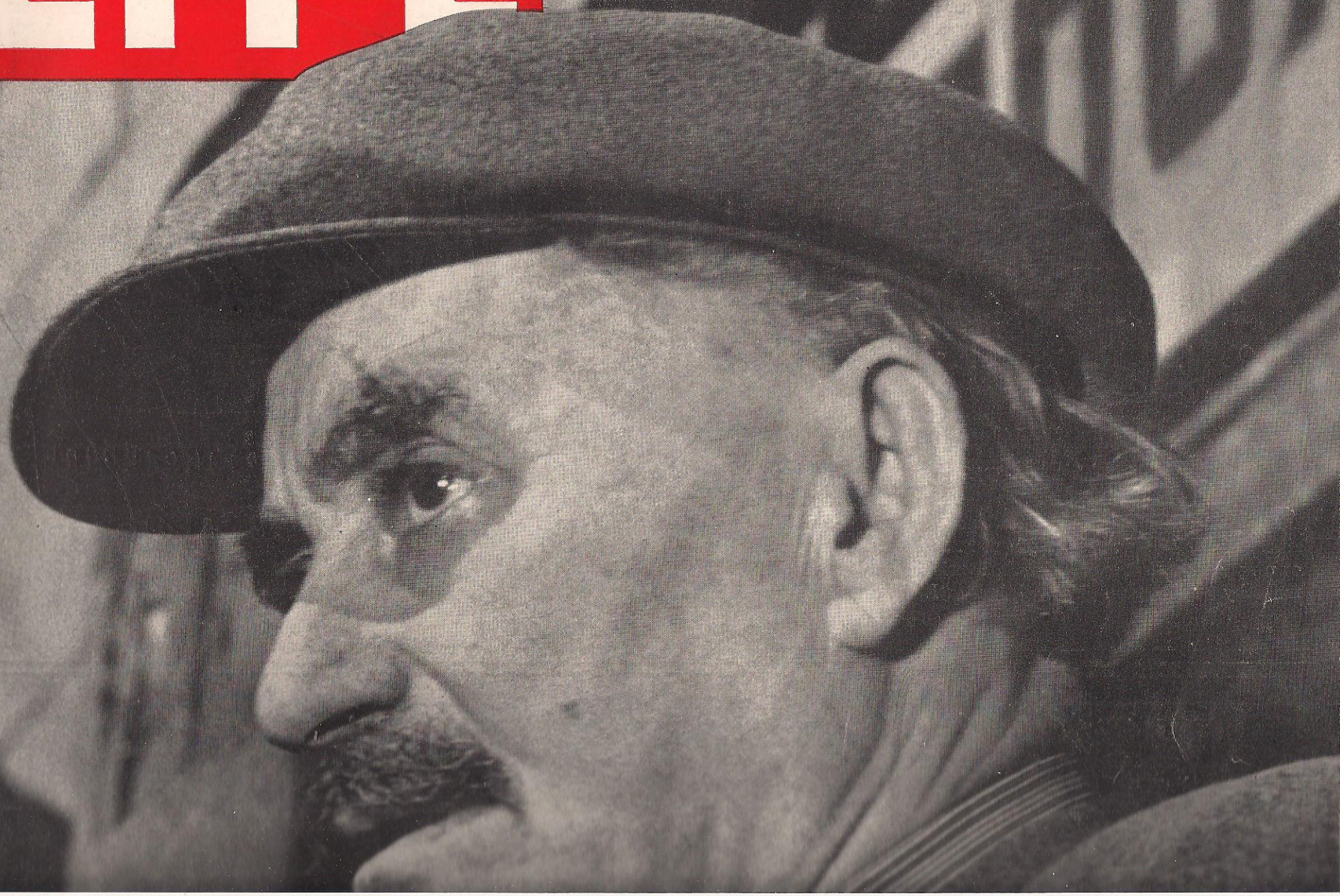


A black and white close-up photograph of a man with a mustache, wearing a dark flat cap and a collared shirt. He is looking slightly to the left of the frame. The background is out of focus, showing what appears to be a window or a structure with vertical lines.

**LIFE**

**COMMUNIST BOSS  
OF BULGARIA**

**LIFE**





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FIRST EXCLUSIVE PICTURES  
OF RUSSIA'S PUPPET STATE

MAY 12, 1947

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# LIFE

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ХОРЕМАГ

ДЕТСКИ КНИГ И ИГРАЧКИ



YOUNG COMMUNISTS MARCH THROUGH SOFIA'S "NINTH OF SEPTEMBER" SQUARE UNDER POSTERS OF PREMIER GEORGI DIMITROV AND HIS INFLUENTIAL FRIEND

# BULGARIA GETS THE "NEW DEMOCRACY"

PHOTOGRAPHS FOR LIFE BY DAVID DOUGLAS DUNCAN

Last week, while a United Nations commission was finishing up its investigation of Soviet expansion in the Balkans, LIFE Photographer David Douglas Duncan flew back to the U.S. with a pictorial report on one of the biggest trouble spots in the commission's itinerary: Communist-run Bulgaria.

Most Americans have always thought of Bulgaria in terms of comic-opera wars and attar of roses. But since the war, when an opportunistic coalition surrendered to the Russians (pp. 34-35), Commu-

nists have been calling the country "one of Europe's new democracies." Bulgaria is neither. Actually it is a testing ground for Stalinist Communism.

Red seed has seldom been sown on rockier land. Unlike Poland and Hungary, Bulgaria has no great feudal estates. Eighty percent of the population is peasant, and nearly every peasant owns his own land and wants to keep it (pp. 36-37). Bulgaria has relatively little industry, and its mines and transport have long since been nationalized. There is no

large, militant industrial class to provide a mass Communist base.

Yet today Bulgaria is a Stalinist state, run by famed Bulgarian Communist Georgi Dimitrov, whose relationship to Stalin and Soviet Russia is far from concealed (*above*). How Dimitrov has utilized his office—and his connections—to spread Soviet control through Russia's Black Sea neighbor is shown in Duncan's photographs, many of which had to be taken by eluding official guides.





**GOVERNMENT'S UNEASINESS** is dramatized by this display of pocketknives, screwdrivers, bottle-openers

deposited on table outside doors of National Assembly. Every galleryite must submit to thorough search, must

surrender his "weapons" and identification cards. After the assembly session, the cards and gadgets are returned



**OPPOSITION LEADERS** Krustio Lulchev (*left*), Petko Stoyanov (*center*) and Nikola Petkov were ousted from the Front after Communists took over.

## REDS RUN THE COUNTRY

### NATIVE COMMUNISTS CONTROL "COALITION"

The way in which the Communists took over Bulgaria follows the approved Soviet pattern for dealing with neighboring countries. In 1944 Russia declared war against Axis-allied Bulgaria, whereupon a coalition government called the Fatherland Front seized power and surrendered. Under the shrewd leadership of International Communist Georgi Dimitrov (*LIFE's* cover), the Reds have gained full control of the coalition and have exiled 9-year-old King Simeon.

With Russian troops and a purged Bulgarian army behind him, Prime Minister Dimitrov is absolute boss. He allows mild opposition (*above*), permits them to hold rallies. But Communist agents, locking arms and holding off the crowds, quickly break up the meetings. Newspapers operate without censorship, but only if they do not get too critical. The F.F. is instituting some desirable reforms but in some undesirable ways. Their public works program will increase production, yet the work is being done by drafted labor battalions. Last fall the government engineered an election that gave it a majority. Despite this

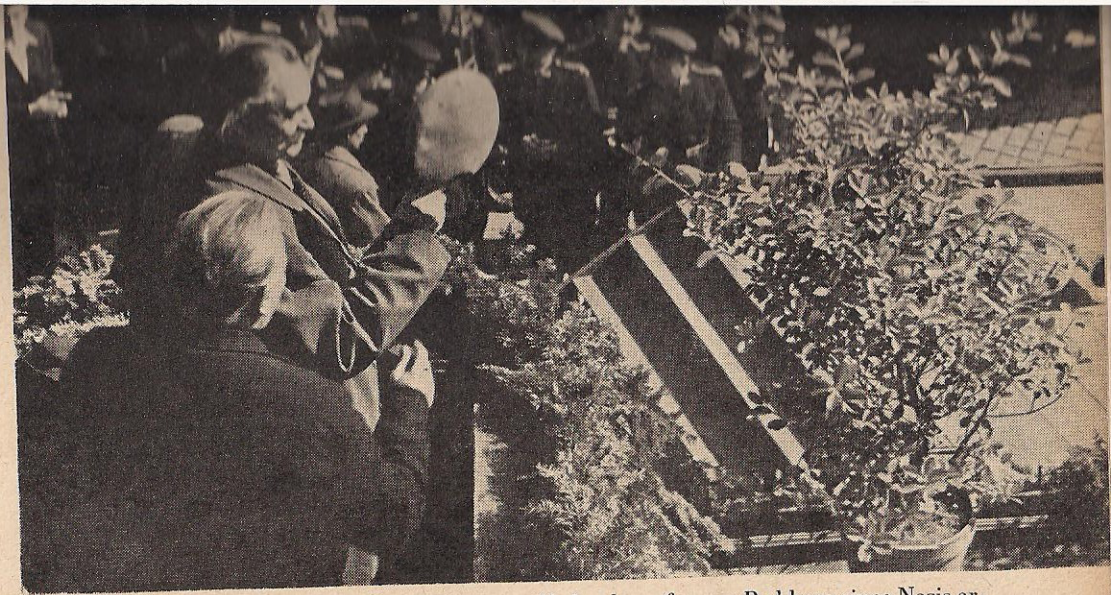




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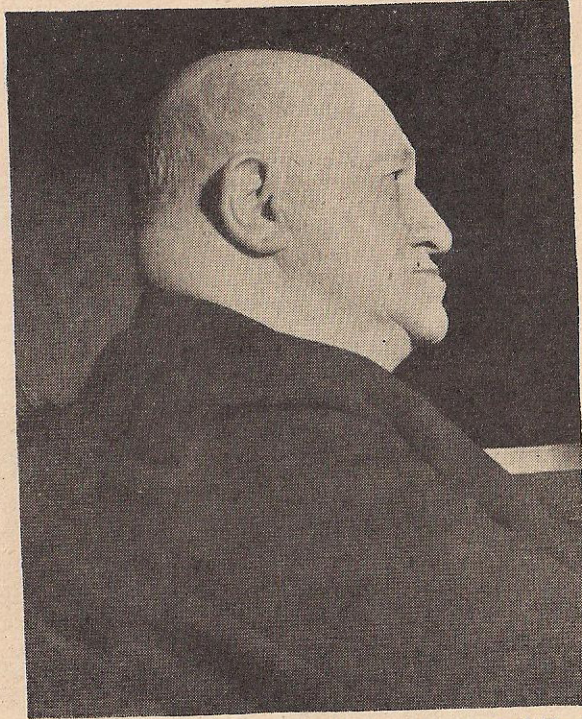
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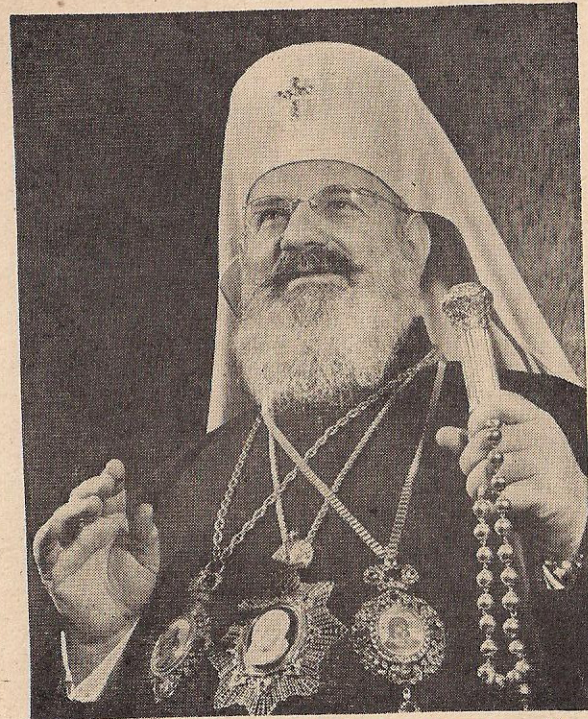
**RALLY** of Youth Brigade is exhorted by Dimitrov. He has been famous Red hero since Nazis arrested him for the Reichstag fire and he confounded them by winning acquittal from Nazi jury.



**COALITION BOSS** is Secretary-General Tzola Dragoi-cheva, former village schoolteacher who directs purges.



**PRESIDENT** of Bulgaria is the Russian-trained Vasil Kolarov, a good Communist who takes Dimitrov's orders.



**HEAD OF ORTHODOX CHURCH**, Metropolitan Stefan I, has been wooed by a Moscow gift of \$250,000.

Bulgaria CONTINUED



**CITY LIFE** can be pleasant. This is the home of Constantin Petkanov (*left*), one of Bulgaria's best-known writers. Petkanov works for the government in the Ministry of Information. His actress wife and his two daughters are in the combination living and dining room of their small flat.



ONLY THE OLD AND VERY YOUNG ESCAPE RED TRAINING

## CITY AND COUNTRY

### URBAN AND FARM LIFE IS PROUD BUT POOR

Both the independence and the misery of Bulgaria are rooted deep in its much-loved soil. Nearly everyone came originally from farm villages like Bistriza (*opposite*). Prime Minister Dimitrov was a Samakov pioneer, and Coalition Boss Tzola Dragoichova once taught school at Bye Slatina (*map*). To the older peasants their tiny tobacco and vegetable plots and their livestock and poultry were proud symbols of independence, even though they seldom made ends meet. As Agrarians and old-fashioned Socialists, they established cooperatives, won land reform and universal education. Even so, living was poor and hard.

It is the sons of such villagers, taught in Bulgaria's free schools and resenting the grim demands of the soil, who have formed the hard core of Bulgarian Communism. They have helped to communize the schools, now seek to collectivize the land. In other countries the seizure of feudal estates has been popular. But in Bulgaria it means taking the land from small, independent farmers. It is these fathers and brothers of Sol-



**CITY SHORTAGES** are acute, partly because of heavy Soviet requisitioning. At the baker's (above), Bulgarians queue up for bread rations, but there is little bread. Below, the government replaces the old royalist currency with new issues. It now limits all Bulgar families to \$40 a month.

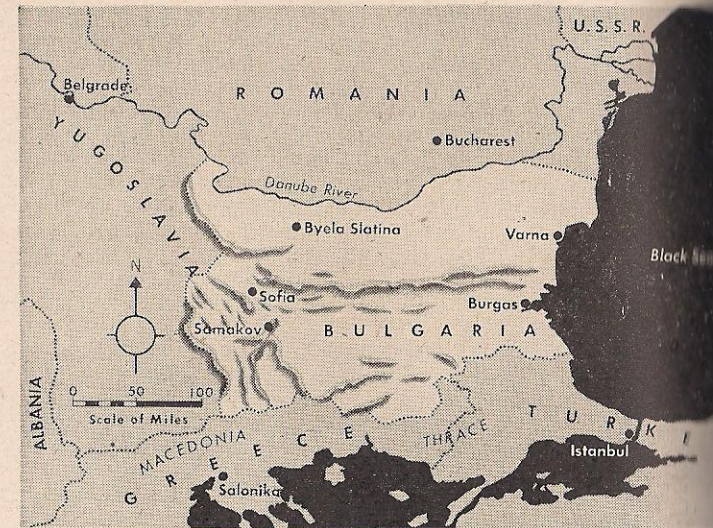


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It is the sons of such villagers, taught in Bulgaria's free schools and resenting the grim demands of the soil, who have formed the backbone of Bulgarian Communism. They have helped to communize the land and now seek to collectivize the land. In other countries the seizure of feudal estates has been popular. But in Bulgaria it means taking the land from small, independent farmers. It is these fathers and brothers of the collectivists who most oppose the government, viewing it with the same distrust once shown the AAA by America's independent Western farmers. The Soviet Union's requisitioning of Bulgaria's grain did not make Dimitrov's Two-Year Plan any easier to sell.

Despite the government's frequent reprisals against peasants opposing the program, the Bulgars still speak up. One old man told a visiting American that Bulgaria today is like the Garden of Eden. "How is it possible," he asked the American. "We're all naked and eating apples," he explained.



**SQUEEZED** against the Black Sea, Bulgaria has always coveted and has fought to possess Macedonia and Thrace. Soviet Union may back her claim.





**RURAL SCENE** in Bulgaria is always dominated by tile-roofed houses. Bistriza, on the shoulder of Mt. Vitoshka southwest of Sofia, is one of the many agricultural communities.

Blooming trees are parts of the orchard which surrounds the village, while uplands in the distance are pastures. Although the land is fairly distributed there is not enough for all.

Bulgaria CONTINUED





**GUSLA NATIONAL CHOIR** is composed of doctors, postmen, students, small businessmen. Most of the 80

members are of peasant origin. Here they wear colorful silk shirts embroidered with peasant patterns peculiar to

their home areas. In prewar European competition the choir won championship over 136 other choral groups.



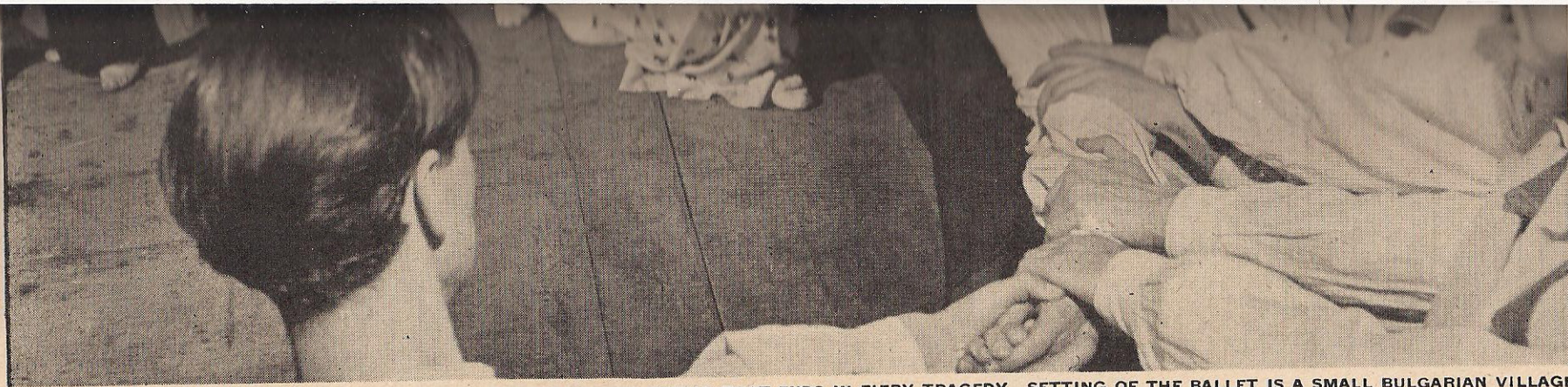
THE SOFIA BALLET DANCES—THE STORY OF A FIERCE PEASANT LOVE AFFAIR THAT ENDS IN FIERY TRAGEDY. SETTING OF THE BALLET IS A SMALL BULGARIAN VILLAGE

## CULTURAL ESCAPE

On moonlit nights the Bulgars like to stroll the streets and serenade the world with their guitars and accordions. But there is no hint of Latin languor in the Bulgarian rhapsody. The Bulgars sing, dance,

Gusla National Choir (*opposite*), best in Europe before the war, is still immensely popular. Critics call some Sofia ballets (*above*) the equal of anything ever offered by Moscow's Bolshoi.





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# CULTURAL ESCAPE

## BULGARS' FRUSTRATED TALENTS ARE POURED INTO ALL THE ARTS

On moonlit nights the Bulgars like to stroll the streets and serenade the world with their guitars and accordions. But there is no hint of Latin languor in the Bulgarian rhapsody. The Bulgars sing, dance, paint and sculpt as passionately as they politick and make love.

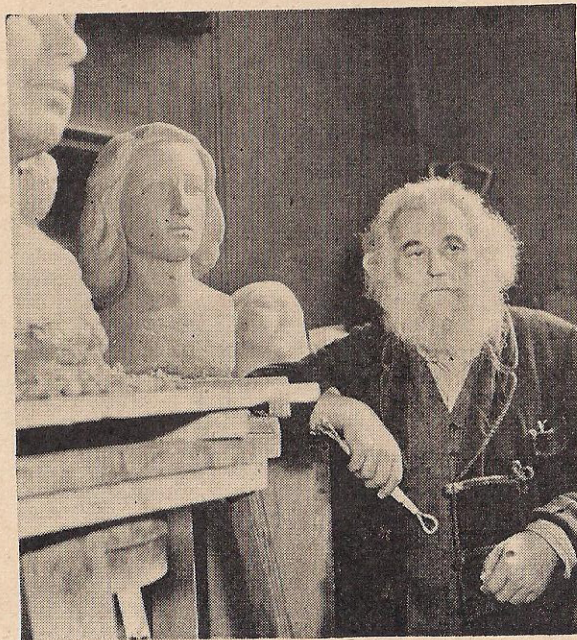
The present government has encouraged cultural pursuits, and many Bulgarians have found them a relief and escape from oppressive reality. The great

Gusla National Choir (*opposite*), best in Europe before the war, is still immensely popular. Critics call some Sofia ballets (*above*) the equal of anything ever offered by Moscow's Bolshoi.

The brilliant work of 73-year-old Painter Vladimir Dimitrov (*below, right*), no kin to the premier, is well known to every Bulgarian art lover. The music of Composer Pantcho Vladiguerov (*lower left*) is played by all of Bulgaria and much of Europe.



**COMPOSER** Pantcho Vladiguerov recently toured Europe, is famed for his *Bulgarian Rhapsody* and *Concerto*.



**SCULPTOR** Andrai Nikolov studied in Italy, weathered the Allied bombings in his big, glassed-in studio.



**ARTIST** Vladimir Dimitrov, "The Master," paints rich canvases of Bulgar peasant life. He never signs them.



**BEFORE** the Balkan commission arrived Stalin's picture hung on statue.

# UNDER THE RED STAR

## THE OLD HAVE DOUBTS BUT THE YOUNG HAVE PARADES

The streets of Bulgaria are filled with the sound of marching feet, a sound frighteningly reminiscent of the days before the war. There are 60,000 Russian troops stationed in the country, a force twice as large as in Bulgaria's army. The Russians march in close formation (*below, left*), singing lustily as they go. The silent marchers are Bulgarian youths, conscripted to work on Communist projects (*below, right*). Even the girls are taught how to march. In Bulgaria today everybody marches but the old people.

This is part of the plan. Bulgaria's Communists are concentrating on the country's youth, giving them parades, celebrations and other planned activities. They are taught the advantages of their "new democracy," especially in contrast to the governments of the Western democracies, or the "monarcho-fascists." And always before the youth of Bulgaria are poster pictures of their nearby benefactor.

Sometimes Bulgaria's older men tire of watching their young people forever marching, grow weary of the campaign songs of the Russian troops. But as long as they do not interfere with the new program, they are free to wander off and sit in the sun. No one stops them when they gather in tiny groups (*opposite*) and talk among themselves, in carefully guarded tones, of course, of the days when hammer-and-sickles were not splashed on the walls of their cities and when they could still hope for independence.



**AFTER** commission arrived it found picture had mysteriously disappeared.





**SOVIET TROOPS MARCH** past National Assembly Building. These Red Army youths have orders to behave, keep to themselves. They have never fraternized with Bulgarians.



**LABOR BRIGADES MARCH** off to work on government project with less enthusiasm than singing Red soldiers. When youths ignore Red call, the F.F. conscripts them.



**GIRLS LEARN TO MARCH** in athletic field of Sofia high school. Here their Russian-trained leader teaches them a kick that resembles the famed goose step. Communists in

Bulgaria are concentrating their effort on recruiting young high-school students for their parades, celebrations and, eventually, their work. Students have always been susceptible





THREE OLD MEN DREAM OF VANISHED HOPES  
UNDER EMBLEMS OF BULGARIA'S NEW ORDER