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SOURCE Osvobozhdenie [Anti-Communist], Vol I, No 8-9, 1950.

MEMBER OF NIKOLA PETKOV GROUP
 IN BULGARIA RELATES PRISON EXPERIENCES

A letter recently received from Bulgaria contains the following account of prison methods under the present Communist regime. The writer says:

Some of my friends and I had formed a group which distributed pamphlets inciting the peasants to resist the shipment of all their agricultural produce to the USSR. This illegal organization was known as the Nikola Petkov Group. As a result of our activity, I was arrested and brought to court, although the work of the organization continued.

On 14 December 1947 I was transferred to the State Security agency in Burgas and interrogated by Captain Nikolov, supply officer of the 24th Infantry Regiment. The following questions were asked: (1) Who had ordered the group to write and distribute the pamphlets? (2) Did we have any connections with the emigres and Dr G. M. Dimitrov personally? (3) What was the objective of the organization and how many members did it include? (4) From whom did we expect to receive arms? I replied that I had no information on any of these matters. This attitude infuriated my interrogators: Nikolov, Buchvarov, Chakurov, Velyu Baev, and Radko Milanov.

After months of torture, I was transferred to a prison, together with Nikola Kostandinov, Captain Nizarov, Krustyu Vasilev, and Staykov, and tried under Article 98, Paragraphs 1-6. I was sentenced to 10 years imprisonment at hard labor, and the others received prison terms of one year and 6 months.

During my term in prison, I was chained and submitted to further beatings and solitary confinement until, on 4 September 1949, I succeeded in escaping from the Ruse prison.

It may be stated in general that the treatment of political prisoners in Bulgaria is so harsh and cruel as to induce many of them to commit suicide rather than suffer the intolerable tortures. Beatings are a normal part of

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the daily routine. I once spent 6 months in the Burgas prison, deprived of food parcels, mail, and visitors, and bound in a chain weighing 40 kilograms, only for addressing Prison Director Stavrev as "Mr Director" instead of "Comrade Director." Such measures are applied to all political prisoners throughout the Bulgarian prisons, concentration camps, and State Security agencies. -- Detelin Selyashki /probably a pseudonym/

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