

CONFIDENTIAL

LIMITED DISTRIBUTION

READ AND DESTROY

ITEM NO. 4249/56

MK
April 23
VII-2027 a

BULGARIA

EXILE (1200)
Possibilities of Emigration (1205)

POLICE (2300)
Passports (2302)

LEGAL EXPATRIATION FROM COMMUNIST BULGARIA.

SOURCE TRIESTE: A Bulgarian emigrant recently arrived in Italy.

DATE OF OBSERVATION: March 1956.

EVALUATION COMMENT: Old people, whose relatives live abroad, are sometimes permitted to emigrate, provided they have committed no crimes against the Regime. Accepting of bribes, especially in foreign currency, for the granting of exit permits is an old Communist practice.

X X X

In 1946 when source's husband was still alive, her family made the first attempt at leaving Bulgaria. Their wealth had already vanished; their daughter in Italy was suffering hardships because her parents were not able to support her. At the same time their conscience did not allow them to tell her to return to Bulgaria.

The family went to the United States Legation in SOFIA, where they were told that the husband could regain his American citizenship. His wife and daughter would also be able to acquire US citizenship automatically. The son, however, could not profit by his father's citizenship because the former had served in the Bulgarian Army and had pledged allegiance to the Bulgarian Government. Rather than leave their son behind in Bulgaria, the family decided not to avail themselves of the possibility of going to the United States.

(More)

When source's husband and son died, she had no one to turn to but her daughter, who, in the meantime, had married an employee of the Australian Legation in ROME and had emigrated to Australia. "It's true," source said, "that the two tombs in Bulgaria pull me as though they were magnets, but the living cannot think of the dead, especially when one needs a daughter's help. I fought for four years to leave Communist Bulgaria "legally" and this fight gave me strength to live."

Source submitted her first request to leave Bulgaria in the fall of 1952; her final request was submitted in the spring of 1955. Every application was sent to the appropriate offices but all were rejected. The last request went to the commanding officer of the 4th Commissariat of the Militia of SOFIA. In the request source listed the names of three "witnesses," two of whom were close relatives who, although they were Communists (enrolled in the Party after September 9 1944,) had helped source on a number of occasions.

This request was destined to fail just as the others had, but source was desperate this time. She went directly to the office of the chief of the "people's militia" and insisted on seeing the chief. At first she was refused admission, but when she declared that she would not leave until she had seen him, she was finally admitted. Alone, in his presence, source made what in Communist nomenclature is known as "constructive self-criticism." She confessed she hated the regime, that she was one of the "black veils" (cherna zabradka) the Communist poets speak about, that her only son was a victim of the Communist regime, that it would be stupid to keep her in Bulgaria. She spoke frankly, with the courage of a desperate person who is ready to gamble everything. The militia chief listened to her without interrupting and then kindly showed her to the door. Source expected him to call a militia agent and have her arrested, but when they were at the door he told her: "This time your request will not be rejected if you keep calm and don't do anything rash."

Several days after this meeting with the militia chief, source had a caller at her small attic room at 11, Chernomora street. She had never seen the person, but he showed her an identification card to which she paid very little attention at first. Later she realized that he was an agent of the Darzhavna Sigurnost.

The caller asked her if she really meant to leave Bulgaria and if so, was she ready to make some sacrifice toward this end. When source said she was willing to make the sacrifice, the man said:

(More)

"Comrade, you've got to dip into your pocket, and so will your son-in-law Australia, otherwise I don't think you'll ever see your daughter!"

Source replied she had no money and was not sure her son-in-law would be willing or able to put up anything. In any case, she was not prepared to have him make this sacrifice for her. As the caller was taking his leave, he told source that the price she had to pay in order to be able to leave the country "legally" was not high: 6,000 lewa to be handed over to him in Bulgaria, and \$ 3,000 to be deposited in his name in a Swiss bank. He added that source could find something to sell in order to meet the figure. Her son-in-law would certainly find some way of helping her to collect the \$3000.

The caller went away but returned a few days later just when source was determined to go to the militia office to inform them of the blackmail plot. During the second meeting with the caller, source realized that he was sent by the very man she had planned to visit to report this blackmail. She became aware of this when the caller repeated some of the things she had told the militia officer when they were alone at the militia commissariat. That evening source agreed to pay the 6,000 lewa. However, she refused to ask her son-in-law to deposit the \$ 3,000 in a Swiss bank. The caller set the time limit in which source had to pay him the money. As he was leaving source said that the figure seemed high to her. The caller replied: "Comrade, I would give 20,000 lewa to get away, but I wouldn't have anywhere to go. In this case you're lucky!"

To get this money source had to sell the only apartment left in her possession. The Communists who were living in it bought it at a real bargain price: 10,000 lewa for three rooms, bath, kitchen and foyer. When the neighbors heard this, they thought source had gone out of her mind as a result of her sufferings.

Before the time limit expired, the caller came again and picked up the money. When he left this time, he warned source that if she complained about this she would never get permission to leave Bulgaria. Two days later source was summoned to the Foreign Ministry to get her passport and visa. The employees of the various offices stared at her when they learned that she was leaving for Australia; every eye burned with envy.

Upon leaving Bulgaria source felt like a deserter. On the day of her departure a group of about one hundred young

(More)

people came to see her off. Anyone of them would have considered himself lucky to be able to take source's place. "I still feel guilty," source said. "Those young people, who deserve a better life, were left behind, waving their handkerchiefs to say goodbye to a wasted figure who was headed for the free world."

Except for a few personal articles source could not take anything with her from Bulgaria. The family jewels were confiscated by the customs at the frontier because source could not pay the high export duty. She did take with her an old rug and had to pay a 1,000 leva export duty for it. At customs, source found enraged officials who did not want to let a victim who managed to leave the country off easily.

Source ended by saying:

"When I was in Bulgaria and counted the moments until my departure, I thought I would become a new person in the free world. I have been here five days now and I still can't shake off the feeling that surrounded me in Bulgaria... I know I'll never be happy because I can never again have what I lost. One day, perhaps, I'll find peace, which is as necessary to old age as happiness is to youth."

End.

LIMITED DISTRIBUTION

READ AND DESTROY