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ITEM No 11647/53

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20 Nov
XI - 1015

RUMANIA

ARMED FORCES

Soviet Army

STANDARD OF LIVING

Food

Consumer Goods

COMMUNICATIONS

Post

Censorship

FORCED LABOR

JUSTICE

Amnesty

Letter Says GALATI Swarms With Soviet
Soldiers

SOURCE ATHENS: Greek-Rumanian repatriate.

DATE OF OBSERVATION: October 1953.

EVALUATION COMMENT: The recipients of the letters under reference are members of the Greek-Rumanian Association of Greece, whose reliability is vouched for by the ATHENS Correspondent.

The present report confirms the persistence of the food crisis in the provinces even during the Youth Festival period. The increase of the number of Soviet Army units pouring into the GALATI area is not fully confirmed here but consistent with information contained in Item No. 11216/52 on armored units in the FOCSANI-GALATI area. See also Item No. 2373/53 (Soviet military installations in GALATI.) A Rumanian exile paper recently published an UNCONFIRMED report on the partial withdrawal of Soviet Army units from the Yugoslav border, which may explain -- if confirmed -- the agglomeration of troops in the GALATI area.

The reported details on mail and censorship are known here.

The release of VANVAKAS is UNCONFIRMED here, but
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this measure may be considered in line with similar cases following the recent amnesty. The arrest of this former shipowner was reported by other sources (please see Item No. 6814/53) to have occurred in 1949.

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A Greek resident of ATHENS, who lived in GALATI until his repatriation last year, recently received a letter bearing Turkish postage stamps and the ISTANBUL postmark. The letter was unsigned, but the recipient readily recognized the handwriting as that of a Greek friend who still lives in GALATI; the recipient can only conjecture that his friend confided the letter to a crewmember of a foreign vessel touching at GALATI with a request that it be mailed from a port in the free world.

The letter begins by speaking of the food and soap shortage in GALATI; it then says that food is even difficult to find in the restaurants because of the great masses of Soviet soldiers pouring into the city. "Many houses, among them your own, have been occupied by the Soviets after having been thoroughly renovated so that they would not lack comforts," said the letter. (The recipient's house, to which the letter refers, is on Strada Macri.) The letter said that the Danube at GALATI is crowded with pontoons and all types of Soviet military shipping; also, Soviet tanks and artillery units rumble ceaselessly through the city in two-way traffic streams. Speaking of the International Youth Festival held in late August in BUCHAREST, the letter says: "The visitors from all over the world no doubt marveled at the abundance spread out before their eyes. If they only knew that for three months before the Festival the Rumanian people had to do without everything, so that this show of apparent abundance could be made! And if they also knew that, while in BUCHAREST they could find everything, we in the provinces have forgotten the taste of meat. The food shops have little for sale other than rotten tomatoes and the only fruit we have been able to find this year are some watermelons."

Another letter from Ruamnia, received in ATHENS through ordinary mail channels from BUCHAREST, said that correspondence coming from abroad is now delivered by the postman and that it is no longer necessary to call for each correspondence at the postoffice. The writer of the letter, a photographer who still has his own shop, also complained about the scarcity of food and about the fact that, although a Greek national, he has not been able to obtain an exit visa to leave for Greece. The letter concluded by reporting that Constantinos VAMVAKAS, a Greek ex-merchant of BUCHAREST, has been released from the Danube-Black Sea Canal forced labor camp where he spent three years, following the general amnesty.