

Halpern Martin Joel
Kerewsky-Halpern Barbara (Amherst, USA)

UDK 908 (497.7-35)

LETTERS FROM MACEDONIA

Abstract: Field notes that Joel M. Halpern and Barbara Kerewski - Halpern have made during their field research and trips in Macedonian in the '50ties of the XX century are published. Today they are accompanied by their comments, as well as photographs that illustrate their interest and the time in which they worked.

Key words: Macedonia, field research, notes, comparisons of cultures, analysis of values

Introductory Note

It was never our intention to publish these notes now made a half century ago. How much to edit them, to sanitize them, to remove judgmental views that now some may consider insulting. We were then just 25 and not yet 23 respectively. It would seem too great a burden to impose on this text and, by implication, the authors — expecting us, now retrospectively, to perceptively evaluate what we saw then. These were, at best, raw field notes which we also used to convey the views that we had to our families in America. At times we use words like dirty and backward to describe the peasant villages we saw but, now we are conscious that much less frequently we used the term poor. It is surprising to us now that we thought in those absolute terms since we had just come from spending most of the year in a Serbian village in šumadija which also, in 1953-54, could have been viewed by a Western foreigner as both dirty and backward.

Half a century is now less than the statistical life expectancy in many countries yet, from another viewpoint, this was indeed a remote time from our own if we think in half century time frames. For in 1954, if we deduct a half century, it would have brought us to 1904, a time which would indeed have seemed very remote indeed to us in 1954. Or, from an even shorter temporal measure, if we deducted half that time, a quarter century, we would have come to the early 1930s. This is the period when the Polish, later Polish-American, anthropologist, Jozef Obrebski visited Macedonia to do his research.

Another limiting factor in these notes — there is no mention of Tito's Communist regime and the effect it had on critical observations, or what would have been officially considered by officials at the time as unfriendly comments. Here the answer is much clearer in explaining how we felt than and, yes, feared being truthful. Before visiting Macedonia we had been chastened about how to behave in a dictatorship. First, early in our stay in Serbia I (Joel) had been beaten up in a Yugoslav government staged anti-American demonstration in Belgrade. These demonstrations were held to protest the peace treaty which concerned finalizing the then Yugoslav border with Trieste. A minor matter one might say, and we would agree, compared to recent perspectives on events in the 1990s Balkan wars to say nothing of 9/11/01 in the U.S. and the current

tragedies in Iraq and elsewhere. But I would still maintain that being chased by a mob and having blood trickling down ones face does have a bit of a sobering effect.

Then there was our concern for others. Again, from our experience in Serbia, we were also concerned about how our presence might affect the fate of others. Thus in the Serbia village we researched we had a school essay contest about student memories of their village. One child wrote about how Tito's Partisans had burned a part of his village, proudly signing his name. As soon as we read this essay (which the teacher had neglected to read) we burned it. Again, a minor matter but one that certainly conditioned what we were writing about Macedonia.

Yes, we did write about Tito's birthday celebrations and the Day of Youth but in descriptive way. But we also reacted when we reached Greece. As soon as we left Macedonia just at the time we crossed the border into Greece we started cursing Tito to the rapidly enveloping wind made by our train as it gained speed. We certainly do not claim that all those who are now our age and even older, who came to maturity during the time of Communist Yugoslavia, think of those years as a disaster. It was a complex matter the details of which cannot be explored here. We only wish to say that in the early 1950s critical thoughts were not freely and openly expressed. In sum, our notes are purposely devoid of political comments.

The inverse aspect, and a positive one for us, of a tightly politically controlled state was the fact that as foreign visitors of some modest status roaming around rural areas – we had guides and even, from time to time official transportation. This could be viewed as a plus. But it is quite clear that our wanderings, although somewhat directed and organized, were never planned in such a way as to prevent our casual observations and photographs some of which illustrate this account. Finally, as we can now truly appreciate in our unsettled times, the 1950s were a time of relative peace and personal security. From this point of view, dictatorships with their ever vigilant police and armed forces do have an advantage. It must also be noted that from an overall point of view, and especially an East European perspective, Tito's rule was less repressive than many of the neighboring communist Balkan states.

Despite all of the above qualifications we do hope that these notes do reflect our delight and enthusiasm in encountering Macedonian culture in its various forms and the beauty of the countryside that we saw that spring. We also try to portray the genuine and open hospitality with which we were received in town and village from a proud people.

From an overall anthropological perspective it is significant that in the early 1950s Macedonia, like much of the rest of the then existing Yugoslavia, was on the verge of a far reaching epoch of industrialization and urbanization. Further our concern for costume and crafts is not accidental for this was the ending of a period when urban and rural cultures were truly distinct. Costume and crafts were representative of some of the most obvious markers of this distinction. These, of course, were the most easily observable material manifestations and were non-controversial from a political point

of view. It is, of course, obvious that the government was of two views on these matters. That is, on the one hand, they were happy to subsidize and emphasize peasant arts and performance because these were items which would attract tourists and also affirm traditional heritage. Importantly, the communist state could both control and selectively preserve cultural heritages within the defined political framework.

On the other hand, those in government did not want to see their socialist country portrayed as backward but as a country with a successful socialist system which was building a modern industrial state. It seems appropriate to point out in this connection that social-cultural anthropology as a discipline simply did not exist in Macedonia at this period. Branko Rusić, then the sole ethnologist at the university, was traditionally oriented ethnographer and, as Ljupco Risteski has pointed out in his monograph, he was rather isolated in his efforts. It is, of course, true that in a previous generation, i.e. before World War II, Milenko Filipović, the distinguished Serbian ethnologist, had taught for a time in the 1930s at the University of Skopje. He was a student of Jovan Cvijić, the French trained human geographer, who had earlier in the century (at the time of World War I) helped establish ethnology as a field of study at the University of Belgrade. Our overt interests in folk costume and customs were thus in harmony with the traditional ethnological perspective then dominant at that time and we were influenced in this regard by our contacts with ethnologists in Belgrade.

Finally, it is obvious, but it does need restatement, that writings originally intended only as informal letters home to parents are, at best, and with difficulty, presented as some sort of formal academic record. But that context is also their strength. That is there is a kind of artless quality to these accounts. They were not written to convince anyone of a particular point of view or to support a specific theoretical perspective. These notes of travels, while obviously selective and representative of a point of view, do represent our enthusiasms and pleasure in having the opportunity to spend time with an engaging and hospitable people who took pride in their heritage. We enjoyed what we did, we cannot claim more than that although we do hope we learned something as well.

These notes ere edited by Barbara and Joel Halpern. The bracketed comments interspersed throughout the text were written in 2004 by Joel Halpern*. Barbara Halpern is responsible for much of the original writing but they do reflect what was then in many cases our joint point of view since the notes were prepared together but written down by Barbara. At the same time there is a significant part of the notes that reflects Barbara's gender oriented descriptions particularly in the case of the peasant costumes.

Joel and Barbara Halpern
Amherst, Massachusetts
April 2, 2004

*All items in parenthesis represented our editorial comments to clarify context for the reader. The notes are arranged chronically.

24 May 1954 Skopje

Dear Folks,

I (Barbara) am sitting in the *kafana* (cafe) of the Hotel Macedonia, where we're staying in Skopje, the capital of the Republic of Macedonia. I went out on the roof to type, but they're beating the strip carpets there this morning, so I went down to this sidewalk cafe in front of the hotel. But the sun is too strong there. So here I am sitting inside with men at every table staring at me and wondering what and who I am – surely I don't look like a sinister foreign correspondent.

On Friday, May 21, we left Beograd (after almost a year of intensive fieldwork in a Serbian village). There is a Serbian tradition to accompany guests and friends to the (railroad) station to see them off and to bring cakes and flowers for the trip. So there waiting for us were our friend Mike (with whom we had exchanged language lessons), Mrs. F (Filipović, the wife of the Serbian ethnologist, Milenko Filipović) and (her two) daughters. Our best friend, Kosta came to our room and had breakfast with us. This included tea forced out of the last worn out tea bag we owned. He then helped us lug our gear to the station. For people who have been away (from home) for a year, in all extremes of weather, the gear we finally ended up with is quite limited. However, the assorted little pieces are not convenient to carry. We will have to cut down still further - Kosta is sending the brown suitcase to Paris for us. In it are Joel's new suit, and my ski outfit from (an aunt) and other things it didn't seem right to give away. With us are the big folding knapsack which is stuffed with underwear, and socks, plus typewriter, briefcase, and camera case. Then there are two knapsacks filled with such things as talcum powder, soap, tooth paste, sewing equipment, a carton of hard candy and insect repellent.

When we got to the station it was fairly late and we couldn't squeeze into the 2nd class car. We are now going 2nd class because of the 75% discount we've been given on trains, boats and planes in Yugoslavia. But now for the equivalent of \$ 1.57 more we had a 1st class compartment all to ourselves. This is a real luxury for the two of us who have sat up for 17 hours on a 3rd class wooden bench with 6 peasants on the return trip to Belgrade from Sarajevo.

Mrs. Grba, Mike's mother, had prepared a shoe-box of sweets for us, and Mrs. Filipović also brought sweets. There was a package of baklava and another one of nut and rasin strudel. She also came with a bouquet of pink field carnations which smelled beautiful. The train left on time and Mrs. F was very lovely, calling to us to come back soon, with a baby, and not to forget them, all the time wiping her eyes and waving her handkerchief.

So, after 11 months in Beograd and vicinity, we departed. After a short time we got very nostalgic. We saw from the window, "our" small mountain, Bukulja, the one which rises behind Arandjelovac and overlooks "our" village of Orašac. The train takes a route (south from Belgrade) to Mladenovac (another small Sumadijan town in the vicinity of Orasac) with which we have become very familiar. The line then swings east

and south in the direction of Niš (a major city in Serbia near the Bulgarian border). So, about 15 kilometers from our village, we took our last look at the landscape we had come to know so well. Who knows when we will see it again? The track followed the Morava River, which marks the eastern boundary of šumadija.

Gradually we passed out of the area of gentle hills and, still in the Morava basin, traveled higher into the system of the Rhodope Plateau which projects into the eastern part of Serbia from Bulgaria. The house types gradually changed from the whitewashed mud and brick šumadijan homes with red tiled roofs to homes more open in design, with porches and arcades. Often they were partly of wood.

We passed through the city of Niš, near which there is a famous spa, Niška Banja. There is a folk song about the supernatural power the mineral water gives young men. Past Niš we continued in the vicinity of the Morava, called the Southern Morava here. Outside the town of Leskovac we saw a factory which had been planned with a seeming magnificence with a big formal garden in front. It is now completely abandoned, with broken windows and crumbling trim, although the red star on top is still in good condition. Later we saw another factory under construction. All that was up was the wooden frame but already the red star had been hung on wires, appearing to dangle in mid air in a space between the framework.

We passed the settlement of Džep, Turkish for pocket, and the town of Vladičin Han where we saw peasants returning from market. The landscape now changed rapidly. The flax in this area is relatively famous. In swampy ditches near the roadbed were bundles of flax soaking. The women all wore dark, hand-woven striped skirts, very full, with a trim of black lace on the hem, whether they were working in the fields or returning from the pijac. In many places marshes were overgrown with wild yellow swamp irises and tall reeds. Later on, in open fields, it was even prettier with the tall grasses dotted with white and purple wild flowers and brilliant red poppies.

Entering a Moslem area we saw the white silhouettes of a minaret in the center of the cluster of community buildings. The men wore cotton skullcaps, turbans or fezzes. The women were not wearing the baggy pants we had seen worn by the Moslem women in Bosnia. One surprising thing was the number of horses. Although this was supposed to be a poorer area, it did not appear so to us. In šumadija, central Serbia, we had become accustomed to seeing cows do the work of horses in the less prosperous households. There was flat, fertile land, a good supply of horses, and relatively well-dressed peasants. New for us was the sight of water buffalo. They appeared increasingly common as we proceeded further south.

At about 4:30 in the afternoon, the train crossed the Vardar and, after the slums of Skopje on the city outskirts, we pulled into the railroad station. Waiting at the station were hansom cabs with horses, but we found a *nosa* or porter with a wheelbarrow to get us to the hotel. We had sent a telegram to be sure of a room. The desk clerk was not sure if we had asked for the *najjeftinija*, *cheapest*, or *naifinij*, *the finest*. We assured him that we wanted the cheapest So for 400 dinars, or \$1.30, a night we settled into a

clean cubicle with 2 cots, a miniature sink and a closet that can be opened by moving the cots.

Joel, had eaten the entire box of baklava, not out of hunger, but out of love for Mrs. F's cooking and the thought that he would not have access to her banking soon again. I could not restrain him. He ate all 22 pieces of the heavy sticky sweet as well as several hard boiled eggs we had prepared for the trip. After our arrival he spent his first few hours in the capital of Macedonia getting it all out of his system. While he was thus engaged I went out for a stroll on the central square. There was a band playing and a crowd of several thousand was gathered around a speaker's platform. All the buildings facing the square were draped in Yugoslav, Macedonian and Red communist party flags.

The occasion, I soon learned, was the send-off -of the relay runners from Skopje for the torch relay to Belgrade. This was an annual event marking Marshal Tito's birthday, which is tomorrow. You may have seen snatches of this in newsreels. A (formally) loving speech of fidelity and gratitude to him was read by an official. Then a young boy and girl, muscular in short shorts and undershirts, bounded up to the platform and recited a few lines before accepting the wooden baton to relay on to the next post. On his birthday, all the runners will have met in Beograd, bringing their batons and birthday greetings from all parts of the country. (Wooden torch is used in the original text – perhaps actual torches were used in the final ceremony)

Somewhere in that crowd, we had the feeling we would meet our friend Duško from the ship, the Jugolinija freighter Crna Gora on which we sailed together from New York to Dalmatia. Duško is the young poet and journalist who had been for five years in a German concentration camp. Sure enough, we found him and we recognized each other immediately. Although he looked the same I (Barbara) am much fatter. He was very pleased to speak Serbian with us. We walked around Skopje and recalled when we dressed up four of the boys (men) to do a pony ballet on the cargo hatch of the ship. (We have purposely not deleted items of this sort so that it is possible to appreciate how styles of gender humor have changed.) It was almost a year ago.

Duško wanted us to go see "Vrati se, Malo šibo" (Come back, Little Sheba, a popular Hollywood film of the time) with him and his wife, but we told him to go without us and that we would see him again before we left.

The next morning, with both of us feeling fine, we started off for the official Commission for Cultural Relations With Foreigners, with a letter to them from the Beograd main office, asking them to assist us. They were very busy with plans for a big children's parade the next day (Tito's Birthday was combined with the Day of Youth), and asked us to come back Monday. That is where Joel is now, while I'm here typing.

Later that day we went to the museum, which is located on the central square upstairs from the Narodni Magazin, the big (state) department store. From the mezzanine of the museum we could look down into the store. There we saw a tremendous portrait of

Lenin with a background of factories and other symbols of progress. He was flanked by portraits of Tito, the president of the Republic of Macedonia and Marx.

The (ethnographic) museum itself is, as usual for Yugoslav museums, excellent. Especially interesting to us were the displays of material culture. Almost all of the items which are no longer used or nearly extinct in šumadija are still in every day use here. Because of the collection we have made for the American Museum of Natural History in New York, we were familiar with almost all the items displayed. This amazed and pleased the curators showing us around-. The Macedonian costumes (the reference here is primarily to women's clothing), are the most elaborate of any in all the republics. They are still worn everyday. These costumes have a wealth of trimming and vivid colors but are not at all tasteful (Barbara did not like the emphasis on display of status but, of course, we both now recognize that folk dress did, of course, serve not only as symbols of gender, position in the life course, but as markers of individual and family status in the community involving a strong competitive element). It is interesting that they can still get the gold and silver braid from Turkey, while the šumadijan women's vest, which is of the same style, is becoming extinct because they apparently don't have access to the material in central Serbia, only a few hundred miles to the north. (It is, of course, possible to link the prevalence of folk costume to the level of economic development.)

Skopje has a university with five faculties. We met the one ethnologist (Branko Rusic, see monograph by Ljupco Risteski), a very pleasant man who speaks English but with whom we speak Serbian. Since the war (World War II), Macedonian is recognized as one of the official languages of Yugoslavia, but almost everyone seems able to speak Serbian with us. This professor (Rusić) invited us to his home the next day. As the Commission, which was supposed to make arrangements for us, couldn't do anything on Saturday we walked around the city alone. In some ways Skopje is like Sarajevo, with big square public buildings contrasting with the domes and spires of the mosques and minarets along with in the basin formed by high mountains encircling the city and with a Vardar river spanned by many bridges running through the city.

But Skopje somehow feels fresher than Sarajevo, and we are very delighted to be here. Since we arrived, the weather has been lovely being, mild and sunny. Here in the south more plants are in bloom, especially the acacia, or bagrem, a very common tree here. It has a heavy musty sweet scent. This is a wonderful change for us, from all the sloshing through the mud, and rushing and the commotion of our fieldwork. We're taking it easy and considering this trip both as rest and diversion as well as a source of learning.

Across the river is the old city. It is a combination of Turkish, Albanian, Gypsy, and Greek minority groups each living in their own charmingly ramshackle quarters (we were tempted to insert the word "unique" for "charmingly ramshackle" here but allowed our ethnocentric and romantic description to stand providing a perspective on our orientation at that time) in narrow twisting streets. There are all kinds of craftsmen, including potters, and opanke (sandal) makers. The opanci here have rubber soles with leather straps and are not as nice as the šumadijan ones. There are also jewelers

and wood carvers. We were lured into one little shop, by the owner as we appeared to him to be rich tourists. This apparent owner and majstor (craftsman) turned out to be a handsome 18-yr.old boy, an Albanian Catholic which is uncommon. (They are a minority within the Albanian population). His father had died and he inherited the trade and the shop.

When he saw that Barbara was not interested in the loud sparkly stuff that was so popular with the Gypsies (Romani) and other (similar) groups, he carted out large, heavy pieces of old silver jewelry. This included big belt clasps, Albanian watch fobs with huge filigree balls, and associated chains. There were also heavy old rings. Barbara explained that she couldn't afford things like that. After some poking around we found some items within our range.

We were told that for the people in the lake regions of Prespa and Ohrid, the fish has always been a symbol of good luck. Barbara got a segmented fish of copper mounted on a kind of gliders, which the local peasant women wear in their hair. We also purchased a tiny silver fish set with chips of black and white stones, as scales, which the young man made into a pin for Barbara. She also found two disks hand etched with Turkish characters, which were worn around the neck as amulets for good luck. They are called "Mašala" but we couldn't find an old man who could decipher the meaning of the inscriptions. Then Barbara also found a silver medallion that matches the silver buttons she had made into earrings. The last piece is an old Turkish signet ring, 3-sided and made like a charm, to be worn on a chain. This entire collection cost us the equivalent of \$3.

We bumped into our friend Jerry (an American student whom we knew in Belgrade), who is here on his way to Greece. He had with him an old acquaintance from Ljubljana, a student from Georgetown (University in the U.S.) who is teaching English here under UN auspices. We all had supper together. We also met the Prints, the English couple we knew in Beograd. It seems we keep seeing familiar faces from Beograd here. All told Skopje is one of the least talked about tourist places and at the same time one of the nicest.

The next morning was the parade. We got the bright idea of going up on the roof. No one else seems to have thought of it. So we viewed the parade from a good vantage point. Last year both Skopje and Sarajevo bought several old double--decker London busses and drove them here. Several of these London buses were parked around the square for the duration of the parade (probably this was done for crowd control rather than security, thinking in contemporary terms). The children's parade, an annual event, was part of Tito's birthday celebration, and in some ways is similar to a pre-war children's May Day festival.

Viewers stood 6 deep in a big ring around the square and people hung out of surrounding windows and balconies. As the parade started Joel saw some photographers from newspapers here out in the square running around the miniature marchers and taking pictures, so he dashed down and got out there too. He took a

great many pictures which I think you'll enjoy. This parade was done very imaginatively. Participating were the school children of Skopje. There were several thousand young marchers.

Each group was decked out in costume and went through its paces in front of the reviewing stand. About half the groups were dressed in patriotic trimmings. All the costumes were of crepe paper, including red, white and blue groups of tiny children waving wreaths and streamers of the same colors, they formed a group that spelled out T I T O. Older children did gymnastics with red, white and blue hoops and ropes. The groups represented a diversity of themes. We were impressed at the cleverness of the ideas, especially when a group of plump child mushrooms toddled by, wrapped in white crepe-paper stems, topped with huge, bobbling mushroom cap hats of red with white spots. This was only the beginning. After them came clover leaves, strawberries, violets, and daffodils. There followed a battalion of butterflies. The group of chickens was the cutest. About 15 little children were dressed in yellow crepe-paper outfits made with a tight cap, with a space for the face, and an orange comb down the top. Full baggy sleeves like wings, a little tail feather in the back and short bloomers, through with the little legs projected completed their parade dress. They hopped, pecked and peeped around the square and were totally adorable.

There were several groups dressed in regional costumes, some of them coming from nearby villages where this clothing is still used daily, even by the children. Patriotic groups of tots dressed in sailor outfits carried cardboard boats and planes and waved flags. One of the most interesting was the group from the large minority school for Gypsy, Turkish and Albanian children. They are taught Macedonian and Serbian as minor subjects with all standard instructions done in their own languages (a practice that has, in recent decades, been tried extensively in the U.S.) Using a *tupan*, a drum which beat out a Gypsy (Romani) rhythm, was a group of young Gypsy girls dressed in the Turkish type baggy pants and tight shirts, of pink and yellow silk brocade. This the kind of material available here for the things like quilts. The girls performed a beautiful and graceful oriental type dance as part of the street parade.

When the parade was over, the town center was filled with children, many with proud parents. Long afterwards, till late in the afternoon, we kept encountering remnants of tiny mushroom and butterfly outfits, which their wearers could not bear to take off. The costumes were made by the teachers in each school and were funded out of the school budget. It must have been a big thrill for the children to dress up in the colorful costumes. After the parade I saw a little strawberry very slowly and very carefully shed her costume, fold it over her arm, and start home in her ragged little dress, with the red and green crepe paper petals and leaves bouncing on her arm.

Later the professor (Rusić) met us and guided us on a walk. Our first step was Daut Pašin Hamam, the old Turkish baths. Until a few years ago the building still functioned as a Turkish steam bath, with separate sides for men and women. Now it has been reinforced and fixed up inside. The building has become a most interesting art gallery. The original construction of the baths is retained on the walls and ceiling. At the time

of our visit there was an exhibit of the works of Lazar Li~enoski, a Macedonian born in the village of Gali~nik in northwestern Macedonia. He studied in Paris and has been quite prolific. Most of his works are landscape and nudes but he has also done a lot of peasant scenes. Also on display were his mosaics, we found them pleasant. (Clearly we found and benefited from the fact that the arts, museums and cultural monuments were subsidized by the socialist state with, of course, varying degrees of control.) We met the artist while we were there. However, he was busy chatting with the director of a Paris University.

Next we went on to the church of Sveti Spas. It is like other Orthodox churches built when Macedonia was under Turkish control. It is below ground level so that it would not easily be seen. Today it is preserved as an historic cultural monument. Most outstanding is its famous carved wooden altar, made of walnut. It took 13 years to make. This is one of the most beautiful wood carving we have ever seen. The detail and clarity of the Biblical scenes is most impressive. In one place the carvers even made self-portraits of themselves, for we see the three majstors, busy at work carving at their masterpiece.

We then walked to a bluff overlooking the river. There used to be an old fortress there, but an army garrison of some kind, a big ugly yellow building, has been built on the foundations. To get there you have to walk up a steep path to some crumbling stone steps. On the slopes were wild daisies growing amidst the stone ruins. At the top, from a grove of blossoming acacias, we had a magnificent view of Skopje. We could even see the villages on the mountainside opposite, small as they appeared in the distance. Off to the north, still covered with snow, was the šar Planina, part of the high mountain range of Macedonia.

The afternoon was spent at the professor's (Rusic's apartment). To get there we walked through the extensive riverside park. It was a beautiful, wild sort of place, very cool and green. On the opposite bank of the river, swollen and muddy from the spring rains, a few cows and water buffaloes were grazing on a narrow lowland plain. Several small boys were jumping into the water or lying in the sun on the banks. Their little naked white bodies evidence of the fact that this was the first nice warm weather this year. In several places in the river were horse drawn wagons. Several men, up to their waists in the water, were shoveling sand. It is said that the sediments of the Vardar are of a fine quality for construction and used to mix with cement.

Arriving at his apartment we were a little surprised at how countrified Skopje had become, just a few blocks from the center of the town. This being so the combination of the acacia blossoms and outhouses did mar the aesthetic affect. The professor (Rusić) lives in a two story building built since the war. It is similar to the ones we saw in Banja Luka in Bosnia, only he pays three times as much. When asked to have a small tour of his apartment, his wife was a bit embarrassed, thinking that it was 100 times worse than the worst in America. Certainly its construction was crude with wide (poorly finished) planking on the floor, coarse walls with cracks and loose mortar, and a miniature sink. Actually we have seen a great many apartments like this and they can go to seed

extremely easily. Their apartment, although it was very crude and of sloppily construction, was nicely furnished and spotlessly clean. They were very ashamed of their home and wished they could have something nicer. I hope they were not too upset that we wanted to see their apartment. It is no fault of theirs that this is their reality. (Rereading these lines from a contemporary perspective it seems readily apparent that ethnocentric satisfaction in these matters is entirely unwanted for an American. One has only to think of the wrecking balls taking down the towers of failed public housing in many major American cities.)

Skopje, June 2, 1954

Dear Folks,

If I have patience with this typewriter, which is literally falling apart, I will bring you up to date for the week since we last wrote.

Here it is three hours later - the typewriter was so bad that it wouldn't work properly, what with a year's grime and grease in the keys. It was dumb of us not to have it cleaned earlier. I just took it to a majstor and had it cleaned for what I think is a large sum, 750 d. or \$ 2.50. I wonder what it costs at home. We are still waiting to hear about the grant from the Ford (Foundation). The letter arrived in Beograd just after we left, and our friends there forwarded it to Dubrovnik, but we won't arrive there for about two more weeks. (Joel did not receive the grant. We were nevertheless able to continue our fieldwork. Disappointments are no stranger to graduate students.)

We have a possibility to go to Athens from here for several days, if we can sit up for 20 hours 3rd class. After we decide if we are going we will know more definitely what our plans will be for the rest of our time back in Yugoslavia, till the first week in July.

The people at the museum here seem more efficient than in other places. Joel has arranged another exchange agreement between the Ethnographic Museum of Skopje and the American Museum of Natural History in New York City. (This was a successful part of the trip.) In addition, to items for the Museum we have secured some items for us personally, and to share with our family. These include small copper Turkish pitchers and bright embroidered peasant socks. (We still have some of the copper utensils, a half century later and every time we water our indoor plants we have an opportunity to think of our first trip to Macedonia).

Last Wednesday, the 26th, (of May) we spent a day in the field visiting two types of villages in the Skopje area. The Committee for Cultural Relations With Foreigners has placed us in the category of important guests (into which category we can sometimes get ourselves placed), and provided us with a car and driver. At the same time the Folklore Institute made available to us a student of ethnography, to accompany us (Sometimes such persons were, in effect, "minders" i.e. their role was to keep track of curious foreigners who, under, some circumstances, might be considered a potential threat (spies) no matter how innocent their supposed appearance.). She was scared

and very dumb and especially tactless in talking with the peasants. The way she approached them made me feel that they thought she was a tax collector. One old Baba thought she was a health inspector and was scared stiff. We would have been much happier without this girl along, but we needed her to help out when we couldn't understand the peasants' Macedonian, and we had to use Serbian. (In retrospect it is, of course, possible that she was a bit overwhelmed by the responsibility of dealing with foreigners and perhaps even thinking of the report she may have had to write. These are not imagined suppositions since we had encountered these problems elsewhere in Yugoslavia.)

Less than 10 minutes out of Skopje the road became a river bed. We drove through stream with its sand bars and gravel until the engine failed. The driver worked some magic with old wires and cord. Then the car, a small 1935 German model, which was literally hanging together, merrily bounced again through the stream bed. Eventually, we climbed out of the river and up onto dry land with our seemingly amphibious auto. The region we went to was Skopska Crna Gora or Skopje's Black Mountains. It is a very mountainous region in the hills about 30 km to the east of the city. The village we visited, Ljubance, is high in the range, with a mountain stream running through it. When we pulled up, on a mule path probably never before trespassed by a car, the women were washing clothes in the stream. They had copper cauldrons of hot water heating on open fires on the stream bank.

The homes are mostly wooden, with places for the stock downstairs and a wooden winding staircase on the exterior. The house we visited had a rickety overhanging balcony upstairs with two or three rooms. They have the possibility to build good sound houses, as wood is plentiful, but all of them were in terrible condition. Inside the filth was incredible, just heaps of dirt and rags. (The rooms were dark perhaps heightening the impression of a lack of cleanliness. "Filth, dirt and rags," doubtless hygienic conditions of a half century ago left much to be desired but the fact that the women were washing their laundry in boiling water does not seem to argue for an indifference to their living conditions. But then our views were, at best, impressionistic and not necessarily logical.) In one house we did see something surprising — a copper box with a spigot, and an enamel basin below it. This seems like a very efficient water system that every peasant house could have. These people are Orthodox Slavs.

Many of the men (especially the older ones) still wear pants of hand-made woolen stuff but more often they dress in tattered city clothes. The women have a very interesting embroidery. The older a woman is, the more elaborately embroidered her shirt, especially in the back. Over this are rows of black wool fringe. Then comes a short gathered apron, black with a touch of color. Maidens wear a white head kerchief and young matrons and some of the older women also wear their braids arranged high and stiff on the top of their heads, with a long kerchief wound in front, in back and over the braids. Older women wear two of these kerchiefs, one over the forehead like a sun-shade.

They were all most friendly in spite of our guide's blunders. It was especially interesting to see that the zadruga system, which has just about disintegrated in Orašac, is still in practice here. The father lives together with his sons and their families. Each son had a room for his wife and children. (This is, of course, an over simplified evaluation of social structural changes which we have written about at length, subsequent to these observations.) Often these rooms contained nothing more than an empty dirty place with a wooden hope chest, some bundles of wool and a string a dried peppers. (We may have looked in the wrong place. We later learned not to trust quick first impressions but there is no doubt that the poverty of many of the villages we visited appeared to us much greater than we had been accustomed to in Serbia.))Every mother had several, five to nine, children (a rather gross statement but there is no doubt that fertility rates, at that time, were higher in rural Macedonia than in Serbia, although there were significant regional and ethnic variations.) Many of them were infected and filthy.(We were tempted to insert the word "unkempt" for "filthy" but we have kept the original to retain the impression made on us at that time. Clearly we were encountering the extent of rural poverty prior to the economic development of the 1960s. The feeling of exoticism created by the prevalence of folk costume combined with the reality of poverty did reinforce the strong sense of "otherness". Doubtless if we had spent a longer time among these villagers, as we had in Serbia and stayed with a prosperous household, again as we did in Serbia, we would have been less categorical in our evaluations. In this respect it is useful to refer to the observations of Jozef Obrebski which were made only a generation (20 yeas earlier) earlier. It is now fifty years, more than two generations later.)

In this hilly region the land is poor and the standard crops, wheat and corn, are not cultivated near their homes. The villagers have a big hike to a lower area where there is some land. Their most important crop seems to be potatoes. Skopje is their market town. They go to market in wagons or on mule-back, the latter is a very common means of transportation in Macedonia.

Our guide, instead of planning a visit to another type of village, directed the driver to a similar community. Crossing a rocky river bed again weakened the tires and, of course, we had a flat. This held us up for an hour while the driver patched the previously repaired inner tube. While this was being done Barbara picked flowers in the fields where buttercups, poppies and cornflowers grow in profusion. I walked down the road to a thatched ~uvar's (watchman's) hut Here a whole family from a nearby village had come by cart to spend the day working in the fields. There were eight people all together. They were having a lunch of goat's cheese, black bread and new onions. A week-old infant slept on a pile of straw. After a half hour's rest for lunch they all went back to their work, breaking up clods of earth with locally made hoes.

When the car was ready we turned and headed in a different direction, down to the lowland area to the south of Skopje, Skopska Blatija. Here the houses were one story, mud brick plastered over with a similar material and whitewashed. In some respects they are similar to the more modest šumadijan houses. Inside all had dirt floors. One house still had an open fireplace built directly on the earth. It had a black, glistening

and sooty *odjak* or chimney. The smoke vented directly through a hole in the ceiling. The woman complained that the money she had been saving to buy a stove had gone for taxes. Here too they all have eight or nine children. (That estimate seems to derive from the fact of seeing large numbers of children in the villages and with their parents in the fields.)

But for holidays when they are dressed in their best, you would never dream they are so poor, for the costumes are elaborate and require the skill of a *majstor*. This means that they require an outlay of funds. (It certainly was true that their clothing represented a major investment.) As in other areas women here too wear a long white linen shirt which is often embroidered at the cuffs, neckline and hem in brown and blue. Over this is worn a long, stiff sleeveless coat of very fine woven wool with blue as the predominant color. It is lined with quilted calico so it stands out all around the bottom. Then they wear a solid red woven sash and over it a patterned apron. Formerly geometric patterns in red, black, blue and white were popular. These have now been replaced by floral designs often in bright fuchsia color that the peasants here love so much. This is too bad because it clashes terribly with other parts of what can be a very harmonious costume.

Over their heads women wear a large cotton kerchief. For holidays this may be of silk. The kerchief is tied under the chin and then tied and knotted at the back of the neck. We had the opportunity of seeing a girl's trousseau in this Orthodox village. It included five of the long sleeveless jackets, all of them trimmed by a *majstor* (craftsman). These alone cost several thousand dinars. There were also ten woven aprons, embellished with purchased lace, sequins and other tasteless trim that doesn't go with the costume and that makes you wonder why they spend money on it rather than something more practical. (We were not restrained in expressing our values. But the elaborateness of the women's dress and its obvious close links to prestige within the village community clearly reflected villagers' priorities. It would be reasonable to suppose that at that time the embellishment of the home and certain sanitary practices did not have the highest priority. Such expenses after all did not directly enhance reputations within village society. In this sense urban models were not then, apparently, dominant.) Completing the trousseau were an elaborate blanket woven on a local loom. This was used to decorate the horse which the bride rides to her wedding. Finally, there were several linen sheets, silk blouses, along with some cotton socks and nylon stockings. These items were carefully wrapped in newspaper and stored in a wooden chest.

Later we briefly visited a mixed village, which had five Orthodox houses and several Turkish and Albanian ones. After getting permission for Joel, as a male, to first enter the gates of a Moslem house, we were greeted by the *domacica* (female household head), an energetic Gypsy woman who gave me a big pink rose to stick in my hair. This was similar to that which adorned her teen-age daughter, a beautiful young girl with long black braids. Both were wearing the baggy pants, which go by a different name here than by *dimija*, as they are called in Bosnia. The house had two stories. It was a typical Turkish style house with the overhang on the second story. It was painted baby blue on the outside. There were rose bushes blossoming in the clean swept dirt

outside the house. Inside it was immaculate, with the wooden stairs and flooring scrubbed clean and with woven rags on the floor. Piles of mats and bedding were neatly stacked in a corner, as in every Moslem home. Around three walls ran the usual low wooden bench, covered with woven red cloth and embroidered bolster pillows.

The cleanliness of the home was quite a pleasant surprise after the filth we had been seeing all day. The neighboring house was that of an Orthodox family. They had just purchased land in the village and moved here from Niš. This seemed to be an unusual circumstance. We also saw cleanliness and wondered why the good example wasn't catching on with the more backward neighbors. (Clearly the fact that Moslems slept on bedding on the floors of their homes which were cleared away each day and the fact that ritual washing was associated with patterns of daily prayer did create a different atmosphere in Moslem homes. The question of relative hygiene is a complex one e.g. as in the care in washing food utensils. It is hard to get inside the thoughts we had fifty years ago especially since we had just arrived in Macedonia after living for a year with an Orthodox household in rural Serbia. Certainly we have memories of the men washing their feet after a hard day in the fields. The tile floor in the kitchen was frequently scrubbed and the blankets aired. But there were also homes in "our" village with dirt floors and not very hygienic conditions.)

We wanted to visit a Shiptar (Albanian) house too. Finally we found a Shiptar woman whose spoke some Serbian. They all speak only their native tongue even though they may be second generation Yugoslavs by political nationality. (One can only smile at our credulity concerning the existence of a Yugoslav nationality (aside from cases of intermarriage which was very infrequent among Albanians) The extinction of the Yugoslav state was a matter that then could not be foreseen.)

They too are Moslem. This meant that the house would be clean – this is due to Moslem cleansing ritual. They wash feet, hands and face before prayer five times a day. We described this way of life based on our visit to a Moslem village near Sarajevo last March. Every room has a cupboard like closet arrangement. There is a concrete platform and pipe which drains outside. Here you can pour running water over yourself and get washed. In the yard of this house a young girl was sitting on a sort of wooden platform softened by mounds of pillows. She was embroidering a kerchief and smelling rose blossoms on the bush next to her. The whole composition reminded me of the ballad of old Serbia in Turkish times, especially "Djul devojka," (Rose Maiden).

We had had enough for one day. It was obvious that our guide was dying to run away as soon as possible, so we headed back to town. In the evening we stopped in to visit our friend Duško, (From the ship coming over), but he was working late getting out the newspaper. But his wife and parents greeted us like old friends although we had never met. We stayed late chatting with them. We are to go see them again tonight.

Yesterday being Tito's birthday there was a big celebration in the city stadium. It ran for 3 hours, much too long, and featured guest comedians from Radio Beograd's

popular Veselo Vecer program (Jolly Evening Hour). The MC introduced them as life-sized, better than TV. The joke as well as the comedy sketches made the audience roar with laughter. There followed folk songs from all over Yugoslavia, and two folk dance numbers. After sitting for 3 hours on the concrete benches we were pretty glad to go back to our hotel after the last dance ended.

That same day we met a photographer (Drnkov) who had been in the States and who really is very much on the ball. He now is a field photographer for the museum and is helping Joel procure folk pictures from all over Macedonia. His home, though very Yugoslav in style, has just enough imagination in it to show that he has had some outside experience. It is one of the most pleasant private dwellings, if not the nicest, we have seen so far.

The next morning we left by train, traveling second class. Three cheers for our discount of 75 %. We encountered a very pleasant elderly Swiss couple. I (Barbara) was ashamed at how little French I remembered and pleased at how much German Joel remembers (from our schooling). But with others we constantly kept lapsing into Serbian (Our Macedonian was hardly adequate.) We were now on our way to Ohrid, with its famous lake on the Macedonian - Albanian frontier. After a four and a half hour train ride through rocky hills and lowlands with flooded rice fields we arrived in Bitola, the second largest city in Macedonia. It is amazing how frequently and quickly the sphere of outside influence changes in this country. Here in Bitola it was Greek. A large part of population is from Aegean Macedonia, or from other parts of Macedonia which were formerly part of Greece and are now part of Yugoslavia. (It should be recalled that the civil war in Greece, growing out of World War II, in which the communists played a significant role, was still part of recent memory and involved large population movements.)

The head of the Savez for Prosvetu (Educational Council) had been expecting us. In a most surprisingly efficient manner he had arranged for our hotel room and for bus tickets for Ohrid the next afternoon. He had also secured a car to take us around the next morning (We, of course, were entirely dependent on local transportation. Also at that time private cars were a rarity.) First, we went to the museum, located in an old mansion. Bitola or Monastir, as it was called during Turkish times, (The period of Ottoman rule which lasted till the First World War. It was once a very flourishing city, with a large Jewish merchant population which was almost completely wiped out during the last war, a consequence of the Nazi Holocaust.) At present it is a pleasant city, but growing in size because of candy and leather factories in the vicinity.

The museum immediately won my favor when I discovered that it had a toilet bowl, instead of the so-called *Turski Klozet* or hole in the floor), and even more so when I saw it was of blue and white Delft porcelain, imported from Holland many years ago. The museum itself is well done, as we had come to expect. It has an ethnographic section with costumes from nearby villages and from the city Moslems, the latter with rich brocades and gold and silver embroidery.

The area around Bitola is very rich in archeological sites, having had Greek and then Roman settlements. Immediately outside the city is the excavation site of the Greek community of Heraclea, with carved stone friezes, well-preserved pillars and a clear outline of the buildings. We were taken there by a very sweet student of archeology and art, about my age (Barbara's). She certainly was a pleasure after the dud we had had the day before. After we were talked out on more lofty subjects we turned to the problem of where or how one could wash one's hair here, as the hotel had only a tiny sink with cold running water. Even to have it functioning was something special. Our friend Gospodjica (Miss) D offered to let us wash our hair at the museum early the next morning. She explained that the women who cleaned there would take care of everything. Sure enough the next morning out in the yard behind the museum all was ready. There was a big pot of boiling water and a wooden trough to serve as a basin. This might not have seemed so nice if we had not been accustomed to life in the village for so long. We were, however, extremely satisfied. Then I had to go buy a heap, cotton peasant kerchief as all of mine were begged off me by various Orasac *babe*. (Older women)

So, with wet but clean heads, and feeling good because the car showed up on time, for a change, with the man who had received us the day before. (It was easy for us to get accustomed to our somewhat privileged status.) We drove first to an archeological site several miles outside of town. The director of museum was staying here to direct the excavation. The laborers were peasants paid for the purpose. Sometimes they were assisted by school children on a excursion who were given the fun and excitement of volunteering to help out. The camp was interesting. There were two tents, a makeshift kitchen of woven reed mats propped on poles around an enclosed area which contained a shelf, chest and wood stove. There was a small table with camp stools grouped under a tremendous bright red beach umbrella. This could be seen for miles in all directions. We had even seen it from the train the day before.

The museum director is an enthusiastic, happy sort of person, the kind there should be more of here. He was versed in Joel's work and when he heard we were going to villages he immediately pulled on a shirt and in his shorts and house slippers went out to the car with us and came along. The place we went to is called Srpci Paša. It is a field type (a clustered settlement with surrounding fields) Orthodox village near Bitola. As we walked up the path to the village the first thing we saw was round blobs of patties of animal dung drying in the sun on all the low mud fences. We were told that they would be used as fuel. There is no wood in this area and the corncobs that they had been using all winter were now gone. The houses are of stone and mud. Some of them are raised off the ground level with crude wooden planking. Most of them have dirt floors and are very dirty. (Clearly there was an ambivalence in our attitudes. We found the costumes intriguing, the people friendly but they were also poor, one might say, in general, poorer than in Serbia and certainly more so than in Croatia although the differences were not absolute. As noted we had been in Bosnia. We also visited Kosovo, the poorest region of Yugoslavia but there we did not have any direct contact with villagers. It is worth briefly noting that in 1993-94 when I visited Albania and had a chance to travel in rural areas of the north – the conditions in villagers there, some four decades later, appeared similar in terms of general standard of living.)

These people certainly must be of hearty stock to take all the dirt. As we have noticed all over this area, the beds, if they exist at all, are extremely crude. Often they are like wooden saw horses with planks laid across them and on top there are loose woven reed mats or filthy flax sacks stuffed with straw. (In the Serbian village we studied we slept on such flax sacks stuffed with straw. We also well remembering scratching ourselves because of the fleas in the bedding. We used some insecticide to combat this.) The sleeping area is very wide so that the whole family can fit on one plank bed.

Here the costumes are most decorative although to my mind (Barbara) most gaudy and tasteless. They do, however, look pretty on the women. One woman had a chest full of things to show us but insisted that we had to see how they are worn. Her daughter, whom they fit, was out hoeing, so she said I would make a good enough model. Now I can speak from experience. They certainly are



Women back from the fields, v. Srpei Pasha, 1954

a heavy load of clothes to carry on yourself all year, especially if you're doing heavy work, but the women must be quite used to it. It was a hot day and yet all the women in the village were wearing the same number of garments as I was made to put on.

First came a short linen shirt with long sleeves. On top of this I put on a long coarse linen shirt with a crust of glass beads, sequins and embroidery on the hem and cuffs. The sleeves were short, and even though the sleeves cuffs were decorated, they were rolled up. Over this roll went an armband even more elaborately trimmed than the rolled up cuff. There followed a heavy stiff short sleeveless jacket of black stuff, trimmed with black braid, velvet, and touches of blue embroidery. Partly covering this was a braid of black wool. It seemed like 10 yards long but may have been shorter. It is wound round and round the waist. It is said that this piece of the costume is from the time of the Turks. Then the Orthodox women were said to have adopted this idea to make themselves look unattractive and/or pregnant and therefore undesirable. By this time the figure, including the waistline, is entirely obscured.

Added around the cylinder that I had become the core of, they tied a bright orange, red and black woven apron. Tucked into the neckline of the jacket went a black velvet strap trimmed with colored buttons and a bit of flowered cloth was folded on the edges. This was followed by a necklace, pins, old coins, and everything else in the way of assorted finery to drape on me. Ideally I should have had a long braid, which, as a married woman, I would have tied to a long whisk broom affair of black braided wool, which dangles from beneath the kerchief. A chain of beads is put under the

braids behind the ears and is hooked into the hair under the kerchief. Finally comes the white kerchief, trimmed with tiny beads and knotted “pirate style“ over the head.

Thus decked out, I was put out in the sun, like the patties, to be photographed. This attracted plenty of attention as you can imagine, and soon many women and girls were running in to fix themselves up to be photographed. The best pictures, I think, are the ones of women who had just returned from the fields with their wooden hoes and rakes. All the women were wearing their complete bright costume. There is a photo Joel took of a bride. She had her hair plaited in 32 different braids and arranged in a pattern on her head, with spit curls on the side and a small pin with a plastic rose as the crowning glory on her forehead. (It is apparent that levels of comfort were not a prime consideration but then clothing is not always a matter of comfort and convenience. Even in contemporary terms, to cite only one of many possible examples, tight fitting clothing, especially, but not only, for women can be intentional.)



Braid hair, vill. Srpci Pasha 1954

We returned the friendly director to his excavation site and went on to visit another type of village. This was the village of Dihovo, on the slopes of Pelister, the snow-covered mountain that overlooks Bitola. This upland area in southern Macedonia is especially interesting because of the presence of *pe-albari*, migrant laborers, many of whom went to America. In every single house we saw evidence of a relative being in America, the most frequent being a photograph with “Akron, Ohio“ or “Cleveland“ stamped in the corner. One explanation of why the houses are so nice here is because of all the foreign influence that came into the homes. It was amazing here, less than one hour away from the other village, how clean and progressive Dihovo appeared.

The houses were of stone and wood, two stories high, with concrete flooring on the entrance and wooden flooring throughout, with a wooden interior staircase leading to several rooms for sleeping upstairs. The downstairs rooms were a kitchen with wood stove and a concrete sink. Water was from outside pumps and the other room was usually a store-room filled with wool and potatoes.

Most of the people here wore city clothes. Only the older women still wore the costume of a very pretty black embroidered shirt and black wool embroidered vest. Almost all the younger women had the old costume in their chests. In one house the old man had lived in America for 15 years, having gone and returned for periods of five years three times. He could still understand English but could not speak it. He had returned home for good over 30 years ago (This was in 1954 so he would have returned in the early

1920s. (This is before the institution of the American social security system in the 1930s so it would have been unlikely that he would have had a pension. Although he doubtless sent remittances when he was working abroad.) Wherever we went the people were amazed that Americans should be visiting their village and, of course, always asked if we knew a relative in Pittsburgh or Cleveland.

That afternoon we took a bus to Ohrid, 75 kilometers or 40 miles away. It was a three hour trip but this was partly because it was up and down mountains. It had been a very fair day in Bitola but when we reached a mountain top storm clouds had gathered. We drove in and out of a summer storm as we descended the other side. Then we got a view of Prespa lake, the smaller lake to the west of Ohrid. After going up and down one more mountain range, we sensed our arrival in Ohrid. This was partly because three hours had elapsed but mostly because the ring of mountains seemed to contain an ethereal sort of vacuum and you just felt that a lake was down there somewhere.



Ohrid, 1954

Ohrid Lake is beautiful. It is sometimes called the “jewel in the bosom of Macedonia,” like Dubrovnik is the “pearl of the Adriatic.” It is a lovely sight. The lake is 15 miles long and half as wide, rimmed all around by high snow-capped mountains, made more exotic by the fact that the western rim is in Albania. On a rocky peninsula in the lake is set the old town of Ohrid. It has narrow winding and steep cobblestoned streets. They are lined with Turkish type houses so close to each other that one can literally shake hands across the street from the overhanging second stories. At the very top of the town, on a grassy hill strewn with red poppies, is a crumbling old fortress. Here and there in the panorama you can pick out the stained red tile roofs set in irregular patterns, that cover the old monasteries. One of these is Sveti Sophia built in Byzantine times and later, in the 14th century, converted by the Turkish conquerors into a mosque. Valuable early frescoes were covered with coats of plaster and a minaret was erected inside the cupola. At present there is a renovation program going on to chip off the plaster and reveal the old frescoes.

We went with the historian from the Ohrid museum and were permitted to climb up on the scaffoldings 50 feet about the floor. In doing so we come face to face with angels many centuries old. Later we went up to the monastery of Sveti Kliment. It is an attractive building constructed in the shape of a cross and also contains old and valuable frescoes, the significance of which Joel and I do not fully understand and appreciate, but we just don't have time to read up on them now. The most aesthetic of

all the monasteries in the town is Sveti Jovan. It is a tiny and picturesque, set on a rocky crag with the shallow blue-green water of the lake below. There are willows and yellow wild flowers growing out of the cracks of the rock on which it stands. It contains a tiny but richly decorated chapel. The most interesting feature was, however, upstairs which contained the monks quarters overlooking the lake. There was also a wine storage cellar and a pig-roasting spit. The museum in Ohrid is also a nice place to visit. It is housed in a Turkish style house and was the residence of wealthy early 19th century merchants.

In Ohrid too a car was provided. This time it was a jeep. We had the good fortune to go to the small town of Struga, on the northern end of the lake, on market day. This market, of all we have seen, was certainly the most colorful. It was very well-organized and regimented, thus not as natural appearing as it might be. This year they built rows of brick and wood stalls in a modern design as well as a meat department housed in a glass-enclosed building with a stone floor. It was most functional and attractive. One row of stalls was for crafts. These included opanci (sandals), pottery, and horn set knives among other items. Another row was for vegetable sellers, then there was one for cheese and other for dairy products. (Women were prominent here.)

The grain selling and livestock trading (which was the sphere of men) took place in a large open area at the end of the market area. There (apparently) was no place set aside for women selling handiwork so they squatted on the curbs between the rows of stalls with their wares in their laps. We bought several pairs of brightly colored hand knitted socks. (Although they were made in the traditional form). Their ethnographic value is lessened as they are black, rose, yellow, green and purple, far from the orange, red and black which are the traditional colors of this region.

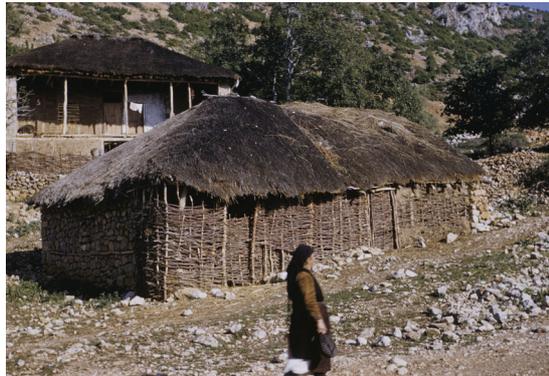
We did, however, buy them because they will make colorful and interesting gifts. (We, of course, falsely assumed that “real“ folk arts were unchanging and not responsive to changes in economic patterns and stylistic innovations.) Everyone (the women) was in costume. There were variations in national dress in the villages within the small radius around Struga. This is amazing. I think Joel got some swell pictures before it started to rain. Before going back to Ohrid we were stopped at the pre-war natural history museum in the town (Although we were not conscious of the situation at that time, natural history museums were apparently given a lower priority than those of history and even folklore since their ideological function was less manifest.)

On Sunday, May 30th, we went with a pleasant German doctor, his wife and son in their car to the monastery of Sveti Naum, at the far south end of the lake, about 50 yards from Albania. This doctor was a POW for four years in Oklahoma and Arkansas and speaks English pretty well, so we didn't have to struggle with German and French. The art historian from the museum went with us, too. It was very hard for six to fit into the tiny car but it was certainly nice of him to let us come. From the town of Ohrid to Sveti Naum is 15 miles, about a 45 minute drive along the cost of Lake Ohrid. Sometimes we would wind around small mountain passes and often the “road“ went across the sand on the shore. This was the case when we passed through the fishing village of Peštani.

It being Sunday afternoon the fisherman were not out on the lake and the nets were drying on poles set in the sand on the shore. Under the canopy of the half-shade-the nets made the women sat resting and chatting as is their Sunday afternoon custom here.

After we got out of the car I went and sat under the nets with the women, chatting in Serbian and pidgin Macedonian. They seemed to love it, especially since they are accustomed to tourists passing through on the way to Sveti Naum. They photograph, stare, and point but do not converse with them. The fishing boats used are very old and, some may say primitive, but they are effective. While Joel chatted with the men about the boats and the fine points of making fish nets, I talked with the widening group of women. Trying to translate for the German lady was difficult for me since I have just picked up only the most elementary German during our stay in Yugoslavia. It occurred to me that it would be interesting to see a prosperous fishing village home. I then asked the group as to who had house nearby and if we could visit it. The domacica (mistress of the house) immediately complied and led the way. When we got there she discreetly pointed to the outhouse, thinking that was what I had really wanted. When I explained my purpose she was very pleased, and led me into her home. It was a two story affair, very clean and neat. It had iron bedsteads, the first we had seen in a Macedonian village.

Later, on the way further south we passed two more villages in the hills. These were sheep-herding villages with corrals for the animals on the slopes. These enclosures were constructed of woven reeds and branches. We arrived at Sveti Naum and, of course, had to show our border permits. Outside the monastery proper is a small post office. The person in charge explained that all mail,



Traditional object for keeping livestock, Ohrid Region 1954

from all over the world, going to Albania has to pass through this post station. This is by international agreement. There is no other way for mail to reach Albania. The only exception is the Iron Curtain countries whose mail is flown in directly from Moscow to Tirana. Right on the wooden slope at the base of which is located the monastery there is a row of burned trees marking the Yugoslav frontier. A few yards further is another row indicating the Albanian frontier. The few rows of trees in between are neutral territory, or better put no man's land. The post official said that his Albanian counterpart crosses the border every Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday, to collect the mail for his country and to dispatch outgoing mail from Albania. There is a military building on the border with TITO painted on the roof. Just a few hundred yards away, on the other side, is a similar one for Albania. The name of the Albanian leader is painted on one

side and on the side facing Yugoslavia there is the name MALENKOV (the then Soviet premier). It would have made an interesting picture along with the tomb of Sveti Naum but picture taking was prohibited.

The chapel is very pretty. It contains the tomb of Sveti Naum. Peasants make pilgrimages and leave offerings at his grave. We saw a pair of socks and towel on the tomb. The guard, a magnificent old man with a big white moustache, explained that the items are later sold in Ohrid and the money is put in a church fund. Around the church are the remains of the monks living quarters as well as those for guests and also animal stalls. These burned down in a fire some years ago. Next to the chapel is a tall bell tower built in 1925, not very harmonious with the existing architecture. However, the whole cluster of buildings certainly makes a beautiful reflection in the quiet mill pond below. Next to the mill pond, surrounded by willows, is the source of the river Crni Drim, which rushes under an old wooden bridge and flows from the bluer calmer water of the Lake. It is an extremely beautiful place.

The next morning we said good-bye to our German friends and received an invitation to visit them if we ever come to Hamburg. Then the man from the museum, who had been very friendly the whole time we had been in Ohrid area, agreed to go with us to a village in the mountains above the lake. No jeep, even if one were available, could have made it, so we set out on foot. It was not too long a hike. It took us less than two hours. Nevertheless it was quite hot and required great effort. We climbing over rocks at a very steep incline. There didn't appear to be a path that we could easily follow. How the people who live here can make this trip once a week on market day, with nursing babies, lambs on their shoulders, or a load of wood, is beyond me. But we finally did make it, to the village of Ramno, a desolate, rickety and impoverished place high up in the stone hills. There was an incongruously beautiful view of Lake Ohrid far below. (It has not been our intention to bring things up to date (2004) in there 1954 memoirs but a few brief words about JMH's visit to Ramno might be appropriate. It is now easily reached by a pored road. Homes no have undoor plumbing. The older houses from "our time" are now used a weekend vacation homes by people from Ohrid who committee.

Wednesday, June 2

One doesn't often get a chance to make a trip like this and I think it is well worth recording every detail, for it is to my (JMH) great regret that I didn't have my own color film when I took the Hosteling (youth bicycle) tour across Europe in 1949. But this time I did have the film. (A selection of the photos that JMH took are used to illustrate this account.) By the way, as per usual custom, I have been buying picture postcards and I also got some photographs as gifts. (Copies of almost all these photos are now archived in the Department of Ethnology at the University of Skopje and some we used to illustrate this article.)

Bobbie (Barbara Kerewsky-Halpern) has been typing away all day. I sent the first four pages of her letter this morning and the remaining two pages are in this letter. While

Bobbie sat and typed I ran around and saw the people at the museum (to formalize the exchange) and also got our official reentry permit for after we return from Greece. Tomorrow we are getting up at 5.30 to see a holiday celebration in a village near Skopje. It is only 14 kilometers away but there are only two trains a day, one in the afternoon at three and one in the morning at six. There is a train which returns in the evening at seven. We will be in the village for 13 hours and have a good chance to see a lot. The day after tomorrow we are leaving for Athens and possibly Istanbul. Our plan is to return to Yugoslavia again within two weeks. After that we will visit Montenegro and the Dalmatian coast (This was the end of our trip through Yugoslavia in 1953-54.)

Enclosed in this letter is a copy of the exchange agreement that I have concluded between the American Museum of Natural History in New York and the Ethnological Museum in Skopje. I am also sending a copy to the American Museum in New York.

Friday, June 4

We are all packed up, for the umpteenth time, and waiting till train time, which is several hours away but it's too hot to spend the time doing something else out of doors. Much to my surprise, we are going to Athens this afternoon. I never dreamed we would be able to get there, especially when we planned our trip. But 3rd class thickets, on the Simplon, are one way only 2000 d (\$ 6) apiece, so we felt that we could treat ourselves to it. Actually, if you look on a map, it would have been a pity to have been here in Macedonia, so close not to have had the opportunity to go to Greece. I stubbornly insisted on returning to Yugoslavia and going to the Kosmet (Kosovo and Metohia), Crna Gora (Montenegro) and the Dalmatian Coast, thus seeing the entire country. When returning to Skopje we will stop in Salonica and from there hop over to Istanbul. It's a great life. We plan roughly to be back in Yugoslavia in about two weeks and to leave early in July.

Through Thomas Cook Co. we have made room arrangements in Paris starting July 11. This was probably a very good idea as will be absolutely mobbed for the whole week of Bastille Day and every place will be packed. They will notify us in Dubrovnik if the arrangements have been transacted satisfactorily. (We have decided to leave in these details of our travel arrangements as they reflected something of the privileged position we had as young Americans at that time. Such extended travels are now commonplace for a great many Europeans but that was not the case a half century ago. Youthful travelers at that time, while by no means uncommon, were nevertheless still a restricted group. Certainly the great majority of people in the Balkans and in Yugoslavia did not easily have the chance for extensive international trips on their own whim. Unfortunately a half century later visa problems remain for Macedonians. Travel was easier for several decades ago under liberalized socialism).

When we left off our account we were wearily trudging up the rock slope to the village of Ramno near Lake Ohrid. This village turned out to be the most primitive and pitiful we have yet seen. Incongruously, it was all electrified as the power station for the whole Ohrid area is located right behind it. Aside from this, it is completely isolated,

accessible only by foot. The houses are rickety stone and wood affairs, with patches of parched earth and rock outcrops all around. No crops are grown except in one small cleared area where the big boulders and smaller rocks are cleared out by hand and then used for a fence around the cleared area. A basis of the economy is selling wood. Many of the villagers make trips into town with a little burro loaded with wood to sell. Livestock raising remains crucial. Someone in each household goes with the family's flock for the three or four summer months. These shepherds live in reed lean to huts during this period. The grazing areas are located on the other side of the mountain where the pastures are better. A few times a week women from the village hike over and bring some loaves of bread, garlic and onions, and take back the cheese. (This way of life is now extinct).

This area is too poor to support expenditures for elaborate costumes, but the older women did all have parts of their costume in their chests. Again, there seemed to be a lot of children. Something that struck me was how pretty all the children in this particular village seemed.

The houses are mostly two-story, with a store-room downstairs, and wooden steps on the outside leading up to an overhanging balcony which seems to serve as a kind of living room in good weather. The sleeping rooms are also on this floor. The rooms on the second floor, as well as the ground, floor have dirt floors. This is so even though there is wood in the area. Often there are no beds but a roll of woven corn husks, designating the sleeping area in the corner of the room. Sometimes a small stove, like half an oil drum on legs, is in the center of the room. There is also a stool or two, the usual chest, plus a string of dried peppers. That is all. But the filth is amazing. In one house we saw the most primitive set-up. It was of the kind that was in less progressive houses in šumadija over 60 years ago. The old people in Serbia used to tell us about how they lived in their childhood. In one two-room house built right on the ground, with no upper floor, we saw in the first room a pot of beans cooking, suspended from an iron chain from the ceiling.

The fire was open, on the ground. The door was open, too, as there was no other way for the smoke to escape as there was no chimney or even hole in the roof. In the other room was a baby sleeping on a pallet on the floor. The infant's face was covered with a rag to keep out the smoke. The whole house, however, was filled with smoke and we were choking and spluttering, although they were all accustomed to it. In this house there were seven people; the old man and his wife, their son and his wife, and three small children. The old man indicated the dirt area in one corner where he and his wife slept, and, pointing to a filthy flax stuffed mattress rolled up in the other corner, said that that was where the others slept. They had a better place, he said, because they were younger. (Now there is no longer the great rural - urban divide. During my (JMH) recent visit I met an old lady at the local church who had recently returned from a visit to relatives in Australia). (We have seen enough filth and poverty to last us for a long time).

Early the next morning we got up early. This was fortunate because the hotel clerk forgot to wake us at 5 am, as we had requested. Luckily we caught the Ohrid to Skopje bus. The trip takes ten hours, thus averaging about 10 miles an hour. Part of the time is used up by the fact that at every town we had a stop of 10 minutes to half an hour. Also these buses can't or won't go fast when possible. The bus was so arranged that only two windows opened and it was very hot. Although a big sign forbade smoking, the passengers, driver and conductor all smoked. When it started to rain, they closed the two windows and we rode in steaming, air-tight, smoky misery. (For the foreigner used to confined no smoking areas smoking by all ages continues to be a problem).

Aside from this, it was a fascinating trip. The bus route followed the narrow valley of the Crni Drim River through the mountains that mark the Albanian frontier. At one point we had to go off the road for about a kilometer. The driver used a newly worn track, as the road now was in Albanian territory. This was according to a recent bilateral agreement, at least this is what we were told. This was where the Crni Drim turns west into Albania. After another mountain pass, we followed the Radika River. The valleys we passed through were wild and beautiful, with the rushing mountain streams, and lush green trees overhanging the streams. A variety of brightly colored birds flitted about. Sometimes we passed a village tucked into the hills.

Later we passed through Mavrovo. Here a dam and hydroelectric station is in the process of construction. Going over the next mountain we descended by tortuous hair-pin turns to the Vardar valley and the town of Gostivar. We stopped there and found it was market day. Again there were wonderful costumes. We especially noticed one old man, who looked more Turkish than those we had seen in other areas. He had a brightly colored turban, baggy britches and, of course, a big drooping mustache. Then we endured a stomach-bouncing segment from Gostivar to Tetovo. There what seemed to be a mentally deranged girl came to the bus to beg. Eventually, at four pm we arrived in Skopje. (Today's modern highways in Macedonia make a trip convenient but less eventful).

We had reserved a room, and trudged up to the 4th floor gratefully anticipating a rest. The elevator had not been running all year. We were tired and sooty but found a young man sleeping in the bed. After half an hour he was out. Then there followed much prompting to the maid. She didn't understand the need to change the linen. We finally got washed and rested. .

Yesterday Joel and a young French girl, who calls herself an ethnologist, went in the company of the photographer we had previously met (Drnkov) to a village festival in Dra~evo. They left at 5.30. I couldn't go till the afternoon train because there was laundry, packing, and seeing people to be done here in town. The occasion was Spasovdan, an all-village Slava. On the train with me in the afternoon several hundred people got off when we arrived in the village. Many were natives of this community who had come from the big city to be in their village for the holiday. I could hear the beat of the *tupan*, the big southern Yugoslav-Bulgarian-Greek type drum, long before

the half hour walk to the village was completed. Eventually I found Joel, the French girl and the photographer even with the crowd.

The village is a prosperous one. They grow grains and have vineyards of good quality. They also specialize in onions and other truck garden produce for the Skopje area. This prosperity was reflected in the dress. Almost everyone was in new, neat and often very elaborate costumes. I



village of Drachevo in 1954

I don't know about the interiors of the houses as I didn't have a chance to see any. Joel will have to write about that as they had lunch at one house. (Evidently I (JMH) never go around to writing up these notes. One reason being that I was constantly busy either taking photographs or thinking about the possibility. From a 2004 editorial point of view it is not now possible when editing these notes to reconstruct these details.)

Every female, from the oldest Baba to tots of three were in traditional costume. This was again the long linen shirt, to the ankles. The girls all had their shirts trimmed with hand-crocheted lace. Over this is worn the Macedonian *elek*, the long and stiff vest of fine wool decorated rather hideously (It is tempting to rewrite here and to modify the original observations by substituting a more neutral word like garish for hideous but by doing so it would take away from impressionable observations which, of course, reflects the way in which an unsophisticated observer dealt with divergent cultural values.) with ribbons and braid. Then comes a narrow woven sash, a bright woolen apron with black and red predominating, completed with a large yellow kerchief. They looked pretty, especially the young girls. The females danced relatively little, and always slowly. But the men, most in city clothes, hopped and pranced and jumped. They seemed to be getting something out of their system. (In retrospect these two contrasting gender manifestations of self within a group obviously do reflect



Old men on Spasovden in village of Drachevo, 1954

, in part, the ways in which these boundaries and manifestations of self were reflected in broader aspects of social life.)

Later, three young men from the village, who are now professionals with a folk dance group, came and led the dancing. We saw that all the apparent gymnastics are part of the performance. The movements are carefully measured and very difficult to execute as they follow the rhythm. This rhythm is supplied by the tupan, played masterfully by a powerful black (His “blackness“ could be seen as heightening the drama) Gypsy. He was a magnificent ham actor and really acted with his whole being. Two older Gypsies played a Macedonian flute like clarinet, which gives a high oriental reedy pitch (zurla) and supplies the melody for the dance. The cheeks of the Gypsies alternately puffed in and out like chipmunks. (It is doubtful that we would use that animal analog today.)

Perspiration dripped from their eyes and foreheads and spurted off at an angle when the cheeks puffed out suddenly and shoved the sweat away. It was excruciatingly hot and the dance most difficult, but they kept it up for about two and a half hours and when they ended their whole bodies were throbbing with exertion. Joel took a great deal of photographs. (Of course, we were aware that the Gypsies had a subordinate and marginalized role within the society at large. From our time in Serbia we saw them living in poor housing in ghettos in both the cities and towns. They were most often visible as street sweepers and, sometimes in metal crafts. Yet in Serbia as well as Macedonia they had prominent roles at weddings and festivals as musicians. It was, in the natural order of things, that it was the peasants that danced and had the weddings while the Gypsies were the paid performers who enhanced the celebration. The only exception being, as we have recorded in these notes, is when they combined with other national groups on state secular holidays such as Tito’s birthday. This provided an opportunity to dramatize the communist enforced state ideology of brotherhood and unity. The collapse of socialist Yugoslavia as a failed state has clearly mean that these ethnic relationships had to be reworked in new ways, not necessarily to the advantage of the Roma ramshoeld whose settlements still be seen next to the old yards on the main highways.)

This morning the head waiter at the hotel, who is from Gali~nik, the most interesting place in Macedonia, gave me two pairs of the incredibly richly embroidered sleeves of the women’s costume from his village along with a woven sash. This was in exchange for a pair of my shoes and also a pair of Joel’s. These are too heavy for us to carry around any longer, some old underwear was also included. (Throughout our stay in Yugoslavia we were collecting folk costume. Photographs of some of these items have been published in American Museum of Natural History publications. On several occasions we did this mutually desirable exchange of clothing).

He is from the area which is most famous for *pe~albari* or migrant laborers. About 1900 the men from this area started leaving their village to seek work elsewhere. They sent money home and once every five years or so they would return for half a year. Afterwards the *pecalbar* would leave his wife and family again. Gradually, with the combination of money sent home, and with the sheep providing plenty of good wool, the women’s

costumes became more elaborate and were increasingly embellished with gold and silver. They used the traditional 100 silver filigree buttons, along with imported silk from Czechoslovakia. This resulted in a lavish wool fabric incorporating fringe and trims. Every year, on July 12, the unmarried men came home, chose a wife, and the village had a huge community wedding, lasting for days. A man from Gali~nik traditionally always marries a local girl. Then he goes away to work and comes back when he can. This joint wedding still exists today, and we would have gone with our waiter friend if we hadn't made the Paris arrangements. This waiter married and went to Cairo, where his father had been a waiter. There he learned to speak eight languages including English, French, Egyptian (Arabic), along with his native Macedonian and probably Serbian as well and possibly Greek).

Now he is the head waiter at this hotel in Skopje. He said that he is proud to be from Gali~nik and proud to be a peasant. However, he also took pride in the fact that he had never hoed or plowed in his life. (This attitude reflected his simultaneously enduring ties to his community of origin and his achievement of status outside this same community which enabled him to disdain the manual field labor integral to the maintenance of a peasant society. As his example illustrated the inherent contradiction in these value system ultimately led to his leaving the village permanently and today Galicnik in its geographically marginal location has become an artifact of the past.)

He said that when the pe~albari came back for a visit, they would always return in their fine new city clothes. He recalled a time when he brought a car and drove home to his village. (in the 1970s I (JMH) visited the mountain village that Jozef Obrebski had studied in the 1930s (Vol~e in the region of Pore~e) and remember seeing a new Mercedes up on blocks outside an old fashioned village home. The car had obviously been driven with great care to this village as we were only able to reach in by jeep over bad roads.) But the next day he and all his friends, who had been away, would put on their peasant costumes that they loved.

I was at his house yesterday and as he was talking about all this his wife casually slipped on the vest of the women's outfit and lovingly caressed it. He said that he is 40 and has been away (from Gali~nik) for a total 20 years and that they now have five children. Since he has a good position here in Skopje, he decided to remain here in Macedonia. He felt that he had been away from his family long enough. When he left home for the first time his two older children were babies. He returned and they were then 11 and 12 years old and didn't know their own father. This idea of the husband leaving his wife and children for such a long time puzzled me. When I asked him about it and how they could be separated for so long and still remain a family unit he replied that he couldn't explain it. (Such attitudes don't have simple explanations but in retrospect it is apparent that the strong attachment to the village meant more than an abstract idea of a community, a heritage and the overt manifestation in the clothes of the women and the cars and remittances of the men. Even in the new houses which were constructed. The major factor was, of course, the family and extended kin support network most particularly the unquestioning support of the women — wives and mothers.) At any rate, they are all together now living in Skopje, but when they say

“home” they mean Gali~nik, and when he, as a state employee, gets his yearly holiday, they immediately head for their native village where they have a house which is empty the rest of the year. (The pattern of pe~albari continues today with a :remittared remain a vital element in the economy).

He told us some interesting things about the peasant economy. This conversation came about when we started looking at the pictures in his album. None of the peasants wore opanke (leather sandals) but rather ordinary shoes. He said that they were all gentleman even if they were peasants. Of the men who remained, some went to the market town (or lowland villages) to purchase fruit and vegetables for the whole village. Gali~nik is an isolated mountain settlement which could have been very poor, if they were totally dependent on their pastoral economy. Others were employed as shepherds, to watch the flocks for the whole village. They were the only ones who wore opanke, as part of their “work clothes“.

The women, having no gardens to tend, no fields to hoe and no stock to watch, were housekeepers, staying home and taking care of the house. They were engaged in embroidering and weaving and bringing up their children. They waited for the year when their men would return for a visit. Thus they lived very well on a cash economy, with all they needed, in the way of material things. (Again with our long term view this is obviously a somewhat idealized view of the *pe~alba* based society. But in our travels in Macedonia in 1953-54 and in subsequent years it became apparent that, generally speaking, we were most likely to find the photos of such distant places as Akron and Detroit more in the economically marginal mountain villages than in the settlements of the prosperous lowlands. This applies not only to those who participated in migrant labor and sent remittances but also to those who became merchants and maintained trading networks throughout the Balkans. Since the time of our initial fieldwork a large research literature has been produced on this topic.)

We just wanted to say in case you are concerned about us that we are having the time of our lives and getting the most out of it.(Without qualification we can say that we both enjoyed our fieldwork and felt that we had profited from it. Certainly others have had similar experiences in subsequent years and, of course, we had predecessors including scholars such as Jozef Obrebski)