

Main events in Modern History

In the beginning of the Second World War the Bulgarian state remained neutral. On Sept 7th, 1940 in Craiova, a treaty was signed between Bulgaria and Romania. It returned Southern Dobrudzha to Bulgaria. On March 1st, 1941 Bulgaria joined the war on the side of the tripartite pact (Germany, Italy and Japan). On October 28th, 1944 Bulgaria joined the Anti-Hitler coalition and contributed to the ultimate defeat of the fascists. The Second World War inflicted serious damages on the social, economic and political life in Bulgaria. Those to a large extent represent a realistic reflection of the changed international situation.

After the Second World War, the Bulgarian state fell under Soviet influence. After a referendum conducted in Sept 1946, Bulgaria was declared a people's republic. Soon after that the government of the state was taken by the Bulgarian communist party (BCP). The elected prime-minister was Georgi Dimitrov. With Soviet help, a totalitarian regime was soon imposed in Bulgaria. The soviet economic model was introduced. Almost all enterprises were nationalized. Collectivization of agriculture began with deprivation of agricultural lands from their owners. Very often, this process was carried out forcefully.

During Vulko Chervenkov's government (1950-1956) the Bulgarian economy went through a period of stability. This to a large extent was due to the support received by the Soviet Union. Characteristic for that period of the development of the Bulgarian state were the political purges, repressions, censorship.

On December 14th, 1955 Bulgaria became a member of the UN. During 1956 Todor Zhivkov became the leader of BCP. The party kept governing the country. Zhivkov's government was authoritarian. He was replicating the internal and foreign policy of the Soviet Union. Zhivkov's period of government was marked by long-term political and social stability.



Varna, Todor Zhivkov and Leonid Brezhnev in an open vehicle

“Cadillac” during a Brezhnev visit to Bulgaria, 60s of the XX century, [source](#)

During the 80s of the XX century the People’s Republic of Bulgaria, governed by BCP, was in a state of economic crisis. In combination with various social changes in Bulgarian society, this led to the fall of the communist regime in 1989.

During 1990 the first steps of transition from communism to democracy were made. On Nov 15th, 1990 the People’s republic was renamed as the Republic of Bulgaria. The parliamentary republic democratically elected, for the first time after the communist regime, its new president – d-r Zhelyu Zhelev.



The first democratic president of Bulgaria – d-r Zhelyu Zhelev

(left) – president 1990-1997 – with his successor – Petar Stoyanov (right) – president 1997-2002 [source](#)

The transition from communism to democracy to a large extent happened due to appetites for quick fortune from the privatization of state property. None of those guilty for the atrocities of the regime were sentenced and imprisoned. On the contrary, the ex-agents of the so called State Security service, still take active participation in the social, cultural and most of all – economic life in the country.

On April 2nd, 2004 Bulgaria became a member of NATO.