

ES  
April 21  
V-769

BULGARIA

EXILE (1200)  
Refugees (1204)

ESCAPE STORY OF A YOUNG TRACTOR DRIVER.

SOURCE ISTANBUL: 19-year-old Bulgarian escapee, native of STRANDJA, District ELHOVO, who escaped to Turkey in January 1956 and who was released for interrogation in March. Source is a secondary school graduate.

DATE OF OBSERVATION: Until January 1956.

CORRESPONDENT'S COMMENT: There is some doubt as to the veracity of source's escape story. The four young men were interrogated conjointly when giving their escape story. It was later revealed that the story they gave us did not correspond with the account they gave to Turkish Security.

EVALUATION COMMENT: This office has no information to confirm or deny source's life story.

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Born in the village STRANDZHA, District ELHOVO, in 1937, source began his education in 1944. In 1950, at a time when source was in the second form of the pro-gymnasium, his father escaped to Turkey. In August of the same year, the entire family, composed of source's grandparents, uncle, mother, plus half a dozen cousins, were all deported to VRATSA. Although source's father had escaped in May, his family was allowed to bring in the harvest before being sent to the north.

At VRATSA, the family was allowed to work and source worked as a cartdriver at the state agricultural farm. In 1951 he was allowed to continue his education in VRATSA and in June 1953 graduated from secondary school. In September of the same year, he enrolled at a drivers' training school but one month later was dismissed because he could not produce the necessary political good conduct certificate.

In October 1953, the family was allowed to leave VRATSA but was told that they could go south as far as YAMBOL only. Until September 1954, the entire family lived at YAMBOL where

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source worked as a tractor driver at the town's state farm. In September 1954, source's mother and uncle were allowed to return to STRANDZHA; his grandparents -- who had been landowners -- were not allowed back to their village and they settled in PARVENETS. Source continued to work at the D.Z.S. until December and then returned to STRANDZHA.

In source's family all property, including the land, belonged to the grandparents. They owned two houses, 100 dekares of land and some 60 sheep. After the family's deportation to the north, a collective farm was founded in STRANDZHA. The property of all deported persons was automatically incorporated into the T.K.Z.S. Thus, when source's mother and uncle returned to STRANDZHA they found themselves penniless. They were admitted to the collective farm as simple laborers, not as farm members. Source's grandfather, the owner of the family property, was not allowed back in the village and so could not claim membership at the collective farm.

When source returned to his village in December 1954, he found no employment. He would have been satisfied if he had been admitted as a member of the collective farm but he was told that his family could not claim farm membership. He stayed in the village for two months and then returned to the YAMBOL state farm to work as tractor driver at 15 levas per day. At the state farm, source and some of his friends often listened to Western broadcasts during the absence of the farm director. From these radio programs, source and his friends learned that life in the free world was more rewarding. Knowing that his father was in Turkey, source made up his mind to join him at the earliest possible moment. During the entire year of 1955, source had very much work to do at the state farm, and his work made him temporarily forget his escape project. In December 1955, he visited his grandparents at PARVENETS and there met Bano Kalchev BANOVA, who confided in him saying that he also planned to escape to Turkey. The two young men decided to cross the border toward New Year but later changed their mind when they heard that border guard reinforcements had arrived near the border. After his return to STRANDZHA, source told his friends Georgi Boychev CHILIKOV and Petko Hristov PETKOV that he and Bano would escape in January. The two boys decided to join source. In January, news was received from the border that the additional guard units had been withdrawn. In the morning of January 15, 1956 source, accompanied by his friends CHILIKOV and PETKOV, left STRANDZHA, having told their families that they were going to look for work at YAMBOL. The three had decided to go as far as PARVENETS and pick up Bano. The latter was the owner of a revolver and was the oldest among the four.

Having left STRANDZHA, source and his friends went to VODEN and took a bus for ELHOVO. Later in the day they boarded a train for YAMBOL and spent the night in that town. In the evening of January 16, they took a bus to PARVENETS, 45 kilometers from YAMBOL.

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Acting on Bano's advice, the four decided to start for the border the same evening. After nightfall they began walking toward the south and, walking until mid-day on January 17, they reached KRUSHEVO village after having passed ALEXANDROVO. Having rested in a forest near KRUSHEVO, they continued toward the border and passed near the villages VALCHI IZVOR and GORSKA POLIANA. Toward midnight, they reached a barbed wire fence which they crossed without difficulty. At exactly 0005 hours in the morning of January 18, the four friends had reached Turkey. Next morning they were taken by a Turkish forest guard to the village MALKOCH-LAR, and two days later were brought to KIRKLARELI. One week later the four young refugees were taken to ISTANBUL.

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