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April 21  
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BULGARIA

EXILE (1200)  
Refugees (1204)

YOUNG DOCK-WORKER ESCAPES TO FREEDOM.

SOURCE ISTANBUL: A 20-year-old Bulgarian escapee, a native of STRANDJA, district ELHOVO, who escaped to Turkey together with three friends on January 18 1956. He was made available for interrogation in March. Source worked at the BURGAS docks for over two years and then worked in the Cherno More coal mines until his escape.

DATE OF OBSERVATION: Until mid-January 1956.

EVALUATION COMMENT: This is an interesting human interest story about the life and opportunities of a young boy who was denied a political recommendation and thus barred from learning a trade. Please note the statement that 20,000 workers were dismissed in BURGAS in connection with the regime's efforts to procure more labor for the rural economy; this information, as well as the names of persons and other details mentioned are UNCONFIRMED in this office.

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"I was born in STRANDZHA in 1936 and began going to school in 1943. In June 1951 I graduated from secondary school.

"My father was a farmer with 150 dekares of land, 200 sheep, 45 goats and a number of cows and buffalos. We were five brothers, the oldest of whom is now 30 years old. Until 1950 we lived well, working in our fields and in the fields which we rented from others. In 1949 my maternal grandfather, Nedialko Yovchev NEDIALKOV, escaped to Turkey. A few months later my

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grandmother and two maternal uncles were deported to VRATSA. My father, fearing that we would also be deported, joined the newly-founded collective farm. My eldest brother had no desire to slave on the TKZS so he and his family moved to ELHOVO where he found work with the State hemp factory. When I finished secondary school I went to ELHOVO and joined my eldest brother.

"In early 1953 a friend of mine working at the BURGAS dockyards found me a job at the docks. I went to BURGAS and worked there as a fitter and mechanic until May 15 1955, on which date I was dismissed with thousands of other workers all over BURGAS who were not registered as inhabitants of that city. This mass dismissal was at the order of the Council of Ministers who had decreed that the peasants would have to return to the collective farms to boost Bulgaria's failing agricultural output. In my estimate, over 20,000 workers were forced to leave BURGAS at that time.

"Instead of returning to STRANDZHA, I went to work at the 'Cherno More' coal mines. The coal mine administration was not very particular as to where it got its workers, as long as there were people to work for the low wages they were being paid. At the mine I worked as a mechanic but the work proved to be extremely difficult. There were only three repair mechanics and we had to mend the equipment used by over 400 miners. On October 10 1955, I quit work and returned to STRANDZHA.

"On October 18, I had to present myself at the ELHOVO draft board and I was told that in November I would be drafted as a labor trooper. Later on I heard that we would not be drafted prior to May 1956.

"I had made up my mind not to serve as a trudovak for two years. The idea of escaping to Turkey was not new to me but in the past I had not found any friends willing to accompany me on the dangerous trip. On January 7, Petko Hristov PETKOV and Georgi Hristov PANDELIEV came to the village and told me of their plan to escape to Turkey. I immediately agreed to join them and in the morning of January 15 we left the village. Three days later we arrived in Turkey.

"I had two reasons for wanting to escape: I had found out that in Bulgaria I could not improve my position and that

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I was doomed to work either as a collective farm laborer or as a miner. On the other hand, I knew that refugees in the West were given every possibility of ameliorating their positions. My 60-year-old grandfather had emigrated from Turkey to France and I learned from his letters that even he, an old man, could easily find work.

"While working at BURGAS I wanted to join an auto-mechanics' course but I was turned down because I could not produce a good political report from the STRANDZHA village council. When at 'Cherno More' I wanted to enter the mining technicians' school. My petition was rejected for the same reason. I then made up my mind: if I was not good enough for my country to be allowed to learn even the simplest of skills then that country held nothing for me."

End.