

ITEM No. 1329/53

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10 Feb  
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BULGARIA

TRADE (3300)  
Consumer Goods (3303)  
Distribution (3304)  
Food (3306)  
Prices (3307)  
Soviet Exploitation (3310)

STANDARD OF LIVING (3200)  
Food (3201)  
Prices (3204)

Supply Difficulties In SOFIA

SOURCE TRIESTE : A white-Russian emigrant who left Bulgaria in November 1952.

DATE OF OBSERVATION : September-October 1952.

EVALUATION COMMENT : The information in this report is confirmed (see Item Nos. 13365/52, 15358/52 and 15377/52.)

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During the last stay in SOFIA (September 1952) our source could observe that the food supply of the Bulgarian capital was particularly difficult. Every morning there were long lines of customers in front of the "Plod-Zelenohuk" and other food shops, waiting to buy a bit of fresh fruit, vegetables or other food-stuffs. Some of the less lucky ones among these persons had to wait for their turns for hours on end and sometimes even for half a day.

At the beginning of the season 1 - 2 kg of vegetables and fruit were distributed per family. But later on

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foodstuff of this kind ran short so that people had to wait in lines to get them, while the maximum quantity granted for each family was reduced to 1 and sometimes only half a kg. During that period fresh grapes, cucumber, apples, green beans, potatoes, tomatoes, water melons etc. were on sale.

It is quite a normal thing to see the people standing in lines in front of the shops particularly on the outskirts of the capital, because not all "Plod-Zelenohuk" shops and especially those in the peripheral parts of the town are always supplied with fruit and vegetables which can be found more easily in the center of SOFIA. Our source was able to hear some of the complaints of the people waiting on the lines. These people would ask how it was possible that to-day there are no fruit and vegetables in Bulgaria while there was quite an abundance of these commodities before 9 September 1944, so much so, that Bulgaria could even export such goods. The conclusion of their surprise was almost always the same, i.e. that this lack of vegetables and fruit could only be explained by the country's great exports to the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, etc. These demonstrations of discontent are made very carefully and at a low voice so that the people concerned won't be heard by the Militia agents normally hanging around the lines in front of the shops to listen to the people's talks.

More than once our source heard the people say that first class grapes were sent to the Soviet Union and other countries at the price of 0,65 Leva the kg while second and third category grapes are sold to the Bulgarians at 4 Leva the kg.. The same applies to meat, cheese, sugar, milk, yogurt and other foodstuffs. People also have to stand in lines in order to buy the latter goods and only get 1 kg or a half per person. According to the government's promises all these commodities were supposed to be available in large quantities after the monetary reform. The lack of sugar is felt especially throughout the country. After long hours of standing in lines people only get a half kg per person. At present fresh milk is only granted to children and sick persons while yogurt is distributed also to adults at limited quantities and under the same difficult circumstances as mentioned for other food-stuffs.

The farmers sell what they can spare of their own production on the free market after having delivered the due quotas to the State. But on this market the farmers sell the goods at much higher prices than in the State shops, i.e. almost twice as high. Persons who were unable to get the foodstuffs in the State shops or who dispose of sufficient money (normally this concerns State and Party officials, the

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personnel of the foreign legations etc.) are the normal clients of the free market.

There are no lines in front of the clothes shops. People can't afford to buy new clothes and have to be content with wearing their old ones even if they are patched up. They don't even dream of buying anything new because they are so short of cash.

Prices are extremely high in the restaurants and quite beyond the possibilities of the majority of the population. In the canteens the food is very scanty and the prices are relatively high. In a first class restaurant a meal composed of soup, meat, bread and a glass of beer costs at least 15 Leva which sum represents a whole daily pay for certain categories of workers. In a second class restaurant the same meal costs 2 or 3 Leva less, and the only difference is that there is an orchestra playing during the meals at the first class restaurant. Lunch in a workers' mess costs from 80 to 100 Leva a month and varies according to the category of the mess. For this price the workers receive soup, a second dish of boiled vegetables and some stewed or fresh fruit. Bread and drinks have to be paid extra. 50 to 70 gr of meat are served twice or three times a week only. Such canteens are normally attached to the State enterprises and are frequented by the workers and employees of the enterprise concerned.

End.