

## **George Varadev**

### **1925-1913**

On June 13, 2013 our Parish said last goodbye to George Varadev. We lost a long time active member, ex-President of the church Committee and a good friend. Together with his family, relatives and friends we paid respect and reverence to his life, full of duty and devotion to the church.

George was born on June 23, 1925 in the village Dolna Sungartia (currently town Hadjidimovo, Gotze Deltchev district, Bulgaria). The origins of the family are from Starchishta village, district of Koukoush, Aegean Macedonia. Their destiny is one of many thousands Bulgarian tragedies. Right after First World War the father of George, as well as his uncle Dimitar are imprisoned in the Greek town of Yanina. During the war, the father (with the same first name – George) is fighting in the regiment of the legendary Cornel Boris Drangov at the front near Doiran.

After the war the father settles back in the ancestral village of Starchishta, now under Greek occupation. Immediately the two brothers Varadev are arrested, put in the Yanina prison and sentenced as enemies of the Greek State. Both are released from prison only in 1924 after interference by the Russian Ambassador in Athens. The Varadev family, as is the case of many others, cannot support to live under Greek occupation, leaves Greece and settles in Bulgaria. George is the first of the children, born in Bulgaria. After him the family has sons Athanas, Ivan and three daughters.

The Second World War brings back the family to their native Starchishta, now under temporary Bulgarian wartime administration. The father Varadev is the village's mayor for four years, from 1941 to 1944.

The tensions and turmoil in Bulgaria following the failure of the national ideals after the war, puts the family under much hardship and ordeal. The young George after middle school is in trade apprenticeship with Alexander Grigorov, the husband of his first cousin Vangelia Mladenov. After the communist take-over in 1944 the father Varadev is in connection with the anti-communist resistance. In the same time some of the relatives like the first cousin Pando Mladenov are sentenced to death by the so called People's Tribunal. Others are banned from the region and forced into internment to the North of Bulgaria.

In August 1951 the young George Varadev escapes to Greece with few friends through the Jostovo village. The secret services of the pro-Serbian Bulgarian communist party look for the father to arrest him, but he manages to hide in the surrounding gardens and also flies to Greece.

Upon arrival in Greece the young George is imprisoned in the Lavron Camp on the island of Macronyssos. Short after him the dad is put into the same camp. Both are kept there until December 1951 when the young George and his cousin George Mladenov are released to leave for Canada. They got sponsored by Pando, the older Mladenov brother. The father Varadev, slandered by Greek informers is transferred to another prison camp – Sirrus. His son George manages to organize his release from there and a transfer to Canada.

In Canada George settles and works in Burlington, then in Toronto. In Toronto he works as a buyer for meats for the big grocery chain Knob Hill Farms. He retires from the same company after many years of devoted successful service for which he received awards and recognition.

George Varadev was married on January 25, 1965 to Tzveta Toupareva. Their daughter Maria was born on December 30, 1966 and son Athanas (Thom) on June 10, 1969. George and his family were among the active members of our church. He was elected President of the Church Committee twice: in 1988 for 4 years and in 2000 until 2003. George departed from us after short illness on June 13 2013. He was buried in the Saint Clair and Birchmount Cemetery in Toronto. On his final destination he was given respect by many parishioners of all Macedono-Bulgarian churches, relatives and friends. Sincere condolences were presented to his family.

The church Committee and the whole Parish bow down before George Varadev. May God bless his memory!

*The current tribute to George Varadev is based on biographical notes kindly presented by George Mladenov. Editing and English translation by Vassil Popvassilev.*