

OSCAR DAVICHO

# AMONG THE PARTISANS OF MARCOS

- Short version -





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Macedonian who came out of Macedonia but  
Macedonia never came out of him

## SHORT INTRODUCTION

The book *Among the Partisans of Marcos* by the renowned Serbian-Jewish writer and journalist Oskar Davičo was initially published in Serbian-Croatian by the Belgrade-based publisher Kultura in 1947. The Culture Committee of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia awarded the book, and it was subsequently released in Zagreb that same year. In 1948, the book was translated and published in several languages, including Hungarian, Norwegian, Slovenian, Bulgarian, and Lebanese. However, it was banned in Yugoslavia later that year due to the political rift between Tito and Stalin and the alignment of the Democratic Army of Greece and the KPG with Stalin. The book was republished in Belgrade in 1969. The original edition spans 380 pages, and here is a selection of the most compelling excerpts.

As a journalist, Oskar Davičo witnessed the events in the Aegean region of Macedonia during the Greek Civil War. In 1947, the United Nations Security Council sent an Inquiry Commission, led by French General Delvois, to Aegean Macedonia. This commission included representatives and journalists from various countries, tasked with investigating the situation by interviewing both warring sides (DAG and the monarcho-fascists). Among them was Oskar Davičo, representing Yugoslavia, who published this book the same year based on his firsthand observations.

To understand the context, we need to consider the events leading up to the Greek Civil War. During World War II, in 1940, Fascist Italy, led by Mussolini, invaded Greece. The Greek regime mobilized Macedonians extensively to support Greece. Out of 300,000 Greek soldiers fighting the Italians, 80,000 were Macedonians, with 12,000 losing their lives in the

conflict. Throughout World War II, Aegean Macedonia was occupied multiple times by Bulgaria, Germany, and Italy, with parts remaining under the pro-German Greek government. The Greek people formed a broad democratic liberation front (EAM), and an anti-fascist army (ELAS) was created, with over 20,000 Macedonians joining voluntarily, hoping for a democratic government in Greece that would acknowledge Macedonian national rights. In 1942 and 1943, Macedonian national organizations (MAO and SNOF) were established and later merged into EAM and ELAS. During the brief period of EAM control from September to December 1944, the Macedonians were granted some national rights and recognized as a minority in Greece, with Macedonian language newspapers and schools being established.

At the end of World War II, Greece was politically highly polarized. On one side were the forces associated with EAM, which did not manage to join the post-war government, and on the other were the Greek nationalist forces that remained in power and demanded the disarmament of ELAS. An agreement was reached in Varkiza, leading to the disarmament of ELAS with the assurance that everyone would be able to live freely in the new Greece. However, contrary to the agreement, the Greek nationalist government initiated a new wave of terror against the Macedonians and EAM members. Newspapers began calling for the expulsion of Macedonians from Greece. For instance, the Greek republican newspaper *Eleftheros* on January 28, 1946, declared: "*Slavo-Macedonians should disappear from here. They should be immediately and compulsorily expelled to any neighboring country they prefer. Greece is and will remain too small for them...*"

Other Greek newspapers echoed similar sentiments, spreading overt hostility towards Macedonians. Even the Chief of the Greek General Staff, Stiliopoulos, publicly stated: *"Anyone who does not wish to fight against the Slavs, who threaten the existence of the Greek race, is not Greek and will be treated as an enemy!"* (Tosho Popovski: The Macedonian National Minority in Bulgaria, Greece and Albania, Macedonian Book, Skopje, 1981, cited from original sources).

In 1946, a law prohibiting the use of the Macedonian language was reinstated. A report from the Macedonian organization NOF (established in 1945 to protect Macedonians in Aegean Macedonia) described the situation in dire terms:

*"The terror against the Macedonian people in Aegean Macedonia is becoming increasingly horrifying. Armed gangs, supported by the Greek regular army and national guard, are creating an unprecedented state of terror... They show no mercy to the elderly, children, or women. Property is looted, from livestock to household goods and personal belongings. Women and girls are assaulted and then killed..."*

According to reports on the latest Greek terror against Macedonians, from 1945 to 1947 alone, over 300 Macedonian men and women were killed, nearly 300 Macedonian women and girls were raped, about 6,500 Macedonians were imprisoned, over 13,500 were beaten, and nearly 14,000 were evicted. The 1947 United Nations Inquiry Commission, which visited Aegean Macedonia, also investigated this brutal repression (details of which are elaborated further in this book).

In response to this intolerable situation, Macedonians were compelled to fight for their survival. They joined the EAM forces, who were themselves rebelling against the severe post-war Greek regime. Macedonians were now fighting not

only for their lives but also to protect the national rights they had gained during World War II in EAM-controlled territories. The primary military organization for the Macedonians remained NOF, which had about 11,000 armed fighters. Meanwhile, Western powers, particularly Great Britain, supported the monarchist-nationalist side. At one point, Great Britain considered the idea of a unified Macedonia, but this would have required the Macedonian regions of Yugoslavia and Bulgaria to join Aegean Macedonia, which was impossible due to the Yalta agreement and the refusal of Yugoslavia and Bulgaria to cede their Macedonian territories.

The Greek Civil War ended in a devastating defeat for the Macedonians and EAM forces, who were left without any foreign assistance. This defeat resulted in approximately 50,000 Macedonians being forced to leave Greece, with around 17,000 being killed. The situation remained dire, with 46 Macedonian villages erased from the map, their inhabitants either killed or expelled.

In early March 1948, the DAG leadership issued a radio broadcast directing the evacuation of all children under 15 from areas controlled by the Provisional Government. Older women were tasked with taking the children across the border into Yugoslavia and Albania, while younger women joined the partisans. The widows of fallen partisans assumed the role of surrogate mothers and escorted the children to Eastern Bloc countries. Many of these women evacuated their own children. By 1948, a significant number of children had died due to malnutrition, disease, and injury. It is estimated that around 8,000 children were evacuated from Kostur alone. Several thousand Macedonian, Greek, and Vlach children were evacuated from communist-controlled areas, now referred to as "Refugee Children." Between 28,000 and 32,000 children



were evacuated during 1948 and 1949, with only those under three remaining with their mothers. Some reports indicate that children were taken without their parents' consent. By 1950, there were 5,132 children in Romania, 4,148 in Czechoslovakia, 3,590 in Poland, 2,859 in Hungary, and 672 in Bulgaria.

General Marcos, the military commander of the DAG, fled to the USSR and did not return to Greece until 1983. His return was conditional on his renouncement of previous statements recognizing Macedonians as a separate, distinct nationality, which he agreed to. However, recordings from 1978 still capture his acknowledgment of the Macedonians as a separate nation, and Oskar Davičo's book, based on his 1947 conversations with Marcos, supports this. Despite referring to them as "Slavo-Macedonians" or "Slovenes," Marcos clearly recognized Macedonians as distinct from Greeks.

Below, we present the most notable excerpts from Davičo's book, complete with our subtitles and occasional explanations. Due to space constraints, some passages have been abbreviated, but their authenticity has been fully preserved.

Aleksandar Donski

## **An explanation of some of the names of persons mentioned in this book**

GRAUR - Representative of the Inquiry Commission from the USSR, sympathizer of DAG.

DELVOIS – French general and leader of the Commission of Inquiry.

GERMAINE – French left-wing journalist, correspondent of the left-wing newspaper "Imanite" and sympathizer of DAG.

JANULIS - Commander of DAG - Greek by origin who recognizes and respects the Macedonians.

IOANIS – Greek journalist, DAG sympathizer.

KIKICAS – Commander of DAG and deputy of Marcos.

LUND – A Norwegian who was supposed to organize the meeting of the Commission of Inquiry with General Marcos, but who made an obstruction about that meeting.

MILLER – Representative of the Inquiry Commission from Great Britain – sympathizer of the Greek government.

NURI – Representative of the Survey Commission from Albania, sympathizer of DAG.

PETROV – Representative of the Inquiry Commission from socialist Bulgaria, sympathizer of DAG.

HIL – Consul of UK in in Lerin, who among the Macedonians promoted the idea of a united and autonomous Macedonia, but under the condition that the parts of Macedonia under Yugoslavia and Bulgaria join the Aegean part.

CALDARIS – Prime Minister of the then Greek government and main opponent of DAG



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**Preparations were underway for the Commission of Inquiry to leave Thessaloniki and travel to the area controlled by the DAG, while the Greek government representative's participation was canceled. The leader of the delegation, French General Delvois, was described as follows:**

...Every vehicle in our convoy displayed large, conspicuous signs on the front and back, on the spare tires, on the roof, and on the sides, reading: "DO NOT SHOOT! DO NOT OBSTRUCT! THIS VEHICLE AND THE PEOPLE IN IT BELONG TO THE UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL COMMISSION OF INQUIRY." These cloth banners fluttered in the morning breeze alongside the dusty flags. "*We are entering a civil war zone,*" General Delvois remarked, "so it is wise to exercise caution..."

From the "Ritz" hotel, porters and hotel staff in striped aprons transported heavy crates of canned goods and bacon. The journalists seemed disoriented, running aimlessly from one group to another.

- *Why are they in such a frenzy?* – I asked Jim, who was always up to date with the news.

- *Nothing major. This morning, the Greek representative handed Lund a letter stating he would not accompany us. He believes it is beneath the United Nations delegates to waste time negotiating with someone like the brutal Marcos, whom he describes as an uneducated, simple worker, sadist, and murderer. Therefore, Kirou said, the Greek government does*

*not want to be involved in what he calls our "communist adventure." The government has ordered its representative to withdraw from the Subcommittee. Additionally, Kirou took the opportunity to remind the Commission that the Greek government disclaims responsibility for any incidents or accidents that might occur to the Subcommittee or its members while in the presence of Marcos's bandits.*

Ioannis shrugged and added:

*- There's talk that we might not even leave. Initially, it was reported that Marcos had been killed, and now Roby tells me there are rumors that General Delvois, the chairman of this Subcommittee tasked with visiting the Democratic Army's Supreme Headquarters, has been kidnapped.*

At that moment, Lund emerged from the elevator, a tall figure with a small grayish-pink head, followed by Delvois in a general's uniform, tall yellow boots, and a civilian checkered coat resembling spilled wine on a tablecloth. At 65, Delvois was in good health, with a ruddy complexion, clean-shaven face, thin lips, well-preserved teeth, and thick, neatly combed hair. Despite his robust appearance, he seemed somewhat worn and aged. During the war, he had served as Belgium's military attaché in Vichy France but later reappeared at banquets after the liberation, representing a government that had promised to punish collaborators. He was soon sent to represent his country at the United Nations.

*- Get in the cars!* - Lund commanded authoritatively. But Delvois raised his hand:

*- Gentlemen, your attention please..*

*- We heard you were kidnapped,* - Walter remarked, but Delvois addressed translator Zafiridis and instructed:

*- Translate everything I am about to say... Dear journalists, as the chairman, I request your absolute obedience*

*and discipline during this trip... First and foremost, discipline. Additionally, I want to publicly state here that I have no intention of shaking hands with Marcos. They may call him "General," but it seems more like a nickname than an actual military rank, doesn't it? In any case, the Greek government regards him as a common bandit. As the president of the Commission, representing my country and as a general, it is only logical that I cannot be expected to treat someone like Marcos as my equal. He is not a general in my eyes, and I will not extend my hand to him... Furthermore, I declare that the Subcommittee I lead will not accept any invitations for meals from Marcos. Such an acceptance could be interpreted as interference in Greece's internal affairs...*

***The departure to the combat zone and the stay in the town of K... (presumably Kozani, as the original does not specify) under the rule of monarcho-fascists. This includes the description of the hearing involving a witness presented by the Greek government, an elderly woman named Evangelia Vassiliou. She had three sons: one was killed outside her home, another was conscripted as a gendarme in Crete, and the third joined the DAG partisans. The Greek government brought her in to testify that her murdered son was allegedly killed by the partisans. She had been threatened beforehand that if she did not comply, her son in Crete would face consequences. Despite her initial hesitation, during the hearing, the elderly woman revealed that her son was not killed by the partisans but by the gendarmes (monarcho-fascists).***

After several delays, we finally set off. Robby, Pavlos, his friend Chirishki, Nuri, and I were placed in an old green Ford from 1930. We hoped to meet General Marcos by the afternoon or, at the latest, by the following day.

As we left the city, the asphalt road abruptly ended. Soon, the concrete base gave way to a rough surface of cobblestones and potholes. Our objective was to reach the free territory by evening.

The town of K... greeted us with a crowd of children, high school students, scouts, and military personnel. The town was surrounded by wire fences and bunkers with machine guns at the approaches. In the square in front of the municipal building, brass band music played under a flag on a mast. The children waved blue paper flags at us, while the adults remained sullen and unwelcoming. None of them greeted us or offered a smile.

K... looked much like other Macedonian towns, with no notable differences. After lunch, we proceeded to the emporium adjacent to the restaurant, where we were to hear testimony from two witnesses proposed by the Greek government: an elderly woman and a wounded man. However, the wounded man did not appear. The elderly witness, Evangelia Vasiliu, dressed in black with a black scarf, entered abruptly as if pushed, standing before us visibly frightened. She was barefoot, with deep, dirty wrinkles and dry, tearful eyes. It wasn't until the third question that she began to quietly recount details about her children.

*- The oldest was a telephone operator, in 1943 he left for the forest, and when the Germans were driven out, he returned...*

We did not know why the Greek government chose her as a witness. It was not clear to us. Ioannis whispered to me:

- *She had three sons. One was killed, the second is in the gendarmerie, and the third fled to the partisans.*

- *Who killed him and when?*

- *The gendarmes at the beginning of October last year. Then sixty people from this place were killed. All were former fighters of ELAS.*

- *Then why did they bring her to testify in favor of the Greek government?*

- *I do not know either. Maybe she was blackmailed? Or they threatened her. Who knows what he will say...*

- *My second son - continued the old woman - in 1945 he was called to the army in Crete, where he is still located because he is assigned to the gendarmerie.*

- *And where is your third son? – asked Halikos (representative of the Greek government, editor's note).*

The old woman turned helplessly around:

- *I don't know, sir. God bless him. All my children were beautiful and good.*

- *And when did he leave? Think well. You swore to tell the truth.*

- *I don't know.*

- *It says here that he left home in September... Where did he go?*

The old woman barely audibly answered:

- *Do not kill my living sons. Let me mourn only the dead.*

Then the Soviet delegate Graur raised his hand:

- *How many of her sons have been killed? Why doesn't anyone explain anything to us? You can't work like that... They bring us a woman, and we don't know anything.*

A discussion began which was interrupted by the well-informed Halikos:



*- Only her eldest son was killed. The second is in Crete in the service of the king, and the third, according to reliable information, ran away to the bandits of Marcos and that even before the murder of Kostas, his eldest brother... It is clear that the old woman is afraid that something will happen to him an accident. And you can see for yourself that she is too scared.*

During that time, Evangelia Vasiliou, crouched on the chair, with her head on her knees, repeated silently and helplessly:

*- Don't kill my children. I will tell you anything you want.*

*- Who beat your son and when?* - Graur asked her. She turned and looked at the door.

*- They came at night, there were many of them. They called him out and slaughtered him right after he left the house.*

*- Who were those people? Did they have uniforms?*

*- It was night son, who knows. I know they weren't ours.*

*- What does "our" mean?* - Halikos asked.

*- Our, local people...* - she muttered.

A tense atmosphere arose in the emporium. The old woman suddenly fell silent, and Halikos kindly addressed the delegates:

*- By "our" she means the local armed people, that is. the local police, gendarmerie and army. She wants to say that the authorities did not kill her son, and thus conclusively denies everything that "Rizospastis" once published - that allegedly "a massacre was carried out against democratic residents in early October 1946". The woman clearly said that it was not done by "ours", ie. neither our gendarmes nor our civilians (...).*

Halikos turned directly to Evangelia:

*- Who killed your son?... Don't be afraid, tell us freely.*

The old woman struggled within herself. This time he was silent for a long time, and the Greek leaned forward, uttering comforting words in the menacing voice of a police investigator:

*- Speak! You are in front of an International Commission of the Security Council. This is neither a court nor the police. No one will arrest you. Feel free to say who killed him.*

*- And my son? – she asked worriedly.*

*- Leave him now. I am asking you about the eldest son Kostas. You said that he has not been involved in politics since he came back from the forest and that he has calmed down. He distanced himself from his former friends and became an honest man, isn't that right? Is that why the communist members of ELAS killed him? Because he has distanced himself from them. –* leaned Halikos, his eyes shining.

*- He was unlucky... - she muttered.*

*- Mr. President - Halikos turned to the delegates - This woman is scared. She is afraid to tell the truth, If we could guarantee the life of her younger son, who recklessly fled to the bandits, I am sure she would tell us the names of the killers, because she knows them. Is that right?*

The old woman did not answer anything.

Then the Soviet representative spoke:

*- Who has your son been hanging out with lately?*

*- Before that happened to him, he was with his friends.*

*They sent him home and he invited them in and they did.*

Evangelia started to cry.

*- Did you know them?*

*- How did I not know them? They killed them too. And after the war they returned together with Kostas from the forest.*

- *And did any people come to you these days... yesterday or the day before?*

- *I'm not allowed to talk about that... That's what they told me...*

- *Do you know them?*

- *I don't know... - she answered in a quiet voice.*

- *Are they here from the city?*

- *Yes.*

Everyone looked at her, but her eyes remained blank.

- *And how were they dressed? Like civilians?*

- *No.* - replied the old woman, and then she shuddered and bowed her head.

- *Did the gendarmes visit you?*

The question surprised her. Only now did Evangelia realize the danger her son was in, the one in Crete.

- *Sir, my son is with them and therefore I cannot say anything.*

- *Your son who is in Crete?*

- *Yes.* – she replied inaudibly - *Maybe I said something I shouldn't...*

- *Can you tell us what they told you? Did they mention your son in Crete?*

- *Yes.*

- *They must have told you that you must not say who killed Kostas because your son will suffer in Crete.*

Evangelia sat down in the chair saying weakly:

- *So you know...*

She suddenly became frightened by the questioning of the Soviet representative, who knew everything and was playing with her son's life:

- *Maybe I said something that I shouldn't... You are learned people... It is a sin to play with children's lives and a mother's heart.*

- *Thank you, mother. Forgive me for being cruel, but you also would not allow the memory of your son to be spat upon by those who killed him. They want to portray him as a traitor and draw a conclusion from that...*

- *What conclusion?* – asked the old woman in surprise.

- *That your son was killed by the partisans, his friends.*

- *Who says that?* - the old woman straightened up, clearly angered this time. - *That's not true! He was killed by the gendarmes! They're lying through their teeth. They never liked him, even before the war... But his friends always cared for Kostas. One of his murderers is standing right here at the door. My son was no traitor, and no one should say otherwise! He was a proud man who loved his own people. My sons are pure and proud..."—she continued in a whisper—"They will kill my middle son, the one stationed in Crete, across the sea. Sons return from the forest, but the sea swallows them. How can I let them insult his brother? He loved him dearly, even though he is now a gendarme across the sea... As a mother, I love only my two surviving sons, and I will do anything for them. Therefore, to protect them, I will not reveal who killed my son, for the walls are listening, and the killer is at the door.*

- *I propose that this witness be disregarded,* - suggested the representative from Syria. - *During her testimony, she provided conflicting statements.*

- *I believe,* - said the Soviet representative Graur, - *that the president should thank the brave mother who stands here alone in mourning. It is not easy to always tell the truth, and we must show understanding towards the mothers still grieving. Yet, she spoke the truth because she could bear the insult to a*

*deceased son better than the loss of a living one. I ask the president to express gratitude to Evangelia Vasiliou for her courage and dignity, and to have this acknowledgment recorded in the minutes of the meeting.*

*- As for the thanks, I don't think anyone will object. Thank you. You may go.* - said President General Delvois, unaware that he was extending his gratitude to all mothers of freedom fighters.

### ***Arrival in Shatista (Sachishta), departure and stay in the liberated territory***

Before evening, we reached Shatista, a small mountain town centered around a monastery where the bells never ceased ringing. Once again, the children waved their flags as three police officers, from the prefecture's window, alternately shouted:

*- Death to the Bulgarians! Go away Bulgarians! Death to the bandits! (...).*

Rojan, who was coordinating with the journalists, gathered us and said:

*- The local general of the Greek division called Lund and informed him, and I quote: I am starting an offensive tomorrow. You cannot go to Marcos; you should not embark on such an adventure. For your safety, I advise you to abandon your journey to certain death. After this, Lund convened a meeting where it was firmly decided that we would proceed despite their warnings. We leave tomorrow at 07:00.*

*(...)*

The next morning, the gymnasium was a hive of chaotic activity typical of our departures. People darted in all

directions, colliding with one another, turning back, changing paths, stopping, and starting again. Lund, confident and composed, issued orders with his calm, authoritative voice:

- *Get into the vehicles!*

The noise gradually faded and then ceased altogether. Lund, along with General Delvois, entered the first vehicle.

We navigated poor roads, and at one bend, the driver had to stop due to a car breakdown. To the left of the road, among a pile of stones, several soldiers huddled by a burning fire, wrapped in blankets for warmth. They appeared disheveled and dirty, their crumpled English uniforms making them look more like scavengers than soldiers ready for a "decisive offensive." The driver repaired the issue and accelerated to catch up with the column, which had moved at least four kilometers ahead.

The column halted at an intersection. Lund stepped out and approached two villagers herding sheep by the roadside.- *Are there partisans nearby?*

- *They are everywhere.* - answered the younger villager - They have been in Germany for three days, here on the right.

- *What are the partisans like? Are they good?* - asked Nuri.

- *War is not good for anyone, sir.*

- *Are they attacking the king's army?*

- *Yes, the army is afraid of them, and the partisans are not afraid even at night.* - answered the villager.

- *Let's all get in the vehicles.* – ordered Lund, after which we set off in the direction of Vogatsikon.

No one greeted us upon arrival. Soldiers assembled near the mast to raise the flag, numbering about a hundred. Local residents were also required to attend this ceremony twice daily. We remained in the vehicles. Once the ceremony was

over, the soldiers gathered around us while the officers went off to a meeting. One of the gendarmes, with fiery rhetoric translated for us by a blonde translator, boasted about his "heroic deeds" against the "Slavic-Partisan bandits."

Afterward, I asked the blonde translator how long he had been in the army, and he replied:

- *Unfortunately, it's already the second week... And where are you from? From France?*

- *No, I'm Yugoslav.* - I told him.

His face lit up, after which he quietly said to me:

- *What luck! I was an ELAS officer, my name is Apostolos. Otherwise, I am a mathematics teacher. Tonight or tomorrow at the latest, I will transfer you to our people.*

I realized in an instant that he was not a provocateur. They simply saw Tito's man in every Yugoslav and trusted him unreservedly. I immediately asked him about the partisans, and he quietly said:

- *There are many of them. All the hills you see around us are in free territory. You can go along the road for another twenty kilometers, then it is their territory. I'm leaving for them soon.*

- *And the offensive?* – I asked him.

- *What offensive?* - he was surprised - *There is only a concentration of troops in western Macedonia and Thessaly, but there is no major action.*

- *And the soldiers on the roads?*

- *They are set up because of you. Guerrillas take to the roads and destroy trucks and military vehicles. Last night we received a call from Shatista to place an army by the roads during the day so that you get the impression that there are no partisans here. And in fact these soldiers are shaking with fear.*

After four hours we set off again.

(...)

As we rounded the bend, a valley came into view with a village nestled at the base of the hill. Ioannis called out:

- *Look at the houses... Those are ours.*

At the edge of the village, we spotted a dozen buildings. Their fighters, equipped with an assortment of weapons and attire, stood ready. A striking partisan girl with a slender waist, dressed in an English military uniform and holding an English typewriter, was the first to approach me. I showed her my journalist ID, and when she saw that I was Yugoslav, a look of joy spread across her face.

- *Your friend is already in the village. Everyone kisses him, but if we talk all the time in our own way, the reactionaries in your entourage will think that we also came from Yugoslavia, and we are local, Aegeans.*

- *Where are you from?* – I asked her.

- *From Nestrom, have you heard? We gave three hundred partisans to ELAS, and now one hundred and twenty to Marcos, but we still haven't been released.*

Vasvos (a Greek who knew some Bulgarian) approached her panting:

- *Do you speak Serbian?*

- *Not Serbian, but we understand each other.* - she kindly answered him - *We are Slavo-Macedonians, and are you Bulgarian?*

- *Ohi.* - replied Vasvos offended and showed his identification.

If I could, I would embrace the hills and hold them close to my heart. It was only now that I truly realized I was in Aegean Macedonia, the very place whose suffering I had written about. For two years, its people had been persecuted,



arrested, tried, beaten, and killed. Now, they were fighting, as there was no other choice for them.

I observed the dozen or so fighters in front of me—some in boots, others in rubber boots, and some in English-style footwear or city shoes. Their rifles varied widely, from small carabiners and German Mausers to English and American models.

Amudara, a humble village perched on a small plateau, was adorned with its residents in their finest holiday attire. The villagers—children, young men, young women, the elderly, and their rugged spouses—carried cardboard signs demanding independence, democracy, the EAM government, and amnesty. The men shouted, "We do not want a second occupation! Let the English go!" while the women called for "amnesty and an EAM government!"

Greek journalists diligently captured the scene. Germain was holding a small child, and the child's grandmother, wiping her tears, spoke to me in Macedonian:

*- I've heard about Skopje; it was never so lively there...*

She dried her eyes, and her husband, the village baker, trying to hold back his own tears, said seriously:

*- Don't cry; it's shameful. What will Tito's people think of us? Who cries on holidays?*

I shared stories about Skopje, the most vibrant city in Yugoslavia, and he added:

*- At night, the streets were filled with songs and laughter... That's how it should be. The Macedonian state was first established there.*

A large crowd gathered around Ioannis, who was adapting to freedom and delighting the locals with his knowledgeable explanations.

Robbie asked a series of questions:

*- How long have you been free? How long do you think this will last? Are you being terrorized? Are the partisans a problem? Are you experiencing any robberies?*

*- Who would they rob? - several locals responded in surprise. - Are the partisans going to rob us? It's like robbing yourself—stealing from one pocket to put into another.*

Ioannis added:

*- This village has been free for six months. This indicates that the Democratic Army has the strength to fend off any enemy breakthrough. The Royal General Staff would not tolerate a free territory if they could eliminate it. Clearly, they cannot.*

Walter, a Western journalist, gave a military salute to Ioannis and said:

*- Thanks, but I respect only the facts.*

Ioannis responded with irony:

*- I'll take that statement only if it's a critique of the articles you've recently published.*

*- Do you think I'm spreading propaganda?*

*- Worse than propaganda. A real massacre of the truth.*

*- What do you mean?*

*- You wrote that Yugoslavia, for "understandable reasons," exaggerates the situation in Aegean Macedonia. According to you, these "understandable reasons" represent a "completely unproven claim of Yugoslavia to the Vardar valley, including Thessaloniki." Is that correct?*

*- But let me...*

*- First, let me finish quoting you. You claimed to have traveled all over Aegean Macedonia and found no compact groups of Slavs. You also said that stories about the persecution of Slavs are mere fabrications. Is that right? You wrote that "divine persecutions and terror were a figment of*

*Yugoslav annexationists' imaginations." This article of yours is dated March 2, and you arrived in Thessaloniki on March 1 from Athens. You were in Thessaloniki on March 2, so how did you manage to visit all of Aegean Macedonia in just one incomplete day? You can see that Amudara is entirely inhabited by Slavs. They and their friends from Yugoslavia speak their own language, young and old alike. There are 600 people here, and from here to Kostur and Lerin, all the villages are Slavic. Compact Slavic villages extend as far as Thessaloniki. If you want, I'm available for a professional tour of Aegean Macedonia once this is over. Do you agree?*

*- I appreciate that you read my articles so thoroughly and critically. But I really must go to Lund now to see what's new.*

At that moment, Lund raised his hand.

*- Do you see? We'll need to continue this extremely interesting and instructive conversation another time, - Walter said.*

Lund added:

*- We need to walk for three hours to reach the next village. We'll rest there briefly before heading to our meeting with General Marcos.*

*- Let me introduce you to a wonderful friend from the UK at EAM. This is the finest part of the Macedonian people. They hold you in great esteem. They are proud and determined. Just as during the ELAS war, the Slavs contributed their best to the Democratic Army. I saw the remnants of burned houses that the royal gendarmes torched eight months ago. Did you know they have their own newspaper on a mimeograph? They write in Macedonian and have their own school where everyone is learning to read. It's a pity we can't stay longer. Tomorrow, a theater partisan group will visit. This is truly free territory, despite what some are saying about an offensive...*

(...)

Nuri was waiting for me outside the village, beaming with joy.

*- This is the second liberated village, which means that the twenty kilometers between the two villages represent a 40-kilometer radius of free territory.*

Asproklisa, like the entire Kostur region, is also inhabited by Slavo-Macedonians. Stamos, the long-faced EAM secretary, stood to the side, quietly conversing with several tall, well-built boys from the village. One of them called over two girls in clean white dresses and red scarves. They approached him, speaking in their high-pitched voices. Some members of the delegation immediately took seats on three-legged stools in the small shop, where they eagerly devoured sausages, sour milk, honey, dried fish, and eggs—everything the village grocer had to offer.

Outside, Stamos and the board members were planning where everyone should be placed, conversing in Macedonian. The house where we stayed was on the first floor. The ground floor was occupied by a kitchen and dining room, reserved for special occasions. Upstairs were four bedrooms, one of which, as in every house in Aegean Macedonia, was designated for guests. The hostess, a large, strong, and plump woman in a pristine white dress, worked diligently despite being in her last month of pregnancy.

Stamos brought in his two companions, who sat on low three-legged stools. Greek anise brandy and three glasses appeared from somewhere. The hostess poured the brandy for us but declined to drink herself.

Six months prior, the gendarmes had taken her husband and twenty others from Asproklisa. It was their final act of violence, as the village was liberated two days later. The

school had reopened, and while the young girl knew all the letters, the housewife was just beginning to learn them.

Our fellow Macedonians eventually joined us for dinner, and after Nuri's invitation, they settled down to eat with us. As soon as they left, we fell asleep.

### ***From Asproklis to Castanofito and Mogila***

Preparations for departure were underway in the square. A group of journalists, eager to report first on General Marcos and confirm his existence, headed to the village of Castanofito, our designated meeting point. We hurried through the three-hour march, each of us keen to be the first to speak with the general. Castanofito soon appeared across the riverbank, a dense village with white houses peeking out from behind lush oaks. We passed a group of female partisans, who, under their sergeant's command, greeted us with their rifles held high. Since the uprising in 1943, Castanofito had been burned several times. People from surrounding villages were also gathered in the square. The men sang while leaning on their long shepherd's staffs, most dressed in worn cotton pants and threadbare short coats. At the bottom of the courtyard stood a building made of rough stone, with a Greek flag fluttering from the wooden balcony. A partisan girl with a Schmeisser watched us curiously from the top of the wooden stairs, then stepped aside to let us in. Inside, a table covered with a rug and low wooden chairs awaited us. Due to a shortage of chairs, some of us sat on the floor. A young partisan with green eyes and fair skin placed two bottles of water and a glass on the table.

- *What's your name?* – asked Mrs. Sokris, a journalist from Great Britain.

- *Atanas Klimas* – the courier replied loudly.

- Are you Greek or from here?

- I'm Slavo-Macedonian, from Kostursko.

- Since when have you been a bandit? Did they take you seriously?

Atanas glared at the journalist.

- Me? They killed my brother, and that's why I joined.

- Who killed your brother?

- We know who the murderers are... The King and Churchill... Who else?

The English and American journalists laughed awkwardly. Walter asked,

- Did the King personally kill your brother? And did Churchill assist him?

- Yes, the King and his agents. The one who issues the orders is most responsible – Atanas replied calmly.

- How old are you?

- Fifteen – the courier said proudly.

- Have you been in combat?

- Yes, eight times.

- Have you killed anyone? – Mrs. Sokris inquired.

- He fights against murderers – Germain interjected.

At that moment, a deep, authoritative voice interrupted. Everyone turned to see a thin Democratic Army officer at the door.

- He's fifteen, but we also have younger fighters. They're more suited to wooden rifles than Schmeissers. But who can play when there's blood everywhere? – he said, patting Atanas on the head. He continued, - The gendarmes killed his brother in the summer of 1945. He fought against the Germans, but it was a crime for the government.

- Are you Marcos? – asked Robbie.

- No, I'm Georgios Ianooulis, commander of the Gramos Democratic Army detachment. General Marcos hasn't arrived yet, but he'll be here any moment if you're ready, gentlemen delegates. He always arrives on time.

- So you're Ianooulis? Are you aware that in Thessaloniki, witnesses of the Greek government mentioned you? Your head is being targeted – Robbie asked.

- Do you think the English are the same as the German fascists? Didn't the English fight for freedom too? – Walter asked.

- They didn't fight for our freedom, but I didn't mention the English as you do. I only have General Wickham in mind, along with a few others. But we need to distinguish them from the English people, who are mostly democratically inclined. You want to skillfully navigate your politics, and I would like to show you what I know well, such as the terror against the Slavic minority.

- Let's talk about autonomism. I'm in agreement on that front.

- I'm not sure what you're agreeing with, but as a Greek, I am deeply ashamed to speak of the terror inflicted upon the Slavs in Aegean Macedonia, which is why I took up arms to fight against that horror. What those courageous individuals endured after Varkiza surpasses even the atrocities committed by the Germans. In the four villages you passed through last night and this morning, 22 men and 8 women were killed over the past year. There were 73 arrests and beatings, and 29 homes were set ablaze. There are currently 252 men and 72 women detained on the islands. Those are just numbers to you, sir, but I knew every person counted in those figures. I knew the sisters Anna and Elena—brave, blonde girls yearning for freedom. Both were brutally slaughtered. I can't help but

*picture their faces as Collaros' men plunged knives into their innocent necks. Anna must have looked at them with meekness, sadness, and perhaps even bewilderment. She always seemed to be in a state of wonder. But Elena, who was energetic and cheerful, must have shouted, "Murderers!" She likely fought fiercely to defend herself. Each of these eight women and 22 men is vivid in my memory. I can recount how they fought, their roles, and their readiness to sacrifice themselves for the freedom that should belong to all of us.*

*- That's truly moving, - responded Walter. - Tell me, what is your stance on EAM? As long as you're not a communist, you're a member of EAM, and that's essentially the same thing. The Democratic Army's slogans are essentially EAM slogans. Is there an agreement between them?*

*Ianoulis looked at him with disdain:*

*- We are not members of EAM; we are fighters of the Democratic Army, and we impose no political restrictions on those who join us in our struggle. However, it's true that our slogans resemble EAM's.*

*Walter pressed further:*

*- I was asking about Macedonia. Specifically, I'm interested in the status of autonomy in Macedonia. Is the NOF organization, which is frequently mentioned at the Inquiry Commission meetings, really that influential?*

*- The Slavo-Macedonians have earned immense respect through their sacrifices in our struggles. They've shed so much blood that they have a right to demand equality. We Greeks, who fought alongside them and admired their bravery, now have a duty to acknowledge that right. We look forward to a democratic Greece where everyone who wants to join us in freedom after enduring seven years of successive occupations—Italian, German, and English—will find their*



*place. But that doesn't equate to autonomism. Few autonomists remain in our country, and they compromised during the first occupation. They discredited themselves in the eyes of the people, not the government. It's curious that the English support autonomism, but it's been a fixed idea of British agents since 1943.*

*(...)*

After lunch, I went with Germaine, Nuri, and Ioannis to the village of Mogila, three kilometers from Ianoulis' headquarters. Our host was a Macedonian, unshaven and slanted-eyed, who greeted us in socks on the steps of his house. Many children gathered around him. He delivered a speech in Church Slavonic, the language of our forefathers, Cyril and Methodius. Afterward, Petar invited us into his room. He had worked in Tierra del Fuego, Australia, Germany, Abyssinia, India, and China before returning here. After sharing a glass of Greek aniseed brandy, we returned to headquarters with Petar to see his "commander-in-chief."

*- Although I'm a civilian, I only recognize him.*

A dance was taking place in the field in front of the church. Miller (US representative) commented:

*- The people dancing here won't last long. As a human being, it saddens me that they will die too soon, but such is the reality. One must be astute and understand the broader interests of humanity.*

To this, Peter (who knew English) responded:

*- Colonel, we are mountain people and proud people, and this is not our first uprising. Have you heard of Ilinden? Back then, we rose up against the Sultan, who was a formidable force, and we stood alone. But we rose and struck. And now? We are not alone. We have allies worldwide,*

*including in America—people who, like us, are fighting for freedom.*

***Conversations with DAG fighters Labrinos, Gedjos and Panayiotis, who came to talk to members of the Commission of Inquiry while awaiting the appearance of General Marcos***

*(...)*

Lambrinos turned to Germain and said:

*- Seventy percent of the fighters of the Democratic Army are young people... I will tell you about the Lerin District, where there are 106 villages. There, immediately after Varkiza, 3,500 people belonging to ELAS were arrested. Four of our comrades were killed those days, 580 were sent to the islands... On March 29, 1945, at noon, Comrade Papaioanis was returning home. I met him in the alley and continued with him.. We parted at the corner. I hadn't gone twenty steps when I remembered that I had forgotten to tell him something about the afternoon committee meeting. I saw him walking down the alley under the chestnut trees and waving his arms. Just as I wanted to call him, a thin blond boy approached him, pulled out a revolver and shot him twice as he passed by. I recognized the killer. It was Hitos Paraskevi from Vienna. Papaioannis fell, and I ran after the boy, but three gendarmes caught me and held me: by God, they identified me, they asked me who I was, where I was from... In the meantime, the killer Paraskevi disappeared. That's how it was with us. Sarandoulou Papadopoulou, a pioneer, a 13-year-old girl, was arrested in May 1945. The gendarmes first beat her, and then tortured her as they tortured the communists: with batons, boxers, ox sinews, spikes under the nails. At last Lieutenant Delianis, enraged that she would not tell where her parents*

were, broke her fragile arm across his hairy bare knee.. Then he stomped on her, but little Sarandula, a kind black girl, would not tell where her parents were, who were suspected of the murder of a traitor. They threw her in prison on a concrete floor and after a week the girl died... Despina and Anicis Kevreki were tortured with electricity to hand over the illegal printing press. But they did not betray her and were killed. Comrade Viron Hadji was killed in Xeniomers. Comrade Hristina Kjatipi from the village of Alino was raped and hanged upside down with a bayonet stuck to the handle in her desecrated girlhood. We took her down dead from the wild pear as swarms of black flies came out of her body. Ten eponite women from Agios Panteleimon were raped and beaten and then tied with belts in the lathe... Despotos, who was a young worker in the lathe, was sawed alive lengthwise, while his pregnant wife was sawed from head to belly into three pieces .

- That's enough! - Nuri exclaimed, his voice heavy with emotion - I can't listen to these horrifying tales any longer. My stomach churns at your stories. All I hear is how you are beaten and killed. I've had enough of the bloodshed, which I feel as if it were my own. It seems that the world has moved past the times when the youth were only expected to endure silently on the path to freedom. Why not strike back? Hit them so hard that you shatter their teeth, and eradicate their habit of seizing nations' freedom through violent death forever...

To this, Lambrinos responded:

- If we hadn't fought back, we wouldn't be here in half-liberated Greece. At first, we endured in silence, suffering while they slaughtered and burned... But when our forces, pushed to their limits, finally counterattacked, it was an unprecedented outburst of fury. In just 20 days, we eliminated all the gangs in the mountains, and within two weeks, we

*disarmed 780 fascists across 50 villages in the Lerin district. We freed the territory in one swift movement. The fascists were few, and now the people can breathe freely once more. Following that, the Democratic Army began to take shape.*

*- I have a question for you, - Germaine said thoughtfully - You've built an army and established a free territory, but in the occupied regions, your comrades who support freedom are still being persecuted. How do you protect them? Specifically, what are the future prospects for the Democratic Army? Do you encourage your comrades in the occupied areas to form units and fight on their own soil, or do you invite them to join you?*

*- Our army was formed as a defense against terror... As that terror has grown, so has our people's army. The comrades who stay and work in the occupied territories don't know much about our army, but when we visit them, we advise that if they find themselves in danger, they should seek refuge with Marcos.*

### **15-th of March. Mogila – Castanofito – Mogila**

Peter woke us with coffee and pre-war cigarettes from his "reserves for dark days." All the way to Castanofito, we encountered large groups from more distant villages, carrying banners and singing:

*In the fight, in the fight, in the fight,  
Macedonian people, people...*

The Heliodendron boys and girls marched almost like soldiers and sang with enthusiasm. Their village in the plain was surrounded by wire, but despite the chief's threats to burn them, they sneaked out at night and now arrived before Castanofito to present a memorandum to the Subcommission detailing everything that had been done to them. They were all

resolute about staying in the army, proud to be the first partisans from their village.

- *I hope we won't be late, - one of the boys said to me.*

- *No, don't worry.*

- *How can we not worry? If the committee leaves, the world won't learn about what we've written. The thefts they commit with URNA's help. They took our money and gave us nothing because we refused to vote last year. And why should we vote? If they deny me the right to vote, I won't vote at all. That's my right... And the mention of UNRA is just the start of all we've documented. Then come all the injustices listed in order. First, they sent twenty to the islands, and then eight to prison. Before that, they killed Atanas Philippopolis, the finest young man in our village, who was unmatched across Greece. Now we'll present everything to the commission, and if there is no result, the entire Heliodendron and the whole plain will follow us into the mountains like a real army.*

Further along, we met a group from Nestrom, a large, still-unliberated village on the route. One girl kept running ahead, urging them to hurry.

- *Why are you making them hurry? Are you being chased by tanks?* – Germaine asked.

- *We were told that the committee might leave, and they need to hear us no matter what.*

I wondered where they got that information. Who told them? The commission was waiting for General Marcos, who might have already arrived. Germaine asked her:

- *Why should Nestrom submit their memorandum?*

- *Haven't you heard of Nestrom?* - she asked in surprise, then continued - *Of the 800 houses the village once had, only 45 are intact. We were burned by seven enemy armies. We provided ELAS with 350 fighters, and had the same number in*

reserve. One hundred and twenty of our best Eponites are in the Democratic Army, even though we are still not liberated. It's unfortunate that we are at a crossroads, or we would have been among the first to be freed as we are...

- And what about you? – asked Germaine.

- We are the best village in all of Greece. Have you heard of Mahi Andromachi?

- You mean the girl who joined the Army with three rifles?

- Yes, she is my sister. We are all like her, and today we'll have the chance to prove ourselves.

### ***The misinformation about Marcos. Battle reports received by DAG***

Ianoulis was inside the headquarters building, and after spotting Germaine, he guided us to the room upstairs.

- Do you know – Germaine asked Ianoulis – that people are saying the Commission is getting ready to flee? Where is this coming from now?

Ianoulis shrugged and spread his arms:

- I heard, damn it. But even her arrival here is a win. However, Marcos is far off. Last night, I traveled for two hours and talked by phone with the Headquarters for Macedonia. My contacts advised me to hold the Commission here. Kikitsas, Marcos' deputy, has already moved on. The Commission's arrival was unexpected. I only received a call from Germe yesterday afternoon about the Commission coming to meet General Marcos. We didn't anticipate that...

- Is General Marcos far away?

- I suggested we move at least five hours southeast, but they disagreed. And I mustn't tell them that Marcos is in Attica,

*700 kilometers away, and if they wait just two more days, they'll only meet Kikitsas.*

Through the narrow streets of Castanofito, I descended with Achilles Papaefthymios to the village of Kato Perivoli, which has around fifty houses. Papaefthymios was an energetic brigade commander.

We entered a tidy house upstairs. A pale greenish-yellow woman with protruding bones and a dry face sat cross-legged by the fireplace. She didn't even move when we entered.

- *That's my mother* – Papaefthymios explained to me in the rudimentary Serbian he learned in the Banjica camp, where he was sent by the Germans in the summer of 1944 after being captured and seriously wounded that spring. By December, he was back in Greece – *She was then taken to a camp in Thessaloniki, where she contracted intestinal tuberculosis and since then she barely eats.*

There were also two female partisans in the room, eating bread and quietly discussing while cleaning their weapons.

Papaefthymios retrieved a diary of military operations from a locked brown briefcase and began translating into Serbian the battles he commanded in 1946. I have recorded only a few that seemed most characteristic of the still young but experienced Democratic Army's tactics.

The Battle of Catilje lasted six hours. There was a strong garrison in that village. At the end of last year, the partisans surrounded Catilje and suddenly opened fire with all their weapons. The gendarmes and the army attempted to break through the encirclement but failed to escape. About 80 fascists were killed and all their weapons were captured.

In the battle near Pirsoena, the brigade managed to capture the commander of the right-wing Kurkulina gang and

eliminate almost his entire group. The next day, the fascists sent an entire regiment to punish the partisans, but Papaefthymios ambushed them with his 50 fighters, causing the royal army to flee. Over 200 fascists were killed in those two days, and 6 machine guns, 2 mortars, and a large number of rifles were seized. Then he flipped a few pages and said to me:

*- The Battle of Skolohari began with an assault. According to the plan, I dropped a bomb into the bunker first. The gendarmes and the army managed to escape the village and take a position on the slope. The battle lasted eight hours, and in the end, we eliminated them all. Most of them had participated in the rape of girls in Ftelia; they were major criminals. We had two dead... My brigade was meant to avenge the rapists of Ftelia. After a month, in mid-January 1947, we ambushed a road between Nestoria and Kostur and eliminated another 11 fascists. They also participated in the rapes. At Hiljandetra, we attacked the gendarmes and defeated three of them, but during the battle, they received reinforcements with heavy weapons. We retreated, but that night we attacked again and killed many of them. The dead smelled of brandy. At Konsko ten days ago, we attacked a company of the Royal Army, eliminating 29, capturing 11, and wounding 14. Yesterday, near Nestrom, we captured a truck with ten fascists, each responsible for at least 20 murders.*

*- And do you also attack cities?*

*- Winning them isn't difficult, but holding them is. We held Naos and Deskat for 30 hours and brought out a lot of textiles and salt from there.*

*- And weapons?*

*- That's our priority. There wasn't a battle where we didn't secure at least a few rifles. But in the locations I*



*mentioned, we also captured a machine gun, a mortar, and even two small cannons.*

Then Mahi entered the room with her sister, whom I barely recognized. She was wearing a uniform.

*- I hope she'll be as good as you. – joked Papaefthymios.*

*- I'm sure I'll be good; there's someone to look up to. – responded the young partisan.*

### ***Testimonies about the murders and the rapes in Ftelia***

The sun obliquely illuminated the low, narrow and bare room with no furniture and only windows. Two female partisans from Ftelia and three girls from the same village were dressed in dark dresses and simple sweaters. They spoke in front of the journalists who filled the room.

Dimitria Glavina spoke, a bold and brave girl with clear and clean cheeks, but with a subdued look.

*- We are all from Ftelia. You must have heard of our pain. The gendarmes after Varkiza often came to our village and always at night. And the dogs always barked terribly, and the next day one of our people was missing. That's how they took our secretary of EAM Gavrilis, and then the senior Apostle who was the lieutenant of ELAS. But they also killed other boys. The dogs barked all night, and we couldn't even live, let alone sleep, out of fear. Men who had just returned from the war wondered: "Is it again?" What should we do now? We surrendered our weapons, and the gendarmes still don't want peace." And so they decided not to spend the night in the village anymore. Before evening they left for the forest and hid in the bushes... Not long after that one night at midnight the*

*dogs started barking again. After not finding the people they were looking for, they started cursing, shooting and throwing bombs. Little Nikos was killed by the exploded bomb, and his eight-year-old brother Spyros started screaming painfully after being wounded by a bullet...*

Then one of the female partisans interrupted Dimitra and continued decisively:

*- You started speaking at length, Dimitra. Let's move on to the main topic. That was on June 3. The fascists knew that the men did not spend the night in the village and came in large numbers. They were great cowards and never entered the homes of less than three people, even though there were only women and girls in the houses...*

*- First it burst at the church. - Dimitra called again.*

*- Alright. Go on as soon as you want. - agreed the female partisan.*

*- Then the first screams were heard. The wailing of the women grew louder and louder. I fled to the attic barefoot and uncombed. I was shaking with fear, and my mother and my sister, who was not even sixteen years old, remained downstairs. I was terrified when there was a knock on the door and I lost consciousness. But the next day my sister told me before she died: "They broke down the door and stood with torches in their hands like wolves entering the midst of a flock of sheep. "Where's your husband?" the one with the torch asked her, while the two men who reeked of alcohol pointed their guns at me, my sister told me before she died. "But my mother was silent. They were smeared with mud, they were drunk and ugly people. They smelled of sweat, dust and dirt. "Give me the weapon you are hiding!" said the one with the lighted torch. That was their excuse. Then through the open door I clearly saw how three bandits took Maria Ilopulo out,*

*hitting her in the ribs with their butts. In the night all the village streets could be heard the insidious sounds of the blows of the butts and the wails of the girls and women like a herd being led to the slaughter. They gathered the girls and women dressed only in shirts in front of the church, while the fascists lay in the grass, drank cognac, sang and fired their guns. Some shouted, "Long live the king." Then they chased them again, this time towards the field by the stream. They beat the girls who were lagging behind. Some sang raunchy songs. Each girl in the field was surrounded by soldiers mixed with some armed civilians and again started asking them about their weapons. Some started touching the girls under their shirts and pinching them. A red-haired civilian grabbed my sister by the neck: "Where are you hiding your weapon?" The latter tried to approach her from behind, but she jumped and screamed, and he brutally bit her on the leaf, even tearing her flesh. The piece of meat stayed in his mouth - so hard my sister yanked trying to escape. But the other soldier caught her by the other leg and she fell face down on the ground. The soldier stood up and spat out her flesh. She was bleeding from the wound, and his mouth and cheeks were bloody from her blood. My sister was lying injured in the grass, and he sat on her bare back. And then as if nothing had happened, he took out a mirror from his pocket and began to look at himself. Then he started spitting and hitting my sister on her sides: "Bitch, look what you did to me!"*

Dimitra suddenly fell silent, and the rest of the girls continued to tell how they tried to run away. But three to four soldiers and civilians ran after them. After they reached the girls or women, they threw themselves on them and hit them, knocking them to the ground. They were punched in the eyes. The slaps and screams of the women echoed through the

mountain. Two or three soldiers pounced on each girl. Their bones cracked under their burden. And as if the pain inflicted on them was not enough, the soldiers hit them on the forehead, pulled out their hair and strangled them. While waiting for their turn, they didn't know what to do anymore. And when they welcomed him, they rose pale and stiff from the soft women's bellies, as if from a sheep that had just been slaughtered and skinned, after which they continued to mercilessly beat the already unconscious girls.

That's how the morning found them. The women lay moaning motionless and bloody. Andromhi Coralie was then 18 years old. Olga Glavina, who died, was 16 years old. Five more girls died: Urania Coralli, Argiea Coralli, Elena Iliapoulos, Dido Benesi and Maria Kolaris.

Those who survived went with their men to Nestoria to complain. They could barely walk, bruised and trampled, bloody and with broken hearts. The doctors testified that it was assault.

But the county chief laughed:

*- I have no doubt that it is so, but come on, prove to me scientifically that the gendarmes did it. I don't trust you... - then he started laughing loudly and added - And the children who will undoubtedly be born to you should shout "Long live Moscow".*

From Nestoria all the women and men of Ftelia went to Kostur. But there they were imprisoned and beaten: "Why are you stirring up the people?" Everyone should kill you and burn your houses."

*- After a few days - continued Dimitrina - we were released from prison, the bruises went away, and the wounds healed, but the soul will never forget. Then our girls went from village to village telling what happened to them. People cried*

*when they came face to face with them. And everywhere there was someone who then left to join the partisans to fight.*

*(...)*

During dinner, many ate without appetite. Vasvos, who recently joined the partisans, turned to the journalists:

*- Now you must be disgusted with yourself, but I am sure that you knew about Ftelia from before. Left-wing newspapers wrote about it, but you said at the time that it was ordered. You couldn't believe that such things could happen in the 20th century. And you have so far defended the very side from which this horror comes. Your arguments were no less immoral than those of the head of the county. Will you come to your senses for once? Certainly not. I know people like you well. And that's why you're afraid to eat now. You have no appetite because you are sick of yourself. But as soon as you find yourself among the gendarmes again, you will start to cry again. Then your appetite will return and you will no longer be disgusted with yourself. You will write even worse, shameless...*

Iannoulis stood on the balcony holding the big flag with his hand. He had not slept at night. After midnight, he went to the first telephone 10 kilometers from Castanofito, to consult with Kikitsas, the first deputy of General Marcos and commander of the Central and Western Macedonian General Staff. But Kikitsas had already gone to Castanofito where he believed he would meet the Commission. However, it would take at least another 48 hours for him to arrive. And until then... at the recently concluded meeting of the Subcommittee, they made a decision to interrogate Marcos only if he gets to midnight. If it doesn't happen by then, the delegates will leave tomorrow at seven o'clock in the morning. Miller insisted that if he arrived even a minute after midnight,

Marcos would not be questioned. Germain was angry, and Ianulis commented:

*- In fact, this desertion decision of theirs means their recognition of defeat. Every minute of their stay with us brought them dozens of proofs of the real reasons for the rise of the Democratic Army. They had the opportunity to see and hear what the people of 30 surrounding villages think about it. They received a bunch of memos. If they stayed another day, they would get twice as much. These are village memoranda, all written concretely and with facts. Simple and clear. I noticed a certain relaxation among the journalists.*

(...)

Although we had dinner, our host Petar wanted to treat us well before leaving. His brother-in-law also came and agreed to keep us company. **(Starts a conversation about the war against the Germans and the alliance of ELAS with the British at the time, editor's note).**

Peter's son-in-law said:

*- Once in 1944, some Englishmen suddenly appeared here. There were two of them, a colonel and a sergeant. They were looking for suitable grounds for airports.*

*- Talk to them about it. – said Peter.*

*- They pitched their tent not far from the supporting company of the battalion. The next morning the colonel got up first, made himself some tea, opened one or two cans, and then woke up the sergeant as well. Both of them spoke Greek and Macedonian, they were not proud and talked to the soldiers all day. The colonel asked:*

*- What is the state of the field? Are there plenty of autonomists? (members of Mihailov's VMRO who were promised an autonomous Macedonia by Hitler, and later some circles from the West considered this possibility, organizer's*

note). *And the fighter who asked him, our Macedonian, a smart boy, answered him:*

*- No, there used to be few of them, but we killed some of them, and some fled to the Germans, so now they are fighting together.*

*- Are you killing them because they are autonomists? – asked the colonel a little worried.*

*- No, but because they serve the fascists. For them, autonomy is throwing sand in their eyes. But if I were wondering, I would liquidate them all. Just so you know what they are doing to our people there in the plain. If you just mention the letter T, you are immediately taken to the Germans to be shot. And should we treat them nicely?*

*- The letter T? – the colonel was surprised – What does that mean?*

*- It is the first letter of the name Tito. You must have heard of him.*

Then Petar's son-in-law explained to us:

*- I should tell you that in 1943, a powerful friend of yours stayed in our battalion - Tempo, greet him as a friend when you see him. Tempo told us about your fight and about Tito. That's how our fighters found out about him and were proud, and from them Tito's name spread among the people, who loved him, even though the Germans started shooting because of it.*

### ***Split in the Commission of Inquiry, some leave and others stay to meet with Marcos***

In Castanofito, everyone was already standing outside the headquarters. A battalion had assembled in the square,

with journalists bustling about, snapping photos and greeting each other, sharing their impressions. The delegates stood firmly to the side.

(...)

Delvois, neat and fit, walked among the loaded mules.

- *So, general, you have failed.* – Germain teased with a cheerful tone.

- *Yes, sir. I must admit it. I did everything possible to find a common ground. I gave both sides a full three hours to reach an agreement.*

- *Which side do you support more? The Greek?*

- *That's not something I can state. I strive to be objective. Sometimes I do support the Greek position, but other times the opposite...*

Mrs. Sokris was assisting Bill with his heavy backpack. He suddenly asked me:

- *Are you staying? I don't see your backpack.*

- *Yes. I will wait for Marcos here. He should arrive by five o'clock this afternoon at the latest.* – I lied to her.

- *Where did that come from? We were informed he was in Attica.... I am really confused now.* – she replied.

- *Journalists, come immediately!* – Walter shouted from the headquarters' balcony.

Ianoulis briefly outlined to us reporters everything he had done so far to inform General Marcos about the Subcommission. He recounted the events in order, from when he was notified in Germe that they were heading to him on Gramos, to the present moment. He mentioned that he sent his top three couriers towards General Marcos. He also said he personally called the Headquarters for Central and Western Macedonia. If General Marcos has not arrived yet, then he is indeed far away, despite being notified on the same day the



Commission arrived and setting out for the North immediately. If the delegates had not insisted on their urgency, General Marcos might have arrived, and the Commission could have completed its task.

After finishing, Ianoulis Graur (the Soviet representative) began to calmly and clearly explain why he chose to stay and wait or, if necessary, to meet General Marcos.

With the backing of the Polish delegation, from the outset of the Inquiry Commission's work in Athens, the Soviet delegation had defended the stance that their role was to thoroughly investigate the causes of the popular uprising and the war in Greece.

This issue was debated at various forums of the Commission of Inquiry and it was ultimately decided that a meeting with General Marcos should be arranged for this purpose. As the supreme commander of the Democratic Army, he was best positioned to explain the reasons behind the current situation in Greece.

After prolonged discussions, the Soviet and Polish proposal was accepted, with the condition that the meeting date would be determined later in Thessaloniki. The reason why it was said in Athens that the date should be set in Thessaloniki is unclear. Perhaps some delegation members thought General Marcos was in Aegean Macedonia, though the objections mainly stemmed from the fear that meeting with General Marcos might be seen as recognizing the existence of the Democratic Army.

Regardless of recognition, the Democratic Army is actively fighting and exists. It has liberated a significant area and is a major factor in Greece's situation. It has achieved considerable successes, whether international bodies and the Commission of Inquiry acknowledge it or not.

Lund was tasked with organizing the meeting... On March 12, under Lund's leadership, we headed towards the Albanian border. We assumed he was competent and that we would encounter General Marcos along the way, who would fulfill the task assigned to the Commission of Inquiry by the Security Council.

But, in Shatista, after speaking with a monarchist general, Lund was prepared to return us to Thessaloniki. He seemed to have been unsettled by the announced offensive, which, in reality, did not occur against the Democratic Army, whose fighters, as we observed, were not at all intimidated.

(...)

However, in Castanofito, despite the clear hostility from some delegates, Gramos's command made every effort to accommodate the Subcommittee. Commander Janoulis reached out to General Marcos, who was engaged in the fighting around Athens, and conveyed his message to the delegates that he accepted their invitation and was prepared to come to the Albanian border for a meeting. In contrast, delegates from the United States, England, and other countries decided they would wait for General Marcos only until midnight between March 15 and 16. If he arrived even a minute after midnight, the Subcommittee would refuse to hear him, and he would be required to return to Thessaloniki the following day. However, General Marcos could not be faulted as Lund had failed to arrange in advance where and when they would meet. Additionally, the Subcommittee should not be allowed to fail in its mission.

Graur spoke calmly, listing the reasons that justified the Soviet delegates' decision to dissent from the majority's ruling of the Subcommittee. Along with representatives from Poland,

Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, and Albania, he would remain here to await General Marcos's arrival or meet with him if necessary.

The reporters huddled at headquarters, jotting down his statements, pleased that they would have at least this story to publish upon their return.

Krulj, the Yugoslav delegate, addressed the journalists:

*- You spoke with the people, the fighters, and the commanders. You observed how the government was organized in the villages and could see that it truly represents a government with the broadest democratic freedoms. This government is strong, and the parts of the Democratic Army that the Subcommittee encountered confirmed it as a liberating, disciplined, skilled, and well-led force. It has not been seven months since its formation, and it has already become an indomitable force, growing stronger every day. It is absurd to believe that a few dozen "bandits," as claimed by Tsaldaris's government (the monarcho-fascist prime minister), transferred from Yugoslavia to Aegean Macedonia, could instigate an uprising that quickly spread from northern Greece to Crete, encompassing all of Macedonia, Thessaly, Attica, Epirus, Sparta, the Peloponnese, and numerous islands. Such a claim can only be the product of the wild fantasies of those who ignore the rules of social development and disregard historical laws. My country has a vested interest in ensuring the world public is informed about the true situation in Greece and the causes of this war, as revealing and publishing the truth will disprove Tsaldaris's claims and validate the Yugoslav position. Therefore, I see it as my duty to remain and obtain answers from General Marcos on key questions relevant to this investigation and crucial to his country. I vehemently protest against the decision of the majority of Subcommittee delegates, which seems to justify their abandonment. In reality,*

*it is an escape from uncovering facts that will not only challenge the Greek and English governments but are also likely to implicate them. I am confident that, despite the majority's defection, we will gather evidence that will refute Tsaldaris's baseless accusations.*

After both the Albanian and Bulgarian officers had presented their arguments, there was silence. The journalists waited for Miller to respond on behalf of his government, but no response came. Then the Soviet representative said:

*- I would like to request, journalists, that you announce our firm determination to meet with General Marcos to complete the task we were all assigned. We are unsure how many days we will remain here, but as soon as we fulfill our task, we will return to Thessaloniki. None of us here in the free territory faces any danger. However, during our crossing back to the government-controlled area, due to the "lack of information" from the royal gendarmes or other reasons, unfortunate incidents might occur. To avoid any unwanted clashes, please inform the Subcommittee that our group will carry a white flag when returning to the government-controlled territory as a sign of recognition. We will ensure it is as large and visible as possible to prevent any excuses from those who might want to harm us.*

### ***Departure of the rest of the delegates and journalists and stay in Damascus***

Our column was prepared for the journey. We set off eastward, moving briskly as we climbed a hill. Before long, we encountered the officer school cadets assembled and conversing with a platoon of female partisans. Upon our arrival, the battalion of non-commissioned officers advanced to

the front, while the women took their place at the end of the column. The weather was hot and humid, so we took a break at the top to rest. Below, Castanofito lay in view. From our vantage point, we could also see the entire Kostursko Lake, with its surrounding houses appearing as small white dots.

In Kostur, a garrison of the monarcho-fascist army was stationed, comprising numerous gendarmes and armed fascists who had fled from the liberated areas. However, the city was under siege, and its supply situation was so dire that it was more costly for Janulis to maintain the siege than to conquer it outright.

After three hours of walking, we reached Damaskinja, a sizable village, nearly a small town, characterized by attractive brick houses lining the road. We entered Damaskinja just as the villagers were congregating in front of the school to sign an agreement titled "Reconciliation of the people through the prior disarmament of the fascists." In front of the school stood a pile of a dozen rifles, which the monarchist peasants had voluntarily and publicly surrendered to the Democratic Army. People from the Macedonian villages of Petropuladia and Cholera, who had come to Damaskinja, a Greek-inhabited area, joined in celebrating the Agrarian Party of Gavrilides' holiday, which emerged from the EAM.

A burly peasant with a mustache, after handing over his rifle, said:

*- My father always voted for the king. I've never missed an election either, and I've always voted for the king. My house is the largest in the village, and my land is the richest. But the king has been forcing us to fight against you for two years. I didn't want this rifle, but Kanejis, the captain of the gendarmes, told me: "Take it, if you want help from UNRA."... I took the rifle*

*but immediately buried it. People, did I kill anyone? And did I even shoot?*

- *No, you didn't.* - responded an old man.

- *We don't know about you.* - came another voice from the crowd.

The burly man spread his arms:

- *I swear on my life I didn't! But if you must judge me fairly.*

- *We don't know anything about him.* – came an incredulous voice from the crowd again.

- *That's right! Let him sign. We forgive him for voting for the king.* - called others. The burly peasant continued:

- *I admit that as the president of the election commission I tampered with the ballots, but that was what I was instructed to do at Vogatsikon. I could have run away if I wanted to, but why should I? To be afraid again? After receiving the rifle, I couldn't sleep peacefully. Tonight, I know I will sleep in peace. So long live this agreement, and may the bloodshed cease! Long live all of you!*

- *May you live too!* - the incredulous voice replied again, followed by applause from the others.

The burly peasant bowed and went into the school to sign the declaration of reconciliation, along with a dozen other monarcho-fascists.

- *It's done!* - he said contentedly as he emerged - *The Commission forgave me for everything.*

People entered the school, and Janulis guided us into the house, where the residents welcomed us warmly at the door. The host was an elderly man appointed by the government as the president of the municipality, but he aided and protected the villagers and also provided information to the partisans.

Soon after, a villager entered the house wearing a cotton hat resembling a chubara. He treated the host like an old friend. He was the president of the Agrarian Party of Gavrilides, formed on Zachariadis' initiative and a loyal ally of the KPG. His name was Sideropoulos, and he was a long-time friend of Iannoulis from their school and military days.

Graur sipped his glass of ouzo and asked Sideropoulos about the relationship between Greeks and Slavs in the region. Sideropoulos replied that there had never been any issues between them.

- *And what about autonomism?* - Graur continued.

- *It's British propaganda. It's not even worth discussing.*

- *Why is that?*

- *It's their imperialist agenda. Autonomy after the war...*

*They occupied Greece and would prefer it to be as large as possible. But instead, they incite people to overthrow the state. They do this to weaken the force across the border, hoping that they will be called upon to restore order and peace. You shed your blood, and they will enjoy the spectacle. And when they see brother fighting against brother, their dream is fulfilled. But we understand their game. We are pursuing a policy of reconciliation. Come to our conference tonight and see for yourself.*

- *And what about the Macedonian schools?*

- *We now have their schools, books, and newspapers in the district. They didn't have these before. Indeed, we Greeks also lacked them, but they were prohibited by law, though we were not. We advocate for Greeks to be educated, and Macedonians to advance from their backwardness with the aid of books and schools in their Slavic language. The Greek peasant supports this because he values the Macedonians. He only despises fascists, regardless of their nationality. The*

*percentage of fascists among Macedonians is much lower than among Greeks.*

Ianulis added:

*- Exactly. We detest only fascists. While we have great affection for the Greek people, we also cherish the Macedonian people, who have provided us with numerous brave fighters against the occupiers. That's why we support all Aegean Slavs' movements for freedom and equality. This is what EAM taught us over four years and continues to teach us.*

Graur nodded, praising the Greek people's political awareness.

(...)

Suddenly, a courier arrived with a stooped peasant.

*- What's this?* - Ianoulis asked sharply.

*- A letter.*

*- Hand it over.*

Ianulis opened the letter. His expression darkened.

*- Sideropoulos, read this.*

Sideropoulos pursed his lips as he read the letter, which contained a message from the gendarme officer of Tsurilj:

*"On March 16 of this year, around 12:00, a group of your bandits captured 4 gendarmes and 2 nationalists. I heard you executed them. If that is true, I give you my solemn officer's word that I will retaliate by executing seven people I arrested today. Here are their names:"*

- 1. Karanikas Ioannis*
- 2. Kalivas Christ*
- 3. Lysodilis Costas*
- 4. Vassilopoulos Thomas*
- 5. Andonin Mihailo*
- 6. Sideropoulos Elena*
- 7. Sideropoulos Elpita*



*Mother Eplita and sister Elena... Ianoulis commented:*

*- The letter is characteristic. Not a day goes by that we don't get prose like this... Well, that's how the enemies of the people act.*

Then another courier came, bringing another letter. Ianoulis read it and said:

*- We're going!*

From the darkness came first a sigh, and then the voice of Sideropoulos.

*- Are we leaving soon? I would come with you too. I don't have a job here and without that. Can I?*

*- Of course.* - said Ianoulis and hugged him.

### ***The successfully set ambush***

The column advanced through nearly complete darkness. We trudged along like this for several hours before receiving the order to rest. We settled onto the stones. I noticed Germaine and Andromache; he was recounting tales of his homeland. Janulis issued brief instructions to the company commanders:

*- Deploy one platoon on each side of the road, east and west of the crossing point. Establish patrols in both directions. We leave 15 minutes after you. Send me a courier the evening before.*

I joined the soldiers, who greeted me with questions about Yugoslavia. After a while, Ianoulis appeared on the road at the head of the column. The commander told us:

*- We frequently set up ambushes on this road. It's the only route from Macedonia to Thessaly and still in use. Now, let's move quickly.*

Zbjegunj (Poland's representative) asked Janulis:

- *How much longer do we have?*

- *Two hours, at most.*

Suddenly, the distant sound of a convoy of ten vehicles approached. Ianoulis instructed:

- *Raptis, take command of the column and head towards Lucnadon at dawn. We'll catch up with you.*

- *No. I want to stay in the ambush. It's more exciting to see them run away.*

- *You'll have another chance! Now go.*

- *Understood!* - *Raptis responded curtly.*

The convoy of trucks had already entered the forest. Ianoulis positioned two machine guns in the low bushes about 40 meters away and set up the mortar in the clearing.

- *Fire as needed.*

He positioned the machine gun at the bend. A group of fighters with machine guns and rifles stationed themselves away from the turn, ready in case anyone tried to advance up the hill on foot. All this was done efficiently and quietly. Ianoulis used more gestures and glances than words to direct the actions. Once everything was settled, he whispered:

- *You, come with me.*

The trucks took another twenty minutes to reach the bend where the determined anti-fascist fighters were waiting. The noise from the trucks grew louder. Two armored vehicles emerged from the bend, followed by a truck, which came to a halt. On the roof of the driver's cab was a machine gun, with a non-commissioned officer with a mustache scanning left and right. Behind him, soldiers sat on wooden benches with their rifles resting on their laps, their barrels pointed out into the night, anticipating something uncertain.

Soon, the column resumed and approached us. The armored vehicle passed right by the bush where we were

hidden. At that moment, an explosion erupted, and all the weapons from the ambush fired simultaneously. The explosion jolted the armored vehicle, causing it to spin and halt as if buried. Kostadinov leapt to his turret and threw a bomb through the opening, the blast resonating through the screeching metal.

Ivanouli dashed out of the bush with a mine and headed toward the road where gunfire and wailing were heard. A short gendarme, spotting Ivanouli, dropped his rifle but didn't surrender, instead fleeing toward the upper bend. Just as he reached it, he was hit by a short burst in the chest. He staggered and took two steps back, as if apologizing, before collapsing.

Fire was also coming from above. Varkas arrived with three captured gendarmes. These were no longer neatly dressed gendarmes in fresh overcoats; their overcoats were torn, and their faces smeared with mud.

The firing paused momentarily, allowing individual human voices to emerge: from whimpers and mournful wails to the shuffling steps and curses of the victors pursuing the panicked fugitives. The noise, initially chaotic, began to separate into distinct words and sentences.

Suddenly, the shooting resumed with short bursts and explosions. After half an hour, things quieted down. Varkas expertly removed the mortar from the armored vehicle. The first group of prisoners, led by fighters on the road to Bukorina, passed by. Ivanouli and I joined them. No more gunshots were heard from below the village. I felt exhausted and cold. Ivanouli remarked:

*- The captives say they were sent to set an ambush at the upper bend and to intercept us there. They dispatched three columns in different directions, but we correctly*

*anticipated their plan to eliminate the delegation and then blame us for the murders. They will welcome their own everywhere, and tomorrow, as we know, they will bombard Castanofito and Mogila. But we evacuated both villages tonight.*

We passed through a village entirely in the dark. Anxious, uncertain faces peered out from behind fences, silently observing us:

- *Well?* - one of them asked - *Did you sort them out?*  
(...)

### ***The meeting with Kikitsas***

It was dawn, and Bukorina was deserted. We had parted ways with ours an hour earlier. We quickly set out after them. Initially, we rode, but due to the cold, we dismounted and continued on foot. We were passing by plateaus from which an endless expanse of mountainous terrain was visible. Ianoulis halted:

- *Look.*

He pointed out Veria, Gramos, and Pindus, and in the distance, Olympus, which made him smile:

- *Even if the Supreme Staff had spent three years designing blueprints, they couldn't have created a more perfect landscape for guerrillas.*

We resumed our journey to catch up with our group, but Ianoulis paused every hour to show me the stunning scenery with great enthusiasm.

We reached our group at the end of the plateau, half an hour before Lucnadon. They were seated in the dry grass, smoking in silence. Upon seeing us, everyone jumped up—

both the soldiers and our civilians—rushing over and bombarding us with questions.

With a grin, Ianoulis began to provide the details:

*- Forty-seven rifles, nine light machine guns, one heavy Vickers, three mortars, four piyats, and as much ammunition as needed. None of us are injured, and there's more to come. When our villagers arrive, there will be even more. The prisoners are all gendarmes.*

After Ianoulis finished, the partisans scrutinized each of the fifteen grimy captives, but they didn't recognize any of them.

*- They're not from our villages.*

With that, interest in the prisoners waned.

Soon, at the end of the road, we spotted a crowd of people. Three middle-aged officers, all equipped with belts, revolvers, and pouches, stood out and approached us.

The fighters marched towards them with increased determination. Someone remarked:

*- This is Comrade Kikitsas, the commander for central and western Macedonia, first deputy to General Marcos.*

Ianoulis hurried forward, greeted the elders, and they shared a friendly kiss.

Kikitsas, followed by Ianoulis and the two senior officers, approached us with light steps. He was a short, thin, wiry man with a large reddish mustache. Greeting us, his eyes conveyed the excitement and joy he felt upon seeing us, and he would surely remember this morning when he, in front of the assembled people of Lucnadon, shook hands with the delegates from Soviet Russia, Yugoslavia, Poland, Bulgaria, and Albania—whom he said had come here *“against the American-English voting machinery”* to meet the Democratic Army and the Greek people, whose liberation struggle they

understood and sympathized with as true consistent democrats.

A young man with black curly hair stepped forward and greeted us warmly:

*- We are grateful for everything you have done so far and for the significant moral support your presence provides. To achieve our ideals, only our struggle remains.*

Under the vine at the bottom of the courtyard of the house where the headquarters was located, the fighters were preparing lunch. In the room we entered, a set table awaited us with two glasses in front of each plate. Despite the brandy, chicken, wine, and sweet cream with honey, I couldn't shake off my fatigue. My legs ached, and I felt drained. Only my eyes were eager to take in everything around me, every face, and every spoken word.

Graur outlined the entire sequence of events that led the commission to Gramos. He mentioned an attempt by Lund to sabotage the meeting with General Marcos.

*- They gave Ianoulis a 24-hour ultimatum, knowing he wouldn't be able to meet it.*

Kikitsas informed us that reaching General Marcos would require four or maybe five days of walking, approximately 250 kilometers. He also mentioned that the Supreme Commander had authorized him, Kikitsas, to represent the Democratic Army and its leader before the Commission. He assured us that he was at our disposal and wished for us to accompany him to General Marcos.

*- We will carry out our task, and please, Mr. Commander, allow us to leave as soon as possible in the direction where, even if it takes ten days, we will meet General Marcos.* – Graur responded, to which Kikitsas expressed his gratitude:

- Thank you all! It's a great honor for me. We leave here at half past one. We will provide horses for everyone. You won't be too tired. General Marcos will be especially pleased. This is very important to us... We followed the work of the Inquiry Commission with interest during the 48 hours spent at the Gramos headquarters. The schism within the Commission did not surprise us at all. But we are confident that the people of America and England do not support their delegates' actions, which is enough satisfaction for us.

(...)

### ***The departure and the road to General Marcos***

Kikitsas glanced at the clock:

- *We'll depart in ten minutes.*

The mules were anxiously moving about, refusing to be saddled. Ianulis directed us to the first turn and then greeted each of us warmly.

The path we initially followed descended to a stream, from which we emerged onto an expansive plateau of lush grass dotted with small herds grazing in the distance.

(...)

After leaving the plateau and starting down the rocky and steep path, we heard a brief burst of machine gun fire from high above. We soon spotted a small airplane, no larger than a butterfly, circling the hills to the west of us before vanishing.

(...)

And situated just under sixty kilometers from Olympus, was the grimy, noisy, and drunken city of Thessaloniki, with a population of over a million. On Sundays, more than a hundred thousand boys and girls strolled along its quay, dressing up for hours before going out on the corso to attract attention.

That world lingered on the quay all day, and by evening, it split into groups and pairs, dancing, watching movies, chewing gum, or kissing by the darkened gates. The following day, they would return to their jobs, offices, stalls, or workshops. In Thessaloniki, complaints of boredom were constant, and people were preoccupied with their petty personal issues. The city's lights were modest, as the power plant had been destroyed, and now electricity came from two English ships equipped with dynamo turbines, allowing the people to lead their miserable, dirty lives, always hungrier than satisfied, as often happens under an unfree state. Germain loved contrasts, so he remarked:

*- Meanwhile, in the mountains, a brutal war is raging. An open war that cannot be concealed. The royal government's punitive expeditions burn villages, gendarmes kill, and courts condemn entire families to exile, yet the people resist, fight, and have organized their own army. We are currently traversing territory liberated by the people's army, which has established its own state with a humane government.*

For six hours, we walked on roads where we encountered no one. We then arrived at a sparse and impoverished village, where a new platoon of female partisans took over from the comrades who had sent us here. They rested for a few hours before returning alone to Castanofito that night.

Our new acquaintances were Greek. They were shorter and much darker compared to the Macedonian women. Their eyes were large and bright. A young Greek woman approached me and asked if it was true that we had been with the Commission in Ekaterini? She was from there and had not received any news for five months, during which she had been constantly in combat and on the move.



(...)

As on the previous evening, we had to stay here for some time until we received a report on the communications we were to pass through the following night. I was placed in the home of a short but lively old man who continually moved around the table, placing glasses of brandy in front of each of us. He must have been a prominent figure in the village.

(...)

The villagers gathered in front of the house sent a delegation that, on behalf of each surrounding village in the municipality, delivered memoranda about the terror of the monarchists. As we left the house to continue our journey, we were greeted by a genuine rally. Three speakers addressed us, and we responded.

The direction of our movement was kept in strict secrecy, and all units of the Democratic Army were instructed to heighten their vigilance. Nevertheless, the joy displayed by the people, their belief in victory despite the challenges and dangers, invigorated us and filled us with pride, as by diligently performing our duty and documenting the results of our survey, we were contributing in some way to the liberating struggle of this courageous and noble people whom we deeply respected and admired.

At the moment of our departure, a horseman arrived and, stopping in front of Kikitsas, informed him that battles were being fought against tanks near Kipori, one of which had been set on fire. Ten soldiers and one officer had defected to the side of the Democratic Army and immediately began fighting, with two of them being wounded.

After two hours, we reached the road. The fighters ensuring our movement proceeded quietly and cautiously

through the night with the finger of the oros. The guards occasionally whispered to those leading the horses:

*- Hurry up, friends.*

We then ventured deeper into the dark hills towards the villages without electricity, old Balkan shepherd villages. Yet, their inhabitants had pride and understood the reasons for their fight.

In Kiporio, they offered us their last bottle of brandy and a piece of hard cheese as they had no bread.

The people came out to greet us with flaming torches. Kiporio, later known as Cyparis, along with the entire impoverished region, fully supported Marcos. Consequently, the village had been bombed and burned numerous times. Nevertheless, we were welcomed with a song, as old and young women, some pregnant or with infants, came out to meet us.

Kikitsas explained to them that we had come despite the majority of imperialists and their agents obstructing the Commission's work. People rushed to us, kissed us, and lifted us up.

After an hour, at the edge of the forest, with heavy hearts, we decided to part ways. Everyone wanted to bid us farewell, and we shook countless hands of the villagers.

The songs resonated behind us for a long time, and through the branches of the oaks and chestnuts, we could see the flames of the torches flickering in the cold wind for a long while.

We crossed the forest, then the river with an unknown name, and walked for an hour on the high hill. We then spotted the row of tall poplars and the village of Emilianos beyond them. The whole village was waiting for us again on the meadow illuminated by torches, and it was three in the

morning. Despite our exhaustion and lack of sleep, we were not allowed to go to bed immediately. We listened to songs and speeches in our honor, watched the dances, and even joined in. It was already dawn when we finally went to bed.

At nine o'clock, we were awakened. Kikitsas knocked on the door and said:

*- Get up! We leave in thirty minutes.*

We had only slept for four hours, so packing up and getting going required significant effort and willpower.

We got up and washed, and after breakfast, set off with determined faces to hide our pain from our aching legs. I struggled up to the stage where welcome speeches were given and where delegates were thanked for the memoranda. A pop said:

*- They come, they shoot at us with machine guns, and we didn't receive any help from UNRA until we were freed. Look at this girl, she is completely wounded.*

The girl with the bandaged arm showed us the healed wound on her other unbandaged arm. The bullet had passed through the flesh at that point, and another had pierced the bone itself.

(...)

Before leaving, Kikitsas said:

*- We won't tire ourselves too much today. We'll ride and arrive at our lodging by eight at the latest.*

### ***The stay in Diakos and the aerial attack***

We traveled southeast and soon found ourselves on rugged terrain. Numerous streams wound around us, and eagles circled high above the steep cliffs.

We descended from the rocky landscape into a meadow and, around noon, arrived in the village of Diakos, where the headquarters for Central Macedonia was based. We removed our masks and began our meeting with Kikitsas. In front of a charming stone house, a partisan officer was conversing with a pregnant woman who had two young children with her.

We ascended the stairs of that stone house. In the center of the whitewashed room, another officer was seated at a table, engrossed in a book. His sleeves were adorned with embroidered medical snakes.

Upon noticing us, he stood and greeted us:

*- I am Doctor Dadalianis, health officer for Central Macedonia.*

But before he could continue, Zbjegunj (the Polish delegate) shouted:

*- Airplanes!*

We rushed outside into the village square, which was eerily quiet. Kikitsas, hidden behind the stone pillar of the fountain, saw me and signaled me to stay put.

The plane above began to emit beeping sounds followed by a loud engine roar. It suddenly ascended, made a semicircle over the village, and began its attack again.

Kikitsas calmly set up the machine gun on the faucet. As the plane turned once more, Kikitsas remarked:

*- He's trying to get away from me!*

Indeed, the plane started to pull away, but after a few hundred meters, it turned back towards us. Kikitsas aimed the machine gun at the approaching plane.

*- Come here.* - Kikitsas called to the officer, who approached him and began waving his hand at the plane.

The plane fired short bursts at the water fountain, but as it got closer, Kikitsas took aim and fired several bursts back.

The plane wobbled from side to side but soon managed to climb and climb into the sky.

- *It's done!* - the officer cheerfully told Kikitsas.

- *He's wounded! We've hit him. They won't dare attack the Commission now,* - Kikitsas replied.

Engine oil from the plane was scattered on the stones. The officer sampled some with his finger, smelled it, and said:

- *This is the lifeblood of the plane. You definitely wounded him. He won't last until Thessaloniki.*

The next day, we learned that the plane had flown low over Hessia before disappearing. Upon entering the room, we were informed that the village of Emilianos had been bombed an hour earlier, resulting in casualties.

- *There was fighting in Vernia last night, and they are now systematically bombing all the villages, believing that General Marcos's operational headquarters is somewhere here,* - the doctor explained and continued - *Over five thousand gendarmes and other forces were involved on their side. The front stretched for 35 kilometers. They fought for three whole days before retreating without even retrieving their dead. So far, our side has counted one hundred and fifteen casualties. The bodies are already starting to stink. We also captured many weapons and medical equipment worth at least ten thousand pounds.*

Kikitsas entered, beaming, and brought two newspapers from Thessalonica.

The front pages of *To Fossa* and *Ephemeris ato Hitos* featured Graur's statement "I remain" in the largest letters.

But the headlines read: "The bandits are demoralized," "The women there eat the flesh of their children," "We saw the so-called Democratic army - all composed of scum and criminal detritus," "Victory is ours," said Colonel Miller...

- *That's what the Germans used to say. Run, brothers, victory is ours,* - commented the officer, then continued reading:

- *Look at this news: Kozani, March 20. Last night, a group of bandits with a large white flag encountered a large force of gendarmes and soldiers stationed on the road. Our brave defenders of order, thinking they were surrendering, allowed them to approach. However, the treacherous and brutal bandits, disregarding the white flag's symbol of peace, began throwing bombs and shooting. Nevertheless, the brave authorities took a stand and eliminated them. One captured bandit, severely wounded, stated: "Commissioners with revolvers forced us to use the white flag for such an undignified act. They received such instructions from Yugoslavia. We draw the attention of the relevant institutions that this is already the third attack by bandits abusing the white flag's immunity to kill with impunity. From now on," brave officer Eleazaris told our reporter, "we will treat every white flag as if it were red."*

- *Did you see that? They're preparing a reception for us,* - Graur remarked.

### ***Departure and stay in Nea Koutsofleni***

Before we left, we had to go through the ceremony of handing over the memoranda. Graur had an exceptional knack for quickly finding the right words to express gratitude to the gathered individuals for the memoranda received.

(...)

We traveled past the high fields surrounding Diakos, and below us, we began to see the long, narrow villages arranged side by side. In the afternoon, we entered a dense forest with

tall pines and firs. From there, a gentle country road descended, leading us to a clearing. We waited there for the patrol to inspect the road, which we then followed for about one kilometer. We stopped near a village that was concealed behind a hill.

From the darkness emerged two young men, whose faces were obscured by the shadows. They first spoke in whispers with Kikitsas and then with us. In that village, which had been recently liberated right after the battle of Vernia, the monarchists had yet to surrender, hoping that the gendarmes would return.

- *Are we staying here for the night?* - asked Petrov.

- *No. We haven't completed today's designated route yet.*  
- *replied Kikitsas.*

We continued on a road full of stones and potholes, then proceeded up a steep hill track. We also crossed a river and finally, after an hour of climbing, arrived at the village of Nea Kotsufleni in Kutsovla.

A large fire burned in front of the village, where two squadrons of partisan cavalry had passed some time before. A dozen horsemen we found by the fire greeted us curtly and formally, and their corporal approached Kikitsas to present a report.

From the darkness that seemed like a wall in front of us, we entered a room dimly lit by the quiet fire in the fireplace. A blue eight-pointed star was engraved on the wooden ceiling. As soon as we sat down, the hosts arrived. The host was a short, hunchbacked Kutsovlav who was not particularly fond of the partisans but was also wary of the gendarmes. For seven years, the war had prevented him from selling the cheese he produced. He mentioned that he no longer felt like a Greek and that Romania did not hold any appeal for him or his

people, who had no inclination to gravitate toward it. Thus, left to his own devices, he focused solely on trade.

His sons neither answered the call to join the royal army nor voluntarily aligned with the Marcos partisans.

(...)

- *We're leaving!* - Kikitsas shouted from outside.

- *How much longer do we have? It's already eleven.* - asked the Bulgarian Petrov, getting up from the chair on which he had nearly fallen asleep.

- *There was still an hour or two to reach Ambelohara.* - replied the host.

But it took us a full three hours to reach the large village of Ambelohara, near the now-abandoned iron ore mine, which had been deserted for seven years. After dinner, Kikitsas remarked with satisfaction:

- *We will reach General Marcos in no more than two days.*

### ***On the way to General Marcos***

The following morning, it was the housekeeper who roused us, not the sun or the melodies drifting through the village. Ambelohari was a mountain village, but even after leaving it, we kept ascending. Kikitsas and the fighters traveled on foot, while we rode. At the end of the line were the partisan women, who were continuously singing.

We arrived in Castania. Although it was populated by Kutsovlassi, this village had contributed many fighters first to ELAS and later to the Democratic Army. The entire village came out to greet us on the road. The girls waved blooming branches, escorting us all the way to the emporium shed where lunch awaited.



Almost every house in the village was damaged, with at least half reduced to ruins. The slogan "Independence - Democracy" was chalked on the tap, and every wall was covered with slogans. Many villagers came up to Kikitsas to greet and embrace him. He was widely known and loved. The EAM president led us to the emporium and asked about the split in the committee.

A song could be heard from outside. The fighters sat in the shade, enjoying lunch brought to them by the youths.

(...)

The road to Amaras wound through a forest. Upon arriving in Amaras, we were warmly welcomed by the entire population, and we continued on the same day, reaching Klinovas.

- *We will spend the night here.*- Kikitsas said, adding - *Our day is over, but General Marcos's day is still ongoing. It will take him another four hours to arrive, so we can meet tomorrow morning.* The village of Klinovas was encircled by stone hills, making it seem as though it was nestled in a deep ravine. Before turning in for the night, we discussed with Kikitsas the current situation and the differences between ELAS and DAG.

(...)

The next morning, Zafiridis (the Commission of Inquiry translator who chose to stay with the partisans) came into our room and informed us that he had read in the newspaper about the Greek government's protest regarding our stay with the partisans, demanding our immediate withdrawal. The Yugoslav government representative in Greece stated he had no contact with us and would call us back once he could establish communication, though we were well aware that this

would not happen because the Greek government had no control over the liberated territories.

(...)

Our arduous four-day journey was nearing its end. We had traveled over 250 kilometers to meet General Marcos. Passing by the battalion that greeted us on the road near Criosomilla, we had no way of knowing we would meet General Marcos there. Once again, people came out to the road in front of the village, and the elected president presented us with the memorandum and delivered the customary speech. He was unaware that this marked the end of our journey, and everything was as it had been in other villages.

We left with the president, who recounted the terror inflicted by the gendarmes and the king's bandits. In the village, we were met by a new group of people who had come from neighboring villages. After concluding the new speech and expressing our thanks to Graur, the girls, partisans, and peasant women sang and danced.

Nearby, a group of fighters sat in the shade, cleaning their weapons. The battalion commander escorted us to the edge of the village, where we reached the last building near the forest. He instructed us to ascend the exterior wooden stairs. We went up to the first floor. Through the open door of a room on the right, we saw two female partisans slicing cornbread and peeling boiled eggs, while a third was ironing her white shirt. We entered the other vacant room.

- *General Marcos will arrive in about an hour.* - Kikitsas informed us. After shaving with our dull blades, we began to chat casually and joke with each other.

## ***The meeting with General Marcos***

Suddenly, the door swung open. A young, slender man stood in the doorway. He wore a broad officer's belt from which a large "walter" revolver dangled in a shiny new holster on his left side. He smiled, scrutinizing us intently with his large eyes. Standing in the doorway, he breathed deeply, likely from excitement and perhaps from hurrying to get there. Indeed, we later learned he had literally sprinted the last kilometers. He removed his military cap and approached us decisively with purposeful strides. It was General Marcos.

As he shook hands with us, he repeatedly expressed his joy at finally meeting us. His military blouse had no insignia. Kikitsas also entered, all radiating delight. Marcos began by sharing details about his journey and then inquired about ours. His manner was so genuine and unpretentious that we felt as though we had known him for a long time. He quickly became our friend, with no sense of distance between him and us. Then he spoke about their struggle:

*- I have always known that the democratic world sympathizes with the fight led by the Greek people. I am confident that we will prevail. We draw our strength from the illustrious examples of the Soviet, Yugoslav, and other nations that have succeeded on this path. Our resolve is also bolstered by the support of nations engaged in the struggle for a lasting peace, who continue to provide us with significant moral support under these conditions.*

Graur then explained how the Commission of Inquiry had decided to send a team to the Supreme Headquarters of the Democratic Army to understand the reasons for the unrest in Greece. To this, General Marcos replied:

*- It is not our fault that the meeting did not occur. I was prepared to meet with the Commission anywhere, but I was not informed about the location or date of the meeting. I learned from the newspapers that such a meeting was scheduled and waited accordingly. However, it is inconceivable to think that the Supreme Headquarters, which commands the fight across all of Greece, would be situated solely on its northwestern borders.*

During lunch, our conversation became even more relaxed and covered various topics. Marcos responded openly to all questions with a smile.

We agreed that only we journalists would conduct the afternoon interview, while the delegates' role would be limited to receiving and delivering the memorandum prepared by Marcos to the Commission of Inquiry.

Before we began the interview, Graur requested that Marcos prepare a larger white flag for us the next day.

*- We are departing tomorrow and will soon be among the monarchist gendarmes. While we were in the free territory, despite two assassination attempts by the monarcho-fascists and a third attempt by plane, we felt completely safe. However, this sense of security will not persist once we leave free Greece. Especially given the reports we read in the newspapers about partisans approaching gendarmes with a white flag only to shoot them.*

*- That means the fascists plan to shoot you.*

*- It is possible, but we informed the journalists in Castanofito that we would return with a white flag, and we will do so, regardless of the circumstances.*

*- Any one of us would gladly shed blood to ensure you reach a safe location. – said General Marcos.*

*- Shall we begin? – Graur asked.*

We gathered around the table in the small village room, which had enough benches for all of us. Germain, a correspondent for "Imanite," asked:

*- I would like to ask something... What prompted the creation of the Democratic Army?*

Marcos smiled and replied:

*- The democratic army was established to address the essential needs of the people. The elements supporting the current Greek government, serving British imperialism, are the same ones that aided the now-defeated fascist occupier. These are proven traitors. The democratic army reflects the strongest desires and aspirations of our people for independence and freedom. It is a response to the two years of terror inflicted by the monarcho-fascists. Our 238-page memorandum captures only a partial and incomplete picture of the conditions that led the people to take up arms. For the Commission to understand the tragedy that devastated Greece from December 1944 for two years, it must consider the arguments presented in the memorandum, though it only addresses a fraction of the grievances leading to this civil war. (...) The monarcho-fascists sought to resolve the crisis by substituting one occupation with another. The Greek people detest every occupier, but while rejecting imperialist oppressors, they extend a fraternal hand to all the free peoples of the Balkans and to those who sympathize with our struggle and celebrate our successes. We also extend our hand to the working and peasant sons of the English and American people who oppose the policies of their current governments.*

Marcos then retrieved a green folder from his leather bag. It contained the memorandum he was supposed to give to Graur. He placed the folder on the table, opened it, and began to review it slowly.

- The memorandum is divided into two sections. The first, besides the introduction, presents data on the causes of the civil war, and the second section addresses the issue of how to resolve this crisis. The introduction to the first section outlines our people's liberation struggle from 1941 to the present and includes data on the terror, murders, arrests, trials, robberies, rapes, and assaults on the people from December 1944 onwards.

- Where did the Democratic Army's weapons come from?

- Good question. By mid-March 1946, the people were unarmed, and terror increased as the March 31 elections approached. People hid in the mountains and cities. ELAS had surrendered its weapons after Varkiza. These were handed over to the British, who armed the gangs. It was hard to wait to be killed with the weapon you used to liberate your homeland. In February 1946, Commander Barutas, with 15 other unarmed comrades, surrounded his hometown and declared: "Surrender your weapons! You are surrounded!" A few monarchists, frightened, immediately surrendered their weapons, and with those rifles, the remaining monarcho-fascists in the village also gave up their arms. Thus, we progressed from smaller actions to larger ones, and ELAS weapons began to return to our control.

(...)

Nuri asked:

- During the Commission's meetings in Athens and Thessaloniki, the representatives from England and America questioned all Greek government officials about NOF. According to their statements, NOF pursued an autonomist agenda with the ultimate aim of separatism. As the Commander-in-Chief of the Democratic Army, General, you are in the most authoritative position to clarify this issue for us.

- NOF is the counterpart of EAM among the Slavo-Macedonians, who identify themselves as part of the Slavic minority residing in Aegean Macedonia. NOF's program mirrors that of EAM, with identical objectives and methods of struggle. However, the Slavo-Macedonians have suffered more than the Greeks. Their hardships during and after the war were greater than those endured by Greeks. Greek imperialist chauvinists, driven by the "Great Idea," have historically denied the existence of a Slavic national minority within Greece's borders. Following the Balkan wars, they began persecuting Slavo-Macedonians with violence to erase their language and history. This "pedagogical approach" to Hellenizing the Slavs in Macedonia was practiced by all Greek governments without exception.

When the Greek people were granted certain freedoms within a civil democratic framework, Slavs had only obligations towards the state, with no rights of their own. They were conscripted and sent to the fronts, where they perished in every war fought by Greece. Meanwhile, the families of courageous and skilled Slavo-Macedonian soldiers were exiled to isolated Aegean islands. Supporters of the "Great Idea"—a view held by all Greek governments—considered speaking Slavic Macedonian within the family a severe threat to state security. Slavs were denied their own schools, books, and newspapers, with any expression of their cultural heritage deemed anti-Greek.

Nevertheless, during the war, Greece's mistreatment of the Slavic minority was counterbalanced by their significant contribution to the Greek liberation struggle against the occupier. They produced countless heroes and heroines, including Lazar Trpovski, whose noble bravery will forever inspire Greeks as an ideal to strive towards.

*Between September and December 1944, under EAM's rule, Slavo-Macedonians had the opportunity to see their hopes realized. They enjoyed equal freedom with the Greek people, spoke their language openly, published their own newspapers, and established schools teaching their history. Slavs served on boards in their regions, and Slavic was the official language. During this time, there were no disputes or disagreements between Slavs and Greeks.*

*However, after Varkiza, everything changed. A campaign to eliminate democratic forces ensued, with monarcho-fascist terror escalating to wild pogroms.*

*The Memorandum I am presenting to the Commission of Inquiry on behalf of the Democratic Army through the current delegates details this period of horror and disgrace, characterized by the brutal slaughter of innocent lives. It is painful to recount the destruction of villages, the suffering of children burned alive, the hundreds of raped girls, the tortures, and the extensive devastation. I would prefer to fight endlessly rather than continue discussing this shameful period. Please ignore me...*

Marcos paused. After he collected himself from his anger, he continued:

*- All supporters of EAM and fighters of ELAS were arrested and convicted on charges of collaborating with the occupier. Among them was Colonel Burandas, who commanded the so-called anti-communist motorized brigade during the German occupation. He now holds a prominent position in Athens.*

*Those Slavo-Macedonians who did not flee to Yugoslavia retreated to the mountains to continue their fight against monarcho-fascism in support of British imperialism, alongside the Greek people.*



*The attempts by monarcho-fascists to label NOF as a secret separatist organization are transparently intended to justify the post-Varkiza massacres before the world and to sow discord between Greeks and Slavs. However, this tactic has failed. The pogroms eventually spread to Greeks as well, and today all of democratic, anti-fascist Greece is unfairly vilified as "traitors" or, as some ignorantly claim, "Eamo-Bulgarian."*

*In reality, only British imperialist agents spoke of autonomy and worked towards it, hoping that such ideas would provoke movements in the People's Republic of Macedonia—an inseparable part of Yugoslavia—and in Pirin Macedonia, potentially triggering foreign intervention to advance anti-Balkan and anti-Soviet imperialist agendas. It is clear that they evacuated Hill, the English Consul in Lerin, before the Commission's arrival. Yet, the people remember what Hill said and did. It is crucial to note that neither the Greek people nor the Slavic national minority were swayed by Hill's provocations. They responded with a unified, comradely struggle for a free and prosperous Greece.*

*(...)*

*When leaving, General Marcos reiterated:*

*- We eagerly anticipate the spring offensive. After it, we will emerge even stronger and more numerous, with significant territorial gains.*

*General Marcos was absolutely correct. The spring offensive, which began a month later, ended in complete failure. Subsequently, the Democratic Army emerged victorious, even stronger and more numerous.*

*(...)*

*The following day, we departed from Crisomolje. General Marcos, his staff, and Kikitsas awaited us at the village exit. We exchanged handshakes, hugs, and kisses before setting*

off, accompanied by ten female partisans singing and a group of partisans. After five hours of walking through ditches and meadows, we reached Dromizi, where four kilometers away lay a no-man's land behind which was the first station with gendarmes.

Three planes flew high above us to the west. In Dromizi, the locals welcomed us with songs and flowers. The EAM president addressed us about the suffering endured from Varkiza until liberation.

An elderly woman went to the station with gendarmes to deliver a letter from the battalion in Dromizi. The letter (later shown to us by the gendarmes) read:

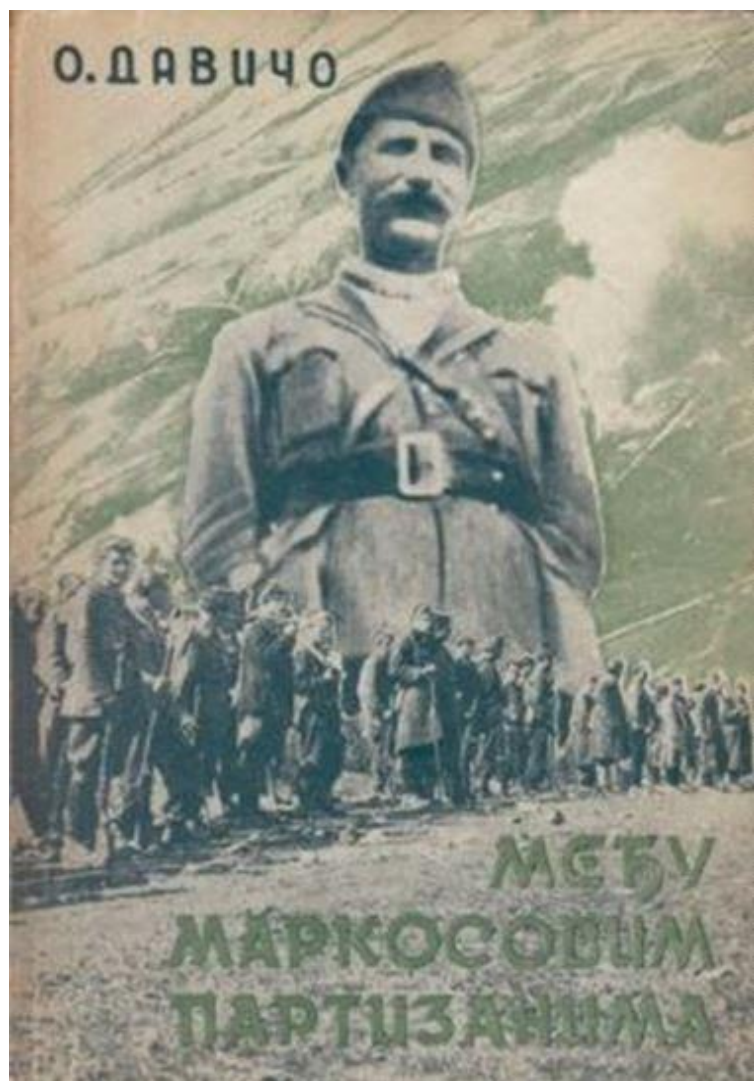
*“A delegation from the Security Council will soon leave free Greece and come to you with a white flag. We’ll keep watch from above, and you will regret it if you do not behave at least once in your monarcho-fascist lives.”*

The letter was written after we resolutely refused further assistance from our friends. The commander wished to send us with the entire battalion to the gendarme station, but we decided to return at our own risk. The fighters sent us to a hill above the road. Graur, on behalf of all of us, thanked the battalion and the entire Democratic Army for their hospitality and efforts to help us complete our mission.

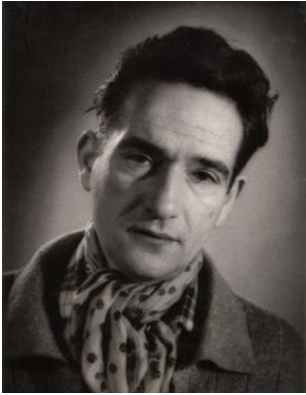
Many of us wept as we reached the road and looked back at the hills where the fighters waved flags and weapons at us.

After half an hour, we noticed a group of gendarmes at the road's end. We walked single file, slowly and sadly, toward the bridge with the white flag hanging on a pole. Thus, we arrived at the bridge.

(Belgrade April 10 – May 31, 1947).



## BIOGRAPHY OF OSCAR DAVICO



Oskar Davičo was born in Šabac (Serbia) on January 19, 1909, into an old Jewish family. He was a famous Serbian and Yugoslav writer and journalist. After completing elementary school in Šabac and high school in Belgrade, he pursued romanticism studies in Paris at the Sorbonne and at the Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade, graduating in 1930. That same year, he released his first collection of poetry. He then worked as a professor in Belgrade, Šibenik, and Bihać.

As a member of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, he became the secretary of the Local Committee in Bihać. This led to his arrest in 1932 and a five-year prison sentence, which he served in Sremska Mitrovica. Until the onset of World War II, he resided in Belgrade and Zagreb. In 1940, he was expelled from the CPJ due to some of his poems. When the Second World War broke out, he was in Split, where he continued his underground activities. Consequently, he was arrested and interned near Parma (Italy). In 1943, he escaped from Italy to Dalmatia, where he joined the partisans and operated in Bosnia, Montenegro, Dalmatia, and Serbia. He participated in the 1944 battles for the liberation of Belgrade.

Post-war, he was a founding member of the Yugoslav agency TANJUG and later worked with the newspaper "Borba." As a correspondent, he covered the Nuremberg trials and spent time in Greece in 1947, where he met with General Marcos and other DAG leaders.

He eventually left journalism to focus solely on literature. In 1951, he was elected a corresponding member of the Yugoslav Academy of Sciences and Arts. He contributed to numerous magazines, publishing poetry and prose that earned him significant awards and recognition. He lived in Belgrade and Sarajevo and passed away on September 30, 1989, being buried in the Alley of Honored Citizens in Belgrade.

Due to his efforts in promoting historical truth about the events in the Aegean part of Macedonia—through this book, which has been translated into several foreign languages, and his other works dedicated to this region—both Macedonia and Macedonians should honor this distinguished individual, perhaps by naming a street or building in his memory.

A. Donski



**NOTE TO THE EDITOR**

Aleksandar Donski was born in Shtip. He comes from an artistic family. He is the author of over thirty books and dozens of radio and TV shows in the field of Macedonian history, folklore, travel writing and literature, for which he has received awards and recognitions.