

JB
April 17
V/768

BULGARIA

EXILE (1200)
Refugees (1204)

ESCAPE STORY OF A PEASANT.

SOURCE ISTANBUL: A 36-year-old Bulgarian farmer, native of RAZDEL, District ELHOVO, who escaped to Turkey accompanied by his wife in October 1955. Source and his wife spent ten weeks at the YOZGAT refugee detention camp and were released for interrogation in February 1956.

DATE OF OBSERVATION: Until October 1955.

EVALUATION COMMENT: This is another life story of a simple peasant who owned some 100 dekares of land. This fact barred source's son from Technical School and made life impossible for him, forcing him to escape together with his wife.

+ + + +

Born in the village of RAZDEL, District ELHOVO, in 1920, source began his education in 1927 and left school six years later. From then on he worked as a farmer in his village.

He married in 1938 and had two children. Six years later his wife died and source remarried. His second wife did not take care of his children so source divorced her and in 1955 married for the third time. His present wife accompanied him on his flight to Turkey.

Prior to 1944 source's family was well-to-do. They owned 100 dekares of land, 150 sheep, a number of cows and oxen and horses. In 1950 the family was forced to join the collective farm

(over)

which had been set ^{up} in the village two years ago. In 1953 source lost his mother and father within the same month. Left to work alone on the collective farm, he was no longer able to support his two children. After his third marriage his wife joined him in the fields but their economic situation did not improve by much.

Source stated that he and his wife were known as "kulaks" in RAZDEL. The main reason for this was that Communist Party secretary, Koldi STOYANOV, had been employed by source's father as a farm-hand prior to 1944. STOYANOV never forgave source the fact that he had worked for them and for this reason persecuted the whole family. In 1954 source's 15-year-old son had completed secondary school and applied for admission to the BURGAS Technical High School. Source hoped that his son would be able to continue his education at the expense of the State. As Party Secretary STOYANOV gave an unfavorable report concerning the young boy, the latter was refused acceptance. Next year source once more took his son to BURGAS but he received the same answer from the school authorities: STOYANOV stated in his report that source's son did not deserve to get an education. Source returned to RAZDEL and pleaded with the Party Secretary to change his report but the latter flatly refused to do anything in favor of source's son. Source claims that this incident plus the poor living conditions he and his family enjoyed motivated his escape to Turkey.

In the morning of October 11 1955, members of the RAZDEL collective farm were ordered to report for work at a granary located one kilometer from the village. The previous evening source handed over the keys to his house to the grandmother of his two children and told her that he and his wife would be away from the village for some time. Next day when most villagers were busy at the granary source and his wife began walking toward the Turkish border under the cover of the cotton fields. They passed VALCHA POLIANA village at around noon and after nightfall crossed the border into Turkey. In the morning of October 12 source and his wife reached the Turkish village of DEGIRMENKOY and the next day were taken to EDIRNE. The couple spent some time in ISTANBUL and were then taken to ^{the} YOZGAT refugee detention camp on November 25, 1955. The two were released and returned to ISTANBUL on February 10, 1956.

End.