

Into the Darkness - Irina Bokova and Her Strange Family

By Miroslav Marinov



The possibility of the current UNESCO boss Irina Bokova becoming the next Secretary General of the UN has brought more scrutiny to her background and personality. Her career was a product of the entitlements reserved for the ruling class in her homeland, communist Bulgaria. Her upbringing resonates well with the way the UN operates – a corrupt organization controlled by backward Muslim regimes and petty dictators.

The turbulent history of Bulgaria during World War II explains why such an odd bunch like the Bokov family could reach the highest echelons of power. The communist movement in the country had always been weak – in 1939 the Ribbentrop-Molotov pact established “friendship” between Stalin and Hitler, so the Comintern demanded international communist support for Nazi Germany. In March, 1941, the Bulgarian “fascist” government joined the Axis and the Bulgarian communists had to support that action as well. Only in June, 1941, after Hitler’s attack against the Soviet Union, they finally realized they were “anti-fascists”. Despite taking Germany’s side, the Bulgarian King did everything to keep the country out of the war – he never sent troops against the Russians and in opposition to Hitler’s constant demands, no Bulgarian Jews were deported to Germany for extermination. The communist “resistance” was dismal and lacked any significant support. Its numbers barely exceeded 1,000 people fighting the government in the woods without any chances to overthrow it.

Things changed drastically in September, 1944, after the Soviet Army invaded Bulgaria. On September 9 the legitimate government was deposed by a group of army officers from the so-called Fatherland Front. As soon as the Russians occupied the country, the communists quickly took a leading role in the new government. Within the first few days they started mass purges that cost the lives of up to 200,000 supporters of the “old order,” mostly educated people (the exact numbers are still covered up). Later a “People’s Court,” organized by the communists, condemned nearly 50,000 people to death or jail for “supporting fascism.” The vacuum in the government and the educational institutions was filled by low-educated workers and peasants whose only qualification was their communist zeal.

This was the environment that allowed the Bokov family to flourish.

The family “patriarch” Georgi Bokov was a son of illiterate peasants. He became a member of the communist party in 1940 and in 1942-1943 studied law at Sofia University. After his expulsion for militant communist activities, he joined one of the armed groups that fought the government as its “political commissar.” Those activities catapulted his career after the September coup. He was actively involved in the atrocities perpetrated by the “people’s militia,” the communist version of the disbanded police.



Todor Zhivkov and Georgi Bokov (right)

Georgi Bokov was notoriously involved in the murder of the popular journalist and cartoonist Raiko Aleksiev whose main transgressions were the cartoons of Stalin he published during the war. After the coup he was arrested and tortured in the dungeons of the “people’s militia” building. Though the authorities tried to cover it up, there were witnesses saying that Bokov was actively involved in the torture by beating Aleksiev and jumping on his chest with heavy boots.



Raiko Aleksiev

The journalist died within days and the authorities returned his corpse to his family in a sealed coffin with the order not to open it. However, Aleksiev’s wife insisted on opening the coffin – the condition of the body was horrific, most of the bones were broken and even his testicles were smashed.

Soon after that the family was expelled from their house. Such a procedure was common when dealing with “enemies of the people” – once the victims were killed or expelled, their property was confiscated and the houses occupied by the new communist “aristocracy.”

After proving his ruthless loyalty to the communist party, Bokov worked shortly for a local committee and in 1946 got a job at Rabotnichesko Delo (Workers’ Action), the Bulgarian version of Pravda. Despite his lack of education, in 1958 he became the paper’s editor-in-chief and a member of the Central

Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party. From 1960 to 1976 he even occupied the position of chairman of the Bulgarian Journalists' Union. In 1976 Bokov suddenly fell from grace, was fired from all positions and sent into an early retirement. It is not clear what caused that, but he still kept most of the perks that came with the previous positions. Unlike Stalin, Todor Zhivkov, the General Secretary of the party, kept his enemies obedient through his generosity, which allowed him to rule unchallenged for 35 years. Bokov died in 1989.

He met his wife in the spring of 1944. Also a communist activist, she was married at the time and had a young child whom she abandoned (the boy was raised by his father). The Bokov family had two children – Filip (born in 1948) and Irina (born in 1952). Both of them took full advantage of the privileges bestowed upon the “nomenklatura,” the communist ruling class. Things were even better for Filip and Irina, because their parents were members of an even higher layer of that class, known as “Active Fighters against Capitalism and Fascism.” The tuition at schools and universities at the time was free and since not everybody could be accommodated, the candidates were sifted through grueling entrance exams. However, children of the “Active Fighters” were exempt from those exams and could enroll at any educational institution regardless of their abilities or academic achievements.

The Bokov siblings graduated from an elite English high school in Sofia, virtually inaccessible to ordinary people. They were groomed to become diplomats – later they studied at the Moscow Institute of Foreign Relations. There were only two ways to get there – as a child of prominent communists or a collaborator of the secret services. Naturally, as children of the right people and members of the Bulgarian Communist Party, their careers were meteoric.

From 1974 to 1990 Filip Bokov was a diplomat in the Bulgarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In 1986 he became Bulgaria's ambassador to the United Kingdom. The fall of communism in 1989 didn't affect significantly his career. The Bulgarian Communist Party changed its name to socialist party, but most of the members and high functionaries remained the same. The party even won the first “free” elections in 1990 through fraud and propaganda. In the same year Filip Bokov even mocked the calls to the renamed communist party to admit guilt for its past atrocities. Soon he became a prominent socialist politician and a member of the parliament.

In the 1970's Filip Bokov married Yulia Vladikova, daughter of another member of the Central Committee. In 1973, while driving with high speed in Sofia, she hit and killed an old woman. Despite the attempts of the victim's family to get justice, the case was covered up and Yulia didn't suffer any consequences. A few papers in Bulgaria claimed that during Filip Bokov's ambassador stint in London his wife was caught several times stealing from stores and even mentioned that the case was covered by The Guardian. Her actions were blamed on kleptomania, a psychiatric condition, but reportedly they still put an end to her husband's career in England.



Filip Bokov (left) and Georgi Bokov, Jr. (right)

Filip and Yulia had two children – Georgi and Bilyana. Despite opportunities that his influential family opened to him, Georgi chose a life of crime.

He became a well-known car thief and was arrested numerous times, for the first time in 1993. He had been convicted four times, including for illegal gun possession, and spent time in jail. In 2001 during a police chase he crashed in a stolen car and was seriously injured. His father eventually gave up and severed his relations with him.

Though his sister Bilyana became a lawyer, living in a dysfunctional family took its toll on her. In 2003 she hanged herself in her home. The rumours attributed the suicide to the embarrassment caused by her brother who was frequently a subject of the criminal chronicles.


The situation became even worse after her death. Georgi Bokov, Jr. had bad relations with his mother. She complained that he assaulted her physically several times. The worst case was in 2006 when he stormed into her apartment and after a short argument knocked her down and started kicking her. The argument allegedly was over a sum of money he lent her for surgery and his mother couldn't pay back on time. The injuries were serious and she filed a police report.

In August, 2011, Georgi Bokov Jr. was driving his car on a country road; his wife was with him. He lost control at high speed and collided head-on with a tourist bus. 11 people on the bus were injured but both Bokov and his wife were killed instantly. Their bodies were taken to a local morgue but neither Filip nor Yulia wanted to collect them for burial. In the end they were cremated. In an interview for a Bulgarian newspaper published shortly after the disaster Yulia said: "The universe is reason and love and

it punished my son. He didn't want to change his ways. If there is a second coming, my daughter and my father will be resurrected, but not my son and daughter-in-law." She even didn't want them buried in the family grave.

Майката на Георги Боков след смъртта му: Синът ми си получи наказанието!

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Irina Bokova also had plenty of problems. After graduating from the Moscow Institute for International Relations, she worked for a while in Bulgaria under her brother's supervision. Then, thanks to her superb political background, she was promoted to the position of a third secretary of the Bulgarian mission to the UN (where she worked from 1982 to 1984). Later she was promoted again by the communist authorities and kept working in New York. Just like in her brother's case, the fall of communism boosted her career in the renamed communist party. In 1990 she was elected member of the Bulgarian parliament and even served for a few months in 1995-1996 as a Minister of Foreign Affairs in two consecutive socialist governments. One of those governments drove the country into bankruptcy.

After her career picked up, some Bulgarian newspapers dug up another embarrassing story about her, which involved a traffic accident similar to the one her sister-in-law was involved in. In 1986, while driving in Sofia, Irina Bokova hit and killed an old woman. Her father, though already a pensioner, set into motion his connections and she got away without punishment.

In an article published in The American Spectator after she was appointed boss of UNESCO, a former Bulgarian diplomat, who defected in 1980's, recalled another embarrassing case from her times in New York. He remembered her as a tough promoter of the party line, but her behaviour was far from the required "superior" communist morality. She was living with her first husband, the journalist Lyubomir Kolarov, but the marriage wasn't working because he was a heavy drinker. Bokova started an affair with

another diplomat from the Bulgarian mission, Kalin Mitrev. The author described a comical confrontation over the affair: “Their liaison was kept secret for a while, probably because Kalin's father was another Communist big shot, but it came out into the open early one evening when a crowd of concerned New Yorkers gathered outside the mission's residential building in Manhattan's Upper East Side. It turned out that Irina's heavy-drinking husband had been dangling from their 11th floor apartment's balcony, trying in vain to jump onto the balcony of the floor below (where Kalin resided at the time without his sickly wife and two young daughters), obviously in an attempt to catch the two love birds in flagrante delicto.”

It was presumed that the affair resulted in Bokova's recall from the USA. As we saw, in the corrupt political environment in Bulgaria such transgressions had very little impact. There were rumours that years later Bokova was overlooked for the position of ambassador to the United Kingdom due to her nephew's criminal activities, but even if it was true, it didn't last. Soon after she became Bulgaria's representative in UNESCO and the ambassador to France. Eventually, in 2009, she reached the highest position in UNESCO. Now she is considered the frontrunner for the top position in the United Nations.

I suspect that even the dark imagination of writers like H.P. Lovecraft or Stephen King would not be able to come up with all twists of evil displayed in the history of the Bokov family. Some commentators in Bulgaria have speculated that the family had been the victim of a gypsy curse. In my opinion, the explanation is simpler. The Bokovs are the product of an amoral social system where the standard concepts of good and evil are blurred or outright rejected. The interests of the communist party and the ruling class created by it trump everything else. In many countries in Eastern Europe that mentality outlived the communist society.

You may consider Bokova a scandalous person, but when you compare her behaviour to that of Barack Obama, Hillary Clinton or the newest Canadian contribution to that amoral political world, Justin Trudeau, she doesn't seem so unusual. Maybe that's why they like her. A person with a shady past and excessive baggage is easier to control, especially when considering the fact that she wants to become a Secretary General of an organization which is even darker than Bokova's past. If at the UN countries with barbaric regimes like Saudi Arabia and Iran could be put in charge of “defending” human rights, the shady personality of Irina Bokova could become a perfect addition to that useless and evil organization.

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