

Crimes Committed by the Communist Regime in Bulgaria

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1. Brief history of the communist regime in Bulgaria

The Bulgarian Communist Party (BCP) is responsible for the State governance in Bulgaria from 1944 to 1989 and for the establishment of the totalitarian communist regime in the country.

The BCP seized the power on 9 September 1944 through a coup supported by a foreign country - the Soviet Union, which had declared war on Bulgaria.

Founded in 1903 after a split in the Social-Democratic Party, BCP had failed to assert itself as a significant power in the Bulgarian politics.

Its efforts to generate big electoral support were unsuccessful, and its parliamentary influence never matched that of the agrarian and social-democratic parties in the country.

In the 20-ties the party leader Georgi Dimitrov directed the party to collaboration with the Bolshevik totalitarian regime in Russia and to terrorist activities.

In 1925 the communists prepared the St. Nedelya Church assault in Sofia. 150 people, mainly from the country's political and military elite, were killed in the attack and around 500 were injured.



St. Nedelya Church assault

In the 30-ties Dimitrov joined the clique of political gangsters surrounding Joseph Stalin and was repeatedly sending from Moscow during the Second World War, calls for armed struggle against the capitalism in Bulgaria. Even the total number of communists involved in armed actions in the period in 1941-1944 in the country did not exceed 3 thousand.



Georgi Dimitrov in Moscow, 1937

Immediately after the coup on 9 September 1944, the BCP started the acts of terror against the "bourgeois". People were killed in all towns and villages of the country. There was a directive of the BCP to its members to organize groups of executors with the aim to go to every village and kill 2-3 of the "enemies of the people". The "enemies" were teachers, priests, civil servants, writers, journalists and civic leaders.



The Soviet army in Sofia, 1944



Communist partisans,
September 1944

The executors arrested the victims in their homes early in the morning, collected them in the municipality offices and killed them on the next night outside the settlement. But to their relatives, who asked them, they answered that they must bring for their father or brother money, clothes and eating. And the spouses or mothers brought eating and money week after week until they understood that their relative is death. Some of the killers forced the families of the victims to leave their houses and the killers started to live there, using the clothes of the killed by them victim.



“Enemies of the people” arrested by the communists in Sofia

Some of BCP’s leaders -like Georgi Dimitrov and Vulko Chervenkov, were in Moscow, while others like Traicho Kostov, Anton Yugov and Todor Zhivkov were in Sofia. But all communicated to their followers, who typically were people from the villages without education, by a simple and compelling message: the time had come to get rid of the “bourgeois scum.” By the end of October 1944 were killed approximately 26 850 people without court sentences

The next stage of the communist terror began in December 1944, when the government installed special People’s Courts authorized to prosecute “fascists”. Similar tribunals were established in every European state that was occupied by or collaborated with Nazi Germany; in Bulgaria, however, the purges were of a magnitude unseen elsewhere. In Hungary or Czechoslovakia individual members of parliaments and governments were indicted - whereas in Bulgaria the government put on trial all members of all governments and all parliaments between 1941 and 1944. Each one of these individuals was sentenced to death - 1050 death sentences overall - and the verdicts were carried out immediately.

The term “fascist” was applied to anyone who had opposed the communists in the past or might oppose them in the future. In addition to the judicial and extra-judicial murders, “fascists” were subjected to imprisonment (the People’s Court sentenced to imprisonment 6188 people), deportations (approximately 5,000 families were sent into internal exile), and incarceration (by the end of 1945 approximately 10,000 people were languished in concentration camps).



Map of the communist concentration camps in Bulgaria

By the summer of 1945 several parties - the most popular of which was the Bulgarian Agricultural National Union (BANU) declared themselves an opposition to the communist government. Nikola Petkov, BANU's Chairman, became the main spokesman of the democratic resistance. The destruction of the opposition became a top priority for the BCP, and this murderous campaign was carried out under the guidance of the party's leader, Georgi Dimitrov.

The last multi-party elections in Bulgaria were held in October 1946. Despite the persecution of opposition activists and the systematic falsification of electoral results in the countryside the opposition still won 28% of the votes. In June 1947 Nikola Petkov was stripped of his immunity and arrested while delivering a speech in parliament. Charged with high treason, he was sentenced to death and hanged in September. Soon thereafter all non-communist organizations were banned, opposition deputies were arrested, and all remnants of political pluralism were extinguished.

As the process of monopolization of power reached its final phase, the BCP initiated a massive effort to build a Soviet-type economy. By the end of 1949 all privately owned businesses, industrial enterprises, banks and trading companies were confiscated, and most of the owners and their families were exiled to the countryside.

The last campaign against private property targeted the rural areas, where a Soviet-style collectivization of land got underway in the late 1940s. Officially described as “voluntary,” this campaign quickly turned violent. In several regions of the country peasants rebelled and even engaged in guerilla warfare. Private farmers were eliminated as a social group only after a series of punitive campaigns during which hundreds of people were murdered and thousands detained in 82 concentration camps, the biggest one was the camp at the Danube island Belene.

By the mid-1950s Bulgaria was a typical Stalinist polity characterized by a one-party dictatorship, an all-powerful secret police, periodic purges that victimized “enemies”, a fully nationalized economy and a cult for the national leader (initially Dimitrov, and after his death in 1949 Vulko Chervenkov, Dimitrov's brother-in-law and successor).



Politburo of the BCP in the 50-ties

It must be emphasized that the communist totalitarian regime became consolidated only after several waves of terror, through the physical extermination of non-communist elites and the brutal victimization of entire social groups.

After Stalin's death Nikita Khrushchev's de-Stalinization campaign launched at the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in February 1956 had an immediate impact on Bulgaria. Chervenkov was forced to share power with Todor Zhivkov, who was appointed General Secretary in April 1956. By the early 1960s Zhivkov had outmaneuvered his rivals and established himself as the undisputed dictator of the party and the country - a position he was to retain until his downfall in November 1989, thus earning the distinction of Eastern Europe's longest-serving dictator.

Post-Stalinism in Bulgaria was characterized by the almost complete absence of political liberalization. In the aftermath of the Hungarian Revolution of October 1956 BCP's new leadership demonstrated its readiness to fight "reaction" by systematically arresting individuals whose social origin or cultural background rendered them "suspicious." It was during Zhivkov's tenure, in late 1956, that one of Bulgaria's most horrible concentration camps, Lovetch, came into existence. Over the next years almost 200 musicians, journalists and peasants were beaten and tortured to death there.

During the next decades the repressive infrastructure of the regime remained intact and was ruthlessly used. The leaders of human rights groups were imprisoned for a long time or killed like the writer Georgi Markov, assassinated in London in 1978.



Politburo of the BCP in the 70-ties

During the 80-ties as the rest of the world was entering the digital age, Bulgaria's communist leaders had to ration electricity and import food in order to forestall economic collapse. The country's foreign debt exploded (reaching \$10 billion in early 1989). In response, the regime tightened political control and unleashed a wave of repressions. In a bizarre and cruel move, the Turkish minority in Bulgaria (10 % of the population) was charged with disloyalty to the "socialist motherland," and ethnic Turks were forced to adopt Bulgarian names and renounce their cultural and religious traditions. Facing the resistance of local communities, the BCP government ordered the

occupation of the ethnically mixed regions. Several dozen protestors were killed and thousands were arrested; 300,000 ethnic Turks were forced to immigrate to Turkey.

In 1989 under the pressure of the growing opposition democratic movement and the revolutions in the other communist countries in Europe the BCP were forced to participate at free elections which was the beginning of the rebirth of the democracy in the country.

Zhivkov died being under home arrest in 1996, but nobody from communist party politburo and the other perpetrators of the communist crimes was convicted until now.

During its rule from 1944 to 1989 the Bulgarian Communist Party has been a criminal organization the activities of which were aimed at suppressing human rights and the democratic system.

2. Data on the crimes committed by the communist regime

Killing of people without any legal procedure or the sentence being pronounced after their assassination

September-October 1944	26 850 people killed without court sentences
1945 - 1962	Killed in concentration camps: 640 people



People killed in the concentration camp Belene

Unfair trials

January - Mai 1945	1050 death sentences, 6188 people imprisoned
1946 - 1975	Death sentences: 680 people

Inhuman treatment and torture especially in concentration camps, prisons and detention centres and especially against political prisoners and detainees

1945 - 1985	Arrested: 485 200 people
1944 - 1962	Imprisoned in 82 Concentration camps: 89 430 people
1946 - 1986	Political prisoners: 36 500 people



Prison for political prisoners in Stara Zagora

Violation of the right of ethnic self-identification and involuntary displacement of people on ethnic grounds

1984 - 1989	Killed during street mass demonstrations of the Turkish minority: 160 people
1984 - 1989	Turks imprisoned in concentration camp: 1200 people
1984 - 1989	Deportations of Turks to rural areas: 4000 people
1989	Turks forced to leave the country: 300 000 people



Ethnic Turks forced to leave Bulgaria in 1989





Restriction of free movement in the state and abroad

1944 - 1980	Deportations to rural areas: 11212 families (42 320 people)
1946 - 1989	Killed on the iron curtain: 1500 people



Siegfried Gamisch and Karl Heinz Engelmann,
killed on the border with Greece in 1966

Support for totalitarianism abroad

 Fidel Castro	1962: 5000 carbines Mauser, 10 000 carbines Manlicher and 30 000 hand grenades submitted to the Castro regime in Cuba.
	1968: Participation of Bulgarian troops at the invasion of the Warsaw pact in Czechoslovakia.
 Pol Pot	1 million leva and 7 million rubles submitted to criminal regime in Kampuchea
 Saddam Hussein	Financial support to the regime of Saddam Hussein trough credits. 1 560 000 000 USD losed.

Total control of the security services over the life of the citizens



The Bulgarian communist secret political police Darzhavna Sigurnost /DS/

1949	Officers and sergeants of DS: 3614 people
1956	Officers and sergeants of DS: 7000 people
1973	Officers and sergeants of DS: 7500 people
1989	Officers and sergeants of DS: 8000 people
1952	Secret agents of DS: 55 000 people
1973	Secret agents of DS: 131 000 people
1989	Secret agents of DS: 129 460 people
1944 - 1989	Total number of the officers and sergeants of DS: 25 000 people
1944 - 1989	Total number of the secret agents of DS: 387 000 people
1944 - 1989	Total number of Bulgarian citizens observed by the secret political police: 2 000 000 people
Total volume of the archives of DS:	20 kilometers

What happens with the initiators of the communist crimes after 1989?



Zhivkov arrested in 1990



Zhivkov at meeting with his "comrades" in 1996 kept by his bodyguard Boyko Borisov, now PM of Bulgaria






At home in November 2009: The last communist PM Georgi Atanasov, during whose government the militia killed 9 ethnic Turks protesters in May 1989 and tens of others were injured

The present Bulgarian prime minister Boyko Borisov said in interview in 2008:

*"Conrad Adenauer is a great politician, Churchill too.
If we look for their time Hitler and Stalin were number one too. And Mao - to be leader of one empire so much time in such situations - for this are qualities needed."*

Where are the DS agents after 1989?

	<p>Colonel Tzvyatko Tzvetkov Former deputy head of the Sixth department of DS, responsible for the control on the intellectuals.</p> <p>In 1994 - 1996 - head secretary of the ministry of Interior during government of the Bulgarian socialist party / BSP / , former BCP.</p> <p>Now: member of the Supreme Council of the BSP, "political analyst" , "security expert".</p>
	<p>General Lyben Gotzev Former officer of the First department of DS and deputy minister of Interior</p> <p>Now pensioner with the most highest pension.</p>
	<p>Dimitar Ivanov Former head of the sixth section of Sixth department of DS responsible for the control on the intellectuals.</p> <p>In the 90-ties: vicepresident of the Multigroup corporation, one of the richest in Bulgaria.</p> <p>Now: Publisher of the Zemya dayli newspaper.</p>

The leaders of the Bulgarian Communist Party are responsible for:

- purposefully and deliberately ruining the values of European civilization;
- intentional violation of human rights and liberties;
- unprecedented elimination of the Members of XXV National Assembly and of all innocent people convicted by the so called "Peoples' Court"
- the moral and economic decline of the State;
- establishing a centralized and directive ruling of economy which has led to its decay;
- crushing and repealing the traditional property right principles;
- dissolving people's moral values and encroaching upon their religious freedom;
- employing permanent terror against people who disagree with the system of ruling and against whole groups of the population;
- abusing education, training, science and culture for political and ideological purposes, including justifying and creation of motivation to the acts described above;
- unscrupulous destruction of nature

The communist regime is responsible for:

- depriving citizens of any possibility to express political will by forcing them to hide their opinion of the situation in the country and forcing them to express in public their approval for facts and circumstances, which they knew were not true and which even constituted crime; this was achieved by persecutions and threats to persecute individuals, their families and close persons;
- systematic violation of the basic human rights, oppressing whole groups of the population, formed on political, social, religious or ethnic basis, regardless of the fact that in 1970 the People's Republic of Bulgaria had already joined the international instruments in the field of human rights;
- violating the main principles of democracy, rule of law, international agreements and legislation in force thus placing the Communist Party and its representatives' interests above the Law;
- persecuting citizens using all means of power, such as:
- executions, inhuman imprisonment regimes, forced labour camps, tortures and cruel violence;
- certifying or placing people in psychiatric institutions as a mean of political repression;
- depriving from the right of property;
- preventing and banning education and the pursuit of a profession;
- preventing free movement in the country as well as out of the country;
- deprivation of citizenship;
- committing unpunished crimes and awarding unlawful privileges to persons involved in the commission of crimes and in the persecutions of another persons;
- subjecting the interests of Bulgaria to a foreign country to the extent which led to the ruin of national dignity and to practical loss of state sovereignty.

The circumstances specified above give ground to declare the criminal nature of the communist regime in Bulgaria from 9 September 1944 to 10 November 1989.

3. *Resistance*

Goryani Movement

The Goryani Movement was an armed resistance against the Bulgarian communist regime. It began immediately after the 9-th of September coup in 1944 which opened the way to communist rule in Bulgaria, reached its peak between 1947 and 1954, subsided by the late 50-ties and ended by the early 60-ties. The movement covered the entire country, including urban areas.

The members of the movement were dubbed Goryani (Bulgarian: ones of the forest). Though helped to a limited extent by Bulgarian emigres and to a very limited extent by foreign powers, the Goryani was an indigenous and spontaneous Bulgarian movement. Its mode of action was traditionally Bulgarian, as practiced by the anti-Ottoman hayduti: the Goryani hid in remote mountains, highlands and forests, relying on a large network of illicit helpers in settled communities, conducted sudden armed raids and withdrew before capture.

Largely composed of country folk who defended their land and property from the communists, the Goryani had no discernible ideology or platform and were united by their dislike of the communist authorities.

Armed resistance to the communists began in the immediate aftermath of the coup and reached sustainable proportions in the countryside after the execution of BZNS agrarian party leader Nikola Petkov in 1947 and the banning of the BRSDP social-democratic party in 1948. By the late 40-ties, the Goryani comprised mostly country folk, alongside members of the disbanded opposition hiding from the authorities, former soldiers and officers.

Large-scale forced land collectivisation campaigns began in the 50-ties. They involved mass intimidation of the peasantry, including threats, extrajudicial imprisonment and torture, and murder. This brought a new upsurge of support for the Goryani Movement.

At first the Goryani were poorly armed and merely hid from the authorities or agitated against them in fear of arrest. By 1947 they had banded into armed *chetas* (Bulgarian, *cheti*: detachments) in highland and mountain areas.

At that time, the overall number of armed Goryani was estimated at 2000 in 28 chetas, with another 8000 illicit helpers supplying them with food, shelter, arms and intelligence. By the early 50-ties, the Bulgarian DS secret police had identified some 160 Chetas, of which 52 were supplied from abroad or comprised hostile emigres who had infiltrated across borders. The movement was strongest in Southern Bulgaria, particularly in the localities of Sliven, Stara Zagora, Asenovgrad and the Mount Pirin area.

The movement was strongest in the Pirin area in 1947 and 1948. The main Cheta led by Gerasim Todorov controlled the larger part of the Sveti Vrach county in the southwest of

the area. In the spring of 1948, thousands of militia troops invaded the northern Pirin, imposing a two-week emergency in the area. Gerasim Todorov and his men were encircled and he killed himself on 31 March.

By the early 50-ties, the Goryani had a propaganda radio station, Radio Goryanin, which broadcast to Bulgaria from Greece. In mid 1951 the radio broadcast an appeal for an insurgent army to form in the centrally located Sliven area, where the movement was at its strongest. Some 13000 police and troops invaded the Balkan mountains near Sliven. Bulgarian communist dictator Chervenkov monitored events from an armoured personnel carrier in the mountain. The largest cheta, led by Georgi Stoyanov-Tarpana, also known as Benkovski after a 19th Century Bugarian popular hero, was encircled by 6000 troops. It fought them on 1 and 2 June, managing to break the encirclement and rescue their wounded. Few fell prisoner to the authorities. Some 40 Goryani were killed, but the Cheta commander fled along with his men. Stoyanov was captured by the DS secret police in late 1951 and was later tried and executed.

During the same period, some 15 Goryani parachuted into the Kazanlak and Ihtiman areas from training camps in Yugoslavia and France.

Despite the Bulgarian popular tradition of highland, mountain and woodland-based resistance, the movement was active in lowland and farming areas. The Dobrudzha area in the northeast of Bulgaria saw strong resistance activity, many villages being captured for short periods. The lowland Ruse area also saw Goryani activity led by Tsanko Tsankov-Mecheto and Tsvetana Popkoeva-Tsena. Their commander Tsankov was shot in combat, while Popkoeva was tried in absentia, to be captured and killed without trial in time to celebrate May Day 1952.

The Goryani hoped that the USA, UK and the other western democracies will start a war against the totalitarian communist regimes in Europe but after the passivity of the West during the Hungarian Revolution in 1956 their hope has been losed. This was the reason for the damping of the Goryani movement in the late 50-ties.

1040 armed members of the movement were killed by the communist regime in combats and they are Bulgarian heroes died in struggle against the totalitarian communism.

Now 2010 in Sofia there is not a single monument of the Goryani, but there is a big monument of the soviet army which occupation of the country broth the communist into power.

Human rights defenders

In the 60-ties, 70-ties and 80-ties there were Bulgarians with anti-totalitarian courage who struggled against the communist regime. Some of them like Eduard Genov, Iliya Minev and Yanko Yankov were imprisoned for many years, other like Boris Arsov, Volodya Nakov and the writer Georgi Markov were killed without court sentence.

In 1988 - 1989 the opposition to the communist regime grew and contributed together with the struggles of the democrats in Russia, Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Romania and Germany and China to its collapse.



Nikola Petkov
Leader of the
opposition in 1947



Georgi Tarpanov
Commander of
Goryani cheta



Georgi Markov
Writer
Killed in London
in 1978



Rumyana Uzunova
Journalist of Radio
Free Europe



Iliya Minev
18 year's prison
Founder of
Human Rights
Association



Meeting of the Union of democratic forces in 1990

All actions taken by persons to resist and to reject the communist regime and its ideology are fair, morally justified and deserving honor.

