

Secret Organizational Meeting of the Bulgarian National Front (BNF)

Toronto, September 4, 1954.

On September 4, a few minutes before the opening of the convention of the American Bulgarian League, I met Dr. Dochev in the lobby of the King Edward Hotel. He took me aside and told me that at the meeting in Springfield he had been informed that the matters discussed there would have to be reported to the proper authorities and that after the convention of the League a second meeting would be held at which a definite agreement would be made. He had been given a post office box number in New York through which he was to keep in touch with [] . He did not mention any details neither did I ask for them.

In reply to my question as to what his plans were for the National Front, Dochev told me that at 5 P.M. on that day, after the regular session of the convention, he would hold a secret organizational meeting of the BNF in the Blue Room on the second floor of the hotel. Delegates from the BNF organizations in the United States and Canada would be present and on Sunday, at 12:30 P.M. he would hold a meeting at the Bulgarian Cathedral in Toronto in protest of the Communist occupation of Bulgaria ten years ago.

I asked Dochev whether it would be in order for me to attend the secret meeting without attracting unfavorable comment on the part of the delegates. He replied that he hoped I would attend and that since the delegates came from various parts of Canada and the United States, many were strangers to each other.

The session of the convention lasted until 5:30 P.M. when

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the BNF members, some of whom are also members of the League, assembled in the Blue Room. There were thirty persons present. Dr. Paprikov and his group of four from Chicago did not show up. It was learned later that they were traveling by car and had been involved in an accident. They arrived in Toronto the next day.

The meeting started promptly. The door was guarded by one of the Toronto members and outsiders were not admitted. Among those present were Zanko Stankov from Pittsburgh, Kalin Koychev from New York, Engineer W. Welleff from Detroit, Dochev from Detroit and Angel Gundersky, chairman of the Toronto branch of the BNF. The meeting was very orderly and Dochev was in full control of the situation .

Dochev opened the meeting by introducing the delegates by name and place of residence. I was presented as a good friend from Boston. Before proceeding with the business of the day, Dochev said that if any of the delegates felt that they no longer believed in the BNF and its ideals, they were at liberty to withdraw and since, due to outside influences, people occasionally do change their views, there would be no ill feeling against them. No one made a move to leave although as we shall see later some of the delegates have been assailed by doubts. Dochev then reviewed the work of the BNF during the past year. The following were the main points covered.

a) A noticeable improvement in the standing of the BNF had taken place. The authorities both in Canada and the United States had allowed the organization to function freely and a number of important persons had shown considerable interest in

the work it was trying to do.

b) Dochev had applied for and received permission to visit the United States in the name of the organization for the purpose of holding meetings and had visited New York, Detroit and Chicago.

✓ | c) In Washington, D.C. the Committee for Freedom through Liberation had denied admission to the delegation sent by G.M. Dimitrov and had recognized the BNF delegation as the true representatives of Bulgaria.

d) The lack of funds was cited as a great obstacle to the work but at the same time Dochev remarked that work accomplished under such circumstances is very much more valuable than if subsidies were being received.

e) The publication of the pamphlet "Borba" (exhibit No 1) was to continue in the future and it was hoped that it would be considerably improved during the coming year. The Toronto branch is to bear the expense and do most of the work while the United States branches were to send about \$35 monthly in its support and were to contribute articles for publication.

f) The BNF paper published in Europe would continue as before, the United States and Canadian branches contributing \$200 to cover the expense of one issue during the year.

2 | g) The Bulgarian People's Voice (exhibit No 2), paper published in Canada, had been discontinued due to the lack of funds. However, a few of the older Bulgarians had collected enough money to enable Dochev to resume its publication. The money was sufficient to keep the paper going until the end of the year and it was to be distributed free of charge. The

delegates were asked to give the paper their support, to advertise it and to try to collect five hundred subscriptions in order to make its publication possible after January 1, 1955. The attention of the delegates was called to page 2 according to which the paper is no longer edited by a committee but by Dochev himself.

h) The Central Committee of the BNF had been working for many years towards bringing together into one organization the various Bulgarian immigrant groups and thus establishing one, universally recognized, Bulgarian government in exile. There is evidence that this will soon be accomplished. In the last number of the BNF paper published in Europe, there was a notice informing the members that should this come to pass, the paper would be discontinued in its present form and the subscribers would receive instead the new paper to be published in its place.

i) Dochev stated that it is very encouraging that Simeon will soon be of age. There are indications that both he and his mother are favorably disposed towards the proposal that he take over the leadership in the work of liberation and head the government in exile as pretender to the Bulgarian throne.

Dochev then took a few minutes to explain the stand of the BNF with regard to the monarchy. The BNF is for the reinstatement of the Tirnovo Constitution but has never stated officially that it is in favor of the monarchy. After the liberation the Bulgarian people themselves were to settle this question.

At the conclusion of the review Dochev stated that there would be no discussion of the various matters mentioned since

its purpose was merely informative.

The real reason for calling the meeting was to let the delegates know that the Central Committee was of the opinion that the time had come for the BNF to get ready for more active work both locally and on a world wide scale. The work of the BNF is twofold. On the local basis it is educational and has been limited to that up to the present time. However, the main purpose of the organization is revolutionary in character. In the future, it was felt, the revolutionary aim should be stressed just as much as the local, educational. The Central Committee is of the opinion that the time is fast approaching when revolutionary activity will become necessary. It may come in six months, in one year or later but come it will. The members should then be ready to put the revolutionary plans into execution. Therefore, the Central Committee felt that the members should be consulted in order to determine whether they would be willing to prepare now for future action. The discussion would be limited to this point. Other matters such as funds for the work, a program for execution, etc. would be taken care of by the Central Committee.

Many of the delegates spoke on this subject. It was stated that due to the passage of so much time there is in Bulgaria a whole generation of young people who know very little about their country as it was before September 9, 1944 and, also, that a change has been and is still taking place among the Bulgarians abroad. Many have become U.S. and Canadian citizens and the rest hope to be naturalized in the course of time. To whom do these citizens owe allegiance ? To their new country or to Bulgaria ? If they participate in revolutionary activity for the liberation

of Bulgaria, do they not face the danger of losing their new citizenship ?

Dochev replied to these questions as follows. The Bulgarians in the U.S. and Canada owe allegiance first of all to their new countries. If they are called to serve in the armed forces, it would be their duty to do so. But, at the same time, since participating in the revolutionary activities of the BNF would mean taking an active part in the struggle against Communism, such action would have the approval of the United States and Canada. Approval would, of course, be secured in advance and nothing would be undertaken which might endanger the citizenship status of any Bulgarian.

One of the speakers on this subject was Zanko Stankov from Pittsburgh. He is a young man who has an excellent job with the United States Steel Corporation, has recently purchased a house and a car and is planning to get married in the near future. Stankov said that his opinions have been undergoing a change and that he no longer feels the way he did when he first came to the United States. He finds life here good and is becoming more and more a part of it. Doubts have begun to assail him about the various Bulgarian organizations and the work they are doing. He has been asking himself, "Why not forget the past and become a permanent part of the American way of life ?" He is very much afraid that if the BNF were to postpone much longer the work of preparation and actual participation in revolutionary activity, he would be lost to the cause.

The delegates praised Stankov's sincerity and admitted that each in his own way was undergoing similar changes in

point of view. The consensus of opinion was that the work of preparation must begin at once and revolutionary activity of some kind be undertaken before the nationalism of the Bulgarian immigrants cools to such a degree that they would no longer be willing to participate.

Next on the program was discussion of the relations between the BNF and the American Bulgarian League. Dochev reported that certain members of the League were constantly attacking the BNF and claimed that it was trying to take over the League. The question was raised whether members of the BNF should not withdraw from membership in the League. As a result of the discussion which followed, it was agreed that the League and the BNF are entirely different organizations, that the aims of the League are worth while and that all Bulgarians should support it by becoming members. BNF members were advised to keep politics out of the League and that being elected to office in the League would be a matter of personal interest and ability to do a good job. The BNF organization would not attempt to have its members elected to office for the purpose of taking over control of the League. The majority desired to have all difficulties between the two organizations settled amicably as soon as possible.

Stankov expressed the opinion that the unfriendly relations between the Macedonian Political Organization and the BNF were due entirely to irritating and unfriendly acts on the part of Dochev and a few other BNF members, that there is no sense in such acts, that the BNF should seek to make friends instead of going out of its way to make enemies and that unless the BNF

*What was
DS answer to
this.*

uses more common sense, he fears, a similar situation would be created between the BNF and the League.

Dr. Dochev announced that a meeting in protest of the Red Rule in Bulgaria would be held in the social hall of the Macedonian Bulgarian Cathedral on Sunday at 12:30 P.M.

At 8:30 P.M. the secret meeting adjourned, sandwiches and coffee were served and then everyone went to the party given by the League in the social hall of the Cathedral. To cover the rent of the Blue Room and the cost of the food each delegate paid \$1.25.

I was very favorably impressed by the way the meeting was conducted. Dochev seems to have good control over his people although some are beginning to waver. The meeting was very orderly, each delegate was allowed to express his opinions freely and, though in some cases these opinions were critical of Dochev and the BNF, they were listened to attentively and without apparent irritation. Dochev made no claims whatever to any great accomplishments or to any backing of his activities, financially or otherwise.

Protest Meeting (Exhibit No 3)

September 5, 1954, 12:30 to 1 P.M.

At 12:30 P.M. on Sunday, September 5, 1954, a protest meeting took place in the social hall of the Macedonian Bulgarian Cathedral in Toronto. The meeting was sponsored by the BNF and was presided over by Mr. Angel Gundersky, chairman of the Toronto branch of the BNF. The chief speaker was Dr. Dochev who said that the purpose of the meeting was to raise a united voice in protesting the Communist occupation of Bulgaria ten years ago ,

on September 9, 1944 and to honor the memory of all those who have fallen in the struggle since then. The aim of those gathered there was to call to the attention of the free world the fact that the Bulgarians abroad have not forgotten the terrible fate which has befallen their countrymen under the Red Rule.

The audience consisted mainly of recent immigrants and Dochev supporters. Conspicuously absent were the so called big men, Mr. K. Elieff from Pittsburgh, the Toronto priest, Rev. H. Elieff and the older immigrants. It was not possible to tell exactly how many persons were present because there was a great deal of coming and going but I estimate the number at a little over one hundred.

The meeting was very dignified and well conducted. Stankov, Boris Clarke and others with whom I spoke after the meeting were very favorably impressed. It seems that the older Bulgarians feared that this was to be another political meeting and decided to stay away. Later some expressed regret that they had missed a worth while occasion.

Promptly at 1 P.M. the meeting was over, in good time to allow the audience to go back to the hotel for the closing session of the convention scheduled for 1:30 P.M.

Enclosures :

1. Borba
2. The Bulgarian People's Voice
3. Protest Meeting notice.

*given to
Stankov
Boris Clarke*

Булгарит 3



По случай десетъ години отъ заробването на България
отъ болшевикитѣ

на 5 Септемврий 1954 год. недѣля, 12.30 часа на обѣдъ,
следъ отпущкъ на църква, въ залата при Катедралниятъ ни храмъ
"Св. Св. Кирилъ и Методи ", 237 Саквилъ Стритъ Торонто ще се
състои

ПРОТЕСТНО СЪБРАНИЕ

срещу червения насилнически и кървавъ режимъ въ поробената Родина

Ще говорятъ представители отъ Канада, Америка и отъ Анти
Болшевишкия Блокъ на Народиѣ.

Цѣлокупната наша родолюбива емиграция се поканва масово,
да посети събранието и манифестира солидарността си въ освободи-
терната борба срещу комунизма .

Б. Н. Ф.

PROTEST MEETING

AGAINST THE COMMUNIST REGIME IN BULGARIA

To mark the occasion of ten years of subjugation in
Bulgaria a Protest Meeting will be held on Sunday Sept. 5th., 1954
at 12.30 p.m. in the church hall of St. Cyril & Methody cathedral
237 Sackville Street.

All Bulgarian immigrants and friends of Bulgaria are
invited to attend this meeting to express their solidarity with
our fight against communism.

B.N.F.