

INFORMATION REPORT

CD NO.

25X1A
573

COUNTRY Yugoslavia

DATE DISTR 27 OCT 51

SUBJECT UDB Execution of Five Students Attempting to Enter Greece

NO. OF PAGES 3

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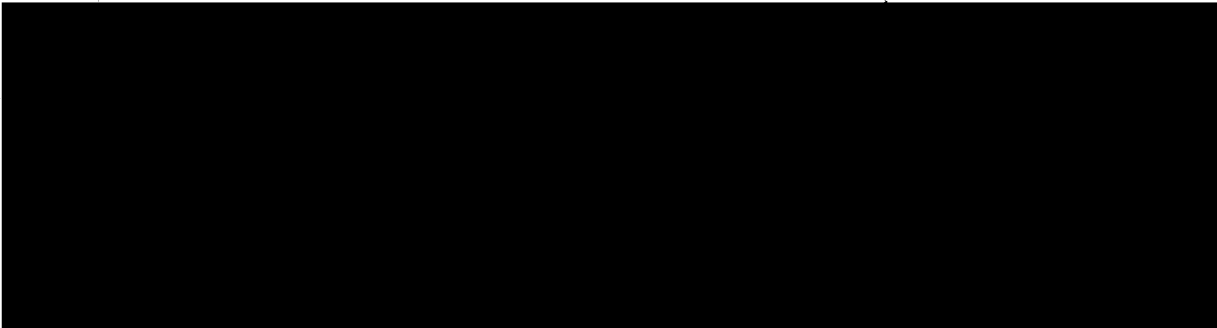
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NO. OF ENCLS. (LISTED BELOW)

DATE OF INFO July-August 1951

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SUPPLEMENT TO REPORT NO.



1. Nikola Fidancev, Boris Belev, and Stevan Topcevic, students at Zagreb University, decided to escape to Greece with their friends, Georgi Jarmov, a student at Belgrade University, and Mirko Pecev, a student at the Strumica Gymnasium. The five agreed to meet in Strumica on 1 July 1951 and to escape to Greece in two groups.
2. Boris Belev, the leader, went to Stojakovo, Djevdjelija District, to find a guide to the border. The guide that he found refused to take them because the passages that he knew were heavily guarded at the time. About the same time Fidancev succeeded in obtaining from the District Commissioner of Interior a "border permit" which allowed him to stay 10 days in Dojran, on Dojran Lake, for his health.
3. On 27 July all five students met again in Strumica and Belev said that he had found a guide who would help them cross the border over the Belasica Mountains. They agreed that the four would cross the border over the Belasica Mountains on 3 August, and that Fidancev would cross the border on Dojran Lake. The group agreed to take with them their birth certificates, student's booklets, and identity cards. The group had no arms and they did not intend to offer any resistance if they were caught while attempting to cross the border. This decision was made because the penalty for an escape attempt was usually only two or three months in prison.
4. On 28 July Fidancev went to Dojran. On 2 August Belev went to Dojran with a group of tourists and told Fidancev that the date of escape had been fixed by the guide for 5 August. Belev and Fidancev agreed that if the date of escape were changed, Fidancev would receive a note on 4 August by the local bus. On 4 and 5 August Fidancev was followed by UDB men. Since Fidancev received no note on 4 August, he presumed that there had been no change in the escape plans and he left Dojran at 7:30 p.m., swimming the four kilometers across Dojran Lake to Greece.

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Document No. 1
 No Change in Class.
 Declassified
 Class. Changed To: TS S C
 Auth: HR 70-2
 Date: 05/08/99

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5. For an unknown reason the date of escape of Belev's group was changed to 12 August 1951. In the meantime Koce Kosturanov joined the group. Kosturanov was born in 1930 in Strumica. Kosturanov's father was a wealthy merchant in Strumica before World War II, but after the war all of his property was confiscated and he was imprisoned several times. The father then moved his family to Zagreb, where Koce was a student in Zagreb University.
6. During the early morning hours of 12 August 1951 the group started out. They first passed near Kulis, and by the evening of 12 August they reached the area of the village of Dorlobos, about three kilometers from the Greek border. At this point they were ambushed by the UDB or the Militia and were seized.
7. A Moslem from Dorlobos later told Mirko Topcev, Steve Topcev's brother, that during the night of 12-13 August he had seen all five students, with hands bound, being marched by Militia personnel to Dorlobos. Informants and residents of Strumica believe that the five students were interrogated by the UDB, mistreated, and then shot at dawn on 13 August 1951. Moslem peasants from Dorlobos, who were ordered by the UDB on the morning of 13 August to carry the corpses on horses to Kosturino, stated later that the hands of the students were bound with wire and that the bodies were still warm when they moved them.
8. On 13 August 1951 the UDB ordered the Town Carpenters Cooperative of Strumica to make five coffins, which were sent by UDB truck to Kosturino.
9. Mirco Topcev, who was employed as a carpenter in the Town Carpenters Cooperative, was ordered to accompany the coffins and to identify the corpses. Topcev related later that each of the dead students had several bullet wounds in the head, and that there were bruises on each of the bodies. The throat of Belev had been cut, and all the fingers of both of Georgi Jarmov's hands had been cut off.
10. At 11 p.m. 13 August, a UDB truck took the coffins to the cemetery in Strumica. In the meantime, UDB officials called the parents of the murdered students, and questioned them about the whereabouts of their sons. Later, the UDB informed the parents that their "heroic sons" were killed while attempting to escape to Greece, and that the funeral would take place at 12:01 a.m. at the Strumica cemetery. The news of the murder of the five students spread quickly in Strumica, and the people of the city were so aroused over the atrocity that several thousand (sic) people attended the funeral.
11. The coffins of Stevo Topcev, Georgo Jarmov, Mirco Pecev, and Koce Kosturanov were placed in one grave. Boris Belev was buried separately because he was a Protestant.
12. Following is some biographical information concerning four of the students who were killed:
 - a. Boris Belev was the son of Alexander, a medical doctor who attended medical schools in Beirut and Geneva. Alexandar Belev, a Protestant, is a popular doctor in Strumica. Boris was born in Strumica in January 1929, and he graduated from the Strumica gymnasium in 1950. Before attempting to escape to Greece, Boris was studying mathematics and physics at Zagreb University. In 1946, he was arrested with a group of Strumica gymnasium students for IMRO activities, and was released on parole. He did not have a government scholarship, and he was molested by the authorities because of his bad political record.
 - b. Stevo Topcev was the son of Kiro, a former merchant who is serving a five-year sentence in Idrizovo prison as an anti-Communist. Topcev was born in 1931 in Strumica, and he graduated from the Strumica gymnasium in 1950. Before attempting to escape to Greece, he was a student at the Zagreb Law School. He did not have a government scholarship, and he was molested by the authorities because of his father's political beliefs and because his brother, Ljubco, escaped to Greece.

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- c. Georgi Jarmov was the son of Tushe, a former merchant who has been imprisoned twice for being an anti-Communist. Jarmov was born in Strumica in 1928, and he graduated from the Strumica gymnasium in 1950. Before attempting to escape to Greece he was a student at the Law School in Belgrade. In 1946 he was arrested with other Strumica gymnasium students for IPRO¹ activities, and he served two years in Idrizovo prison. He was molested by the authorities because of his bad political record.
- d. Mirco Pecev was born in 1928 in Strumica, and he was a student in Strumica gymnasium. In 1946 he was arrested for IPRO¹ activities, and he served three years in Idrizovo prison.

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