag. With the exception of a few state flags, the rest were diversely coloured and of different types, but all were made with taste. On them were stylish, heraldically arranged and drawn figures: a cross with four crescents in the corners, a circle with four crosses around it, etc.

I was pleased that the people stopped to talk to me. I learned that each family had had a family flag once. "We have always been free and independent", they told me proudly. "We are from the Miatsi tribe, neighbours of the Birzatsi" (they pointed to the southwest). "Records of our two tribes date back for more than a thousand years, from the time of the Bulgarian Tsars who had ruled in nearby Ohrid. Tsar Samouil came from our region".

We could speak of the nobleness of the local people, of their way of life and their politeness, if we weren't overwhelmed by their democratic equality, exhibited not only by the Balkan manner of addressing each other with the familiar form "thou", but also with the fact that there were no servants, employed farmhands or beggars. In many respects we were reminded of Montenegro (especially by the bearing and costumes of the Vasoeviches'), but a tendency towards haughty commanding existed there, especially as far as the women were concerned. Their situation there was below human dignity, while here, although religious laws subjected them to men, in practice they were their equals.

Our first impression was further strengthened. A ceremony, existing for centuries, was connected with the magnificent women's costume. Only when one knew whom and how to treat, was his conduct free and easy, i.e. rid of any embarrassment, just as a train

moved freely only in well embedded and firm rails.

We visited the three married brothers of our host, who lived in the family house. At the entrance we were met by the men, the women, and the children with cordial handshakes and a greeting: "Welcome!", to which we answered: "Well met!". The real welcoming, with the participation of all, took place in the oldest brother's room, and after mutual questions on our health and our families, *ratlouk* (a pastry) was served first, followed by jam, black coffee and brandy.

We thought that the visit to the house, i.e. to the three families had ended. But we were mistaken! The second brother took us to his room, where the ritual and the feast were repeated, and then we went to the youngest brother's room. The only difference had been in the conversations, which had centered on the large family portraits of heroes, fallen in the pre-war battles with the Turks, or died abroad. The wide and spacious rooms, although partly arranged with Western furniture, were basically old fashioned: *divans*, covered with rugs and pillows were arranged along the walls.

We left the house as if we were leaving a ritual ceremony, but outside we witnessed, and partly participated, in another, and this time real, ritual.

A phantasm was coming towards us, a woman walking in the scorching, blinding sunlight. The bright strips on her yellowish coat alternated with the red and dark-red surface of her heavy tassles, her rich embroidery and the woven apron. A dazzling, colourful, silk scarf, a wide silver belt, and a gold coin added to the magnificence.

The lovely woman, with pink cheeks and a dignified modesty, stopped beside our first companion and handed him the wooden wine vessel, which was hanging on a leather strap from her finger. The flat sides of the vessel were richly painted and it was decorated with a flower and a small coin. It was called *karta*. The woman said, "Be blessed!"

My friend explained, "She is a caller". She is inviting us "for water", i.e. to a wedding." She handed me a wine vessel, from which only older and more important people could drink. Only "brides" — young women — were chosen to do the inviting. The big silver clasp on her belt, the *nizalki* (hanging ducats) and the *mahmoudii* (Turkish silver coins) were lent to her by the groom, in order to show the gifts he had prepared for his bride.

The men drank from the "karta" one by one, saying, "Be blessed" "May you be happy and have many children."

The caller took her karta and replied to the married, "May God give them to your house as well", and to the unmarried, "May the day come when you will also have some".

My turn also came. I repeated what was hinted to me. But that was not enough. I had to bear the consequences of my age and had to drink from the vessel.

After that, the woman entered the house in order to continue performing her task.

"Little by little she will invite the whole Galichnik", I said.

"Of course", was the reply, "we are all one big family!"

When evening came, I had lost the count of the number of weddings I had been invited to.

Fetching Water for the Parents, for the Last Time

Fetching water in the morning and at dusk has been, since ancient times, the beginning and the end of the working day of the young girls and women. It was not only a physical or material necessity, but an inexorable one as well. Therefore it was a law, something supreme, which was indisputable and which one could only obey humbly. He who is humble, says the Bible, he will prosper. That was what had happened. The soul had risen to a height, from which its act had actually looked like a ritual, and from where it could evaluate it morally and artistically. It had made a subject, or at least a motif, for numerous songs of this act. It had lighted it with its art. The people of Galichnik had achieved even more. They had apotheosized it and placed it among their wedding rituals. And they had created two rituals: one as an overture and the other as an epilogue, of a grand opera, with beautiful sets, called a galichnik wedding.

It had two acts. In the first one the bride was brought on horseback to the groom's home, where until the morning women guarded her. In the second, one the ceremony was performed. In the overture, the bride fetched water for her family, for the last time. In the epilogue (at four thirty A.M. after the wedding) she went to fetch water for the first time, for her new home.

The structure seemed simple, but it was hidden among a week of celebrations, which from the artistic point of view had only one

flaw — that in terms of beauty, the overture was superior to all that followed.

No one was to blame, of course. At first, the groom had not allowed the woman he had chosen to perform any chores in her parents home, even at the last moment. He had lied in waiting for her, had blocked her way, and the bride had been forced to bring her own suite with her, thus ensuring her personal protection. Sometimes, there had been fistfights, for fun or real ones, and sometimes even shooting. Such were the origins of the magnificent processions with burning torches, with songs and dances, which accompanied the brides to the three water fountains, while at the grooms' houses there was eating, drinking and gaiety.

The Galichnik rocky amphitheater with its nine processions in the moonlit night was unimaginable. (The processions were nine, because there were nine weddings).

Four gypsy bands, which shook Galichnik, were invited.

I could have taken part in any of the weddings, but my friends took me to Yordan's. His house, illuminated by a large bonfire, flared high above us. The figures of the musicians could be seen in front of the bonfire. They were competing with the flames with brisk movements. Some were beating the drums, while others were jumping up and down and playing the zourlas. It was a satanic idyll, an infernal home, in which comfort was represented by a small arbour, prepared for the musicians, where they could eat and rest. It remained a mystery when they used it, though, since the air shook day and night from their drums.

It was a bit of an effort for me to keep up with the others, while going up towards the house. We moved slowly along "the road", which could hardly be called a road. I used a majestic stick, even though I did not look majestic myself. I had frowned when they had made me take it, but when we arrived, deafened by the gypsies' fanfares, I was grateful to it, because by mustering up my last reserves, I was able to walk with the necessary dignity through the sunlit yard, as a Herzog in an opera, passing through the stage. Everything around was a theater and I was an actor. In front of me stood a house almost as big as a palace, with a balcony full of people and with stone steps on which men in official clothes and women in splendid costumes stood. The blazing fire divided the figures into bright lights and dark shadows.

We kissed the groom and after that we were greeted by his mother and the others. We could hear nothing. Our ears were filled with sound, just as our eyes were filled with light.

The house was full of people everywhere: in the corridors, the staircase and the rooms.

The rooms on the first floor were turned into dining rooms, with long, low boards from which tables and shelves had been made in such a way, along the walls and in the center, that one could easily step over them and over everything that was arranged on them. It seemed to be taken right out of a sixteenth century Breughel painting.

Everyone offered us a hand. Happiness, that we had come to enjoy ourselves with them, gleamed in everyone's eyes.

The host led me to the corner, where the priest and the elders were sitting, but I asked if I could be taken to the verandah first. The view of Galichnik was enchanting: along the slopes, between the houses, snakes, emitting faint lights, were crawling. The moon appeared suddenly and immersed everything in a silver light.

A young man approached me and handed me a pine splinter, to serve me as a torch. It was time for us to prepare, as well. We lined up in the yard, lit our torches, and started moving, accompanied by the song:

Puschle

O-dyt mome za vo-da, odyt mome za vo-
-da, odyt mome za vo-da so dre stomny
să-ra - ni, joj, aman, aman!

A girl was fetching water in two colourful pitchers.
A wild, young man appeared and broke her pitchers.
The girl started crying; Oh, God what has happened
How am I going to tell my other, Oh, aman, aman!

I was walking as if in a dream. Where was I? At a woodnymphs' fair? Or at a gathering of midnight spirits? I felt that I was one myself. Soon I started stumbling and falling down. Spirits don't stumble. It makes no difference to them whether they are walking on a road or not, while I had to be guided by my friends. The rest walked easily. They were used to it. But they had another difficulty. Opposite us, another procession was coming, singing another song:

You can wait, father, for cold water,
wait; and fall asleep by the gate.

You'll have neither a girl, nor cold water,
they have taken away your daughter.

They managed to pass each other on the narrow path and to maintain their balance, but their songs were entangled and it took a long time to untangle them.

I confess that, that night I didn't see a single bride, nor the actual filling of the pitchers with water. For more than an hour I was occupied with protecting my limbs, on the one hand, and trying to absorb as many of the constantly changing images, as I could, on the other.

When we returned to Yordan's house, I felt quite exhausted and when we sat down beside the full tables, they all promised that they will not let me leave until the morning. It would be nice — there was singing, dancing and jokes — but too much for me. I waited only for the ritual with the wedding loaf, which had been baked the same day, and then I quietly moved away to get the rest I so much needed.

The loaves were two, looking the same on the outside. They had drawings, inscriptions and monograms on them. But one of them had some old silver coins inside, while the other had nothing. The empty one was sent on the next day to the bride, while the other one was torn into pieces during the supper and everyone was given a piece. Whoever found a coin in his piece, handed it over to the host, who had to pay ten dinars for it right away.

The ritual was accompanied by a song, which was sung by two old people. They kept the loaf between themselves, rocking it with their knees:

The moon shone on the respectable table,
but it wasn't the moon.

It was the honest round loaf.

I had no luck with my piece. There was no coin in it. When I got up

to go to bed, the people sitting next to me started laughing and said that I was going away because I hadn't found a coin.

"I did", I answered with a joke, "but I preferred to swallow the coin instead of asking for the money and that is why I can't stay any longer . . ."

Everyone roared with laughter. A number of remarks, which I shall not repeat here, were made.

I started towards home under the full moon. It was light as day. Galichnik seemed to be immersed in a silver bath. I repeated to myself the song "The Silver Moon", which seemed quite appropriate for the moment.

The Bride

On the next day after St. Peter's day, the day before the weddings, the groom must go and ask for the bride, after which the matchmakers will bring her to his house, but will not hand her over. She will be left locked up in a special room, where she must spend the night with a few women. This is called "repenting".

Such is in short the contents of the busy day, which is marked by galloping horses and fluttering flags.

A flag waves on top of each groom's house, although not all the time. It is hauled down and hoisted a few times, according to the needs of the galloping matchmakers. Each wedding has a number of compulsory figures: a messenger, a sworn brother, a standard bearer, and matchmakers. All of them can go home at any moment, can hoist the flag, and can shoot. They gallop around, in order to show their skill and courage, since in some places the roads seem to be built especially for falling.

That day is the most difficult one for the engaged couple, who are in the center of various rituals, since no custom, offering them convenience, has ever been created.

I didn't visit them all, since as the French saying goes, one can't ring the bell and go with the procession at the same time. I don't know what was done with the bride before noon, but I saw what was done with the groom. They were just going to shave him and give him a haircut, but the poor young man had to endure so much, until they

were finished with him!

They had to look for him for a long time, since he had hidden somewhere. He hadn't done it on purpose (although I wouldn't wonder if he had) but because such was the custom, a memory of times past, when the young men had been shaven and had had their hair cuts for the first time for their weddings. When he was finally brought in, the room was full of people. With some difficulty, I managed to edge my way into the middle of the room, where a couple of girls with a white towel and a brand new bar of soap were standing beside the groom.

The "barber" couldn't be just anybody. He had to be a relative of the groom, and if such a relative couldn't be found, special rules pointed out how to find a substitute.

The operation did not begin immediately. The girls' chorus started a song, which explained why the groom had to be absent:



The groom doesn't want to be shaven until he has parted with his father.

The groom started saying farewell to his family. The drawn out singing was with a small range, but was rich in minor decorations, like the rest of the local ritual melodies, and was moving with its grief. The groom turned pale and we were all stirred.

The confusion which ensued, when the shaving was about to start, took us out of our daydream. The young man bent down his head over the wash basin but the razor went from hand to hand and couldn't find the right one. When it finally did, it turned out it turned out that the barber was not very deft. We were alarmed, since deftness was absolutely necessary. The rules did not allow any foam or hair to fall

on the ground. Everything had to fall on the towel, which was later given to the bride.

There was singing all the time and I wanted to write down the notes of the song. It wasn't easy, not only because writing notes was always difficult, but because the songs, even though they were old, were full of life and their details were gradually changing.

We both heaved a sigh of relief when we were finished: the bridegroom with the shaving and I with the song. He went to change while I went to look elsewhere. In the yard it was very noisy. Two horses were being saddled there. The groom mounted one of them and a young boy the other, with gifts for the bride and her family hanging from it. The gifts were in bags. A sworn brother, carrying bags with bread, wine and meat, was running to and fro with the match makers. He didn't wait for us but hurried with his suite to the bride's house, to announce the arrival of the groom, to hand over the gifts, and to receive gifts in return, as a sign that the groom may enter.

The rest of us, led by the groom, started a little later.

The groom was sitting upright, his right hand, according to tradition, on his belt. His father was walking beside him. We were lucky that some joker hadn't placed and hard or pointed object under the saddle, as it often happened. The horse was calm and the groom could ride with dignity, as the moment dictated.

In the meantime, the sworn brother had galloped wildly around the village with his suite, and we arrived almost immediately after him. On the terrace, a group of young girls was singing like an ancient choir. Their one-part song was for the sworn brother.

The standard bearer was hoisting the flag on the bride's house, while the sworn brother came out of the house and handed a vessel with some of the bride's wine for the groom to drink.

We could all enter now, or at least, as many of us, as the house could accommodate.

The groom kissed the hands of the bride's parents on the doorstep, stepped over it with his father and handed an apple with three old coins (which were later returned to him) and two extra ones to the bride's brother. The bride was nowhere to be seen. According to tradition she was hiding somewhere, still in her everyday clothes, looking at the groom through a ring and saying, "I am looking at you through a ring — you have entered my heart."

A white cloth was placed on the groom's right shoulder and his

friends sang: "Congratulations for the shirt, hero, which the girl has embroidered for you!"

That was all that the groom would receive for the moment. He returned home with his suite, tasted some "sarailia", a ring-shaped cake, with them and repaired to the small room, which would later be occupied by the bride, sitting up all night and "repenting". The mathmakers went to fetch the bride with the groom's horse.

In the meantime, there was a small feast at her house. The brothers brought the bride, who kissed the hands of her future father-in-law and the other guests and they gave her gifts. Over the loafs of bread, which had been brought for the bride, they placed shoes, buckles, veils, etc. Next to them they placed smoked trout, rice, hazelnuts, raisins, sugar, a mirror, a comb, a thimble, brandy, silver threads, a silk scarf. Many stories and jokes were connected with these gifts, since the bride's parents criticized everything. They said of everything that it was not enough or was of poor quality. They picked up the buckles and returned or was of poor quality. They picked up the buckles and returned them disparagingly, saying that they were not golden but just gold-plated. The groom's father swore that he had bought them as pure gold, but that the goldsmith had swindled him.

In the din, a knock on the door leading to the next room, was heard.

There, the bride had changed into formal clothes in the meantime, while the sworn brother was knocking and calling to her to hurry up, so that they could leave.

She appeared on the threshold, dressed in gold, silver, silk, and heavy, woollen clothing. The sworn brother took her by her left hand, her brother by the right one, and accompanied by a sad, girls' chorus, they led her towards the yard, where two horses were neighing. One of them, the groom's, was for her and the other one was for her dowry. The groom's father threw coins and sugar cubes over them.

The mother was afraid to look at her daughter even from the window. Part of the bride's relatives accompanied her for a while. They led her horse and supported her, while she bowed to everyone they met. Her relatives left her when they had passed half the distance to the groom's house.

After that, the groom's relatives guarded her. Some of the women supported her on both sides. Others, carrying water, sprinkled the bride's flowers, so that she could be refreshed in the stuffy heat and the heavy clothing, while some wiped the sweat off her face.



It was a magnificent scene, a regal picture. The girl's dignity was increased each time she bowed deeply. Her eyes seemed to be closed all the time and her forehead touched the horse's saddle. The women had to help her raise her head.

The arrival at the new home was also magnificent. Following the enthralling music, the horse stopped in front of the house, walking right up to the carpet, which was laid from the door, since the bride must not step on bare earth. The carpet was immediately rolled up after the bride had passed on it.

With that, her glory came to an end.

Upon entering the house she ceased to be a princess and became a housewife. She was taken to the fireplace, where she touched the cauldron, hanging on a chain over it, with her forehead, in order "never to leave the house". She was handed a bolter, to sift some flour, and some dough to knead it, while the womens' chorus was singing:

The bride knows how to knead dough

The bride knows how to twist it

She was handed a glass of wine, in order to treat those present, and the chorus sang:

The bride knows how to obey her mother-in-law . . .

The whole family was mentioned in the song.

How it went on I didn't hear. We were shown into a room, where a feast had been prepared. Later, I was told that it had gone on until the morning. I didn't stay that long. I sat exhausted by impressions among the merry wedding guests, where food and drink alternated with music and songs.

When I was leaving, the host came to see me off. I asked where the bride was and could I say good-bye to her.

He pointed to the right, to the small room with an open door. To my amazement, I saw an exquisite scene.

Among the colourful chaos of the motley rugs, in a fern forest, surrounded by young girls, dressed in her dignified, maybe even too solemn costume, in which the yellow wool contrasted to the brown and bright-red woven apron and the golden sleeveless jacket, the bride stood in the corner, in her dazzling splendour, in a quiet and serious posture, like the Mount Athos' Virgin Mary. Her eyes were still shut, her hands were hidden under the wide, silk, penance belt. "The bride is repenting." She would stay up during the whole her last

girl's night.

It was the end of her girlhood, a night for deep meditation.

Of the Wedding and During the Wedding

The couple started for the wedding ceremony from the groom's house, where the bride had spent the night repenting and fasting. Such a custom was predominant among the Macedonian and Old-Serbian Muslims, with one difference — the Turkish bride was dressed up repulsively, as a ploathsome monster.

The couple walked to the church, led by the standard bearer. The man who walked beside him, carried a bag with two loafs of bread, which he divided between himself and the rest of the guests, but not very evenly, since he took one for himself and broke up the other one and handed it around. Along the way they received breakfast: a couple of young men carried around a tray with chick-peas, raisins, and brandy, and a copper wine vessel. Those of the guests that weren't lazy could just stretch their hands and find a glass at the bottom of the vessel, which in that way was always kept clean.

The groom walked in the man's group, after the flag, with a red stripe on his short, round, black hat and a white shirt slung over his shoulder.

The bride walked in the womens' group. She was led, arm in arm, by her brother on her right side and the wife of the sworn brother (who was actually a brother of the groom) on her left side. She could be easily distinguished from the other women by her bowed down head and by her long veil, which hid her face, but was transparent enough to allow her to see everyone whom she had to bow to. Those accompanying her, touched her forehead and helped her straighten up again. The future mother-in-law, carrying a copper vessel full of water, occasionally wet the shirt and sprinkled the bride. The act was supremely ritual, moving, and dignified. In such a way, the train became a real procession, in which the deity was represented by the bride; homage was being paid to future motherhood.

The women's singing also referred to the bride:



The song mentioned everyone in the grooms family.

Only the couple and their closest relatives entered the church. The standard beared and the rest of the guests remained outside. They found some cool shades, spread out their rugs and started eating whatever they had brought or had bought. When a number of weddings gathered, the place looked like a fair.

The church ritual was not lengthy. With so many weddings, the priest had to obey the laws, valid for any large industry. The best man placed a flower on the while cloth and standing behind the couple, held two crossed, lighted candles over them. After the ritual, the relatives kissed the flower one by one.

The bride came out of the church, standing close to the groom, so that "no one should pass between them".

Again the standard bearer led the procession and the women sang the same song, with a slight but significant amendment:

The procession walked along a different route and at every corner the bride wanted to run away and return home. The guests had to stop her by force. My friend pointed out that I shouldn't take it seriously. The bride didn't really want to run away, but had to obey the custom. He also said that I shouldn't be misled by her grave expression. It was again according to custom. She was actually very happy to get married.

Her mother-in-law met her in front of the house. She had a bolter and two loaves of bread on her head, and held them steady with her right hand, while in her left hand she held a pitcher of wine. The guests arranged in a circle for a "horo", which was started by the bride's mother-in-law with a few steps. After that she immediately went to congratulate the bride, bowing three times before her in such a way that the bolter touched her forehead. She then took her into the house.

In the house, where the music was very loud, the bride was first taken to the kitchen. She had to start kneading dough and offering wine right away. Everyone congratulated her. It was a rare moment. After the real ritual, the real wedding celebration was starting. Up to now, even though there had been feasts, it had been basically missing. The seriousness and the fatefulness of the moment had always been stressed. Finally, the reign of the clear and passionate thoughts, the time of jokes and gaiety had come. The kitchen was rocking with laughter. Occasionally someone received a slap on the back. I didn't know why, but I soon found out, under the accompaniment of a Turkish march, which was playing noisily outside:

My turn came to offer my congratulations and my friend quickly told me that I must wish the couple a large offspring and immediately point out a specific number.

"You can wish them, for example, five boys and three girls". I was obedient, as in everything else, but a misfortune befell me! My back recoiled from the slaps that it suddenly received.

The first law was in action until all had taken their turn.

A year ago, when they had been engaged, the fiancées had given each other tube of mercury and had always carried it with them, as a sign that they belonged to each other. Now, their contents were poured into one of the tubes and the bride was to take care of it. The best man kissed the flower, which had been consecrated in the church and handed it over to the young couple. With that the official ceremony ended. There was a break, necessary to all (the guests and the cooks), in order to prepare for the evening feast.

The gypsies urged to the feast with all their might. The drums roared and rumbled, while the "zourlas" played a "maane" (a mixture of Turkish songs and marches) and while we were gathering for the feast, we thought that we were hearing the thunder of guns. But some wonderful things were expecting us. For example, the hors d'oeuvres! Table luxuries and delicacies filled the arranged with musical regularity plates and dishes. There was rice pudding, or pilaf, prepared from rice, milk, and sugar, djoufte (a dried meat, smoked on the wind), djigheritsa (roast liver), all types of local sheep's cheeses, which were all exceptional, wonderful yoghurt, and divine cream. Children were bringing bread and pouring brandy all the time. They took away the half empty glasses and returned them full.

The groom came in. He kissed the hands of the priest and the elders and said good-bye, since he would not feast with us, but with his wife

in a locked room.

We were sate by the time the real feast started. It consisted of excellent lamb meat, prepared in different ways — boiled or roasted, with sauce or without sauce, served with fragrant onions, sharp garlic, or a hot pepper or two. Red wine was served after the brandy and the gaiety and the singing came with it. The gypsies were invited inside. With great diligence, they played their "ezghia", a medley of different melodies, opened by the "zourlas" and the quiet beating of the drum. It stood on the floor and the gypsy quietly tapped it with his sticks. Then he slung the leather strap on his back and started beating the drum, which was on his stomach, with such force that the ceiling trembled and our ears were deafened. The end of the conversations had come — no one could hear a word.

But still, my neighbour was trying to tell me how the feast would end. I could barely hear him. At half past four all would go "for water". At the spring, the bride could wash them. But it wouldn't be so easy, since the girls would be throwing mud on our hands and the fun would be immense.

The important thing was that the bride's work in the new home started with water, just as it had ended with water in the old one. From that moment on, the bride took on the burden of her new duties for her entire life and it was nice that it was done with universal gaiety. The taking on of the burdens, which only death would relieve her of, was made easier so.

The next days also eased the transition from carefree youth to the burdens of life. There were a few more feasts! One was when the groom's parents and the young couple made their first visit to the bride's parents. Another was when the bride for the first time really kneaded dough. The poor girl was the subject of many jokes, at that, "How could you fall so low", they shouted at her teasingly, "Go home! Run away! What are you doing here, anyway?" And when she started kneading dough, she had to hear the mocking song: But there were more or less family holidays. For the community, the wedding had ended on Sunday with a carnival, in which the men had walked from house to house, dressed as women, Turks, Albanians, or otherwise.

On that day, the flags were taken in, the gypsies went away, and silence slowly began to take over Galichnik.

It lasted for a full year, until the next St. Peter's day.

V. VARDAR OUTLINES

The Contested Zone

In the sloping yard of the old inn, which was in an out-of-the-way Skoplje quarter, near the Kourshoumli Inn, I heard the sound of horse's hoofs. Someone dismounted a horse and stopped behind me.

When one is seeking something, he rarely pays attention to anyone standing behind him. At that moment, I was trying to catch one of the gypsies, who were walking to and fro in the foreground and excellently filling in the picture, whose climax in the background was magnificent mosque. That was why I paid no attention to onlookers.

But the rider greeted me and I couldn't avoid him. One of the languages in which I could answer in, I chose Russian. The stranger presented himself as a Serbian abbot of one of the many monasteries in the Skoplje Cherna Gora (a parallel ridge, three hours to the north of Skoplje, which formed the pre-war border of Macedonia)

I had no choice but to do the same. I did not regret the short interruption, though. The energetic old man, whose kamelaukion was happily resting on his unruly, long hair, was smiling at me. With his agility, he managed to surmount the impression given by his black dress to such an extent, that it seemed to swell from some wild whim, rather than from his ascetic addiction. When he found out that I was a Czech, he retorted joyfully that he had known personally our Orthodox Bishop Gorazd,* and that long ago, on Mount Athos, he had met our Sava Hilendarets, the born near Koutna Hora, Slabor Brauner. He invited me to visit him in his monastery and promised to relate how he had been a leader of Serbian "Haidouts", or as they were called lately, 'Komits'. (insurgents)

I actually met him later on. But we did not have an interesting discussion. I asked that we do not mention politics. It was not my field of work. I had come to Macedonia, only to collect impressions and to study the place of this land, in terms of music and art, in the mosaic of Balkan Slavs.

●Gorazd — from the Cyril and Methodius church in Prague, died together with other Czech patriots after Heidrich's assassination. Author's note.

I knew that I was on a very hot soil, politically speaking. The Macedonians, who had had their Revival in the past century, had aspired towards the creation of new conditions of life, and so had started a struggle against the Turks, who had oppressed them politically and socially, and against the Greeks, who had deprived them of churches and schools. The armed and political struggle against the Turks had followed the struggle on the cultural front, and when in the nineties foreign bands (Greek and Serbian) had appeared besides the Macedonian ones, they had to fight them, as well, since even though the enemy ostensibly was common, the Greek and Serbian bands had their own goals, to fight not the Turks, but the local Macedonian bands, who were believed to be part of the Bulgarian people.

Of course, it was difficult to avoid the political subject altogether. I felt it immediately during my first stroll in Skoplje.

We were in a side street with my son, trying to look into a dreamy, Turkish monastery through the bars on the windows and to glimpse the tall Mohammedan saints.

A man in house clothes was sitting on a bench, beside the house across the street. He told us that it was impossible to enter the monastery. He was a Serbian lawyer. When he found out that we were Czechs, he started, with great interest, a fruitless discussion on Slavdom in general. He had once studied prehistorical times and was interested in the Luggi Serbs, of which he questioned us. He even advanced his own theory, according to which all Slavs were Serbs. His claim was allegedly made good not only by the Polabian Serbs, but also by the Czech people itself, among which the name Serb, as a geographic or family name, was quite common. His theory was also confirmed by the fact, that once, when he had visited Prague, its mayor had been called Dr. Serbin.

"I know that it was a coincidence, but a very significant one", I must say, he added.

I assured him that we, Czechs, would have nothing against it, if it was proved that we were Serbs. We were certain of the original unity of the Slavs and our feelings were pure and void of any fraternal envy.

Then, our willing interpreter put us wise as to where we were, since we had thought all the time that we were in Macedonia. "Skoplje is not in Macedonia. That's what the Bulgarians say. According to them, Macedonia begins north of Skoplje Cherna Gora and Shar, but it actually begins not far from here, to the south. This is still Old

Serbia. The zone with the towns Koumanovo, Tetovo, Gostivar, Kichevo, Ohrid, and of course Skoplje belongs to it."

I could, of course, simply state that King Miliutin had been the first Serbian ruler to conquer the region for a longer period of time, and because of that was called conqueror of Macedonia, but I remained silent. I mention all this, because the fanatical man called the towns that he listed, with the correct term "contested zone", which I must mention in order to protect myself from possible accusations that in my book on Macedonia I am writing of a region which does not belong to Macedonia. But Dr. T. Djordjevich, a Serb, released the second edition of his "Macedonia" in 1926, and even though he excluded the region from Macedonia, he didn't exclude it from his book.

The term "contested zone" originated at the diplomatic talks between Bulgaria and Serbia, when the general terms of the Balkan War were negotiated in 1911. After the victory of the allies, Serbia acknowledged the Bulgarian claim over Macedonia and Bulgaria the Serbian over Old Serbia. They only were not able to agree where the border between the two was to pass. It was exactly those towns that were contested. The Russian Tsar was the one to decide after the war whom the "contested zone" should be given to.

The Tsar never had to decide anything, since as it is known, the Balkan War changed so significantly in its second part that Bulgarian was left alone and exhausted against her former allies and the kind-hearted Rumania, which also ran to their aid with her fresh regiments, and with a worthy of "praise" courage carried away the crops from Bulgaria's fields, guarded only by old people, women, and children.

The reasons for this twist of events have already been examined in numerous works, with different standpoints, and consequently with different results. But from all of them it is clear that it is Macedonia they are speaking of, and the whole of it at that, and not just the "contested zone". Also, after the battle at Koumanovo, the Serbs, who had taken over Macedonia, had closed all Bulgarian schools immediately and had replaced the Bulgarian priests with Serbian ones.

We, as Slavs, must naturally be interested that Serbia achieved its victory over the exhausted and abandoned Bulgaria with non-Slavic assistance and on the basis of an agreement, which ceded Slavic

territory to a non-Slavic state. I am not about to judge the Serbs' behaviour, but I think that we cannot agree that it befitted a Slavic nation, after it aimed the loss of Slavic land to non-Slavs.

So the result of the war was quite non-Slavic, since Rumania received Bulgarian land in Dobroudja, Thracian Bulgarians remained in Turkey, while Greece got southern Macedonia with 300 000 Slavs, who were later proclaimed as "Bulgarian speaking Greeks".

The largest part of Macedonia was, of course, allotted to Serbia, but there the macedonians were not allowed to call themselves Bulgarians and they were officially proclaimed as Serbs.

Bulgaria received only an insignificant portion of Eastern Macedonia, which was further clipped off after the World War. If we can imagine for a moment that the Slavic population of Macedonia, with the exception of an insignificant number of Serbs, who had for centuries waged a struggle for liberation against Greeks and Turks as an integral part of the Bulgarian people, we will understand the feelings with which they accepted such a result, after so many sacrifices. We will also understand the numerous deplorable events of which we occasionally hear, and the many more we never hear of, since even the statements of that real friend of the Slavs, Scoutus Viator (Seton Watson) are hidden, or accepted with disagreement in our country.

One might say that in our country it is a mere continuation of the way that our public has treated Macedonian Slavic branch. Only the reasons then and now are different. The pre-war ignorance of Macedonian conditions is up to a certain point excusable. Travels in Macedonia then were undertaken only at the expense and efforts of separate individuals, to whom the territory had made an impression with its high prices and its insecurity. Only a handful of specialists knew the real state of things, but their voices could hardly creep into our society. In 1909, Dr. L. Niderle won a recognition with his work "The Macedonian Question", whose scientific value was appreciated among all fair-minded people.

The struggle of Macedonian Slavs had not been so simple and easy, as that of the rest of the Balkan Slavs, for whom the simple formula was sufficient: Slavs must liberate himself from Turks, Christians from the Muslims. It was enough that the press opposed the cross to the crescent in the crudest fashion, for which their vocabulary had

been sufficient.

It had been different in Macedonia. First of all her territory, which had belonged to three Turkish provinces had not been a defined geographic, much less even as political concept. But as a national concept it had represented a complex phenomenon. The Slavs had accounted for half the population and the reason for their predominance had been the fact that the other half had consisted of fragments of all the Balkan peoples and that partly, the Slavs had formed the connecting link of the country, while the other half lived scattered in separate town quarters.

From manuscript 128 to 135

The role of a national enemy to the Slavs had been played not by the Turks, but by the Greeks, one of the least numerous elements, but the most dangerous one, since the churches and the schools had been in its hands. It had Hellenized and demoralized.

And finally — the thing that is most delicate in explaining the Macedonian question. The conditions became even more complicated when in 1872 the Turkish Sultan recognized the Bulgarian Exarchate as an independent church. The Bulgarian success aroused a keen political interest in the Serbs towards Macedonia. Its Slavic population was designated as Serbian, even though all scholars, Slavic and non-Slavic, still believe the Macedonian language to be a Bulgarian dialect.

The question, was Macedonia Serbian or Bulgarian, was discussed in some Slavic periodicals, and since Bulgaria lacked such a promoter as the popular Joseph Holecek was for the Serbs, the wide public and the press itself remained without a guide on the Macedonian question.

The insecurity alienated most, with minor exceptions, since they were afraid to touch the subject, or still more, to write something harmful of the Serbs. So, after numerous, bloody struggles, the glorious Illinden uprising began in 1903 (on St. Illiya's day). And our press could not arouse the necessary interest in the brave revolutionaries, even though the three-month long battles stirred Europe so much that a meeting of the three monarchs was called.

Our attitude towards Macedonia, after the World War, remained the same and even deteriorated. Ignorance continued to reign, even though it was admitted that Macedonia was a powder keg, or at least



the key to a union between the Balkan Slavic countries, which would limit the access of foreign elements and influences into the Balkans and the position of Yugoslavia and Bulgaria would become a firm as a rock.

Skoplje

Before the war we used to spell it in Bulgarian-Macedonian-Skopiye.

But the name is neither of Bulgarian, nor of Serbian origin, but a memory of the Illyrians, or (according to Weigand) of the Thracians. Together with the Turkish modifications we find an interesting gama of forms: Skoupi, Skopiye, Skoplje, Oushkoub. It is the same sound which has been handed down from prehistoric times, from the times of the Dardans, through those of the Bulgarians, Romans, Greek-Byzantines, Normans, Cumans, Serbs, and Turks. Even the excellent name Justiniana Prima, given it in the sixth century, could not suppress the barbaric name and graft the wild tree.

The center of the Illyrian tribes was conquered by the Romans in the second century B.C. From it, they had managed their military affairs in the Balkans and even farther. Later, a destructive earthquake had added to the historical storms, and Justinian I, who was born here, had to build a new city, starting from scratch. As an ardent builder, he had probably done it happily, and the chronicler Prokopios had announced that the citie's magnificence had been beyond description. Could it have been just meaningless Byzantine boasting? One can judge for himself from the still preserved, wonderful monument — the twelve kilometers long viaduct, connecting the Skoplje Cherna Gora with Skoplje, which has numerous brick vaults, arousing many mysteries. They were not only of a constructional nature, due to the frequent reconstructions, but of a mathemaical one, as well, since their number was so variable, according to the Skoplje "Tlasnik Proffesorskog Drouzhestva", which on page 188 stated that "they are over one hundred", but on page 198 they were reduced to merely 55. I, myself, did not dare count them, lest I got a different figure.

The viaduct was the only thing left from the old city, and solely from it one could judge that present Skoplje was built on the same spot. But during the same century another calamity had befallen the city. During the migration of the peoples in the next 400 years, the city had declined so much, that no one could be sure where it had been

situated.

While stone, prospecting for construction purposes, was going on not long ago, the remains of the first Roman Skoupi had been uncovered near the villages of Birdovtsi and Zlokouchange, within seven miles of present Skoplje. There, I saw a few open tombs and a part of a basilica. In the past century, the Englishman A.J. Evans had suggested that Skoplje had originally been situated elsewhere, and not at its present location. He had probably reached that conclusion when he had noticed that the troughs and the wells of the Birdovtsi peasants were made of Roman debris, as they were when I was there.

According to the Serbian historian M. Kostich, it was during the reign of the Bulgarian Tsar Simeon (around the year 900) that the city had finally "shone again". By then it had been in its present location, along the banks of Vardar, under the loose, 50 meters high, neogenic rock, where now, in the place of the castle, there were ordinary barracks, called unjustifiably, according to Serbian writers, "Doushan's" castle.

After the fall of Samouil's Bulgarian state in 1018, there came the Greek-Byzantine and the Bulgarian-Assen periods, followed by the Serbian domination, starting with King Miliutin in 1282 and lasting until 1371, when they were defeated by the Turks on the Maritsa river near Chernomen (Vuk Brankovich had only remained as a Turkish vassal by then).

As the Serbian scholars point out with regret, no records of Serbian times have remained. The big, stone bridge, resembling our Karlov's bridge and serving as a foreground scenery to the castle, is also unjustifiably called "Doushan's", (according to Dr. B.S. Jovanovich*), since it has been built by the Turks.

Nevertheless, Skoplje had been a memorable place for the Serbs. In 1346, Doushan, who proclaimed himself a Tsar, crowned himself, called his sejms, and published his famous collection of laws there.

The Turkish age had been quite favorable for the city. The number of inhabitants had reached 60 000 (which is its present number). The Turkish traveller Evlia Chelebi was full of admiration. He had found a city of white, paved with stone, and surrounded by a castle wall with 70 towers. Inside, there had been 10 000 houses, 2150 shops, 120 mosques, and 110 water fountains. 1 000 mills had worked in the vicinity.

* *Tlasnik Profesorskog Drouzhestva — V.4 196. Author's note.*

All this was destroyed in the fire of 1689, ordered by General Piccolomini, when he was forced to retreat from the city. The incendiary had watched his act from the castle walls. Only the grand, old mosques had been left. They still form the basis and the richness of the present city, insofar as the perverted and false "progressiveness" has not prevailed over reason and taste. They also are its greatest decoration.

The present Skoplje is rapidly expanding and in a typical way, after the changes which have occurred not only in the Balkans, but elsewhere as well, without paying any attention to the cultural or artistic values of the conquered or overcome past. The local buildings, classically beautiful and in proportion with both the climate, tradition and demands, were making way for the rejected, lacking any character Western style. The Middle European, "modern" architecture was being inserted constantly. (In this respect, only Austria had acted otherwise in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and her merit was not diminished by the fact that she had preserved the old style in order to please the Turks).

In Skoplje, as elsewhere, many sins have been committed towards the Holy Ghost. One of the most drastic ones was the tearing down of the magnificent mosque, which together with the old bridge, the river, and the castle had represented a wonderful scene. Now, in the place of the mosque, there is a modern, Renaissance*, officers' casino, called by the population "The Locomotive". The Serbian writer S. Krakov, in his book "Kroz Yuzhni Serbiyu" sorrowfully lamented the fact that "because of that clumsy building, Bourmali Mosque, perhaps the most beautiful and oldest, from the fifteenth century, had been sacrificed".

Further one he said: "Because of the same reason — to open the view towards the castle — the oak-tree on the other side of the Vardar bridge, which was mentioned in all old chronicles and was also called Doushan's, was cut off. The Turks used to hang our people on it. It would have been the best monument for those martyrs who had died on its branches. Now only the trunk, from which a few branches have grown as a condemnation from the undestroyed century-old power inside it, remains". In order to make the "victory" full, a monument for those fallen in the World War was erected next to it. It was so clumsy that another one like it could hardly be found anywhere else.

●The author probably had in mind Neo-Renaissance. Translator's note.

Nevertheless, Skoplje's beauty had not been destroyed. That, which the Turks had sown for 500 years, could not be reaped in one. Next to the Turkish quarter, domineering with its red sahat koula (clock tower) and the merchants' streets, whose colourfulness was filled in by brisk Spanish Jews, there were 30 mosques, 20 Turkish monasteries, many baths and bathing pools, marble water fountains, and a large number of old inns, among which was the famous Kourshoumli Inn (Lead Inn), built by Doubrovniks' merchant colony in Eastern style, with numerous domes and arches. It was being prepared for a museum.

The city's attitude towards nature, resolved with such artistic beauty, was also indestructible, although hundreds of trees had fallen victims to woodcutters' zeal. They were being cut off on the pretence that in this way the area would be dried up and rid of mosquitoes, but the picture did not change considerably. As we stood on the bridge and looked around, we became certain of it! We were angered, seeing the Turkish plaque in the middle, carved out delicately and beautifully in the marble, was hidden by a number of nonsensical posters that had been posted on it by deluded people. Our eyes were immediately captured by the clear and wide river, in which numerous dyers were immersing and then drying violet scarfs and curriers were immersing and then drying violet scarfs and curriers were tanning furs in cylinders. After that, our eyes moved along the marvellous mountain peaks, among which Liubotin dominated the Shar mountain to the west, with enough wisdom to preserve an ice cream cap for itself in the heat. A long time passed before we could say farewell to the beautiful scene.

Our nights were especially pleasant. Instead of the daytime din, there was only the ripple and the lapping of the river and the music from the military casino, the cabarets, and the cafes, which intermingled with the gypsies' songs and the crickets' orchestra. On the mountain slopes of the high Vodno, to the south, the lights of the only European tropical institute flickered. It was an institution with the size of a small town, founded with Rockefeller's aid and managed (at the time of our visit) by our compatriot Dr. Noheil. On the roof of the nearby building a movie was being shown and we could discern both the audience and the images on the wall. The hot southern nocturne held us in its grip, from which we were relieved only by the frequent fire alarms.

One of my significant visits was that to the mayor's office, where the very intelligent mayor, Mr. Sapoundjich, received us politely. He was still with fresh impressions from his visit to Prague. He had been to our country to gather some experience and knowledge on the subject of city refuse — how to cope with it and was it expedient to do so. While we drank black coffee he was able to converse with his visitors in pseudo-Rumanian (Tsintsarian), Greek, Albanian, Turkish, and maybe Spanish and Romany. I don't remember any more.



A Turkish Woman from Bitolja

Skoplje, with its inhabitants, represented the Balkan peninsula on a small scale. Before the war the city had 32 000 inhabitants, including the Serb colony. 15000 were Moslems (Turks and Albanians), 13 000 Macedonian Bulgarians, 1 900 gypsies, 800 Spanish Jews, 450

Wallachs, and 50 Greeks.

The Skoplje Bulgarians had been among the first in Macedonia, in the past century, to manifest a desire towards a life as Slavs. They had started a struggle with the Greeks as their national enemies. As far back as 1833 they drove Greek priests out of the churches and demanded that they be replaced by Bulgarians. For four years rich merchants had collected money to found a Bulgarian school, and with the aid of voluntary contributions had created conditions for the publication of Bulgarian books. But they had to wait until 1872, When the Turkish Sultan approved the establishment of a Bulgarian Exarchate, to have their own Bishop. It was then that the local Bulgarians received rights and freedoms in church and school matters, which lasted until the Balkan War.

Scant remains had been left from the time of the pursuit of Christians, but one of them was unforgettable. It was the St. Spass Church, which was almost entirely in the ground and could hardly be seen. It was not known when and who had built it and what changes it had experienced, but its present appearance indicated that it was from the time of the greatest oppression, when a church dared not trouble a Moslem's eye or ear, neither with a tower, nor with a single chime. And that what was why it was an admirable Bulgarian-Macedonian monument. The oconostasis, with an astonishing descriptiveness and rich carvings, was the work of three Debar wood-carvers. The Biblical scenes and faces were drawn in a extravagant plastic ornamentation.

The entrance of the church was in the hidden yard, paved with white marble. We were immersed in a different world. We thought we saw many different flowers growing from the cracks between the stones-water-cresses, begonias, mallows, and God knows how many others. But it was all one flower and we didn't want to step on it. It grew and blossomed all by itself, a real polyp. It was the image of the local Slavic race.

Market Day-The Weekly Market

Even though the rivers in some local towns, as for example the Dragor river in Bitolja or the Bregalnitsa in Stip, take their vacations in the summer and send their fish off on a holiday, and the arches of the bridges and the canal openings yawn tediously, and during market days are amazed by the fact that instead of trout lazy hogs are rooting

about the river beds and the rounded stones are replaced by the slender "stomni" (classical, round water vessels) of the local potters, the market day everywhere in the Balkans is a source of paintings, typical with their fathomlessness and turbulence, always identical, but always enchanting.

Skoplje was transformed into such a kaleidoscope every Tuesday.

The beautiful Skoplje valley must excuse me for the imperfect comparison, if I say that in the morning it resembled a subtle water-colour, painted with a delicate tonality of still wet shades. The blue-green sky merged in the grey mist with the purple-blue and chocolate of the plain, composed of green marshes and golden stubble fields. The harmony of colour, bathed in the golden morning sun, possessed a tropical character. The neighbouring mountains seemed as if they were about to give birth. Peasants' expeditions invaded, rolled about, swarmed together, and set out on the star way as motley dressed corals. Raising dust, they seemed to swim in the clouds. The inhabitants of the Skoplje Cherna Gora came from the north. Women, with waving, white veils (and an infants cradle before them) rode as princesses, while the men held the reins as pages. The more sluggish "marsh-people" approached from the east, and the dashing Albanians and the young, puny pseudo-Rumanians from the west. The southern hillside Vodno, or Nerezi, sent the Moslems whose women had not yet removed, fortunately, their veils, as their city-born counterparts had so generously done.

I returned to the city with the peasants. They were hurrying, while I was not. The spectacle would last until sundown. On that day, the shutters of the shops remained raised all day (they served as a shade for the shop windows), since the buyers had not time for an afternoon siesta. The din and the commotion in the narrow streets of the "charshiya" did not cease for a moment and the constant beehivelike buzzing went on and on. We noticed only one secure point in the throng, a Turkish merchant was sticking out next to his goods, as if he himself was for sale. The haggling and bargaining of the peasant did not budge him an inch and we thought that he must be made of wax. . . And only his smoking and his index finger, with which he rubbed and picked his nose occasionally, and tried to push it in further than it would go, assured us that he was not.

The Spanish Jews and the Christians, of which the richer amused themselves with an amber rosary, were more adroit. The seriousness

of their profession was backed by some unwritten sayings, like the following, which was said with a doubly insulting politeness: "Respect for everyone, credit to no one".

The skinny and tall dervishes looked even taller in their high hats. They and the imams with the white scarfs, wrapped around their bright red fezzes and the white caftans and waving majestically around their wide breeches, were a more peaceful element in the pedestrian traffic, surpassed only by the meandering cattle of all sorts: cows, calfs, and goats. During their independent strolls, they hardly looked like the stupid brutes they really were, since they seemed so intelligently bored among the displayed merchandise, as if they were aware of the contempt they aroused because they had no money to buy any of it. In return we, the foreigners, seemed to arouse their interest, because they had no money to buy any of it. In return we, the foreigners, seemed to arouse their interest, because they kept an eye on us, as if trying to guess where we had come from. On the other hand, their smaller friends — pigs, dogs, and chickens — were not troubled by such curiosity. Bent over the deep crevices in the monumental pavement, they were moving slowly but steadily towards the goals they had chosen. They paid attention to no one, not even if someone bumped into them occasionally, as we did.

We were impressed by everything: the people with their costumes and attitudes, the groups engaged in picturesque conversations and haggles, distinguished by their vivacity and their peculiarities. The peasants had brought everything that they might sell and were taking back all that they had bought and all that they hadn't been able to get rid of. It was not by chance that such barterers were called by all Slavic peoples "tirovanie" — exchanges. The right hand of the unyielding seller would jerk back sharply when he would not agree with the price given him for his merchandise. If the deal had been concluded quietly, the two parties would part wearily, each one of them certain that he had been swindled. If, on the other hand, there had been heated arguments, they would part contendedly, certain that they had done as well as possible.

An enchanting phantasm flashed nearby. We followed it as if we were following a star. It was a peasant, adorned from head to toe with garlic, as if with a wreath of enormous pearls. Such unseen beauty! The shop was an Asian sanctuary, a scene from *A Thousand and One Nights*. The walls, the ceiling, the floor, everything shone like an opal

covered with pearls that have grown in a garden. The garlic stalactites and garlands rose all around the grocer, who was sittig like a Buddha. He stretched a hand towards the displayed merchandice as Dalai Lama towards an offered sacrifice. The peasant suddenly took off the fabulous robe, and poetry, under the chilling breath of business, was suddenly transformed into prose. He moved off, all at once much poorer, and we did not follow him any more.

We reached the most beautiful part of the "charshiya," the part with the fruits and the vegetables. We saw that the specialised onion shops were not less charming. Nearby there was a shop which seemed to be of blood-red bones, burning in the sun like red flames. They were just ordinary peppers. Whether they were thrown in heaps or hanging from a wall, they were like cut off tongues on St. Nicholas's day, or even better, like real devils (since they were hot like hell).

Pyramids of all sorts of water-mellons were arranged as cannon balls in an arsenal. Some of them, like cut in two rounds of beef, with their redness were attracting swarms of flies, which resembled livers, except that they moved. The rolling about fatsos could be identified by their colours and their stripes: musk-melons, cantaloupes, or water-mellons. The latter reminded us of an incident that one of our compatriots had had. Not knowing the language well, he had tried to adapt the Czech and the Slovak to the south Slavic. When he was asked if he was married, he had answered, "No, but I plan to do so soon. I have a liubenitsa* waiting for me!" His ambitious smile had vanished at once, when he had seen the effect he had achieved.

Money was treated in the same way that the boys treat the butterflies — it was immediately put under the hat and carried over the head all day. And the crumpled pieces of paper looked just like butterflies. When they were many, one could easily understand the saying that "money had stepped on someone's head", and it becomes obvious that souherners are quite rightly called "hot heads", since even in the greatest heat they wear enormous, bushy, fur caps. Furs were worn all year round, and they were masterfully worked out, not only the edging, but the lining as well, especially those of the rich townspeople. Xenophon, in his *Anabasi* (VII.4), wrote that the Greek soldiers in Thrace had envied the locals for their warm, fur caps

*Liubenitsa — in Bulgarian a wather-mellon. The "compatriet" had tried to adopt the Czech word sweet heart to the Bulgarian language. Translator's note.

and coats, I was reminded of the recently deceased Serbian scholar Tsviich, who was greatly troubled by the question, whether there was an Ice Age on the Balkans too, as it was proved for the Italian and Iberian peninsulas. He had managed to find out, as a result from his difficult expeditions in impenetrable mountains. May be it would have sufficed if he had noticed the fashion, which was preserved since those cold days, as Xenophon's statement indicated, and which was a manifestation of real backwardness of the people, which even now, in the heat, were not able to sweat properly.

We were sweating all the time. We decided to end our stroll, so we left the "charshiya" and passed by a smithy, in which an ox was being nailed, and I must say, quite comfortably. They tied up its hoofs, passed a thick beam between its legs, turned it over, and while it was half-lying, half hanging, it could happily watch the passers by while being nailed. It didn't suffer as our cows, which often, weak with pain, hit the blacksmith and the others with their hind parts and sprayed them so much that they had to wipe their faces clean, and not from tears, of course.

We walked around the houses, surrounding the round and wide puddle, called "Lake Ohrid Hotel". It seemed doubtful that it could survive in the heat and was probably artificially maintained for advertising purposes.

A small gypsy boy, knocking a brush against a wooden box, approached us. Should we let him polish our shoes? How many times had we done it today?

"Only from the dust", said the boy, guessing our thoughts (they charged only half the normal fee for that).

"Here we go again," we thought, "soon all our "prakhi" will vanish in your "prakh"!

We smiled at the boy and it smiled back. It smeared shoe cream on the bare foot of its friend and began polishing it with a brush. Wasn't it making fun of the international proverb of the blacksmith's mare and the cobbler's wife? Or maybe it was making fun of us, of our thrift? Maybe it was gallantly trying to tell us that money was not the point, but that just the act, which it adored doing, mattered? It could be. Good for it if it was so! Good for its wit, manifested by an innocent whim, and especially for its idealism! Long live all who enthusiastically perform their vocations! They work with an amazing interest, with an artistic fervour. If one travels in the Balkans, from the north to

the south, he will notice how the shoe-shine boys' class becomes more refined. In the south, they place their profession high and not every shoe is fit to get a shine by their artistic hands. I, myself, saw how a gypsy boy refused, with a contemptuous grimace, to polish a peasant's muddy, rubber sandals, a job which in Serbia would have been done without any disgust by a colleague of his. Of course, he would show the same indifference and apathy if he was polishing a pair of patent leather shoes, while the Macedonian gypsy would caress them gently. He knows what he is doing and why he is doing it: with his own hands he is helping his fatherland shine. It is his privilege and his duty, and from them he draws his self-confidence, with which, as an official, he calls people to his street tribunal with a knock on his box, or with the same signal orders them to change the foot on the box, when one of the shoes is ready.

The Macedonian gypsy was a peculiar creature! Settled permanently, he had preserved all his peculiarities, which could survive the melting pot of his place of permanent settlement. His distinctiveness, not only outer, but inner as well, was especially evident during market day, when his figure could be glimpsed occasionally in the crowd. He could most easily be discerned from the peasant groups.

The peasant's figures, with their amazing, majestic costumes with magnificent colours, walked slowly and leisurely, in conformity with their clothing, which with its style picturesqueness, and embroidery was itself ceremonial. The peasants walked with an air of importance, almost sluggishly, as if with each movement they wanted to underline the seriousness, the suffering, and the tragedy of life.

A couple of sun-tanned, ragged gypsies passed by us. Those of them who were going, or coming back, from work walked easily and briskly, and they probably did it because in that way they would have more time to lie down. They looked like carefree sparrows. The father teased the infant, which the mother was holding to her chest. Life seemed to be a game for them.

But it wasn't. On the contrary, they lived surrounded by disregard and earned their bread with hard work for minimal pay. When some time ago, the Skoplje authorities wanted to tear down their quarter and move it to another place, an hour's distance away from the city, the merchants had objected by asking, "Who will perform the heavy work so cheaply?"

The only pleasure in their lives was music, to which they were

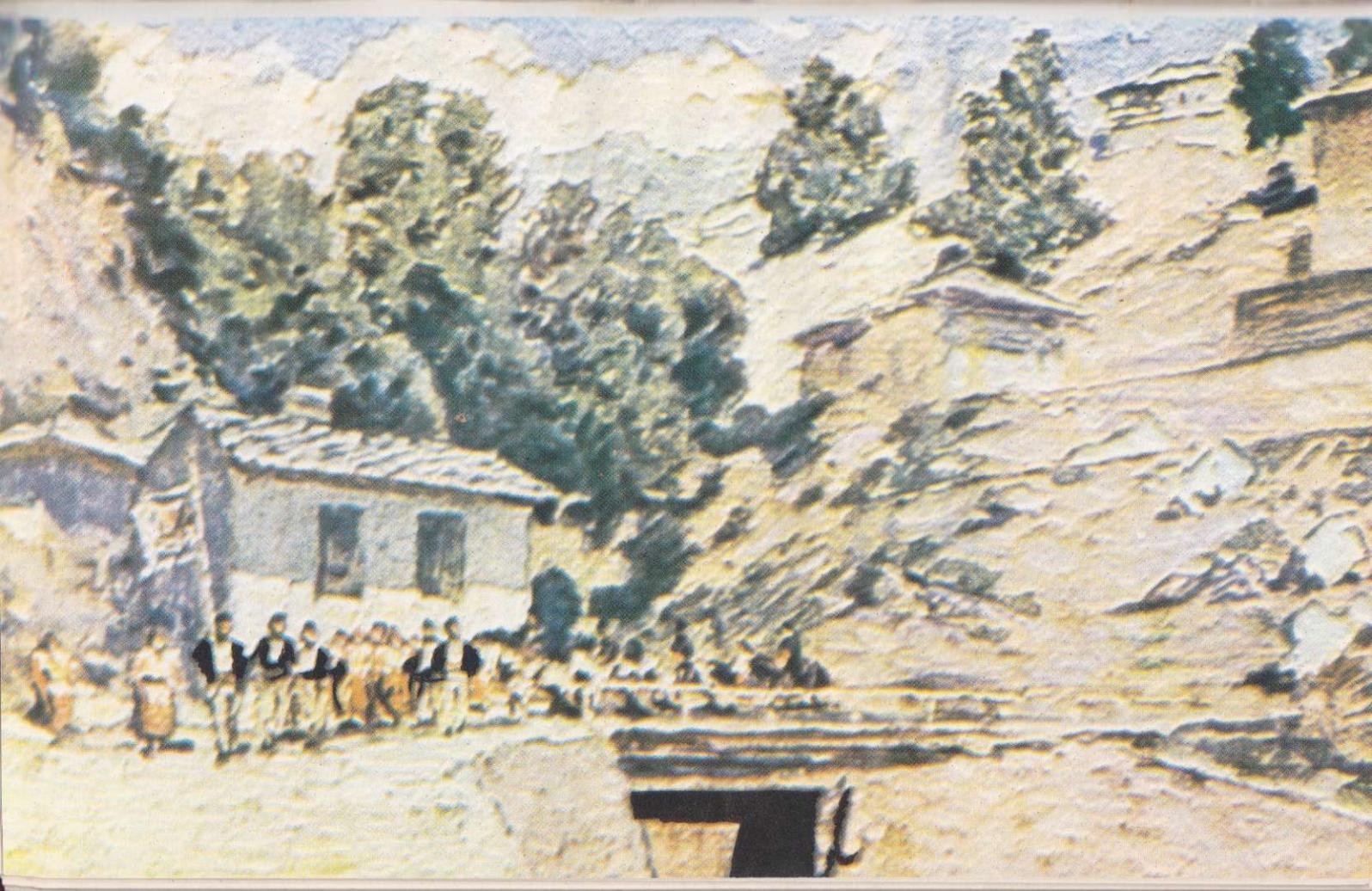
addicted. If in any shop a record player was turned on, they would swarm with wide-open eyes and pricked up ears.

One evening, before the cafe where a Czech trio was playing had opened, their teeth and eyes shone so fiercely, that my neighbour, a compatriot of mine, who had just arrived from Czechoslovakia with a head full of dreadful stories of this region, pointed terrified to one of them and said, "That one would finish us off if we met him in a dark alley!"

"That one? That one simply loves music. If you want to learn anything about the local gypsies, just ask our hotel manager, who employs a few old gypsies. They clean the place and he says that he is not afraid to leave them unattended. The gypsies here are honest. They would kill one of their own if they caught him stealing. He has only one inconvenience with them. When he hires them, they always discuss the food — how much bread and cheese they are going to be given and that they should be given no meat. The gypsies here have emigrated from the East in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. It is difficult to say what their religion had been. Here, they either profess none or all of them. They are eclectics. They don't care which religion they profess, but they observe all the holidays. They are somewhere between all religions. On the outside, they want to please all, but on the inside are alien to all. You might think that they have not risen high enough to become attached to any of the religions, but it might be just the opposite — they might have risen above all of them. So far, we only know that they remain independent of any of them. In



St. Archangel near Kouchevitse



this respect they are superior to the Jews. During the half millenium in which they have lived in the Balkans, astounding changes have occurred, both inner and outer. There has been a great migration of the population from the south to the north when the crescent had begun penetrating here, and afterwards, when the crescent had retreated, in the opposite direction. But nothing has been able to budge the gypsies-history has passed through them as through a fog and left no traces, as a ship leaves no traces in the sea. The great concerns of mankind as a whole are unknown to them and its ideas never seem to touch these gypsies. If all this does not surprise us when it occurs to their compatriots, the nomad gypsies, it should when it does to the local gypsies, who aspire with their work to become members of the society and to be useful to it."

My compatriot, as if he had heard nothing, said, "Refuse! The scrap of mankind!"

"It depends on the point of view. They are an element from a different world, with a different inner life. Nothing is known of their origin, but if you look closer, behind their unattractive appearance, there lies hidden a cultivated elegance, which at appropriate occasions comes to life, like a spark in the ashes. What seems like an atavism and an inclination towards primeval man, is actually a taste for luxury. They seem to be descendants of century-old, noble castes, in whose tradition the animal has not been entirely forgotten. It can be seen in the rags they wear, which are sometimes mended with an astonishing, peculiar taste, but never carelessly. Look at any gypsy woman, old or young, and you will notice how prettily she has stuck a rose in her hair or her bosom and how elegantly she walks. A lady is hidden in each one of them. You can see it in the hotel, when one of them finds a cigarette butt, in the way she will ask you for a light. And you will be further surprised when the old woman nestles in a corner, like a pile of rags, and still, in the elegance of the curved lines of her cigarette smoke, she will continue to be a symbol of poverty and misery. Even old age cannot erase the slenderness of her limbs and cannot bend her spine. This cannot be explained only with preserved sprightliness. The reasons must be much deeper. They don't shun from any work. Not long ago, for example, a gypsy was weaving baskets with astonishing dexterity, in an extraordinary heat, and a boy was helping him. At the same time, both of them had managed to preserve their taste for idleness in exactly the same degree, and at a

certain moment they both devoted themselves to a voluptuous languor. Just imagine any of their women fashionably dressed and you will agree that she may appear among the most elegant company and will never be felt as an outsider, but as an integral part of it. And take notice, some evening, of a gypsy orchestra in the square, whose members are dressed in Western clothes. You will be amazed to find out that each one of them looks like an European commercial counselor or a relative of his. You must understand that the whole race lacks nothing but prosperity, in order to appear as caste of cultivated lovers of pleasure. As for now, they have only music, which raises their spirits as opium. For some of them music is a living, while others carry (alone!) whole beams padded with a sack of rags, which, while they are resting, serves as a pillow. In the evenings, they amuse themselves with songs, with zourlas, and with drums, for which sometimes an earthenware pot or a wooden box will suffice, since even on them they can expertly bring out unusual rhythms, which are heritage of the Orient”.

My lecture was making my compatriot weary. I stopped talking, since there was no use in wasting my words. I did not tell him to visit the gypsy quarter and see the poor, filigreed huts, which were actually made of clay and sheet iron (or of anything else) and resembled May-bugs, but some of them were exquisitely decorated with flowers, most often with sunflowers. I did not tell him of the gypsy dance, with which a child of four had hurried along, while trying to wrap a piece of new pink cloth around itself, with the comic sincerity of an old coquette. It looked at everyone it met, in order to receive recognition and admiration. I did not tell him how the fast rhythm had allured outside a sick girl, who was placed on a rug, with her head raised, so that she could participate in the wild dancing at least with her eyes. Even the Christian city youths could not resist to participate in the chain dance, while their whole families were indignant. The youths were finally pulled out, after a lengthy scuffle, from the circumstances which had desecrated them. I mentioned nothing of the old gypsy woman, which slept on the floor in our corridor and each morning shared her breakfast with her soldier son, who came to see her early in the morning. She was concerned about my son's illness. He could take only tea for a week and she brought him a cup each morning. Once she said, "Today I dreamt that your wife had come to make a cup of tea for your son." She had dreamt it on the hard tiles in the corridor.

I had not started a lengthy discussion with her that day. I had no time since it was market day.

St. Archangel's Patron Saint's Day

It was observed in the end of July in Kouchevitse, three hours to the north of Skoplje.

But just the same (i.e. as magnificent) was St. Illiya's patron saint's day, two hours further to the west.

The differences in the patron saints' days, which were observed on their patrons' days, just as in our country, arose only from the fact that some churches had monasteries and some didn't. The monastery ones were more beautiful.

The monastery — a beginning, a sum, and an end of Medieval wisdom — had struck roots among the Balkan Slavs as well. The Bulgarian, and after them even more the Serbian rulers, had zealously endowed them with a great number of villages and other property. And the royal decrees were valuable historical sources.

The people also gave them many gifts. An old man had told me in Prillep that the Treskavets monastery, which had possessed until not long ago over fifty villages, had had a shop in the center of the town, where all sorts of gifts had been brought (wheat, lambs, etc.) as offerings for curing the wife or the children of the donor. Everything which the two "epitrofs" (honorary citizens) had collected and written down had been handed over to the monastery on Sunday.

All this had almost vanished now, even though the ordinary people were still devoted to the monastery. In Treskavets, during our stay, two young men were serving as shepherds without being payed, in gratitude to God for being cured. Their mothers had given them to the monastery.

During the Patron saint's day, the monastery attracted people from the whole area. They came from towns and villages, on foot and by carriage. The Moslems came either as musicians, to earn some money, or if they were sick, to be cured by the saint in which they also believed.

By nighfall, the monastery was under seige. Whole families arrived with their bed covers, rugs, and food, on foot, on horseback, or by carts. They occupied the spacious rooms and wide balconies, and

even the lawns, since the nights were warm. Those that arrived riding horses or donkeys, whether men or women, took off the saddles and used them instead of pillows. When on such a day, on a hot afternoon, we were cooling a watermelon in the stream below St. Petka in Ohrid, in order to quench our thirst, everywhere around us we could see women dressed in white, with waving scarfs, sick people on horses, gypsies with music, pastry sellers with loaded donkeys, street vendors, city ladies with their lovers, and honourable matrons with fat daddies. The ill and suffering had come to pray and the healthy and young to have some fun.

The big crowds gathered on the patron saint's day, of course. Monks came to lend a hand (since the monasteries often had only one monk), taxies hurried and the people had to make way for them. Everything was jammed — the church, the yard, and the area around the monastery. The loud, deafening din around the monastery replaced the silence which had reigned for a whole year. Everything merged in a unified noise, like that of a waterfall. Numerous candles were quickly sold inside. At the entrance of the church, the priest held out an icon for the visitors to kiss, in one of his hands, and sprinkled them with holy water and blessed them with the other. A large table in front of him collected all sorts of bills and coins. He could hardly withstand the flood (the priest of course; the dish on the table was large enough). He threw an irate glance at the boy, which possessed enough religious interest to kiss his hand and to allow to be sprinkled, but lacked the necessary resources to pay for it. Innocent deception! The people were very honest. This was proved by the plates containing money, which were left without supervision.

We had great difficulty in elbowing our way into the church, and once inside, we could hardly stand the stuffiness. The scene was moving and wonderful, with the people, the priests, and the church. The stylishness of the costumes was increased by the impact of the humble air of the figures. Everyone pressed towards the monks with the small rolls. Half of each roll was returned after being consecrated, while the other half vanished below the desk. It was true that the priests did everything as automatic machines, but still they were so grand while doing it, because at that moment they were super-human martyrs, and martyrdom always makes one beautiful. They were tired and exhausted. Their wavy hair hanged down from their heads and merged with their arms, just as Jesus's, absorbing the sweat, running

down their temples, faces and noses, with a hard bronze luster, the same that Donatello's John the Baptist captivates us with: Behind them, the icons, arranged on the oconostasis according to their height, seemed to be alive with their colours. At that moment the priests seemed to be transformed into the Deity itself. They looked as if they had come out of the icons, with the serious faces of martyrs and prophets, and the men and women saints, above who, on the arch, were the Holy Evangelists with Jesus Pantocrat. The whole, old building was imbued by secrets. Its century-old architecture sounded ceremonially, like an organ. The tones seemed to collect the voices from the different ages, always praising God. The columns and the arches were in synchronism with the common prayer of the generations and the centuries, since they were not the product of one moment, but a sum of aspirations, which have captured time, flowing past as a river. The individual was drowned in the current, but the common effort remained. Its author was called tradition, which meant the common soul of a number of generations. Its grandeur was in the discipline of the masses (for whom the separate individual's death meant nothing) and certainly not in the chance whim of the artist. The great artist was nothing but an attainment of the peak of all that had come before him. From all sides we felt great commands, reaching beyond the boundaries of human life. The command rose above everything, above the murals and the architecture and subjected the total impression of the marching army of the generations.

The monks and the children outside were much better off than those inside. They ran to and fro, inspecting the cauldrons with the meat soup, which was being prepared for all the guests. They were also sweating, but still, it was far more pleasant to carry around "monastery" brandy, to divide servings and to command a big meal.

We would have asked them a few questions with great pleasure, but we were afraid that we might disturb or distract them. That was why we stopped the priest with the wide purple belt, who was a guest from the town and was walking around carefree. We presented ourselves and showed him our certificate, a letter of recommendation from His Holiness The Belgrade Patriarch. But alas! The priest read the letter without it having any effect on him and returned it with some unexpected words. We were suddenly reminded that the autocephalousness (or should I call it capricious obstinacy) of the local church reached way down into its roots. They had respect for no one. It was a rare

trait of local democracy, which was typically South-Slavic.

The priests' and monks' class was the same mosaic of human characters that one found anywhere. The decoration of their heads had only an outside effect, but it did not touch the inner self, the moral essence of its carrier.

Another priest happily took us around the church, which had more or less emptied in the meantime. He showed and explained that which interests us, as, for example, the lives and the fates of the saints drawn on the walls. For St. Dimitar, he noted that he was sometimes drawn with a dog's head, which he once really had, as a punishment for being too gallant with the Virgin Mary while boating with her.

We thanked the gay, old man and vanished in the turbulent sea of people, who after serving God, had now become devoted to themselves and to the earthly pleasures. They whirled around the lawn. The bagpipers were blowing their bagpipes and the gypsies were beating their drums. Their "zourlas" pierced the ears and the air, groups of peasants were singing old songs, and townspeople were playing guitars or tormenting breathless harmonicas in the yard, the balconies, or the rooms.

In one of the rooms, a gypsy was standing so comfortably near the door that everyone who left had to stick a metal dinar on his forehead and make way for the next person. The dinar quickly rolled into the musician's lap.

This way of paying fees was only a modification of the one that we had already become acquainted with in Oktis, a village beyond Strouga, on the Albanian border (where we had gone to see a recently discovered mosaic of a Roman bath).

The old women there went from saint to saint, all painted on the iconostasis, and to those who had helped cure them or fulfill their aspirations, they not only read a prayer, but also spit on a dinar bill and stuck it on the saint's face. Some of them were literally blinded by money. The gypsy, of course, was paid after he had played, while the saint, like a lawyer, was paid beforehand.

We merged with the amicable people and soon had to answer all sorts of questions. The most important one was, were we Orthodox?

"No".

"Then what is your religion?"

"Mostly Catholic."

"Do you pay a lot of money to the priests?"

"Most of them have fixed incomes."

"We have to pay them for everything separately. And the fees are always changing. Before the war it was like this: five times a year the priest came to my house to bless it with holy water and each time I gave him 20 groshes.* When I die I will again have to pay 20 groshes. When he christened me he took 10 groshes."

The arithmetic was correct, since it made it easier for one to enter life and more difficult to leave it. "It's correct," I said, "that it's cheaper to be born than to die, but why on earth does getting married cost the same? Or may be it's all the same to you?"

"Not to us, only to the priest."

"I also think so. Why, we get married from goodwill and die only because we have to die."

"Both are necessary, both!"

My interlocutor started greeting, hugging, and kissing the newly arrived. The same scene had been repeated many times and it seemed to be one of the basic reasons for the pilgrimage in this holy place. Friends and relatives saw each other, exchanged questions and answers, both superficial and serious ones: "How are you?", "All the bread that I own is in me, all the clothes that I own are on me." Strangers became friends. An old granny asked a woman with a boy, who was sitting next to her sadly, as a widow, "Do you have a husband?"

"Yes I do."

"You're rich! And who is this?"

"My son."

"God bless him!"

The words and sentences seemed to be carved out of stone.

The conversations, and the people themselves, were possessed with grandeur. And their clothes as well.

The granny went on, "I also had a husband once. From that time, since God is above me, my face has been touched neither by water, nor by soap, nor by any man's hand."

We looked down at the valley, below the monastery, from the window. On the green meadows, surrounded by green slopes casting violet shadows, white, moving ornaments, flecked with red, were folding and swelling out all the time. The youth, both boys and girls, but each sex separately, had joined hands in a chain, stirred by the

*A grosh = 40 pary; 100 pary = Idinar. Author's note.

music from the bagpipes and the flutes. Everything had a hard, strong shape, just like the cuts of the shirts, trousers, and sleeveless dresses. Everything was century-old, even though the centuries and the ages were represented by blossoming youth. It was just a bud on the millenia-old, self-grown trunk.

We went down to them. The picture lost the charm of the bird's eye view, but was still possessed by a spell. St. Illiya or St. Archangel watched all this affectionately and smiled, from the dense forests and rocky slopes of Cherna Gora. And why not, all this occurred only once a year!

The Skoplje Cherna Gora

On the one hand, it was a 1500 meters high, bare ridge, which was the divide between the Black Sea and the Mediterranean, on the other hand, it was eleven villages along the southern slopes, called in the order in which they come: Choucher, Gorniani, Baniani, Glouvo, Brazda, Myrkovtsi, Kouchevitse, Liubantsi, Pobouzhye, Brodets, and Liuboten.

In all the villages, except the last, an Albanian one, the inhabitants intrigued us with their original, Slavic wholeness, and the specificity of the people and their costumes, differing from the rest of Macedonia. They appeared like a magnificent phantasm one after the other. They held us spell bound with their whiteness and their grandeur, and aroused in us a great wish to visit the region. We only asked ourselves instinctively, while looking northwards, towards the bare mountain slopes, in which the Black Foresters* lived: why were they called so? Why was their native land called Cherna Gora (during Turkish times Karadag)?

There was no answer to our question.

Of course, the present bareness of Cherna Gora did not imply that it has always been such. All mountain regions, which had been near the antique Mediterranean culture had suffered so. It had destroyed the trees all the way from Asia Minor to Dalmatia. On the Balkans themselves, its contact had outlined clearly the old forests. If such was the case, then the name Cherna Gora would be a witness to the very old age of the pre-Slavic tribes. Another mystery was why the name

●Cherna Gora — the Bulgarian for Black Forest. Translator's note.

Cherna Gora referred only to these few villages and not to the inhabitants of the northern slopes, who were mostly Albanians, and who, according to pre-war concepts, had belonged to Old Serbia. Of course, the population there was quite different. The factory owner, Mr. Salvaro from Ouroshevats, who had been born in Dalmatia and had been a Czech student, had sent me interesting data on them. According to him, these Albanians were ancient Dalmatian emigrants. While Mohammedanism was predominant among them (it was a frequent phenomenon among the Old Serbia Albanians), the Catholic faith had also been popular. He had spoken to a priest there, and to his surprise had learnt that some Moslem women had sometimes secretly brought their children, asking him (with a promise to keep secrecy) to christen them. Obviously, under the Moslem veil, the former Catholicism was still smoldering.

And so the northern Cherna Gora slopes were the complete opposite to the southern ones, where the inhabitants had not only preserved their faith and their nationality, but displayed frankness, courage, and proud self-consciousness, as well. From time immemorial they had been able to look down upon the inhabitants of the Skoplje valley. They not only lived, but also stood higher than them. Socially, of course.

While in the lowlands the peasants lived in poor huts, dependent on the landowners, working as employed farmhands, as landless, enslaved rayah, owning neither their souls, nor their bodies, the Black Foresters had always been free, independent proprietors of the monastery, and later of the vakuf* lands.

From the back, their villages were surrounded by the marble background of the mountains, and from the front, by the deep, green colour of their gardens and meadows. They were like small towns. The one storeyed, semi-stone buildings were like small palaces, the men and women were like farmers-noblemen. If one chanced to meet a caravan, he could see how the women rode as princesses, and when they had before them and infant's cradle, the husband gallantly led the horse.

As the villages' location indicated, the first occupation of its inhabitants had been shepherdry, which was still maintained. The pastures still existed above the village. Below it were the gardens, the fields, and the vineyards. Whoever had been left without any land had

*Vakuf — a Turkish church a estate endowed in the memory of someone deceased. Translator's note.

gone abroad to seek work, as a day-labourer or a wood-cutter, or as a craftsman—a baker or a stove expert. Only from Kichevitse and Myrkovtsi no one had had to leave.

As the farms of the industrious and lucky peasants had increased, so had the arable land, which at the beginning had been marked out with a red cord, tied from one tree to the other, until the cords had finally become overgrown with hedges (as in England). Fruit trees were grown here, but the people took care of the others as well. We were passing through a real park in this enchanting country! In the fields there was wheat, barley, rye, oats, corn, hemp, and tobacco; in the gardens lettuce, cabbage, onions, beans, potatoes, pumpkins, egg-plant, and peppers; on the trees pears, apples, plums, walnuts, almonds, apricots, and peaches.

The mountain slopes supplied each village with a stream, which carried the name of the village: Baniani, Kouchevitse, etc. Water from here was led as far as Skoplje, to the Moustapha Pasha Mosque and the Kourshoumli Inn.

Each village, seen from a distance, looked as if it was the seat of a boyar. The houses stretched out high in the narrow streets, their eaves covered with Turkish tiles and touching, and in the open attics one could glimpse the white figures of the beautifully dressed women. But we found no castles or palaces here. There were no masters' seats, but they belonged to the master of the universe. There wasn't, as there never had been, a village without a church. The churches were century-old. The number of scattered ruins was unknown. The charm of the region was increased by the monasteries, hidden mysteriously in the deep mountain slopes. Each village (plus a church) had its own monastery.

The churches, as the houses, were worn out, but it didn't disturb us. It helped us to strengthen our impressions. We felt the breath of nobleness, without which the numerous shrines could not have been created. Ancient culture breathed from everything.

For the specialists, the old shrines are inexhaustible sources for research. The westernmost, St. Nikita from Choucher (with an old school), built solidly from brick, in Greek style, on the model of the Miliutin Hilendar Church, The St. Bogoroditsa in Kouchevitse, and especially the magnificent St. Archangel, hidden deep in the mountains, was full of mural paintings from the floor to the ceiling. Together with the Pobouzhi monastery, they had survived the turbu-

lent times without being damaged, while the famous St. Nikita church in Liuboten had suffered most. St. Illiya (in the mountains like our Karlstein*) was actually a cave in the rocks. Further inside the valley were the ruins of St. Spassitel and Blagoveshteniye, in which unfortunately we could not see everything. The churches were generally of the second Serbian, building period (the end of the Milutins'). They were built around 1330 (may be St. Archangel was even from the beginning of the Turkish age), when the construction of Christian churches had still been legal. The brick arcades refreshed the outward appearance of the classical buildings, They were not presented in commemoration of someone deceased. The sign on the Liuboten church mentioned specifically the founder "Mrs. Danitsa". This confirmed our anticipation that the region had stood well with the local nobility, who had obviously been advanced culturally.

We felt that the costumes, with their beauty, their style, and their spirit were a reflection of those times, even though it was evident that they were mostly home-made. They were of pure wool or hemp cloth. Such had been the original Slavic costume without foreign influences, Greek-Byzantine or Turkish, so predominant in the Balkans. They had no sleeveless jackets, woollen caftans, or padded jackets, no arch-like cuts or fantastic oriental decorations. Not a trace of the endless, complicated spirals, with which the fine broadcloth was embroidered, could be found. The men wore cloth trousers and simple shirts with tassels, tightened up with wide, almost to the armpits, red belts, richly and artistically decorated with white thread. Added to them were the fur caps and the sleeveless, woollen, outer garments, and that was all. They reminded one of the Bulgarian "Shopp," the Herzegovina mountainer, the Bosnia "Rham," or the Croatian "Lik."

The white colour was predominant among the women, as well. It was matched with their red aprons and the beautiful, embroidered in brown and blue, wide sleeves of their shirts. On their breasts, the coloured threads formed rich figures, but their clothing was otherwise impressively simple. The black, pleated tassels on their backs were splendid. Their faces, with the big, waving veils, were wrapped in white, in a special, typical way. A coloured, variegated, beautiful belt embraced the head from the chin to the crown. The whole face shone as a red triangle. The scarf had to hide the mouth almost to the nose, a

●Karlstein — a castle near Prague, built in the fourteenth century by Charles IV. Translator's note.

proof that the clothing had had to be such, as to allow the whole face easily to be hidden when necessary. But occasionally, one could see a beautiful woman, whose beauty was marred by a black stain on her forehead or temple. These black stains were drawn by gypsy women in order to "scare away" diseases.

Whenever people weaved a cloth from their shorn wool or from their hemp, they cut out and sewed themselves a shirt or an outer garment and embroidered it in such a way that it had to be fully impressive. And if all had been done according to tradition and the century-old habits, which meant an improvement of the shapes and the models in accordance with the genius of the talented, self-learned individuals, the result could only be a grand, original art, the more so that it would begin developing from early childhood. From the age of eight, the girls would sit together all winter long, preparing their dowries. Their artistic activities would be accompanied by songs, i.e. by music and poetry. The meager rooms in which all this was done, were the people's art academies. Their members could also be divided into classes. The first one consisted of the creative talents, which within the limits of tradition created new forms. The second one imitated it deftly and the third one tried with hard work to keep up with the second.

We were curious about everything and everyone was curious about us.

"Where are you from?" a peasant asked us.

"From Czechoslovakia, from Prague. We are Czechs."

We had told him a lot, and at the same time nothing. Our answer simply contained no information whatever for him. I explained, "Before the War we were under Austria, as you were under Turkey. After the War we gained independent."

"Who is your king?"

"We are a republic."

He contemplated for a while and then asked with some doubt, "The republic is better, isn't it?"

The question was delicate, especially in these places. Had I to explain that for us it was the only possible form of government? Wouldn't I be in trouble if I did so?

"During Austrian time", I said, "we had a monarchy and now we have been a republic for seven years. I can only say the following: the rich still own everything as before. He who had been a vagabond had remained one, and probably it is the latter who have changed most."



In the Land of the Monasteries

On the advice of our compatriot Dr. Noheil, our first outing from Skoplje was to the Matka monastery.

It lay three quarters of an hour to the southwest by car. The road passed through the Skoplje valley, along the Vardar river, and after the Sarai bridge turned south towards the mouth of the Treska river, which flowed opposite us in a deep rocky gorge. The Bluish Mountains, which formed an excellent background to the lonely, slender mosque, around whose pale, sad face we drove, formed part of the foundations of the monastery, suspended in the end of the gorge on a steep slope, overgrown with fig-trees, mullberry trees, vines, and all sorts of greenery. Such was the Matka monastery!

The car passed through an Albanian village, jumped like a goat over all the obstacles that lay in its way and stopped before the huge, dark gorge, the walls of which were touched by the water, since there were no banks. The precipice resembled a stone grave! For many it had really become a grave. An Englishwoman had once gone down the narrow goat track, since there were no other roads, and had never come back. The recess was luring with its treasures and old churches, but it could be reached only by the river and one might not always have a boat handy. The Prague Byzantologist N.L. Okounyev had tried to reach it through the hill on the other side, but had soon been exhausted and forced to slide down the loose slope. By doing so, he had scared hundreds of eagles from the numerous holes on the opposite slope. They had circled above him with such noisy squeals that he had soon ceased to enjoy all of it. Otherwise, in the constant silence of a half a millenium long dream, three saints stood firmly: St. Nichola, on the other side of the river, and St. Nedelya and St. Andrey on this one. Further on to the east, at a height of 1100 meters stood St. Bogoroditsa, and three hours to the south St. Dimitar, known by the name Marko's monastery (because of the untrue accounts that Krali Marko had built it). It was an important source of information on the history of art.

Saint Pantheleimon, in the village of Nerezi, in the Vodno mountain, also belonged to the Skoplje group. We passed by it, but could not see the monastery because of the dense chestnut trees. It was the ancestor of the rest because it was 200 years older. According to the

preserved sign, it was built in 1164 by the Greek Comnenus and had been dedicated to the doctor St. Pantheleimon. Inside it, there were images of other saints—"doctors", and since many curative springs were located near the village (where the local Turkish women went to bathe) it was obvious that the names — the Slavic Vodno and the Greek Neresi, which were synonyms, were not accidental and that the place really possessed its medicinal past.

All that, together with the gigantic natural scenery, presented a memorable view. We glanced to the north, towards the Skoplje Cherna Gora, also occupied by many shrines and monasteries, and we suddenly understood that the Skoplje valley was surrounded by two rows of fortifications. They were not military fortifications but spiritual ones.

The temple is built as a place of prayer, but is actually something much more. Man, while creating temples, had wanted to express two things — obedience and soaring, to admit his weakness and to manifest his yearning for power. He has achieved the harmony of beauty, which is contained in the unity and struggle of the opposites. With such ecstasy, man has created the greatest and most thorough works of art.

In his creativity, he has been stimulated by the great wish to explain to himself the mystery of life. From his birth to his death he has always sought the answer. Emptiness, both physical (loneliness) and spiritual (Ignorance) is unbearable to the soul. It can never be content with it. Irritated by the impervious veil, which does not give it the answer, incapable of rationalizing its own image, the soul makes up another, a personification of power and perfection. It is the positive image of its shortcomings; the positive of its negative is incarnated in it. As the French philosopher said: "Semblable à l'idée de moi-même, celle de dieu est née produite avec moi, des lors j'ai été créé" - just as my idea of myself, my idea of God was created with my birth.

All religions and all churches have always had one goal to unite the human with the eternal, the earthly with the heavenly — a difficult and remote task. The human life is too short for its fulfilment and nothing is left to the churches, except to feign their heavenly origin. While offering themselves mankind as intermediaries between this world and the other one, they raise one hand upwards, pointing to the sky, and holdout the other one for the mortal and the sinking. With

the right one they threaten, reminding of God's commands, with the left one they soothe, appease, console, and lead. They preach justice and punishment and at the same time must promise compassion and remission, since nothing is left to them but to build a bridge between the two poles, a bridge which leads to God, via the angels, the saints, the blessed, the bishops, the priests, the presbyters, and all the way down to the common sinner. It is a transition towards remission and compassion, which mean relief and concession.

Without them man cannot exist, and the Church knows it. In his life and his work, Protestantism offers relief with its rites and formalities. Catholicism, severe in its rituals and in the interdict on marriage by its clergy, is clement in life. The Koran compels its believers to "bow" five times day, which makes 1825 exercises a year, but together with the compulsory washing, it is nothing but a physical health activity, which in its essence is extremely necessary. The Israelites' religion merges with the tribal and earthly life and leads to



The Horse on the Meadow near the Treskavets Rocks

a non-distinguishment of either. The Orthodox man attaches God's Ten Commandments to his forehead and reads his prayers wherever and whenever he finds suitable, as in the church he may speak to anyone on any subject. In such a way, the distinction between his church and the street disappears completely.

Wherever the Church has tried to preserve its loftiness, without managing to adjust itself properly to life, peoples have declined and vanished. And vice versa, the fuller the church's contact with the earth, the stronger it is.

It must allow its magnificent panoply to trail in the earthly dust and its great concern must be not wear out its clothes excessively.

And it is in the mastery of the trailing of the panoply that the Orthodox Church is the greatest expert.

A Serbian acquaintance of mine once told me, "We believe in nothing, we don't respect our priests, but we love our church." Richer in rituals than the Catholic Church and secure in its picturesque impact, it can afford to be freer and more unrestricted. The constant intrusion in the peoples' lives and the greater intimacy, which it can permit itself with them, makes them even more dependent. The priest's standing, both in the church and outside it, allows him to behave without ceremony, not being afraid to lose any of his seriousness. He can behave naturally with the others and indulge in gaiety in his family and in the pub. He can, as I once saw, walk around at three A.M. with a cigarette in his hand, with merry wedding guests. But his long hair and beard, his grand panoply and tall kamelaukion can quickly give him back his dignified appearance, his figure of a saint, or even of Christ himself, when it is necessary. Five times a year he visits each home to bless it with holy water. He takes part in family occasions; in the church he constantly performs services; he dedicates loafs of bread and and Easter cakes to be taken to the cemetery on the third and fortieth day after the funeral (wine and brandy is also brought on such occasions); he blesses the crops; he chases away illnesses, and does many other things, with which he not only promotes close relationship, but also ensures observance of the church commandments at home, mainly the keeping of lent. Under such circumstances, it is not necessary for anyone to care about church attendance. The priest does not depend on it, except for patron saints' days or christenings. Once, in Tsetina, before my eyes, the sexton expelled a boy from the church, beating him with his hat and shout-

ing, "You have no business here!" (It occurred on a Sunday during a liturgy). In Smilevo, I wondered that there were only married women in the church, but I later learned that this was done elsewhere, as well. I was told that an unmarried girl should attend church service only three times a year, as an exception: on Palm Sunday, on Easter, and during the Three-day Lent.

In the Orthodox church all was possible. The old church had an effect on the people not only with its architecture and its mural paintings, but also with the solemnity of the moment. The mysterious shadows and bright lights, the rich iconostases and the numerous saints on the walls drove the people to an ecstasy. In the holy gates of the altar, the golden vestment with the priest's head, whose white hair



A Peasant from Dabnitsa

shone as silver, seemed to emerge from the waves. He only lacked an eagle, in order to appear as a saint, or even The Father. The puffs from the icon-lamp provided a heavenly background and the magic of the scene had an effect even on us, the foreigners, the infidels. But such supernatural phenomena did not prevent the priest even to make jokes sometimes, on weddings or on christenings. And we were very pleased, when with a cheerful face he offered us some of the "kolyevo" (boiled wheat with sugar), which he had blessed and had begun offering to everyone. He could come down from his pedestal of greatness at any time, without being afraid that someone behind his back might take it away. He was not vexed by the women who gossiped during the service, or held crying infants in their arms, or by the boy who was trying out his new mouth-organ in a corner. Only in St. Nedelya, in Bitolja were the rules stricter, judging from the sign inside the church: "No Smoking". The rituals were preferred to the sermons. That was why news of a wedding was always happily received. Sometimes, it was announced that such and such a girl was poor, that she had no dowry and begged for contributions. Sometimes, even, it was specifically mentioned what exactly was necessary: linen, clothing, or furniture.

And the people brought all that they could spare and gave it to the church elders, who accepted it and honestly handed it over.

They were honest people chosen by the parish to take care of the church's property. When we arrived at Matka, they were near the church. They greeted us politely and took us into the church. They showed us old mural paintings and introduced us to the abbot of the monastery. One of them, a Skoplje goldsmith, showed us what he had already done for the church.

We asked if it was a church holiday. We saw a number of visitors, even though they did not seem quite a large crowd. Groups of people were lying around on the grass and entertaining themselves with music, or were eating. Some were sun-bathing on the balconies, sleeping, or even drying their washing.

We were told that part of the people took their summer vacations in the monastery, while the rest were Sunday picnickers from Skoplje. The monastery readily offered its hospitality to all of them.

It was a nice custom, the last link of the chain, with which the church merged into real life and with which it bound it to itself at the same time.

VI. AMONG NATURE

The Foal

"We are savages", we were constantly assured by the local people. The townsman, shrugging his shoulders, would say the same thing, "We are a savage people". And because, if something happens here, it appears in all European newspapers (while our numerous cases are always termed as local), poor Macedonia has been glorified as a "dangerous zone" more than it deserves. At least I, myself, seek futilely both in my notes and in my memory a threat on my life, whatever it may be, I even find things, which absolutely contradict the legends, and I will describe one such occurrence now, at the risk of being laughed at, because of its insignificance.

My recollection is of a horse. The ordinary phenomenon had probably interested me, because fate had not wished me to be in contact with animals and to become acquainted with their inner selves, even though I have lacked neither the will, nor the feelings to do it. As a boy, I had started reading Brem, but soon the circumstances had turned my attention and activities in another direction and I had grown up with the views, of literature and the newspapers, that the animal was just a likeness of human degeneration. I had held that view for quite a long time, but once I visited a friend who had a dog was very surprised by the following incident: someone had started lamenting and crying jokingly, hiding his face in his hands, and the dear dog would have gone mad with sympathy and grief. It had fawned upon the wretched fellow, had whined sadly, and with its front paws had tried to pull his hands from his face, as if to console him. It had no need to read the Holy Scripture's words: "Weep together with the weeping". Little by little I was unable to read words like "swine", or "animal", or especially the dilligently created, modern word "brute", and not feel them as an undeserved insult towards the innocent creatures, which possessed a great will to live, but the deliberate nurturing of passions, vice, and malice, and especially the invention of moral, ideological, or philosophical mottos, which would serve malevolence, just as the fig-leaf serves as a pretence to shyness,

were unknown to them. Even though the virtuous life of the animals, with which they were superior to man, lacked a subjective nature, and therefore a moral one, and had only a practical value and an objective significance, the use of words as "swine" (opposed to "humaneness") reminded me of the cry of the thief: "Catch the thief!"

These thoughts persistently imposed themselves upon me whenever I remembered that trip, accompanied by Nichola, through the labyrinths of basalt rocks, watching the beautiful horizons of the Prillep area.

Nichola had found the horses for the journey from Dabnitsa to the Treskavets monastery and was accompanying us in order to return the horses back. On the way, he acquainted us with his meagre life, in which the new times had pressed him. The war had brought numerous difficulties and sufferings to the area, and not benefit, as to Middle Europe. After the war, some past difficulties had again awakened. Trade had received a new purpose and different centers. And the ordinary man, if fate had not placed him in a convenient spot, began to suffer. Nichola complained of the large taxes, sounding me out to see if I wasn't in a position to help. He described the great tobacco failure, which in 1925 had befallen the area and had brought great losses to the peasants. In such a way, he was placing me in an uncomfortable position, since little by little I had to dispel the hopes, which he had wrongly placed on me.

I started looking to the left, at the wide, rocky valley, where between the grey rocks and stones, bared in the course of time, there was still enough soil for a nice small meadow and a few beautiful trees, fan-shaped willows and tall poplars. The group was so picturesque that it highly interested me. In the middle a spring gushed forth through the rocks. It had managed to make its way between the stones. Next to it was a white horse, of the type to which only Cermak* could add a beautiful Macedonian woman.

The white horse saw us. It raised its head and turned its neck in our direction. Seconds later, it started neighing.

"It's a nice pasture," I said to myself. "It has grass, water, and coolness". I started looking for the herdsman who was taking care of the horse, but saw no one.

Nichola also looked at the horse, and interrupting his accounts and complaints, said, smiling with satisfaction, "That's my horse".

●A Czech, nineteenth cen. artist. Translator's note.

"Your's? What's it doing there?"

"It's grazing."

"Alone?"

"Alone."

"Why?"

"The harvest has already passed and everyone is necessary at home, so I brought it out here. It will stay here until the first snow and will then come home."

"Alone?"

"Alone."

"And what if someone steals it?"

"Why would he do that?"

"Really", I thought, "this is a wild place!"

I looked at the horse, which hadn't stopped neighing after us. I now understood it. It was greeting its master, happily and eagerly. Even though it had only seen hard work from him and had not been fed well enough, it would obediently return from its "summer camp", as a conscientious clerk from his vacation.

This horse kept looking at us and neighing. But we went on without a word or a gesture. May be Nichola, just as myself, felt ashamed at our human helplessness to answer the affectionate greeting of the horse suitably.

We finally moved out of its view. We moved out owing it something, since man was not made in such a way that he could react to the "animal". He could not respond to the attention, with which the mute animal honoured him.

The Buffalo

I saw it for the first time in Southern Bulgaria, in Rumelia. A whole herd, looking like a dark cloud, was resting on the shining Maritsa, which had spread out in the Plovdiv lowlands. Its soft bed had attracted the four-legged gentlemen, using to their hearts content its slime, which healed rheumatism. "The patients" weren't, of course, real patients, but were simply taking wise precautions. Mankind will be happy one day, when it can limit itself to such treatment only.

Since then, I have always connected their oval and somewhat flattened out shape with the image of the elongated horizons and the

southern, boggy lowlands. The artistic thought, expressed through their formation and style, was their yearning to merge with the horizon. In detail, they could be distinguished by their wide muffles, their set apart horns, their comfortable postures, and their wide steps.

Seeing a buffalo helps us orientate ourselves geographically. It means that we are somewhere in the southern half of the Balkan peninsula, since the buffalo wades only in the rivers, which flow towards the Aegean*. It cannot survive in our country, and it will not look so beautiful either. Its dark coat needs the hot sun, which makes its blackness gradate into green and violet gleams, with which the festive coat of the beast acquires the tenderness and charm of velvet.

This tenderness — appreciated and acknowledged by no one — penetrates through the whole being with such a force that even its meat has the taste of musk, which (figuratively said) harms it in many's eyes. In this respect, the buffalo, according to us, has gone a bit too far.

I believe, of course, that the human stomach's view is very narrow-minded and I do not share it. I am attracted much more by the expression and the outward appearance of the beast. Without exception, the buffaloes are serious and natural. It seems that they now what an important role they have played here, until the development of roads and railway lines. If the camel and the donkey had been the most important beasts of burden, on whose backs endless caravans of goods had travelled, the buffalo had been the most important hauling beast, since on the primitive roads it had been the only suitable animal to pull carts with large quantities of goods to faraway places. The oxen had been used on short distances, usually to neighbouring villages, while the long distances had been covered only by the buffaloes.

But the railroad and the car had displaced the buffalo. It awaited its fate calmly, preserving its dignity as an old pensioner. Whether it was rolling in the river or in the puddles, or grazing with majestic indifference, or slowly, as if at a funeral, was pulling the overloaded cart, it was always augustly calm, thus reminding of its Eastern origin. The Oriental law commands: "Be troubled by nothing and always preserve the expression of Ben Akiba, who was surprised by nothing". From this point of view, the buffalo could be placed on the same footing as the local "effendies," "imams," and "hadjis," and

● *With the exception of Old Serbia. Author's note.*

could divide the glory of outward dignity with them.

In order to achieve such an expression more easily, nature had endowed it with a number of qualities.

I have already mentioned the coat, which resembled the broad-cloth of our ritual costumes. If its skin was not covered either with flakes of dried up mud or with fresh mud, the buffalo seemed to be wearing a long frock-coat or a "kaiserokk." The counsellors at the Austrian court had worn them when they had made their reports to the ministers, and they weren't quite unlike the buffaloes, since they possessed the same gait-ceremonial and somewhat wobbly.

I must say that if the buffaloes didn't have the habit of rolling around in the marshes, I would have pronounced them as much bigger dandies than our cattle. Their horns, for example, were not pointed out from their foreheads aimlessly, like those of our oxen or exhausted little cows. With a moderate elegance, the wave of their horns was divided in two, just over their foreheads, and they were curved in the form of an S.

The decorative ears resembled a hanging tire with heavy, black tassels, as those we are used to seeing only on the funeral covers of first-class funerals, for which, by the way, the buffaloes were much more appropriate than the wild horses, which always seemed to be stomping restlessly with their hoofs, or impatiently jerking the reins.

Some of the buffaloes' other qualities, as the already mentioned horns, for example, could also help them perform such an honourable task — to accompany important or rich persons on their last journey.

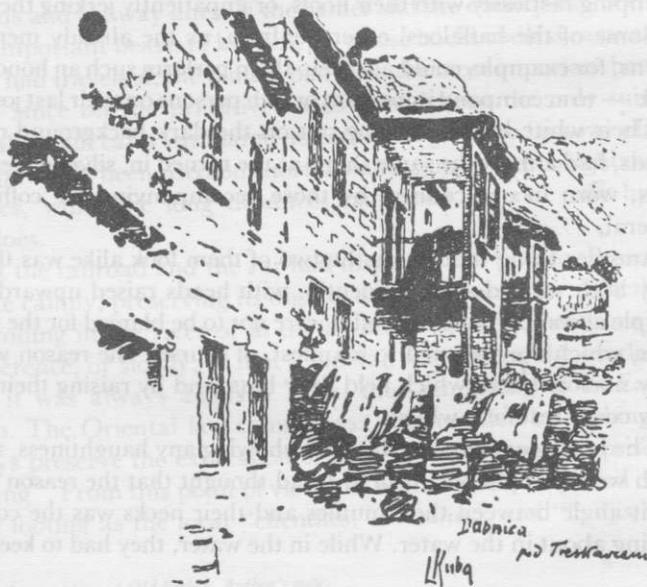
Their white horns, sticking out on the dark background of their heads, had almost the same shape as the turned in, silver edges of the hats, worn in our country by those accompanying the coffin at a funeral.

Another thing that made the two of them look alike was the way they both walked self-confidently, with heads raised upwards. The people accompanying the coffin were not to be blamed for the proudness, which they seemed to manifest, of course. The reason was the very narrow band, which held their hats, and by raising their heads they could rest for a while.

The buffaloes were also far from showing any haughtiness, at least such was my opinion. At first, I had thought that the reason for the right angle between their muffles and their necks was the constant rolling about in the water. While in the water, they had to keep their

muffles raised, in order not to swallow any of it. There could be some truth in this, but I soon found another reason, much more significant and much more correct.

I made my discovery quite accidentally. The stiff collar of one of my new shirts had chafed the skin at the back of my neck and for a whole week I had to bend down or raise up my chin, in order to minimize the chafing. In such a way, I was considerably relieved. In this unenviable condition I once happened to walk beside a team of buffaloes, whose heads were fastened, as was always done here, in a double wooden yoke. The yoke consisted of two wooden squares through which the buffaloes' heads stuck out as in a family portrait. This contraption, which could be of interest to western scholars from an archeologically-ethnographically-anthropological point of view, was handed down from ancient times, but at the same time, the buffaloes were quite unhappy in it. It held them by a cervical vertebra so firmly, that instead of pulling the cart they pushed it. After some time a corn was formed on that spot and the friction from the yoke must have hurt much more than my collar. At that moment, I suddenly understood why the buffaloes folded their bodies and raised their muffles. In both cases, the cause and the effect were the same. Since



Dabnitsa, a village below Treskavets

then, I have looked on them not only with greater understanding, but with sympathy, as well.

After some time, respect was added to those feelings, since I found traces of considerable intelligence in them. Once during the midday heat, which had made me dull, I had difficulty in crawling through the red-hot streets, when it suddenly dawned upon me that I could walk pressed close to the walls. Their shadows were narrow and could cover only half of me, but still it helped. I moved on panting, with a bowed down head, when I almost collided with a buffalo. Its wide belly was pressed so hard against the wall that it seemed about to break, but just as me, the buffalow had wanted to escape the heat. We went on against each other and couldn't agree who should move aside. Since at that moment we had shown the same degree of intelligence, the question was reduced to the following — I had to defeat him with my moral superiority.

Another time, we were returning from a half-day picnic and a buffalo herd was walking alone with us. They were sate, while we were hungry, since they had been grazing all morning, while we had eaten nothing. In the town, they started disappearing one by one. Certain buffaloes stepped aside from the street and stopped in front of the buildings, raising their muffles as if checking the addresses. After that they started moo-ing, and when it didn't help, they pushed the door lightly with their horns and waited patiently, until someone opened it.

In such cases, which may not appear so interesting, I was amazed chiefly by the fact that the buffaloes knew the numbers so well. A reader, who has seen a dog or a horse count, may look upon the fact with indifference. He should know, though, that the beast in this case had a far more difficult task, since for some unknown reason the addresses of the houses were nailed upside down. And while zero upside down was still a zero, what could the poor animal think when it saw a six or a nine, since each number was the opposite of the other?! But the buffalo, as it had been established, was never wrong: it was absolutely impossible for it to err.

I don't intend to defend the idea that the buffalow is intellectually superior to man. I found proof for the fact when we reached the inn where we stopped. Unconsciously, I turned around to look at the rest of the herd and to see if our action would arouse their interest. There was no such thing! Therefore, they lacked the ability to admit mental

maturity in others. It was an indisputable proof of their mental inferiority.

Between Eagles and Donkey

The first were above us and the second beneath us — that was how we approached the Treskavets monastery.

The peak seemed high as our Snezhka and the granite rocks betrayed their volcanic origin from far away, with their ferocity. They were in full contrast with the neighbouring mountains, composed of graphite and limestone, which watched the rocks and stones, resembling a petrified, satanic wedding, with their calm, simple full lines. The rocks looked lordly and sublime, and alien and dreaded, may be because they were higher, or may be because the wide Prillep valley allowed them enough privacy from ill-bred, common people.

But the mountain attracted us. Its first terrace was in its southern part. It was indented by the ruins of Krali Marko's castle and looked like the smooth jaw of a skull with carved out molars. The old monastery, our goal, was on the second terrace, while Zlatovrukh's shield, with the golden apple, towered over the third one, hiding many legends and beautiful scenes. To its northwest was Babouna, where the last remnants of the Bogomils and the Patarens (Medieval religious visionaries, Predecessors of the Albigenses and the Waldenses) had led their final, desperate struggles and from where they had acquired their name Babouni.

The road was only for walking or riding. It looked as if it had been the site of a Cyclopes' battle. The scattered rocks lay in such unsteady positions that every time our animals touched them with their hind parts we were afraid they might roll towards the precipice. I almost wrote this story with a bombastic title: "Between the Sky and the Earth!" But in my notes I noticed the lines: "...seven eagles are constantly accompanying us as an escort of pilots. May be they will serve as our suite all the way to the monastery..." So I changed the title, guided by a speculation — a result of later reasoning — that for the honour we had to thank only our awkward riding, which had probably given hope to the birds of prey that in a short while they would be able to pick at us and eat us in some ravine. We were amidst the mountain range, riding in an undignified intimacy with those creatures that are believed to be an atipode of human intellect and

wit. But the circumstances did not permit us to dwell on questions of prestige. We were content that the donkeys were carrying us well. I told myself: "Modesty ennobles", and I proudly sat up on the ridiculed animal.

I couldn't even imagine that a day later, almost in these same places, I would be punished for evaluating the relationship between myself and the donkey wrongly and unjustly. I am ashamed to write of it, but I am doing it as a repentance.

Since we were received very warmly in the monastery, to which we had thought of making just an ordinary outing, and since I noticed that not only could I collect songs, but that I could make some drawings as well, on the next day I walked back to Prillep for my drawing equipment. Once there, I had difficulty in finding transportation, but I finally did and set off toward Dabnitsa, below Zlatovrukh, where the considerate priest had offered me not only lodging and a meal the day before, but had promised to give me a guide and a donkey on my way back, as well. I had planned to be in the monastery before sunset, with the donkey and the guide.

But I was disappointed. This time the priest just shrugged his shoulders and said, "Tomorrow is a market day in Prillep and I can spare no one".

It was a great shock to me. It was already five o'clock, in the second half of August, and I needed at least two hours to reach the monastery by myself.

"If you want to go alone, I will lend you my donkey and a boy from the monastery will return it tomorrow", said the considerate man.

"Alone? But how am I going to find it?"

"Don't worry, the donkey will."

And what about my things?" (I had canvases, frames, small boxes, an easel, etc.).

We will load them on the donkey."

There was a strong wind blowing in the mountains that day. It was quite violent and seemed to promise to knock me and the donkey down, if it could reach the spread out canvases. But I would have felt ashamed if I had declined the proposal, and since every minute was precious, we quickly loaded my things and tied them up. After that, I managed to mount the donkey with the common efforts of the monks. Then, they inserted my feet in rope stirrups, stuck the reins in my left hand and a staff, as a symbol of my ruler's power, in my right one. But

only as a symbol. In reality, they took me, or rather the donkey, as far as the mountain slope, so that the wise animal (as a proof that it was wise) could take me to the monastery and come back.

The picture lacked only a Don Quixote in front of me, in order to be complete. I set off, but was actually sent off. When all was over, it didn't seem so bad after all. As soon as it felt the path under its tender and at the same time strong legs, the intelligent animal started climbing quickly, with occasional snorts.

We travelled well, more or less. Only in those places, where the spring floods had erased the path and the smooth, steep stones made the donkey insecure, I sat breathless. In such cases I would start offering my advice, based only on human intelligence, of course, as to where the animal should step. But our opinions did not always coincide. It stepped where it wanted to, and with a snort, would suddenly make a small leap, almost throwing me with the luggage up into the air.

The excellent animal, which by then I was worshipping in my soul, aroused only one doubt in me. I was afraid that it might tear up the canvasses, as it walked so near the rocks and the bushes.

But we reached the point from which the monastery could be seen, without any incident. It was at half-way and from there the road was level. The sun had already set and it was clear that we would not be able to reach the monastery before dark. But the wind had calmed down and did not threaten us any more, and I could contemplate the magnificent, golden, nocturnal sights on the horizon. Two huge rocks, whose fantastic shapes of fairy-tale frogs looked strangely alike, as a male and female mate, fascinated me most. I suddenly saw two small, wormlike creatures in the gorge between them. They turned out to be two young men, one of them being my son. They had gone out to look for me.

There was little hope that they would notice me and the grey donkey in the dusk, but I waved my hat anyway. I very much would have liked to meet the boys, and for a moment I thought that they had noticed me, but they soon disappeared. When a few minutes later I glimpsed my son, this time alone, and lost him again, all hope left me.

This did not spoil my good mood, though. I was certain that I would return safely, since only a quarter of an hour was left to the monastery. But suddenly, the donkey started turning to the right. We were close to the "frogs", which were already towering above us, as

huge castles, and I had remembered from the previous day that the road became steeper and curved a bit, but also diverged. The southern road led to Prillep. And if the donkey took that one? Why, it would prefer to walk downwards! And, after all, who had told it that it must go to the monastery? It continued turning towards Prillep and we left the monastery almost behind our backs! My attempts to make it turn right were futile. And the road had disappeared completely in the semi-darkness. I so much wanted to know if we were following the right direction, but I couldn't see the road at all, not only because of the darkness, but also because we had reached a large, stone platform.

I jumped off the donkey and tried to pull it by force towards the "frogs", next to which the road towards the monastery passed. Or was it possible that I was mistaken? I shouted and pulled the animal with all my strength, but the donkey wouldn't budge. The unequal struggle went on for quite a while and I finally had to sit down exhausted.

The donkey snorted happily, while I, aware of the ridiculous situation, had almost put up with the fact that I would have to spend the night under the open sky. But suddenly, I had a wonderful thought. What would happen if I tried to induce the donkey from behind? Even people were sometimes more reasonable to arguments coming from that direction, if, of course, they were convincing enough. I tried to win over the donkey with my fists, with my staff, and by pushing and shouting. And the stubborn animal finally gave in, slowly at first, but still we reached our road, which took us to the monastery's gates.

I was tired and sweating all over when I knocked. My throat felt as if it was in Sahra.

The doorman opened the gate and the smiling Brother Modest and my son greeted me. I immediately asked for some water, with a hoarse voice. For the first time in life, I knew what a dry throat meant.

I unloaded my things off my donkey almost to the monastery itself", I finished my complaint.

"I had to struggle with the donkey almost to the monastery itself", I finished my complaint.

"All that you have done has been unnecessary", Brother Modest said with a gentle smile. "You should have left the donkey alone and not interfered with it. It wouldn't have done anything wrong . . ."

"Only we, people, do", I murmured to myself.

"The donkey has really made a big turn at that place", went on Modest, "but it would never have set off for Prillep. It has enough sense not to".

My adventure amused us during supper. The donkey was the hero of the day.

I finally said, almost vexed, "All right, I know that we sometimes call a person a donkey, but why on earth is the donkey called so?"

VII. AT WORK

Songs

The train was entering the Kachanits gully, through which the Lepenets river, which had carved out a bit of the Shar mountain, flowed from the north. We were hurrying on to Skoplje. I was looking out through the window eagerly. The dazzling full moon had turned the mountain's scenery into a marvellous, enchanting, breathtaking view. Occasionally, the conductor pointed out some detail. For example, immediately after the narrow pass, we were supposed to see Mousa Kessedjia's grave. He was the tyrant that had tormented the region, until he had finally been caught by Krali Marko, and after a persistent battle, his throat had been cut. Mousa had the value of a saint and all who passed his grave threw a coin on it.

The grave appeared for a moment, behind the blazing furnaces of a lime factory. We saw nothing, nor heard the sound of the falling coin, probably because of the noise made by the train. But we stood on at the open window, caressed by the pleasant wind and spellbound by the beauty of the full moon, whose silver seemed to change into yellowish cream in the gorge.

We were released from our spell at the station, by a certain sound. The tracks had shortly left the gorge and entered the large Skoplje marsh (which was malaric, but now looked very beautiful). The sound — a melody — was slightly ruffled, just like the lake's surface when it is furrowed by a swan. We leaned out of the train, bathed in the moonlight, and listened carefully to the acoustic illustration of the magic evening. The melody was plain, but with its burning sensitivity could have melted even gold. We looked downwards and it carried us away completely. Who was singing? I wanted to find him. But the conductor stopped me, "We are leaving!" We could have thrown out our luggage and got off the train, and tried to find the singer, but that night I had to be in Skoplje. I accepted my fate, but decided to come back here from Skoplje. I was so excited that the conductor asked me, "What's wrong?" He had thought that I had lost something.

I disabused him and he did the same for me, "The local station-

master has a gramophone. When a train is leaving the station, he turns it on. That was a Turkish song. He likes them . . .”

Such was our work. Mixups like these were sometimes added to the numerous inconveniences and obstacles. Sometimes, I couldn't help being misled by Edison's wretched invention. I would inquire about the singer and would suddenly find out that it was a machine, the name of which was erroneously (quite often appropriately) pronounced by the Bosnians "gramophan".

I wrote down the note of the songs best, when I was drawing. For example, in Bitolja, in Koukourechen street, I was drawing in a yard and nearby a girl, which was embroidering, was singing. The South Slavic songs were usually long, and while drawing, I could memorise the simple tune, while the long one I had to make out. When I was acquainted with the whole song, it was usually easy to attract the singer to sing it again for me, while I could write it down.

Of course, it wasn't always easy doing the two things at one time, especially since the tunes seemed so peculiar and so diverse to us.

Let us imagine Macedonia, whose Slavic half was full of scattered around alien islands, and all the towns had Albanian, pseudo-Rumanian, Turkish, Spanish-Jewish, Greek, and gypsy quarters. Most of them differed in their clothing and religion, and therefore in their music and songs. That is why we have to define the term Macedonian song.

I, myself, understand it as the songs, sung by its Slavic population, and the Slavic lyrics are usually enough for me to classify the song as Slavic. Given the existence of such a national diversity, it is difficult for me to usurp the right to determine what belongs to each people and what is a transitional form. But it is no ill fate when one finds some foreign elements in a song of a different nationality. They only show the degree in which the cultures have merged. When a lot of material has been gathered and studied, the solution will come by itself.

From this point of view, the Balkan peninsula is a peculiar place. The diverse cultural currents have not managed to eradicate the ethnical heterogeneity. They have not led to the grey, insipid international dough that has been created in all parts that are under the influence of Western European culture. The Balkans are a land of classical individualism, of preserved and clearly outlined personalities, both separately and in combination. The Balkan Peninsula, unlike the Italian and Iberian peninsulas, has never had a

real center, and only the Romans, in ancient times, have conquered it. But the Romans had not been a people, but just an extraordinary cultural and political phenomenon with world power. Unwittingly and at random, they had destroyed nationalism and had replaced it with a forcefully imposed internationalism, whose powerful traces have still been preserved. They had strengthened their power-for as long as they could and had exploited the land. Nothing else had interested them. The Byzantines, together with the exploitation, were concerned only with the acceptance of their rule, which was sometimes quite symbolic. When the Turks, who could serve as an example of conservatism, had arrived later on, they had been content that all had not converted to Mohammedanism, and so an enslaved rayah, which they had needed so much, had remained. Basically, they had left everything as it had been, and their tastes and fashions had not been spread forcefully, but only because of the magic of their charm, picturesqueness, and elegance. Their influence makes one compare the East with the West. The former left everyone to itself and influenced only its feelings, while the latter grossly destroyed mankind's profile and attacked its mind.

The invasion of the Turks, who were full of hatred for the West, had placed the Balkans in a green-house, in which everything could thrive and be preserved.

Macedonia is the Balkan peninsula on a small scale. All its national groups are represented there, and approximately in the same proportion, at that.

Of course, it is necessary to define the term Macedonia, which is now more difficult that it was before the World War. Then, it was a while, and together with Old Serbia, under Turkish domination. One could then say: "Macedonia lies from the Shar mountain and the Serbian Kingdom to the north, to the sea to the south, and from Albania to the east, to the Rhodopes and the Mesta river to the west". But now Macedonia is divided into three parts, of which the smallest belongs to Bulgaria, the largest to Yugoslavia, and the rest to Greece.

The ethnographer's view cannot fight with politics, since the cases when the governed territories correspond to the language borders are extremely rare. The politicians would like to see the language globe as a few large fields, and those fields should be distributed among a few large landowners. But the ethnographer cannot agree to such desires, especially in the Balkans. Each region there is an individual whole,

including Macedonia, which has never stopped being such, even after it was divided, regardless of its internal diversity. It is an ethnographic mosaic, a marble, whose Slavic base is coloured by strips of other elements.

These strips have not merged, precisely because of the conditions in the Balkans. It is not the language barrier, which has prevented their merging, since the people, especially the men, are amazing polyglots. They differ tribally, in their religions, and in their costumes. The latter, especially, represents an insurmountable wall. One can say that the different costumes do not marry each other. There exists an antipathy, an animal, physical, material one.

It is impossible, though, to form any conclusions from this fact, as far as the spiritual loneliness of the people is concerned. The fluid of the human spirit is almighty, all-penetrating. In this sense, one may say that interbreeding does exist there. It occurs in waves, unnoticeable from nearby, which manage to preserve the outer shape, but penetrate in its content, and possibly, might change it, just as it happens in the earth's crust. It is not a leveling influence (such is the influence only of Western Europe culture), but one with a limited effect, or rather a refreshing influence. As with the gardener, who artificially exchanges the pollen. The flower remains the same, and only the tint has changed.

The shapely, diversified form of the Macedonian song, which is basically in one voice, but is rich in keys, is derived from here. The rhythms, whose richness originated in the west, near the Morava river in Serbia, which was the border of the former Bulgarian regions, and moved to the east, are numerous. In this respect, the Macedonian song is an inseparable part of the Bulgarian song.

The structure of the melodies and the verses is unrestrained and the metric versification inexhaustible. Melodically, the song is still alive, i.e. variable, while the lyrics are comparatively constant, since they are connected with a given territory or a given ritual. The songs which may be sung everywhere and by everybody are more variable and offer numerous versions.

I mentioned the pollination of the flowers with foreign pollen. Here, there also exists an element which performs the role of a wild insect — the gypsies. Able to perform any work, they are musicians first of all. No one can do without them, neither Christians, Moslems, Albanians, or pseudo-Rumanians. A gypsy orchestra must participate in every

festivity, fair, wedding, or any other event. It can play for anyone. Actually, a gypsy, accompanied by a couple of his compatriots, can supply the whole Balkan peninsula with a musical mixture, which at present cannot be separated from the original.

But even they cannot do so, that everything which refers to music can merge together. The fact that their musical instruments are never used by the Slav or Albanian peasant is very interesting. They may listen to a drum or a zourla, but will never use them, just as a gypsy will never use any of their instruments. They are the bagpipe, with a wooden pipe (possibly double), the "doudouk"* and the "loukarina"***, for the Slavic peasant, and the "kaval"*** for the Albanian one.

The instrument, called in our country a "Serbian gousla"****, is not met here at all. I also did not see any of the two versions of the "tamboura"***** — the "shargiya" or the "bougaria", except if they were used in Turkish homes, to which I had no access. But on the other hand, I discovered a small three-stringed instrument, which was spread all over the Balkan peninsula — from Dubrovnik, through Albania and Macedonia, as far as Bulgaria, where it was called "gadoulka" (which translated in Czech means houselka, i.e. a small violin), while in Dalmatia it was called a "lyritsa"

The melodies of the southern peoples, despite the radiance and the warmth of the sun, are usually sad, compared to those of the northern peoples. The gayest local tunes would sound mournful to a northern man, and vice versa, our saddest songs are a clear sky compared to the dismal clouds of the passionate moans.

The Macedonian song makes no difference, but with it this phenomenon can be understood only partially. The great shyness of the women and the girls and the fiery songs of the soldiers are a witness to the conditions in which Macedonia and Old Serbia have existed — of all Slavic peoples they have longest been under Turkish domination. Macedonia's future fate was also unhappier. It had

●doudouk — a wooden pipe

●●loukarina — a stringed instrument

●●●kaval — a wooden flute

●●●●gousla — a rebec

●●●●●tamboura — a pandore (Translator's notes)

fought not only against the Turks, but against the Greeks as well. But the most painful part was that because of the vagueness of the language borders, it had been drawn into the fratricidal Serbian-Bulgarian War. It is easy for the passionate southern blood to find itself an attorney — gunpowder and lead. So we must not be surprised by plaintive songs, as this one, for example:

Three shots were fired,
three heroes,
Oh, my God,
have fallen,
three mothers,
Oh, my God,
are crying.

It is difficult to console the miserable girl:

некои му ел - за ка - ва - виш, некои му
Не ро - ни ева - ги крв - ва - виш, не ро - ни

ел - за ка - ва - виш
ева - ги крв - ва - виш.

Don't cry, young girl, don't cry!
Don't shed tears of blood,
don't shed tears of blood!
"How can I not cry and lament,
how can I not shed tears of blood?
We have just heard the sad news,
our father, the Turks have beheaded."

The next song describes the fate of the hero's wife:

Ritardando e semplice

Раз - ка - ла, до - ва в љалу свој
Раз - фла - ка - ла се во - бу - га

дам на ро - ме - љи ту - ро - кем.
на па - љ Турека зра - ма - га.



A widow was crying
 on the Turkish border.
 "Stand up, stand up, Oh, Stoyan,
 look at your miserable wife,
 look at those seven, eight orphans,
 one still in its cradle!"
 "I cannot get up, my dear,
 a Turkish bullet prevents me
 it went right through my hear."

The "comitadjii" (insurgents) always gathered in the mountains in the spring. The Pirin mountain in Bulgaria has become famous songbecause of this. This song tells us about it.

Pirin

Pirine, ty - ko sy - so - ki - , ach, ty horo
 Плакано, Ти - сикъ - плаки - ко - , мого сь, Па -

na - prikras - na! Hey, - , hey -
 киво, ху - ба - ва! Хей - , хей -

, ach, ty horo na / , мого сь, Плакано / , prikras - na!
 , ху - ба - ва!

Oh, Pirin mountain,
 you are so beautiful,
 hey, hey,
 you are so beautiful Pirin!
 In your deep shadows,
 heroes will find shelter.
 On your green grass,
 tender sheep are grazing.
 You are beautiful in the summer,
 but in the winter — ugly and dreadeu.

The next song gives an example, how the revolutionaries have created a political patriotic song by slightly modifying a folk song:

Macedonian

Oh - ya, Oh - no, oh - ne, with deat - no.
 Ya - no, ne - ne, ma - ma kьe - ko!

Oh - ya, Oh - no, oh - ne, with deat - no.
 Oh - ne, Ya - no, ne - ne, ma - ma kьe - ko!

Oh, Yana, Oh, dear daughter!
 You are always sitting by the window,
 embroidering a Macedonian flag.
 Each day you use a hundred lots* of silver,
 a hundred silver pieces and pounds of silk.
 You are embroidering a sign: Freedom or Death!
 Who will you give it to Yana?
 May be to Turks or vile Greeks?
 Neither to Turks nor vile Greeks,
 but to Macedonian heroes,
 who roam in dark mountains.

Arms were dearer to them than anything else. This is how they glorify them:

Macedonian

Oh - ya, Oh - no, oh - ne, with deat - no.
 Ya - no, ne - ne, ma - ma kьe - ko!

Vivo

„ Oh - ya, Oh - no, oh - ne, with deat - no.
 Ya - no, ne - ne, ma - ma kьe - ko!

„ Oh - ya, Oh - no, oh - ne, with deat - no.
 Ya - no, ne - ne, ma - ma kьe - ko!

*Lot — an old weight measure. Author's note.

Don't you miss your mother?

"My mother is my blazing gun!"

Don't you miss your dear sister?

"My dear sister is my sharp sword!"

"Don't you miss your dear brothers?"

"My dear brothers are the small bullets!"

Don't you miss your dear beloved?

"My dear beloved is the green forest!"

If the heroes are sometimes having fun, they sing a witty, mocking song, spread all over the Balkan peninsula — from Macedonia to Bulgaria. It is the song of the wounded hero, who is moaning with pain:

Хайде, сонце - да си - да си не гоји рана на чело,

ајди, браќо, ајди, брале за - што ме - ти
каже, кажи, хайде, елици за - даје ме - због

два ра - бот - ки. Тра рега кара рега
двојо бра - ки - ки. Тра рега кара рега

тра рега кара, тра рега кара, тра рега кара, тра рега кара,
тра рега кара, тра рега кара, тра рега кара, тра рега кара,

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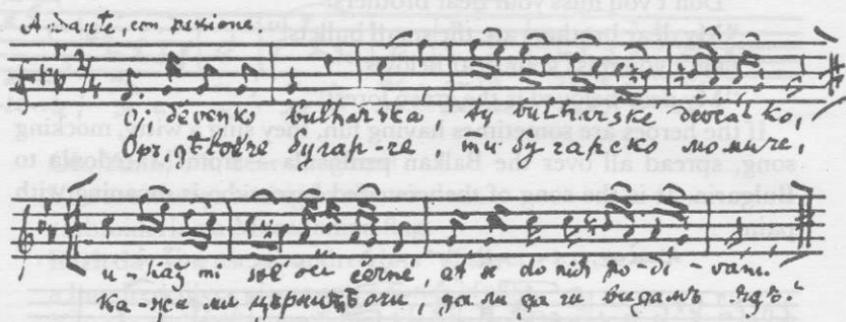
Come on, the sun has set,
between two mountains.
And between two mountains,
the meadow is green.
Let's go to the meadow
where the poplars are tall.
Let's go under the poplars
to see what is there.

Under the poplar,
Bogdan is lying ill.
His tooth is aching,
a filigreed tooth.
Come on, let's call
a strong barber.
Let him take pliers
from the blacksmith!

In order to pull out,
the filigreed tooth!

The comitadjis may rarely hum a love song with an impressive melody, expressing the temperament of the southern people:

Adante, con passione.

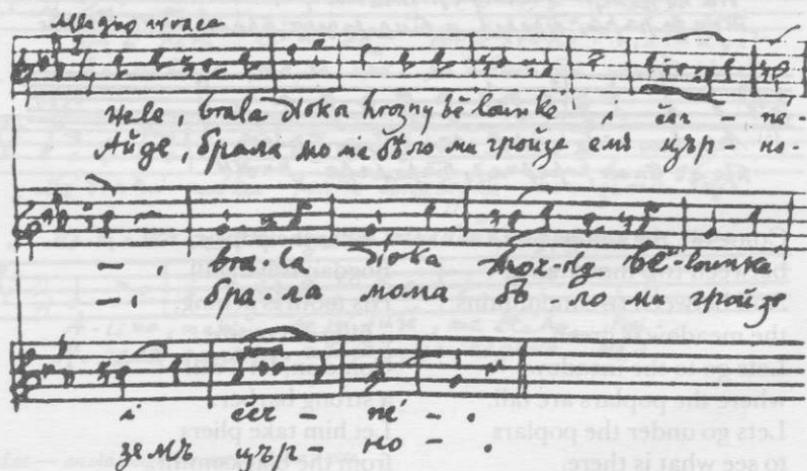


o, de venko bulharska, ty bulharske očerakoi,
Ops, q t' lože b'zrah-re, m' b'zrah-reko momre,
u-kaž mi so' oč' čorne, at k do nih po-di-vani.
ka-nc'a mi u'pravit' oru, ga mi ga re b'zrah-re q'ž'o.

Oh, Bulgarian lass,
Oh, Bulgarian girl!
Tell me, your black eyes,
can I look at them?
“Why should you look at them,
silly, young man?
There are so many black grapes,
haven't you seen them in the market?”

Even though the lyrics are frivolous, the southern melodies are slightly darkened, like a painting by an Old-Spanish artist.

Allagio vivace



Hele, brala doka krazny b' lounko, i čer-na-
t'uge, b'ra-na mo ni b' lo ni z'rajze em' u'zr-no-
- , bra-la doka mox-dz b' lounka
- , b'ra-la mo na b' lo ni z'rajze
i čer-na- me- .
ze m' b' u'zr- no- .

Wivca

usila m matka živa - leka, pesila sestien
 сошла ми матка еде - ле оге сестра - ко - то

за дра - ну а на нате, бо - же, јак нору!
 венбо - по а на мене, мори, нов по!

A girl picked white,
 both black and white grapes.
 In nine vessels she poured,
 the sweet-tasting wine.
 And in the tenth,
 she poured the brandy.
 Dreno, a village farmhand
 became accustomed, Each morning:
 "Hey, good morning, my dear!"
 Each evening:
 "Hey, good evening, my dear!"
 Each evening:
 "Hey, good evening, wicked dear!"

Lately, the gay, attractive with the simpleness of its lyrics, and electrified with its lively melody song, may be heard everywhere:

My mother has sewn me a jacket,
 from my sister's old one,
 but mine is brand new.

Instead of the girl's sleeveless jacket, the song goes on for her coat, shirt, shoes, belt, and so on, i.e. for her clothing*.

Some of the songs may be called wedding songs, and I can speak of sleepless wedding nights with a full right, but I don't want to arouse any unrealizable hopes in the reader.

They portray numerous and endless processions through the winding and uneven streets of the spread out towns, in which I have

● See "Macedonian Songs", for singing and piano, with full original texts and Czech translations by Jan Houdets (book XIV "Slavdom in my songs"). Author's note.

participated only because I gather songs. They occurred both during the day and at night. During the day I participated on foot and readily, but at night in bed and reluctantly.

I say reluctantly, because even though I was in bed, covered only with a sheet (in order not to insult the moral refinement of the malaric mosquitoes with my nakedness) in the stuffy heat, I would vainly attempt to fall asleep, when an uproar, and songs and music, would come from outside: the wedding procession with a mandolin, a violin, and a small drum would slowly come nearer and then move away, for a few times in a single night, each time leaving me sleepless.

The first time that I heard such a procession, I readily looked out of my window, and while still dozing I even thought of going out on the collapsed balcony, but I remembered the inn-keeper's warning. When later on, when I was desperately trying to cling on to the angel of sleep, and was already half asleep, and again heard the same two or three melodies, which by then I knew by heart, my passion for research began to dwindle. I did not accompany the tunes and the melodies with a specialist's attention, but with a grinding of my teeth and a quiet cursing instead.

I remembered my happiness, when in the morning I had learned that I would be able to see a wedding ceremony in Strouga, with a bitter smile. Now, tossing in the red-hot bed, I was straining my mind vainly, trying to solve certain human mysteries, as for example: why does the heat attract sleep during the day, but repulse it during the night?

And all that, had occurred on the day before the wedding, which would be on the next day, and would go on for a few days, and, Oh, God, for a few nights! What a disappointment! Or may be all that was supposed to make one's impressions of a wedding complete?

The wedding in Strouga (a town, situated on the northern shores of the wonderful and charming Lake Ohrid) started well and interestingly. It was a Sunday and the sun was shining, while the whole sky seemed to be laughing, and with it the whole town. The people, most of all the women, were standing on their doorsteps and at street corners, expecting the procession. It soon appeared and passed along.

It was still not the wedding. Only the bride's gifts were being taken to her.

I was so sorry that there was no master as our Ignat Herman to describe how a wedding in Strouga managed to capture the attention

of so many people! Without any warning, a procession, headed by a few musicians, and a man with a shining vase, a brass pitcher, a copper tray, or a lamp, walking proudly behind them would appear. Yes, Mr. Ignat Herman, a lamp! As on Kondelnik! It looks like a plagiarism of our gay creation, but there is no spiritual robbery. Your books are unknown here. My companion, who whispered to me, "Sometimes they collect so many lamps that they don't know where to put them", also knew nothing of them. He was just a jolly man, who, just like you, understood life's humour. He proved it with another remark, "They are raising such a commotion for those gifts now, but just wait till after the wedding, it will be much bigger then ..."

When, around noon, we had gathered in a large semicircle in front of the bride's home, a procession was formed. A patient horse stood in its middle. The bride's dowry was carefully arranged over it, with visible pomp. The carpets and silk covers, whose yellow and red colours shone brightly in the burning sunlight, were tied on one side; the trunk, containing the underwear and the clothing, on the other. On top of the horse, between the two, a few small pillows were placed. The name pillow was not quite appropriate, since they were used for sitting. A three year old boy, with full cheeks, was seated on them, so that the first-born child of the couple would be a boy (that was a remnant of the past, when a boy had meant Cupid).

When the couple appeared on the doorstep, the father threw sugar cubes and small coins over them, and the procession was divided in two. The horse, with the smaller group, took the valuables to the groom's house, while the bride and the groom went towards the church. Strouga's church was very big, but it was difficult to stay inside because of the heat and the crowd. We didn't wait until the end because the Orthodox Church had a weakness for long rituals. We stayed only for the consecration and the throwing of the wheat, and heard the questions and the advice, which were directed to both, but mostly to the bride.

It was interesting, since the role of ministrant was given to a boy, who resembled Jesus at the age of twelve, except that he did not seem to be as wise, and who with superhuman effort was trying to be serious. With a comic braveness and a charming self-importance, he was trying to alter his boyish alto into an old man's brass, and with an inexorable sternness, was telling the bride to obey her husband and to

always be faithful to him.

When we heard those facetious words, we were sweating all over in the heat and our strength failed us and we had to leave the church.

In the late afternoon, we were walking along the Drina, which flowed through Strouga, and unwittingly happened to pass by the couple's house. The young people were dancing a chain dance outside, in their honour, and the bride was looking through a window in her silk clothing. We couldn't guess what her feelings were, while she watched the fun outside, since her face was hidden by a long veil, which suited her.

A veil always suits a bride. It is a curtain, which hides the future of the young couple.

Soon, we were not able to see her any more. She was hidden in the dust, which was raised by the feet of the dancers.

When it started covering my notes, we set off homewards, in a sad mood. We were not moved even by the image of the day-dreaming bride, since we had been seized by a fear for our sleep. How were we going to sleep, if the weddings here lasted for such a long time? "Oh, not, southern nights," we sighed in advance, "so short, and still so long to live through!"

Our sighs were partly unnecessary. We had only one bad night. A fire, which destroyed for buildings, broke out on the next day, and the whole town was so frightened that everyone quickly forgot the wedding.

I could never have imagined that man could be so cruel, if I hadn't felt it on myself. Even though I was still seeing the terrified and desperate figures, when I fell exhausted in my bed in the evening, I almost said to myself, "Thank God that there was a fire . . ."

After all, we, people, are great miscreants!

The Artists Grievances and Idle Chats

Idle chatter? Why not? But grievances? Why? After all, from the very beginning I had achieved one success after the other easily, and had had only one fear — that I might stop working altogether!

What I am saying is no nonsense. Too much of anything, including success, is harmful. Once you have reached the peak, you have to start down the other side. It is the law of the turning wheel, relieved of the

depressing prejudice — which is “up” and which is “down” — which is also a certain state, even though it is inadequate for ordinary life, since it creates only confusion and disorder.

The clarity of this not very clearly stated thought suddenly struck me as I was reading this, I admit, rather confused, story.

I was going to visit places to which no artist had probably ever been, and I had no idea what would happen to my work. And there I was! Our luggage, covered with a thick layer of dust, was still tied to the car, when I suddenly had a model! And what a model!

It occurred during my first stop in Strouga, a town which was comfortably situated on Lake Ohrid. We had arrived from the north, through the valley, which had once been a battlefield for the Slavic-Albanian hero Skenderberg (as the remains of his castle indicated), and which was now a border between Albania and Yugoslavia.

We had hurried off early in the morning from Skoplje, on our way to Ohrid, and it was not surprising that we had stopped here. The more so that our driver had relatives here and we would be served fish. (All the way from Gostivar we had not seen a decent restaurant!)

Strouga, an ancient “panagirishte” (market), would have been the most luxurious place in the world, if it had that which it lacked, and had lacked that which it had.

It was famous with its malaria, first of all. When I asked a local clerk how he managed to live here, he said, “Each month I receive 2500 dinars plus malaria”. Then came the famous fish, mainly trout and eel, towards which one could feel not only love, but also respect, since they were subject to a state monopoly, and therefore twice as expensive and rare. One could eat only fish caught by poachers. Finally, Strouga was famous as a prototype of the Czech Varvazhov, whose women sand of themselves:

We, the women are all beautiful,

because we are from Varavzhov.

Koulaskova is also beautiful,

because she is from Varvazhov.

Such a statement was also valid for all local daughters of Eve.

I did not dig into the validity of the statement, but I must admit that it was true for the first Strouga woman, which, figuratively said, fell into my lap (as an artist, of course).

It happened thanks to the innkeeper. When he heard that we were going to Ohrid, he proposed that we stay for a while in Strouga and

showed us his rooms. When I promised him that we would come back, he asked us how long we plan to stay. I told him that it depended on whether I would be able to work. He asked me what work I had in mind, and when he heard that I wanted to do some drawing and to publish a book of paintings from Macedonia, he suddenly became eager.

"You must draw my wife! You will be amazed to see how her Sunday clothes suit her!" And he immediately began describing her enthusiastically. "I will find you other people to draw, as well," he added, not sounding like a husband in love any more, but like an enterprising middleman.

I had liked the idea, and started looking around secretly, trying to spot my model, but all was in vain. Krusto prepared the fish and served his guests all by himself.

But there was no reason not to believe him, and since our driver confirmed everything that he had said, I returned a few days later with my equipment.

Golubenka, that was the name of my model, was really a charming woman, with large, brown eyes and bravely arched, almost grown together eyebrows, leaning on the tenderly moulded nose, as on a large column. Her face had pleasant outlines, and the curving, red lines of her lips stood out.

She sat before me sideways, her hands on a brocade, blue apron with large, golden, acanthus leaves. Her breasts were in a tight, red, sleeveless jacket, and her bell-like, wide sleeves were edged with heavy, golden embroidery. Her pink scarf was weaved into her hair and fell beautifully on her back. It completed the image, which both I and her husband watched with delight. Whenever his duties allowed it, he would come over to us, would sit down and watch the movements of my brush, in the air and on the canvas.

I began working zealously, since in such cases one never knows when the posing might abruptly cease, and I was very happy, when after almost two hours, during the break we took, my canvas aroused Krusto's and Golubenka's admiration.

With it, my happiness reached its peak. My successes continued, but the horizon of happiness began to cover with dangerous clouds. The spouses, after a short and quiet discussion, made a flattering, but at the same time murderous, offer — that I should sell them the painting when it was ready.

That was a heavy blow. Fate takes its revenge with pleasure, if we turn our backs to its smile. If I refused, Krusto probably would not find me any other models. But an evasive answer would also have undesirable consequences. Also, I didn't want to part with the good people with had feelings. It wasn't their fault that here, for a full day's hard work, the wages were ten dinars. Than what could I do?

It wasn't difficult to dissuade them. But what I had expected happened — in my room I had neither the necessary calm, nor the necessary responsiveness any more. And I, with a bad foreboding, speeded up my work and limited myself only to the most easential things, so that I would be left with that, which could later be finished without the model.

I had guessed correctly. She did not come in the afternoon and Krusto excused her. He seemed perplexed, though. I had been prepared for that and thought of going back to Ohrid. But Krusto, whether because he wanted to keep his word, or because the businessman in him prevailed, found me two interesting old ladies, one of whom I started drawing right away.

Again I had success, and again it was breathtaking and staggering! This time, it was even greater, since the granny looked upon me not as an artisan, but as a gentleman. For sitting comfortably for an hour, she would receive as much as a worker for a full day's work. She wanted me to give her the picture as a gift. She wouldn't take it for herself, but would give it to her children. So that they have a memory of me," she explained with a childish smile.

It was my second Pyrrhean victory in a day! I really had to leave! What would happen if I continued having the same luck? I would have to say good-bye to Macedonia altogether!

On the next day, I started drawing the other granny with great fear. I worked quite hesitantly. I was afraid of being successful again, and the innkeeper's attitude was becoming more hostile all the time. Unwittingly, I was slowing down my work, postponing the moment when it would be completed. At noon, I let the granny go and engaged her for the afternoon only because I wanted to delay the fate which was inevitably awaiting me.

But fate was merciful towards me. Unfortunately, it wasn't merciful towards the others. Towards them it was cruel.

We had just started working in the afternoon, when from outside we heard a commotion, screams, desperate shrieks, and shouts: "It's burning!"

It was the house across the street, which belonged to Krusto (he was running the inn under a lease).

Soon, four buildings had been engulfed by the flames. We saw how the innkeeper helped his mother and the fainting Goloubenka out of the burning building.

All his belongings were left inside. "My cow, as well", he told me on the evening after the fire. Everything kept falling out of his hands. He was trying to open a bottle of wine for one of his guests, when the bottle exploded in his hand, and pieces of glass cut his face, so that it was all in blood. He went to the basement for some cherry-brandy, which he made by himself, but he toppled the vessel, his candle went out and the brandy was spilled.

He sat beside me, pale, with deep-set eyes and a bandaged head, and said, "I dare not touch anything else today. Today is my day of misery".

We packed our things that same evening and left on the following morning.

When we were saying good-bye, no one even mentioned the drawing. Poor Krusto had other worries.

So "vis major" had helped me out of my difficult position.

It is rejected in literature, where it can bring no harm to anyone, but in real life it constantly rages. If I could, I would introduce the opposite order.



VIII. MISCELLANEOUS

A Soap and A Towel

As I hear, our Ministry of Railroads has decided* to introduce soaps and towels in the express trains, tentatively at first, to see if our educatedness can be complimented in such a way. The soap, just to be sure, will be sticky, so that no one will be able to put it in his pocket. Therefore, the trial will be made only for the towels (or may be, if the soap is liquid, a risk 'hat someone might drink it, exists?).

This is not a laughing matter. It reminds me of Macedonia, an unfortunate land, because while all sorts of weird ideas of it exist, disturbing information comes (and still more doesn't come) from it all the time. The soap and towel matter intrigued me precisely because of it. No matter which inn we had spent the night in, there were always a few bars of soap and a couple of towels (once we even saw a common toothbrush) on the common washbasin in the corridor).

So people don't steal there. In countries where one easily takes a rouchnitsa**, one never takes a rouchnik***, except to dry his hands. In the "unsecure" regions there always exists security. One might forget something, but it will be sent to him through mountains and valleys. "Order" is achieved only through education, when locks are introduced everywhere, mutual distrust is legalized, and suspicion becomes a basis of public peace and "security". And we are not offended by all this, but on the contrary, we are infinitely pleased by it. Mutual suspicion binds us into an indivisible whole, and we then take it with us to most inappropriate places. And that is why we are punished, as I was once myself. I am still ashamed of what happened.

I was leaving a Macedonian monastery, almost forgotten in the mountains and when parting I said to the abbot, "I still owe the mayor of the village D. 80 dinars for lending me horses. He didn't want to take the money beforehand, but said that I could pay him

●Written in 1928. Author's note.

●●Rouchnitsa — a rifle (in Czech). Translator's note.

●●●Rouchnik — a towel (in Czech). Translator's note.

when I returned. Since you advised me to travel along a different route, I sent it the day before by Risto (a twelve year old shepherd). But Risto hasn't told me yet whether he has given the money to the mayor, or . . ." I couldn't finish. The abbott smiled so delicately, and waved his hand so softly, that it pierced me right through. I turned red, and I deserved it. Why, from my own experience and from what I had heard from others, I knew the balkan people.

A pharmacist, who was a Dalmatian, was once telling me in Bitolja how during the fatal explosion of the arsenal, in 1922, all had to leave the city, while the explosions lasted. For three days and three nights they camped out of town. "We left everything unlocked, because we had no time to lock up. When we returned, everything was in its place and nothing was missing".

Of course, I once saw a man who mounted his horse and placed a rifle across his knees, in Strouga. I asked my innkeeper, "Why did he do that?"

"Because he has not only wealth, but enemies as well. You can travel around without a single worry. Nothing can happen to you" (i.e. I had neither).

It was true that the smell of gunpowder and the romance of the battles, of old, Medieval times, were preserved, due to the lack of a legalization of the relations between the people. Jurisdiction, especially in Turkish times, had not been developed enough so that the people could depend on it. They, as much as they had been able, had become used to seeking justice on their own. The spell of tragedy and great deeds, the dreams of courageous acts, which could not be achieved without bloodshed, still existed and were innate in everyone. Everything was gradated in martyr's aspirations. Not only the form of the crimes, which in their essence were a struggle, but the methods of political struggle, too, were derived from them. The vendetta, which was widespread among the Albanians, existed also elsewhere. And the charm of the folk songs still had a great impact on the life and rich, spiritual make-up of the people. They dreamed of great deeds and base treachery was unknown to them.

Once, I spoke to one of the local people, who was acquainted with our conditions, and I reproached him for the way they carried out their political arguments and struggles. He said, "And is it better in your country, when someone can be disgraced in a newspaper dispute, in a court trial, or in any other way, for an insignificant sum.

I didn't know what to answer. I only knew that the soap and the towel were safer there than they were in our country. The people there washed their hands with them, while here, they would sooner dirty them.

Macedonia and the Novaks

Actually, this chapter should have been called "The Given Name in its Ancient Form", which form is still preserved in the Balkan peninsula, mainly in its southern part. But since this work allows me to mention their famous Novaks, and since we have unanimously accepted the view that all the numerous Novaks are representatives of the branched Czech nation, I am using the more contemporary title in order to attract some attention to my story, which I suppose will be an interesting discovery for our Novaks. And, most probably, not a pleasant one. Even though I leave aside the doubtful problem of the origin of the Czechoslovak Novaks (still more the Luggi and Polish ones), I don't know if this narrative will please them. It is otherwise interesting, since from it one can conclude that there is no such thing as a common origin of Macedonian and Czechoslovak Novaks. And ours should know that they can hardly serve as an example to the Macedonian Novaks. True, ours also have things to be proud of. There is hardly a ministry in our country which doesn't have one. (In one there were even two, which I already call a representation).

But this glory — let the gentlemen ministers forgive me — is nothing, compared to the historical fame of the Balkan Novaks, since as far back as 1883, a book (by an *unknown author*) with the meaningful title "Stazina Novak in Folk Songs". History tells us of Kesar (Caesar) Novak, the third highest, (after the Tsar) dignitary in the Byzantine Empire, who has left a lasting mark in the history of art, by building the wonderful church on the memorable island of Mali Grad, on Lake Prespa, where, in the beginning of our millenium, the seat of the glorious Bulgarian-Macedonian Tsar Samouil had been.

Therefore all the mentioned Novaks are good people, since they have been sifted out by history.

The first among them had been, as far as I know, a famous blacksmith, He had been so deft that he had forged Krali Marko's famous, thaumaturgical sword. When it had been ready, it had first

struck its creator, i.e. Marko had cut off the blacksmith's right hand and said:

Oh, blacksmith Novak,
you have to work no more.

Take these 100 doucats,
they will feed you for the rest of your life.

The sword also had an interesting fate, which is described in another song. It tells us that a young man, who was lying wounded, had asked a passing Turk for help. But the Turk, seeing his wonderful sword, had cut off the young man's hand. He had taken the sword to Istanbul, where he had boasted with it in the court. Marko, who had been a nobleman there, had also seen it. He had looked it over carefully and had read an inscription on it: Novak, the blacksmith, King Vulkashin (Krali Mrko's father), and Krali Marko. In the next moment, the Turk's head had rolled on the ground.

History seems to have quite a bad orientation for the rest of the Novaks, since whenever it is present at heroic deeds, it does not pay much attention to the system of chronology (which has at least a little importance in history) and gathers together representatives of different centuries. For example, present at Georgi Smieredevets's (Brankovich's) wedding in Dubrovnik were Novak, who was match-maker or best man, Sibinyan Yanko (Jan Houniadi), Relyo Krilati, Milos Kobilich, Milan Toplitsa, and Krali Marko. The whole group is both a chronological and geographical omnium-gatherum. That, of course, is not the point here. What is important for us is to show to our Novaks in what company the song places our hero. Without exception, they all are distinguished heroes whose feats have shaken both Serbian and Bulgarian folk songs.

With the exception of the blacksmith, all the other Novaks have a surname, added to their given names: Starina (Old man), or Debeliak or Debelich (Fat man).

There is a song of a Starina Novak who had no sons, but only a daughter Yana. Once, when he was very old, he had been called to served as a soldier and his daughter had gone instead of him. She spent nine years there and no one had guessed that she had been a girl. In another, similar song, the girl is called Rouzhitsa. Someone had begun to suspect her, and an interesting check had been performed, so that her sex could be determined. But since the check had not gone beyond the limits of decency, the girl had managed to

keep her secret.

A Bulgarian song, written down by me in Bachkovo, in the Rhodope mountains, in which a girl was called Mariika, tells us what sorts of checks had been performed:

Who has ever heard of such a thing,
of a voivoda who is a girl.

with seventy heroes,
she is the seventy first.

Her name is Mariika.

The young men knew not what to do,
but they finally agreed,

“Lets go and check!”

They started making pipes,
pipes and motley distaffs!

“If our voivoda is a man,
he will grab a pipe,
but if she is a girl,
she will reach for a distaff.”

But Mariika was smart.

She did not reach for a distaff,
but grabbed a pipe.

Starina Novak, who has been studied by historians, had lived in the Kachanitsa gorge, on the Lepenitsa river, near Skoplje. He was a Bulgarian and as a “haidouk” had attacked the Turks from the Bulgarian mountains. He had also fought against the Magyars, and during a campaign against Zigmund Batori, had been captured, tortured, and finally burned.

All this can be read in many different books, of which I will point out Vuk Karadjich's glorious collection of Serbian songs (parts II and III) and Kachits-Mioshiche's “Viennats”. I will now proceed with the most important part of my story, the part of the highest of the Novaks, the Caesar.

Caesar Novak!

I believe that the combination of the name Novak with the high title will seem funny to anyone, and not only to me. The name Novak somehow does not seem appropriate for the title Caesar. But why? Is it not worthy of such a title?

That is not the reason. We are accustomed to hearing Christian names together with ruler's titles, and not surnames, and the name

Novak is a surname in our country. That was why it sounded so funny when we called the Austrian Emperor "Prohazka"*

But with the southern Slavs the name Novak is a given name. And there is nothing wrong that it does not come out of the calendar. Such a thing makes no difference there. A priest is never taken aback, as he is in our country, when he hears an "un-Christian" name, whether it is Prjemisl, Libousha, or Vlasta. They have a lot of un-calendar names, especially in Macedonia: Grozdan, Nedelko, Tsvetko, Mille, Soloun, Tvirtko, Dragan, Predrag, Zlatko, Liuben, Rada, Roumena, Stamena, Sossanka, Dzvezda, Dardana, etc. The Bulgarian composer Dobri Hristov is well known in our country, but it is impossible for someone here to be called, for example, Vesseli Dostal or Popelka Koubatova, Kvet Nezavdal or Chervena Hlavsova. The parents will not allow their son to be christened Vesseli or Kvet, or their daughter Popelka or Chervena. Only through sympathy for the South Slavs have the names Zorka and Draga been adopted in our country lately. But in the Slavic south, the religious names have never been predominant. It is interesting that at the beginning of Christianity they had achieved some popularity, but mostly Old Testament names had been preferred, as Samouil, Aron, Simeon, etc. Constantine Jirecek believed that the belligerent Bulgarians had preferred the mighty heroes of the Old Testament to the gentle apostolic figures of The Gospel.

Another peculiarity is that the given, or Christian, name, whether it is secular or religious, is always the main one. One lives mainly with it. Ask anyone "What is your name?", or "What is his name?", and you will always be told the given name and not the surname. Just as it had been a long time ago in our country.

The leading politicians in Serbia are called, without exception, Velya, (Voukichevich) or Liuba (Davidovich). Friendship knows no other form of address. In Kossovska Mitrovitsa, in Old Serbia, the mayor, who was a former teacher, told me, "I once knew a Czech, the officer Zhizhka". He started rubbing his forehead and angrily exclaimed, "I've forgotten the surname!" Once, while riding on a train, I told a few peasants that I came from Prague. They immediately asked me if I knew a certain Pepa. "He is a good man. He comes each autumn to buy fruit. His name is Pepa." In Prizren, we asked for professor Kostich, an old man of eighty who had lived there all his life.

*Prohazka — promenade; surname (Czech). Translator's note.



But no one knew him. It was after I had said by chance Petar Kostich that the local man shouted out: "Ah, Petar!" And, of course, he knew him. Our compatriots also got used to using given names quickly. At a station near Skoplje, we visited the station master and told him that Mr. X had sent us to him. Mr. X was Czech engineer who had lived in Skoplje for the last 15 years. "I don't know him", shook his head our compatriot, when he heard the surname. We tried to describe him, since it was impossible that the station master would not know him. We also explained where he lived, but all was in vain. And suddenly, our compatriot exclaimed, "Frantisek! That's Frantisek. Now I see what he was trying to tell me, when he passed through the station today. I couldn't understand him. He must have been telling me of you!"

And, of course, there arose difficulties when I wanted to write down the name of the person I had drawn. I asked an old lady, "What is your name?"

"Sultana", she answered.

I wrote it down and asked, "and the other one?", but she looked at me in surprise. After some time, I learned that in order to ask for a surname I must ask a woman not what her name is, but whose she is. She is her husband's, and if he is called Krusto, she is Krusteva. The men had father's (middle) names. T'virtko Ivanov's father, for example, was called Ivan. But that's not all. We have now reached the same stage as when a Russian has told us his given and father's names, Pyotr Ilich, for example. In order to find out the surname, i.e. the name of the family or the home, we must further ask and explain. My model in Galichnik, for example, had a full name Tvirtko Ivanov Ginovski.

We, the Czechs, may be particularly interested by the fact that very often the Macedonian surnames end in -ski. Therefore, they have Czech, and especially Polish endings, since this ending is not found among the rest of the Slaves. We didn't know that some years ago, when Rumelia was united with Bulgaria in 1885 and the name Dr. Stranski appeared, as that of chief executor of the coup, we thought at first that he must be one of the numerous Czechs, who were working there. The ending-ski is predominant among the Macedonians, just as -ich is among the Serbs and -vo and -ev among the Bulgarians and the Russians. And what seems odder, it is used among Slavs who are not neighbours, but on the contrary, are far apart, as the Macedonians

are from us and the Poles.

In Macedonia, of course, the Bulgarian endings -ov and -ev are also met fairly often, since the language of the Slavs there is closest to the Bulgarian, and up to the war they had considered themselves as a part of the Bulgarian people. Many of them had written their names Ivanov, Damianov, etc. This had been possible during Turkish times, but not now, in Serbia and Greek Macedonia. Everyone in Serbian Macedonia has been given an -ich at the end of his name by the authorities. Only the emigrants, who still can't return to their homes, have preserved their original names.

It is true that a hundred years ago the Serbian authorities had done the same thing, since the people had used only their given names at the time, and they had had to introduce some order. Anyone who had not had a surname at that time, had been asked "Who are you"? He had given either his father's name or his father's profession, and according to either of them had been written down as Pavlovich, Jovanovich, Kovachevich, or Popovich. Except that, all that had been done with an administrative purpose, while now the authorities are changing even the surnames of the Albanians, and it is done with quite a different purpose - in order to give an outward Serbian appearance to Macedonia.

But let us leave politics aside and pay attention only to the fact that the paternal spirit is predominant there, according to which everything is the father's, including the wife and the children, as the system of names indicates. Otherwise, the people use only their given names, as it had once been in our country, during the time of Hus. He had lived only as Jan, while the surname Hus had appeared much later.

This was something that I might never had thought of, if a Macedonian peasant had not asked me once, "Do you have a king"?

"No", I had answered, "We have a republic and therefore a president".

"Why? Why not a king? Is it better that way?"

I Hadn't known what to answer. The "why" had surprised me. All at once I had had to compare Macedonian conditions with ours! The man had really confused me. But in my confusion, something suddenly had flashed through my mind. To my surprise, I had felt that nothing else was possible. I had answered the peasant perfunctorily, but had tried even harder to answer myself. I had imagined that our

present president was a king. An objection had immediately sprung up — could we ever call him “King Masarik”? It was out of the question. We could call him by his given name, though. King Tomash seemed all right. Only the present title was suitable for a surname. A surname denotes present times, the opposite of patriarchal times. Times have their signs, which taken alone seem insignificant, but in reality are like buds. Even though they are quite small, they are a result of deep reasons. Such is development. May be for good, and may be for bad, but it never goes backwards. Patriarchal times have had their beauty. But in our country they have already passed. They will pass down there, as well. Our next president may be called Vomachka or Vokourka. And why not? But neither of them could be a king. Nor could any Novak ever be Caesar Novak. So may be the presidency awaits one of them. Who knows?

Macedonia

When, upon our arrival in Macedonia, my son had announced that all our turpentine had been spilt, I had been very angry at first, but I



Ново Село а. Маркић јуни

а. Стип

Novo Selo, near Stip

had smiled when we had been able to buy some. The merchant, who had sold it to us, had said proudly, when he had heard where we come from: "And we, here, are descendants of Alexander the Great".

He might have been a disguised Greek, but to a certain extent he had been correct. It was doubtful that the ancient Macedonians had been a Greek tribe (since Thucydides calls them semi-barbaric) but the dynasty of the Argeades, from which Alexander had descended, was Greek, at least from the cultural point of view.

So for truth's sake, if the above mentioned had not been, as far as time and greatness are concerned, a conqueror of the world, I doubt that anyone, except historians, would have had any idea of Macedonia. By the year 148, the Romans had erased it from the face of the earth, and as a state it has never existed since. But for Alexander, who died in 324 B.C., 33 years had been enough to engrave the name of his fatherland forever in mankind's memory, thanks to his political and military genius, his courage, and his numerous physical and spiritual advantages. He had been a student of Aristoteles. He started building his glory from his childhood years, and his father, Philip II, a famous statesman, had once allegedly exclaimed with enthusiasm, "You, son, must find yourself a larger empire. My kingdom is too small for you!" He had said it as a prophet, quite modestly.

More than 2000 years have passed since then, but the name Macedonia has been preserved in the memory of all mankind. Its territory is not large (approximately 60,000 sq. kilometers and with a population of 2.5 million and it has never since formed any political, or even administrative whole. During the Turkish domination, it had been divided in separate parts and had been attached to three Vilayets (provinces) — Salonica, Bitolja, and Kosovo, and the Istanbul newspapers had refrained from even mentioning the name. But the ban had been useless. The name could not have been erased from human thought or human language at all.

The configuration of the terrain, united its great diversity and contributed for the intransience of the concept. It consisted of the valleys of the three major tributaries of the Aegean — Vardar, Struma, and Mesta, and had natural sea and mountain borders. To the east the Rhodopes and Rila were to the north Karadag, also called the Skoplje Cherna Gora, with the Shar mountain, to west the Albanian mountains and the Greek Pindus and Olympus.

From the ethnographical point of view, Macedonia is a continuous

Slavic territory, pierced by small islands of other national groups, of which the major ones are: Turks (500,000), Greeks (200,000), Albanians (100,000), Wallachs (60,000), Spanish Jews (70,000), and gypsies (50,000)*. The majority of the local Slavs, with the exception of an insignificant Serbian colony, have always been considered as a branch of the Bulgarian people.

This mosaic is a diagram of history.

In prehistoric times, the Thracians had lived in the eastern part of the Balkan peninsula and the Illyrians in the western. They had been divided by the diagonal line passing from Timok to Ohrid approximately. (Later, it had become the approximate border between the Serbian and Bulgarian tribes). The Wallachs, who have remained here and there, are a memory of the first inhabitants (they are probably Romanised Thracians). They are unevenly scattered in small regions. The Albanians live in the western part, in a compact group. They have penetrated the peninsula from the sea. The southern sea coast, with the Peloponessus peninsula and the islands, had originally been the motherland of the blessed Hellenes. Their spiritual progress had been facilitated not only by the favourable climate and the possibilities open for shipping, but also by the contacts with the ancient Asian cultures. In such a way, this part of the Mediterranean had not only reached the highest point of cultural development during their age, but together with their early Roman subsidiary, had managed to erect the sound foundations of the whole later European culture including the present.

The northern peoples, towards the end of antiquity, had been attracted to the south, to the warm seas, and mainly to the cultural center which had existed there. The Western European peoples had turned towards the two peninsulas — the Italian and the Balkan, while the Eastern European peoples only towards the Balkan peninsula. (The crusades, even though they had had the same exterior and direct cause, had been nothing else, but a spontaneous response to the same aspirations towards the charming Southeast, whose smouldering spark had been inflamed by religious passions).

In the Balkan peninsula, the Slavs had come in small groups, as colonizers or mercenaries, reaching as far as Greece and Asia Minor.

●The data is from before the war. All the figures are approximate and are calculated according to the number of houses and households. Author's note.

The oldest record, a Slavic inscription with Greek characters, has reached us through Byzantium.

A great movement took place in the sixth century. The Slavs had come, as other peoples, holding weapons in their hands. Even now, the peoples cannot think of a more convincing reason for making such mass "visits". And if the remains of devastated long ago cities are now carefully unearthed and preserved in Skoplje, Gradsko, and Macedonia, it is nothing but a manifestation of some remorse for the sins, which our Slavs (together with the other peoples) have committed there.

The ancestors of the present South Slavs were the Slavs, who in the seventh century swept over the deserted Peloponessus and had an independent state, and those, who in the thirteenth century had risen as a whole against the Frank feudal lords. The eastern and southern parts of the Balkan peninsula had had an interesting fate, reminding of the creation of the French and Russian peoples. As the Gauls had assimilated their conquerors, the German Franks, who left them only their name, and as the Eastern Slavs had adopted the name Russians from the Scandinavians, so the Southern Slavs had assimilated the Bulgars (Asian Tartars). They had been overpowered by them and had acted upon their victors with their superiority in numbers (maybe with an economic and cultural superiority, as well), and like a pumice stone, which had engulfed a sea wave, they had assimilated them, leaving only their name. Asparouh became the founder of the history of the Bulgarian people destined to become a military and state-creating element. Supported by the configuration of the land (a vast low plane around the Danube and Rumania, and the wide Macedonian valleys), in the seventh century the Bulgarians had already spread their authority over the whole southern part of the peninsula, as far as Greece, and in the ninth century Tsar Simeon, a contemporary of our ruler Vaclav, could already consider conquering Byzantium, the cultural and Christian-religious center of that age (Rome's superiority had not been clearly demonstrated yet).

Under these conditions, the Bulgarians were the first among the Slavs, with the exception of the Czechs, to adopt Christianity. Their Macedonian branch had set the foundations for the emergence of Slavic literature and culture. The Macedonian Slavs had not only reached the gates of Salonica, Macedonia's capital, but had also lived quite comfortably in it. This can be clearly seen from the fact that first

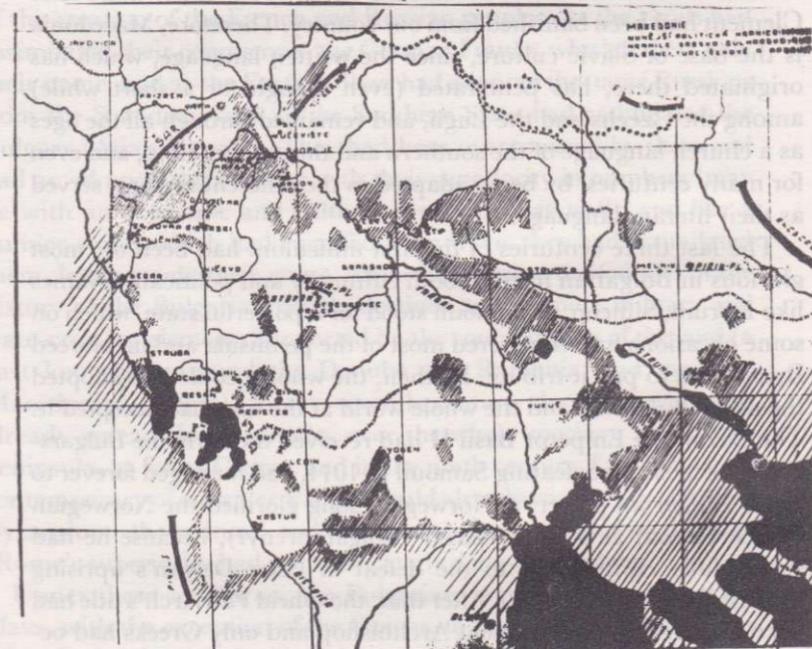
Slavic alphabet had been created there, and that the first, Slavic, religious books had been written there. And when the Prince of Moravia Rostislav, asked in 863 the Byzantine Emperor Michael III to send him Christian clergymen who knew the Slavic language, his wish could be fulfilled immediately. Cyril and Methodius arrived in our country with the necessary books. It is clear that this work, through which the Slavic language had received not only an alphabet, but the possibility of expressing deeper religious-moral thoughts, should have been done much earlier. There exists a view among some scholars that the first Slavic alphabet, the Glagolitsa, had not been created by Cyril, but had existed much earlier.

The Bulgarian King Boris had been christened and had introduced Christianity in his country not long after the Salonica brothers had arrived in Moravia. Ohrid became the center of Slavic literature after Clement had been banished from our country. Therefore, Macedonia is the base of Slavic culture, since the written language, which has originated there, has penetrated (even though for a short while) among the Czechs and the Luvians, and remained through all the ages as a church language of the southern and the eastern Slavs, and even for many centuries, by being adapted in the different regions, served as their literary language.

The last three centuries of the first millennium had been the most glorious in Bulgarian history, both culturally and politically. Names like Krum, Simeon, or Samuil stood for a powerful state, which on some occasions had conquered most of the peninsula and had forced Byzantium to pay it tribute. By then, the whole people had adopted the name Bulgarian and the whole world at the time had accepted it. The Byzantine Emperor Basil II had received the surname Bulgarslayer, because by defeating Samuil in 1014, had managed forever to crush Bulgarian power. A Norwegian song glorified the Norwegian Prince Harold as a Bulgarslayer (Bolgarabrenyr), because he had successfully contributed to the defeat of Peter Delyan's uprising against Byzantium in 1040. After that, the Ohrid Patriarch's title had been changed to Independent Archbishop and only Greeks had occupied the seat, all of them officially calling themselves Bulgarian Metropolitans.

From that time on, the Bulgarians had begun showing signs of fatigue. And no wonder, three great centuries had exhausted them.

Not only had Delyan's uprising failed, but the same fate had befallen the interesting initiative, encouraged by the Macedonians. In the eleventh century, they asked the Dicletian Serbian Prince Mihail to give them his son Bodin for a king, on the condition that he would organize a campaign against Byzantium. Bodin was actually elected as Bulgarian Tsar, in Prizren, in 1071, but his campaign had failed. Neither the attempts of the Assens, allied with the Serbian ruler Neman, nor the efforts of Tsar Kaloyan, could give back Bulgaria its one-time superiority over Byzantium. So, gradually, the preserved Serbian people had started rising, in order to pick up from the Bulgarians the historical task — the struggle with Constantinople. Stephan's grandson, Ourosh II, had managed to reach as far as Polog, beyond the Shar mountain, for a short while, and his grandson Dragoutin as far as Serres and Stroumitsa. But it was his brother Miliutin who had been fated to capture all of Macedonia. In 1299 he



Map of Macedonia

..... The Serbian-Bulgarian-Rumelian border before 1912

— The present political border

Albanians, Turks, Greeks and pseudo-Rumanians

had made Skoplje the Serbian capital. It had remained as such for 72 years, until the last ruler of the Neman family had died, i.e. until 1371, when Tsar Ouros, Doushan's son, died by some interesting accident a few days after the Chernomen battle on Maritsa, in which Ouros's co-ruler King Vulkashin died. If there exists a battle which deserves to be called fateful, it is this one. "The Turkish domination over the Southern Slavs began from that moment", said their historian, our compatriot Constantine Jirecek.

Macedonia fell first and was longest, oppressed until the Balkan war of 1912, or to be precise, until the battle at Koumanovo, when the Serbs, fulfilling their major task, had occupied Macedonia after routing the Turks, while the Bulgarians, even though they had been victorious everywhere, had to go on fighting, since fresh Turkish forces from Asia were being sent against them all the time.

Macedonia, which had given 40,000 volunteers to assist the Bulgarians, had finally been liberated from Turkish yoke!

But how?

The glorious moment forces upon us a comparison with the conditions that had existed a thousand years ago, when Macedonia had been the first to spread enlightenment and legal freedom among all Slavdom, on the conditions, under which it had existed during those 1000 years. While Serbia* had already been free for a whole century and had gradually achieved political independence and had strengthened all the time, Macedonia had been bound by Turkish chains.

Where had the difference come from?

The situation had turned around. The Northwestern Balkan Slavs had become the ones closest to the centers of enlightenment, which had moved towards the European west, while Macedonia, and together with it the whole Bulgarian people, had become the one farthest away from them. When in 1826 P.J. Shafardjik published "Geschichte der Slavischen Sprache und Literatur", he had mentioned only the literature of "Slavic Serbs of Greek faith", in which he had included the literature of 600,000 Bulgarians as well. For the outside world, the Bulgarians made themselves known much later, and the reason had been the fact that their fate had been much more difficult than that of the Serbs. The Serbs had suffered from the Turks only politically and economically, but had had a National Church and a National School. Besides that, the Bulgarians had also been

●In 1830 it had received autonomy. Author's note.

oppressed by the Greek clergy. A Bulgarian school, such as the one that existed in Veles, in 1750, was a major exception. That was why the first struggles of the Macedonians had been against the Greeks.

It is interesting, that under such difficult conditions, Macedonia was the one that started to express its Bulgarian national spirit first, sending out its apostolic message after long centuries of silence.

In 1762, in Macedonia, in the Serbian monastery Hilendar on Mount Athos, Paissiy Hilendarski finished his history of the Bulgarian people, which may have little historical value, but for the people had been invaluable. It had been the call of one rising from his sleep. Through it, new Bulgaria had been revived. The book had served as a seed. In the beginning of the nineteenth century, a number of Macedonians proved to be good writers, printers, publishers, teachers, and later on politicians, rebellion leaders, and soldiers.

In 1814, in Buda, Hungary, the first book, by the Macedonian Hadji Yakim, was published. It was followed by other works by the same author, published with contributions from many towns and villages, of which, for example, Novo Selo, near Stip (a romantic spot near Krali Marko's castle), had collected 500 groshes for their publication.

Dascal Kamche from Ohrid had founded the first printing press in Salonica, while books had been printed in Istanbul, as well. Neofit Rilski had become the founder of Bulgarian pedagogy and had transferred his activity from Macedonia to Bulgaria. In Stip, where Bulgarian books had been written in the Middle Ages, by 1830 there had already been a school with 150 pupils. In the fifties, the Istanbul Bulgarians had sent the Hungarian emigrant, the Serb Georgi Miletich (from the family of the famous Hungarian-Serbian revolutionary Svetozar Miletich) there. He had quickly understood that the children's studies could not be conducted in the Serbian language, but only in the Bulgarian. In 1860, his wife founded a Bulgarian girl's school.

With the development of literature and schools among the Macedonians, it had become clear that they must rid the church of Greeks. In 1833 they drove the Greek priests out of the churches, and made demands for Bulgarian clergymen, and above all for a Bulgarian Metropolitan. Their demands were made in vain, but as a result of their struggle, four citizens had contributed 30,000 groshes for the foundation of a Bulgarian school. Koukoush, which is now in Greece,

and threatened in 1859 that it would adopt Catholicism (and had really carried out its threat afterwards) if it was not given a Bulgarian Metropolitan. In 1860, in Stip, the Greek singers were driven out of the church during the Sunday service. Dimitar Miladinov had struggled heroically in Ohrid, and together with his brother had suffered a martyr's death in Istanbul.

When finally, in 1870, Bulgaria acquired a national church, through the establishment of the Exarchate, there had been 178 schools in Macedonia, built by the people. Their number had soon risen to more than 600. Forces for a political and revolutionary activity had also been released. It had started as far back as the sixties, by the Bulgarians from Danubian Bulgaria and those abroad. Names like those of Illiya Markov from Behr, Georgi Izmirliiev, nicknamed the Macedonian, etc. had appeared.

The Macedonian Revival had exerted an influence abroad, especially among Slavs. Shafardjik had corrected his views. The Serb Vuk Karadjich had become interested by Bulgarian songs in Macedonia. Shafardjik's map of 1842 (and other ethnographic maps following it) showed the Bulgarian people and its territorial distribution. The Belgrade scholarship holder, the Bosnia Serb S. Verkovich, had given most of his life in research work in Macedonia, and had become an apostle of its Bulgarian national spirit. In 1860, he gave his "Folk Songs of the Bulgarian Macedonians" as a gift to the Serbian Princess Julia Obretenovich. Towards the happy feeling of kinship, which had awoken in both Bulgarians and Serbs, the consciousness that a common enemy existed for both had been added. The Idyllic times of Slavic unity had fully corresponded to Kolarov's ideals for a Slavic mutuality and they had reached their peak with actions, which reminded one of the offer made to Prince Bodin in 1071. The Macedonians, in agreement with the rest of the Bulgarian politicians, had offered Mikhail Obretenovich a confederation between the two peoples.

After the Herzegovina revolt of 1875, and later the Bulgarian and Macedonian uprising of 1876, The Russo-Turkish war of 1877 broke out and ended with victorious San-Stefano peace treaty. One of its articles speaks of liberated Bulgaria together with Macedonia. Bulgarian Macedonia was jubilant. It had achieved its goal.

During the Berlin Peace Congress that article had been fully revised. And dreadfully, at that! The Bulgarian people were torn in

parts. The South Morava area, which until then was known as Bulgarian Morava in its eastern part with Nish, Pirot, Vranja, Zaichar, and Leskovets, was given to Serbia, while a Bulgarian principality was created only in the northern regions. The autonomous Rumelia was formed in the southern regions. Macedonia had remained under the Sultan. It had been promised "reforms".

The uprisings in Razlog, Prillep and Ohrid followed, and since then Macedonia had turned into a constant battlefield. The most educated Macedonians had become leaders of the bands.

The situation had worsened still. Thanks to the Salonica railway line, coming from Belgrade, a political interest towards Macedonia was aroused in Belgrade. After the Union of East Rumelia with the Bulgarian Principality in 1885, King Milan led the Serbian Army against Bulgaria, but the Serbs were routed at Slivnitsa. In such a way, Macedonia had acquired a new enemy — its former ally.

Since the promised reforms had not been carried out, while the economic difficulties of the Macedonians had increased (they had been oppressed by the landowners, the majority of which had been Turks, and by their servants, especially by the notorious Albanian field-keepers), the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization was founded in 1893. Its goal was the establishment of autonomy. A revolutionary wave had risen. At first, it had been aimed against the Turks, but when Serbian and Greek bands had invaded Macedonia, it had had to fight against three enemies too. From 1898 until 1902, 132 battles were waged, in which more than 500 Macedonians were killed.

Clouds began gathering over Macedonia. The only folk songs from that time were of bullets (lead). The songs told of Turkish, Greek, and Serbian bullets. A typical example of those times is the short song:

Three guns were fired,
three heroes, Oh, God, have fallen.
Three heroes have fallen,
three mothers are crying, Oh, God, crying.

A friend of mine, a Czech, who owing to his profession of a clerk knew Macedonia well, once told me, "There is not a more miserable mother in the world than the Macedonian mother. She lives in constant fear for the lives of her children".

This desparate land had tried to focus some attention on itself with brave deeds and assassinations. Finally, in 1903, it rose in the famous

Illinden uprising (St. Illiya's day, July 20). It was the largest armed struggle ever carried out by a Slavic population (without a state of its own) against the Turks. 26,000 Macedonians fought against a Turkish army of 350,000. The former lost 1000 people and the latter 5000. The Turkish artillery destroyed a number of villages. 12,000 houses were destroyed, 5000 people were slain. The struggle, which was led chiefly in the Bitolja area, continued for three months and achieved poor results. In a meeting in Mursteg, the Three Monarchs decided to create an international gendarmerie at Turkey's expense.

The participants in this commission, the frenchman La Mouche and the Austrian A. Rapport, made interesting descriptions of their four year long work in their books "Quinze and d'histoire balcanique" and "An pays des martyres". The work of the commission had begun with the settling of the salaries and had continued with the creation of barracks. The commission would have been dissolved at one point because of the issue of uniforms. The Turks had not wanted to drop their fezzes. But just then, a much more serious event had taken place — The Young Turks Revolution.

Its seed had been planted on the shores of Lake Prespa, in the Ressen valley (therefore, in the same place in which the IMRO had been founded), by Nyazi Bey, who was born in Ressen. It ended with the reforms and all the rest. History began sliding down like an avalanche. The Italians invaded Tunisia, while the Balkan states allied for a final showdown with Turkey. The Balkan War, which was nothing but an overture towards the World War, began.

The end is well known.

In the Balkan War, after the complete victory over Turkey, the disagreements between Bulgaria and Serbia led to the uneven war between exhausted Bulgaria and its former allies, which Rumania had joined in the meantime*. Bulgaria was defeated. And it was again among the defeated after the World War.

The reason for the Serbian-Bulgarian discord was Macedonia. The Bulgarian claims over Macedonia, with the exception of the so called "contested zone" (which bordered on Old Serbia) were recognized by a treaty before the war. If the war ended victoriously, the Russian

*Rumania's participation had been such that the Slavists Louis Leger and his follower La Mouche publicly renounced their Rumanian friends, until it would not correct its "Heroic deed". Author's note.

Tsar would be the one to decide whom the "contested zone" should be given to.

But the turn of events was such, that unfortunately, the Tsar's decision became unnecessary. The developments, from a Slavic point of view, were very painful. Bulgaria, which in the war had twice as heavy task, since only she was the one exposed to the constantly arriving from Asia Minor Turkish reinforcements, was forced, because of disagreements over Macedonia, after a six month exhausting war with Turkey; to oppose her former allies, joined by Rumania militarily and by Turkey diplomatically. The uneven struggle ended tragically from a Slavic point of view, with a loss of Bulgarian territories to Rumania, Greece and Turkey.

Macedonia received just the opposite of what it had dreamed and aspired for. Only an insignificant part was allotted to Bulgaria. The largest (but not the most fertile) part was taken by Serbia and, united with Old Serbia, remained under the name South Serbia. Greece, with the smallest number of military casualties, received the largest share, with the most fertile, southern Macedonian regions. It increased its population by more than 2 million, of which 300,000 were Macedonian Bulgarians, or "Slavic speaking", as Venizelos called them. From that moment on, not a single Bulgarian school remained either in the Greek, or in the Serbian parts of Macedonia. If in the Greek part, even though rarely, some books have been published in the Slavic dialect with Greek characters, in the Serbian part, where more than 600,000 Bulgarians had remained, the Bulgarian nationality not recognized at all. No Bulgarian books are permitted there. According to information from our Slavic review (1931, book 3, p.226), the endings -ov and -ev of the Bulgarian names, have been replaced by -iades (e.g. Evtimov — Evtimiades) in the Greek part, and an-ich has been added to them (e.g. Popov-Popovich) in South Serbia. The phenomenon reminds one of the Luggi Serbs. While under German domination, they had been forced to adopt German surnames. But there are two major differences — they can use their own surname as well (in such a way everyone has two surnames), and secondly, everyone is free to consider himself a Serb, and that does not create obstacles for him even in his career as a civil servant.

So Turkey recognized the Macedonians as Bulgarians, Greece recognizes them as "Slavic speaking" at least, but Serbia denied them the right and forbidden them to call themselves Bulgarians. Under

such conditions, no wonder that many of them emigrate to Bulgaria. If some impartial onlooker ever reproaches them that in such a way they are hurting their own people, we must reject his reproach, since he is obviously unacquainted with the internal conditions.

Such ignorance is excusable in our country, since, for some unknown reason, nothing is written of the conditions there (often it is even prohibited).

By concealing our interests towards Slavdom, we readily vow that we have an impartial, unegotistical, and moral attitude towards all Slavic branches, and we always speak about the settlement of their issues according to the principle of absolute equity. It is desirable, but in reality it is not done.

If we begin writing of this error, which increases each day, it would mean that we must write quite a large book. So I am concluding by referring to Joseph Holecek's book "In Yugoslavia of 1924", in which he describes how he had been received by the present Yugoslav King. Even though Holecek knew very well that the Bulgarian nationality had been officially prohibited in South Serbia, he had spoken of the Macedonians as the western part of the divided Bulgarian people (p.67). And the King had not protested!