

LL
Oct 26
XI-1991/B

BULGARIA

STANDARD OF LIVING (3200)
Housing (3202)

HOUSING IN SOFIA

SOURCE ATHENS: A 31-year-old Rumanian refugee, who re-redefected from SOFIA while in transit back to Rumania, and his 26-year-old Greek-born wife.

DATE OF OBSERVATION: Until September 22 1956.

EVALUATION COMMENT: The housing shortage in Bulgaria and the measures taken by the government to cope with it are extensively described in ISTANBUL RFE Item Nos. 6527, 7804/54 and in their Evaluation Comments.

+ + +

For two weeks during his stop-over in SOFIA, source stayed at the home of his godmother's sister.

"She was the owner of that house, a large three-story building with a four-room apartment on each floor. Before the Communists came to power," said source, "only her family lived in the house. That consisted of herself, her daughter and son-in-law with their children and her son with his wife and children. Today the government has left them two rooms on the ground floor for her son, who is a military doctor, and his family, and two rooms on the third floor for herself, her son and his family. The remaining rooms are rented out by the State.

"Although she is paid no rent, she must pay taxes on the whole house as well as the insurance. She has abandoned all pretense at repair, which, in general, is neglected throughout SOFIA, because the proprietors have no money, and the State is indifferent."

Source said that as his hostess spoke only Bulgarian, which he did not understand, the lady living across the street, a Greek, would interpret. This woman also owned her house and had constant fights with the tenants, she told him. Mainly about the use of the kitchen, source declared. Everyone quar-

(over)

reled as to who would cook the meal first, and no one dared prepare a tastier dish than his neighbor for fear of police denunciation and investigation. This Greek woman's son, who had been an officer in the pre-Communist Army, had been imprisoned in 1944 and had only been released a few months prior to source's arrival in SOFIA. Because he was considered a reactionary, he was still unable to find a job.

"Both these women told me that only a few new buildings are being erected today," said source. "They are mainly three-storied and built by a combination worker/civil servant co-operative. The worker or the civil servant interested in a house must have 25 per cent of the value in the bank on deposit; the remaining construction cost will be met by bank loans amortized over a period of years.

"Naturally, it is understood that the new owners are Communists since only Communists can have bank accounts." Source added that the reason for the construction of no building higher than three stories was lack of elevators. Even the majority of the pre-war ones are out of action owing to lack of spare parts, he said.

End