

LL
4 March 1951
XI - 227BULGARIABORDER ZONES

Military

ARMED FORCES

Training

Personalities

Morale and Morale

Communists

Organization Of Border Army

SOURCE ATHENS: A Bulgarian refugee, formerly a reserve officer of the border army, who escaped to Greece on 15 January 1952.

DATE OF OBSERVATION: 1950 to 1952.

* * * *

According to a former reserve officer, the classes of 1929, 1930 and 1931 were serving in the Bulgarian border army at the time of his escape from Bulgaria in January 1952. The class of 1928 was demobilized in November 1951, after three years service in the border army.

The border army, consisting of specially selected and trained units, is in all respects independent of the regular army, having its own directorate in the Ministry of the Interior. Until December 1950, when source's service in its ranks ended, its commander was Major-General PANOV Yonko, wellknown as a partisan leader during the last war. He is about 48 years old, tall, stout, dark, bald, with black eyes. Originating from the village ROSSOVO, near PLOVDIV, he has had a university education and is calm of temperament.

The border army's deputy commander and political commissar general was Colonel MARKOV (fnu), a taciturn man of about 55, of medium height, stout, with thick black hair and black eyes. Source does not know whether PANOV and MARKOV have since been replaced.

The border army directorate in the Ministry of the Interior comprises the following branches:

1. Operations branch (Stroeva Sectia,) in charge of training and personnel, under Colonel PESHEV (fnu). PESHEV is one of the few highranking officers of the old regime still retained in service. He is considered to be a brilliant tactician and one of Bulgaria's most experienced officers. He is about 50 years old and irascible. During the last war he served as chief-of-staff of the Bulgarian First Army.

2. Political branch (Politicheski Otdel) under Colonel MARKOV (fnu).

3. Supply branch (Natchalnik Til) under Lieut.Col. POZAROV (fnu).

(Over)

4 March 1952

XI - 227

BULGARIA
(cont'd)

1

4. Veterinary branch (Veterinaren Otdel) under Colonel SHISKOV (fnu).

5. Medical branch (Meditsinski Otdel) under Lieut. Col. STOICHEV (fnu).

6. Finance branch (Finansov Otdel) under a civilian, PANOVA (fnu).

There may, the source says, be other branches too, of which he had not heard.

Until the summer of 1950, no separate training centers for the border army existed; the men were trained in the regular infantry regiments and afterwards posted to border army units. In November 1950, for the first time, a border army training battalion was formed in ZLATOGRAV. The administrative personnel was supplied by the Ministry of the Interior, under whose direct orders the battalion operated, while the training staff were officers and non-commissioned officers from other border army units and from regular infantry units.

On completion of each training course, the training battalion is dissolved and the instructors return to their original units; the trainees are selected for posting to frontier units. As a rule, those who do not inspire complete confidence in the authorities are sent to units stationed near the Rumanian frontier, rather than the Greek or Yugoslav frontiers, in order to lessen the possibilities of escape.

The training period for border army selectees is four months. Fresh training battalions are formed for each new batch, as required. These turn out riflemen, mortarmen and machine gunners, while for auxiliary personnel, such as drivers, signalmen and anti-mine squads, the border army draws on the regular army.

Regular officers of the border army graduate from a military school in SOFIA, where they receive an eight-month course in the specialized duties that will be required of them. Candidates for this school are selected from among the enlisted men; in addition to being good soldiers, they must be trusted Communists. It is not known whether civilians are accepted.

The reserve officers selected for service in the border army receive 12 months' training at the "Christo Botev" Reserve Officers' School, after which they are posted to the units as platoon commanders. They are selected from among conscripts and must have a gymnasium (highschool) education. When, after having given satisfactory service, they become due for demobilization, they are offered the choice of becoming regular second lieutenants.

Also selected from conscripts are the prospective non-commissioned officers. After two months in the training

(Over)

4 March 1952

XI - 227

BULGARIA
(cont'd)

2

battalion, they are sent to the "HADZHIDIMITER" Non-commissioned Officers' School in SOFIA for a six-month course; they, too have the option of remaining in the border army as regulars when their period of service is up.

The morale of the border army troops at the time when source was serving (November 1950) was neither low nor high; with a better standard of living than that of the regular army, the men were fairly contented but, on the whole, indifferent to the Communist propaganda meted out to them in large doses. The propaganda consisted mainly of stressing the "threat" constantly hanging over Bulgaria of aggression by the so-called fascist countries. During his period of service, source did not see or hear of any instances of indiscipline among border army ranks.

EVAL. COMMENT: Matters correct. The cited persons, except of General PANOV, are UNCONFIRMED.