

Bulgaria Asks Death for 4 Pastors, Heaviest Prison Term for 11 Others

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SOFIA, Bulgaria, March 4 — Dimiter Georgiev, chief prosecutor of Bulgaria, demanded today the death penalty for the four principal defendants in the trial of fifteen Protestant ministers. Mr. Georgiev was followed by his deputy prosecutor, Todor Tsakov, who demanded the heaviest prison sentences for the eleven other defendants.

The four principal defendants are the Rev. Vasil Ziapkov, 48, head of Congregational churches, the Rev. Yanko Ivanov, 48, head of Methodist churches, the Rev. Nikola Mihailov, 49, head of Baptist churches and the Rev. Georgi Chernev, 46, head of Pentecostal churches.

The chief prosecutor demanded the supreme penalty on the grounds that the four pastors were guilty of treason and espionage. The charge of illegal currency transactions only compounded their crimes, it was held.

Four of the sixteen defense

counsel were heard after the two prosecutors had completed their summations. Defending counsel said they were not seeking acquittal for their clients because they had confessed, but would plead extenuating circumstances and urged clemency upon the court.

Defense counsel joined with the prosecution in attacking American "imperialism as the real culprit on trial." The prosecutors attacked the United States on the ground it had used the fifteen pastors as tools of subversion in a campaign against the Soviet Union with the design of provoking a new war. Defense counsel attacked the United States on the ground the fifteen defendants had been nurtured on the evil ideas of Western capitalist society and, therefore, nothing better could have been expected from such Bulgarian citizens who could only have become criminals.

Mr. Georgiev said in the pream-

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ble of his attack on the United States that the Bulgarian people had no intention of organizing their lives on American lines. He said he had lived for many years in the Soviet Union where he said he could assure the Court that peasants and workers were happy, contented and prosperous, while in the United States, scores of thousands of free people were being persecuted, "not to mention Negroes."

Mr. Georgiev quoted George Bernard Shaw to the effect that the Soviet Union was the cultural leader of the world today. The defendants, he said, had worked against the policies of the Soviet Union, which were intimately associated with Bulgaria's policies.

His assistant, Mr. Tsakov, denounced American "imperialists" as bloodsuckers and fomentors of a new war. He complained that foreign radio stations had been slandering Bulgaria because of the trial although the proof presented against the defendants was so irrefutable "that even the gods respect them."

Background Held at Fault

Todor Tatarov, defense counsel for Mr. Ziapkov, attributed the Congregational minister's downfall to his "American" culture. He started off by saying: "I don't want to plead for acquittal, but find extenuating circumstances, and I don't want to repeat the phrase of Tolstoy that 'to understand is to forgive.'"

He said that where the guns of capitalism had failed to penetrate missionaries were dispatched. "He who gives money rules," he declared. "The defendants were not only obedient tools but ideologically convinced tools. Missionaries were sent to colonies. Bulgaria was a semi-colonial state when missionaries first arrived. The defendants are victims of a foreign influence, which was tolerated by the governments of those times.

"The defendants were influenced by foreigners and torn from us Bulgarians. We must understand them. The criminal will in them was greatly facilitated by their upbringing and the education they received at the theological seminary to find extenuating circumstances,

Mr. Tatarov pleaded that Mr. Ziapkov was an irrational man in his thinking and behavior. He said he was an actor fond of acting, and that he had never received any money for his acts. "He lives in a dream world," the lawyer said.

Mr. Tatarov pleaded Mr. Ziapkov had not been guilty of having divulged state secrets while a member of the Bulgarian mission to the Paris peace conference. The death penalty for this crime is mandatory.

The second defense counsel was Vladimir Tumberov. He said that much of the information that the prosecution accused the defendants of having transmitted to the British and Americans had been a matter of public knowledge and did not constitute secrets.

He mentioned the location of railroads and roads leading to the Greek frontier. He said that the course of these railroads and roads is published in maps that can be purchased in any book store. The defendants were accused of having given information about a factory at Kazenlech. Mr. Tumberov said: "Even the dead know about this factory."

Mr. Tumberov said he pleaded for clemency and not for acquittal because the defendants had confessed freely. But he added: "If the court believes the confessions, then it also must believe the denials of certain allegations in the confessions."

Defense counsel will continue their pleas tomorrow.