

Stela Astrukova And The Welcoming Of The Partisans On 10th September 1944 In Gorna Dzhumaya



The welcoming of the partisans on 10th September 1944 [The day of the communist takeover in Bulgaria. In September 1944 the Soviet Union declared war on Bulgaria.

On 9th September 1944 the Fatherland Front, a broad left-wing coalition, deposed the government.].

The people had gathered on a square in Gorna Dzhumaya where we had been interned.

I am behind the man with a gun on the right. There is nothing on the back of the photo.

Two days ago I ran away from the Pleven prison. I remember the dress which I was wearing.

This was my formal dress sewn by my mother from old clothes. It was in two colors.

On 7th September [Konstantin] Muraviev [Bulgaria's Prime Minister at that time] issued an order for the release of all political prisoners.

But the director of our prison refused to let us go. Then all of our comrades started to force the doors open.

It looked like the storming of the Bastille. They brought some railway tracks and started smashing the doors.

They opened them, came in and released us. Meanwhile the director notified the police and the doors had been forced open.

We were all coming out of the prison.

At first the male prisoners forgot about the women and then came back to unlock us.

Meanwhile, we caught Konyarova and took her keys. We rushed outside.

Zizi, who had been released two months before, because she was acquitted at the trial, had mounted a door and when she saw me, she rushed to hug me.

We were chased by mounted police and we were being shot at. Some of us ran towards the grapevines.

I went to my aunt's place with the three girls and four or five people from the prison.

We went to the house of Meshulam Beni, a brother of my mother who lived with his wife Lora, his daughter Fani and my grandmother Yafa.

My cousin Fani Avramova was outside with the protesters. She took us there. Meshulam had been interned to Pleven and brought us food in the prison.

Yet, the police managed to take a lot of people back to prison. On 7th September one of our saviors was killed in the shooting.

The next day Muraviev's order for the release of the political prisoners came and they had to obey. In the evening we took a train to Gorna Dzhumaya.

On 9th September I heard the proclamation of the Fatherland Front at 6 am at the station in Sofia.

We traveled all night together with the political prisoners in a horse wagon on the eve of 9th September.

We sang all the songs we knew - 'We will give hundreds of victims, but we will beat fascism!'

I arrived in Gorna Dzhumaya in the afternoon on 9th September. We were welcomed with a ceremony at the station.

There was a field, two kilometers and a half between the station and the center.

Someone had told my mother that we were back and she met me in the middle of the field. It was such a meeting, such hugs...

My mother was crying with happiness that I was alive, I was hugging her and telling her, 'Walk mother, now is not the time for sentimentality!'