**SITUATION REPORT**

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1. A Review of Bulgarian-Soviet Relations

Summary: On October 17 TASS announced that Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev would visit Bulgaria after the Warsaw Pact summit. In recent years there have been signs of discord between the two countries. With the emergence of the new Soviet leadership it is an appropriate time to re-examine the state of Bulgarian-Soviet relations.

* * *

In recent years there have been unmistakable signs that Bulgarian-Soviet relations have been more problematic than at any other time in Todor Zhivkov's long tenure of power. To the surprise of observers, these two states, once described by Zhivkov himself as "two bodies with one bloodstream," have appeared to disagree over a remarkable range of economic, internal, and foreign issues. The consolidation of Gorbachev's power in the Kremlin and his installing of a new and younger leadership would seem to provide the opportunity for the re-establishment of close ties. Indeed, on two recent occasions, Soviet spokesmen have acknowledged that serious attention must be devoted to their country's policy toward Bulgaria. In an interview with the Bulgarian weekly Pogled, Ambassador Leonid Grekov said, reputedly quoting Gorbachev, that "the roots of our friendship are deep and strong, but the tree must be watered and nurtured in order to bear fruit." In a similar vein Vladimir Lomeiko, an official of the Soviet foreign ministry, told Bulgarian television that the "level of cooperation with Bulgaria has qualitatively higher significance... for the new impulses of development" in the Soviet Union.2

The sudden death of Zhivkov's daughter Lyudmila in July 1981 undoubtedly allayed the worst Soviet fears about the future direction of Bulgarian policy. The Kremlin was known to rue her weighty influence in government and to balk at her mystical reworking of Marxism-Leninism, her endorsement of traditional nationalism, her vigorous reassertion of claims on Macedonia, her lavish celebration of the non-Slavic Thracian past, and her sponsorship of independent cultural and peace initiatives. Nonetheless, even after her death relations between the two states were observed to be cool.3 Moreover, when the first signs of Bulgaria's present economic difficulties became apparent, there was, as Nora Beloff remarked, no reluctance in the country to blame the Soviet Union for withholding "the agreed quantities of liquid fuel and other raw materials."4

Indeed, the current decline in Soviet oil production may well have contributed to Bulgaria's severe energy shortage this summer. Nevertheless, coal, which is an equally important source of power and in short supply in Bulgaria (as in Romania
and Hungary), is plentiful in the Soviet Union, where a 1% increase over last year's output is being claimed.5

If the Bulgarians have voiced their dissatisfaction with their trading relations with the Soviet Union, the Soviets have retaliated, the sharpest and most recent rebuke coming from Ambassador Grekov. In his remarkable interview he focused on the low quality of Bulgarian exports to the Soviet Union and criticized the investment policies and low productivity of Bulgarian industry. These shortcomings undoubtedly complicated the agreement earlier this year of a long-term program of economic cooperation between the two countries. Begun by Prime Ministers Grisha Filipov and Nikolai Tikhonov in March, the negotiations were protracted by the difficulty of coordinating the forthcoming five-year plans (for 1986-1990) and by differences over the course of scientific and technical cooperation. It is revealing that the program, which was finally signed in June during Zhivkov's visit to Moscow, made specific mention of investment priorities and dwelt in detail on the future policies of bilateral trade.6

Soviet annoyance seems to have been directed for some time at what might be termed a complacency in the Bulgarian attitude toward its close economic ties with the USSR. When British Foreign Minister Sir Geoffrey Howe visited Sofia in February 1985, Zhivkov boasted that the key to economic success lay in the possession of colonies. He continued: "Our first colony is the Soviet Union. It gives us raw materials, like your colonies gave you, and we sell it back manufactured goods and exploit it as a market for our exports."7 It is unlikely that this display of wit raised any chuckles in the Kremlin.

As Gorbachev has proceeded to consolidate his hold on power and to launch his campaign of discipline and rejuvenation, there have been signs that the Bulgarian government, eager for accommodation, is ready to reply with similar, if less drastic, declarations. The party daily Rabotnichesko Delo has printed sharp criticisms of corruption and called for a reassertion of the "April line" of 1956 (which promulgated the basic tenets of the post-Stalinist era) and of the principles of democratic centralism.8 A number of articles have denounced the perils of alcohol.9 Most recently, Stanish Bonev, who accompanied Filipov on both of his visits to Moscow, has been dismissed as Chairman of the State Planning Committee, perhaps as a token of Zhivkov's readiness to renew his governmental team. Meanwhile Politburo member and First Deputy Prime Minister Chudomir Aleksandrov has been appointed to chair a special commission on energy problems.10

The opening of the Warsaw Pact summit meeting in Sofia on October 22 was marked in Bulgaria by the publication of a volume of translated speeches and interviews by Gorbachev, Po Leninski Pat [On the Leninist Road].11 Sofia's cinemas have also responded to the occasion by presenting a week of Soviet films.
In their commentaries on the summit meeting, Bulgarian journalists have been careful to echo the nuances of the Soviet position and to lavish praise on the "constructive, stable, realistic, and peace-loving orientation" of the Warsaw Pact. The Soviets have replied in kind, with Lomeiko voicing approval of the "Bulgarian initiative to create a nuclear-free zone in the Balkans." Thus, over the most vital issues of foreign policy the traditional unanimity has been preserved. Indeed, Bulgaria's election to the Security Council of the United Nations and its expensive hosting of the gargantuan UNESCO conference have reaffirmed its value as a loyal and important ally.

Nevertheless, there appears to be some disagreement over the level of economic and technical cooperation that should be sought from the Western powers. At a time when Grekov has been affirming self-sufficiency within the bloc, Bulgaria has been opening up more to the West, entering further joint manufacturing ventures and obtaining sizeable loans from Western banks. Yet it is significant that Zhivkov felt obliged to cancel a visit to West Germany in September 1984, albeit with some reluctance and only after Honecker had made a similar cancellation.

One might also speculate about the Soviet attitudes toward Bulgaria's assimilation of her Turkish minority and toward the prolonged international embarrassment of the Sergei Antonov trial. Indeed, it is conceivable that the former issue was raised by the Libyan leader, Colonel Mu'ammar Qadhafi, during his recent visit to Moscow, but what the Soviet response was cannot be guessed.

One indicator contained in the press statements that greeted the opening of the Warsaw Pact summit meeting, though of minor significance and inconclusive in itself, suggests that Bulgarian-Soviet relations remain somewhat estranged. While Agerpress reported that Zhivkov had received Nicolae Ceausescu "in a comradely atmosphere of warm friendship," his meeting with Gorbachev was described by TASS merely as "friendly." Perhaps Zhivkov feels a certain unease at the disappearance of long-serving Soviet colleagues such as Tikhonov and Patolichev. Mindful that he is now 74 years old and has held power for more than 30 years, Zhivkov may fear that he, too, will be threatened by the Kremlin's new dynamism. Undoubtedly, the forthcoming months will see Sofia attempt to placate the new forces in the USSR, but the success of its efforts may well depend on the ability of the Zhivkov regime to coerce an increasingly recalcitrant Bulgaria into Gorbachev's mold of disciplined socialism. It is noteworthy that some of Grekov's sharpest comments were directed at what he described as the nonproletarian spirit of the Bulgarian populace. Perhaps this will soon be the target of domestic campaigns.

Stephen Ashley
1 The entire interview, surprisingly critical of Bulgaria's economy and trading policy toward the USSR, is analyzed in Bulgarian Situation Report/10, Radio Free Europe Research, 2 September 1985, item 1a.

2 Radio Sofia, 20 October 1985, 9:30 P.M.

3 See Bulgarian SR/10, RFER, 2 September 1985, item 1b.


5 UPI (Moscow), 19 October 1985.

6 For a fuller discussion of these points, see Bulgarian SR/10, RFER, 2 September 1985, item 1b.

7 Quoted in The Mirror in March 1985.

8 See Bulgarian SR/11, RFER, 7 October 1985, item 2.

9 See, for example, Pavel Bacharov's article in "Alcohol and Intellect," Rabotnichesko Delo, 16 October 1985.

10 BTA, 19 October 1985. A claim by the Turkish journalist, Ozgen Acar, in Milliyet that Bonev was dismissed for arranging unauthorized sales of electricity to Turkey cannot be accorded too much credibility.


12 See, for example, N. Koev in Rabotnichesko Delo, 19 October 1985.

2. Gorbachev's Visit

Summary: Gorbachev's recent visit to Sofia confirmed that Bulgarian-Soviet relations are no longer as smooth as they used to be, an impression that was substantiated by two speeches that Todor Zhivkov gave in the course of the visit.

* * *

CPSU Secretary-General Mikhail Gorbachev arrived in Sofia on October 21 to attend the Warsaw Pact summit meeting. He was accompanied by his wife, Raisa, and a top-ranking government and party delegation. After the summit meeting ended on October 23, he and his wife stayed on for "a friendly visit," which had been announced previously, while the other government and party dignitaries in his delegation left for Moscow.

This was the first visit of a CPSU Secretary-General to Bulgaria since January 1979, when Leonid Brezhnev and his heir apparent Konstantin Chernenko were in Sofia; it was also Gorbachev's second visit to Sofia. In September 1984, when he was a Politburo member and CC Secretary, he led the Soviet delegation for the 40th anniversary of the communist takeover in Bulgaria, and it fell to him then to convey to Zhivkov the Kremlin's order to cancel his pending trip to Bonn.

Since there have been signs of discord between Bulgaria and the USSR in recent years, observers of East European affairs awaited Gorbachev's visit with interest. On October 23 the Bulgarian and Soviet Prime Ministers, Grisha Filipov and Nikolai Ryzhkov, signed an agreement on cooperation in machine building and discussed economic cooperation. The protracted negotiation of the coordination of their national economic plans for 1986-1990 suggests that there has been discord between the two countries. Now there are reports that the Bulgarian plan is being redrafted, probably to make it conform more with the Soviet one. Moreover, the dismissal of Chairman of the State Committee of Planning Stanish Bonev might be interpreted as a move intended to appease the Soviets.

The economic difficulties in Bulgarian-Soviet relations are reflected in Sofia's purported insistence that Moscow earmark money as soon as possible for the reconstruction and modernization of assembly lines in Bulgarian industry and increase Soviet raw material and energy shipments. On its part, Moscow demands improvement in the quality of Bulgarian exports for the USSR. This particular aspect of Bulgarian-Soviet relations must have been one of the main topics discussed in private by Zhivkov and Gorbachev. In fact, it is a vicious circle: Bulgarian industry is furnished with obsolete Soviet equipment that badly needs updating, and it is absurd for
the Soviets to expect higher quality products without helping out with the modernization of Bulgarian industry.

The "friendly" part of Gorbachev's visit lasted only one day, October 24. It started with the usual wreath-laying ceremonies; Gorbachev going first to Lenin's monument and then to Georgi Dimitrov's mausoleum; the significance of the order was obviously not lost on his hosts. Gorbachev then had a private talk with Zhivkov, followed by a meeting with the entire BCP CC Politburo. It was said that the two meetings had taken place "in an atmosphere of traditional friendship and complete unanimity of views and positions." A TASS report said that Gorbachev and his host had exchanged information about the preparatory work for their forthcoming party congresses and about the implementation of the results of the CMEA's recent summit meeting. It added that the two leaders had urged "an improvement in the international prestige" of their respective nations. This suggests that such subjects as Afghanistan, the ethnic Turks in Bulgaria, the Rome trial, and arms and narcotics smuggling might have been discussed.

In the afternoon Zhivkov and Gorbachev went to Sofia's metal-cutting machine-tool factory, most of whose products go to the Soviet Union and for which a further agreement had just been signed; both men delivered speeches. Politburo member and Minister of Machine Building Ognyan Doynov played host there to the leaders, something that may have beneficial effects on his career.

The day ended with a dinner. In their speeches--both at the factory and at the dinner--the two leaders touched upon similar subjects, but there were differences in their approaches to individual issues. In his speech at the factory Zhivkov pledged allegiance to "the principles of Marxism-Leninism and socialist internationalism," but he also said that "the national peculiarities of our countries" should be taken into consideration as being "in accordance with the actual interests and needs of socialism." Gorbachev made no similar references.

Zhivkov admitted that Bulgaria was facing difficulties, but, despite these and despite the unpopular measures that it had been forced to adopt, the BCP's objective, he said, continued to be to improve the Bulgarians' standard of living. The unpopular measures referred to were clearly the recent price rises and the power cuts, water shortages, and the poor supply of goods. In his after-dinner speech Zhivkov elaborated on this theme:

Recently, nature has put us on trial. For a second consecutive year Bulgaria has been plagued by an unprecedented drought; ... a large part of the crops ...
were burnt by the scorching rays of the sun. The party and the entire nation are working to compensate for the losses..."11

In these two speeches it is possible that Zhivkov was both appealing to the Bulgarian public to accept the "unpopular measures" and a lower living standard and to Gorbachev to increase Soviet deliveries of energy and raw materials (which have recently been reduced). TASS did not mention these aspects of Zhivkov's speeches, nor did Gorbachev comment on them in public.

The most interesting section of Zhivkov's speech came perhaps as an answer to the criticism of the Bulgarian economy by Soviet Ambassador Leonid Grekov in a Bulgarian weekly last summer.12 Stating that "[Bulgaria's] successes" were well known to his (Bulgarian and Soviet) audiences and that "the shortcomings that still exist... are no less well known to you," Zhivkov claimed that efforts were being made to improve work efficiency. He then went on to refer to the current distortions in the way of life and in socialist morality and socialist legality, violations of labor discipline, or phenomena alien to our society, [which] we will fight to eradicate.

This was a typical Zhivkovian maneuver: to adopt the guise of a critic in order to divert criticism from himself. He emphasized, however, that Bulgaria had been taking measures to boost the economy since as long ago as the 12th BCP Congress in 1981. Zhivkov then turned to foreign affairs and, after praising "the peace-loving policy of the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact," affirmed: "We once more stress our wish to cooperate with the capitalist states." This forthright but ambiguous statement, so at odds with the tone of Gorbachev's speech, was followed by a brief reference to Bulgaria's long-standing aim of creating a nuclear-free zone in the Balkans. It is clear from the context, however, that Zhivkov had more in mind than disarmament negotiations and perhaps more than Bulgaria's increasing reliance on Western trade and finance. Perhaps he was attempting a discreet assertion of independence. Time will show the extent of his resolution and sincerity.

Gorbachev began his speech13 at the rally with praise for the combine's labor force, which he described as "one of the foremost detachments of the Bulgarian working class." In his further heavy stress on the historic role of Bulgaria's working class, the Soviet leader seemed to support and echo Grekov's rebuke of the Bulgarians for their lack of a proletarian consciousness. His tone then became more matter-of-fact. He said that in his talks with the Bulgarian leadership "We briefed each other... in a comradely fashion, not evading a few sharp edges." It was the first clear sign that there are still
differences between Bulgaria and the USSR. Gorbachev proceeded to urge the strengthening of discipline and a fundamental change in attitudes at all levels. Speaking of cooperation within the CMEA, he said that "more efficient, bolder, and more flexible methods . . . are needed," and he demanded "excellent quality and reliability of output," apparently of both Soviet and Bulgarian industry. Gorbachev said that Bulgarian-Soviet cooperation was "inconceivable without strict observation of a good production rhythm [a steady flow of production] and smoothness of reciprocal deliveries."

Despite the hints at Moscow's dissatisfaction with mutual trade, lack of discipline, and, possibly, with a certain ideological infirmity in Bulgaria, as suggested by Soviet Ambassador Grekov's comments, Gorbachev devoted the last third of his speech at the machine-tool factory and almost his entire speech at the dinner to praising Soviet foreign policy and the Warsaw Pact summit meeting. It should be noted that militant language and verbal attacks on the US were conspicuously absent from both leaders' speeches.

Gorbachev's visit was described by the head of the Press Department of the Soviet Ministry of Foreign Affairs as being of "international significance." The Bulgarian commentaries were more modest, concentrating on the effects of the visit on the domestic scene. The media agreed that "a very important and responsible period is in store for us." There was no communique, which is not unusual, since the visit was a "friendly," not an official one. In contrast with his performance in Paris, in Sofia Gorbachev presented the usual stern image of a Kremlin leader. His stay was surrounded by secrecy and security precautions to the point that Sofia's main thoroughfares were deserted. His wife, Raisa, disappeared from the public eye. All this confirmed that Gorbachev has two different images: one for the West and another for the East.

There have been suggestions that Zhivkov's position as party and state leader might be threatened even before the 13th congress of the Bulgarian Communist Party next April; but, as Gorbachev invited him to pay an official friendly visit to Moscow, it seems that his position is safe for the moment. It was clear, however, that relations between the two men were far from being as amicable as the Bulgarian media had pretended. Diplomatic sources reported that during his speech at the metal combine Gorbachev never once looked at Zhivkov. In neither of his speeches did he praise the Bulgarian President, neither for his international role nor for his domestic leadership. In fact, he did not once refer to him by name.

It seems clear that Gorbachev's friendly visit did not restore the harmony that characterized Bulgarian-Soviet relations in the 1960s and early 1970s. Notwithstanding the facade of diplomacy, both leaders spoke their minds and hinted at deeper disagreements between them. As Gorbachev consolidates his hold
on power and refines his European policies, a "very important period" does indeed lie ahead for Bulgaria.

G. S.


2 AFP (Sofia), 23 October 1985.

3 See item 1 above.

4 See Bulgarian SR/10, *RFER*, 2 September 1985, item 1b.


7 TASS (in English), 24 October 1985.


9 Ibid.

10 Ibid.

11 Ibid.

12 In *Pogled*, no. 26, 1 July 1985. See also Bulgarian SR/10, *RFER*, 2 September 1985, item 1b.


14 BTA in English, 24 October 1985.

15 Radio Sofia, 24 and 25 October 1985, 5:30 P.M. and 6:30 P.M., respectively.
3. Governmental Changes

Two important, high-level changes in the Council of Ministers were announced by the State Council on October 18, just before the Warsaw Pact leaders met in Sofia and CPSU General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev graced the Bulgarians with a "friendly" visit. The offices affected were the chairmanships of the State Planning Committee and the Committee for Science and Technical Progress.

Stanislav Bonev, aged 54, Chairman of the State Planning Committee since July 1982, was released from this post because of a "transfer to other work." He was replaced by Ivan Iliev, aged 60, a professor who had already held this chairmanship before, from January 1973 to April 1975 (between 1975 and the appointment of Bonev in 1982, the post was held by Kiril Zarev, who is now a CC Secretary).

Bonev also had to give up his title as Deputy Prime Minister, a position that has often been linked with that of planning chief (but was not given to Iliev). There can be no doubt that the "other work" to which he is alleged to have been transferred is of lesser importance and that his transfer amounts to a demotion, even if, for the time being, he is formally still a candidate member of the Politburo. His case can safely be said to be one of the most glaring examples in recent years of a scapegoat who was sacrificed in order to protect his superiors, notably Prime Minister Grisha Filipov and even Todor Zhivkov. Due to the nature of his post, however, he was in a vulnerable position when it came time to blame someone for the intolerable downturn of the Bulgarian economy since the beginning of the year. Although much is made of the adverse weather conditions of the last year, it is clear to most that the problems in the economy go deeper than the damage caused by the weather; they are due to a large extent to systemic and managerial failures, coupled with recent unsuccessful experiments with the economic mechanism. A leading article in the party daily 10 days after Bonev's dismissal criticized the shortcomings in planning "on all levels," which, of course, would have included an attack on the planning chief as the main person responsible.

Another serious problem for which Bonev was held accountable was connected with Bulgarian-Soviet economic relations, notably the unmistakable, though not openly admitted, difficulties in coordinating the next five-year plans of both countries. This particular issue is believed to have been the main motive behind the timing of his dismissal, that is, on the eve of Gorbachev's visit. It is worth recalling that Bonev accompanied Prime Minister Filipov on his two trips to Moscow this year, which dealt with the problem, in March and August, and, most recently, was himself in the Soviet capital on September 23, where he met his Soviet counterpart, Nikolai Baibakov, who, meanwhile, has also been replaced.
It is very probable that part of the blame put on Bonev might have been the failure during his latest visit to Moscow to reach a final agreement--blame coming, most likely, from the Soviet rather than from the Bulgarian leadership, if one presumes that he had been defending Bulgarian rather than Soviet interests. The brief report in the Bulgarian press on his meeting with Baibakov said that, in a friendly atmosphere, Baibakov and Bonev had discussed "issues connected with the conclusion of the coordination of the state plans . . . and the forthcoming signing of a corresponding protocol."6 A month later the two prime ministers were quoted as having said that "joint work on national economic plans for 1986-1990 allows for the signing of a protocol on the coordination of plans."6 Despite this repeatedly claimed readiness, it is a fact that the protocol was not signed during Gorbachev's visit either, and there have been rumors that the Bulgarian 1986-1990 plan is being redrawn,7 probably to make the coordination possible at last. The fact that Bulgarian officials, when commenting on Bulgarian-Soviet economic relations, have been emphasizing "mutual advantage" seems significant.8 Assuming that Bulgaria will have to make certain concessions to the USSR in exchange for the badly needed imports of fuel and raw materials, it comes as something of a surprise that Iliev should be chosen to make the offers that Bonev might well have been withholding.

The two men have different backgrounds. Bonev, although he has the title of assistant professor, is a typical party apparatchik who first served as party secretary 25 years ago at the metallurgical combine in Pernik and later became secretary of the Pernik City Party Committee. As Filipov's protege since the late 1960s, he has held various, increasingly important economic posts in the government and from 1977 to 1981 worked as deputy head and head of the CC Planning Department. His promotion to candidate membership in the Politburo in January 1984 placed him in the top hierarchy and marked the climax of a career that seems now to have come to an abrupt halt.

Iliev, by contrast, has had a varied career in the government and in academia. He has held no formal party positions and is not even a CC member. Consequently, he does not have the same party allegiances as Bonev. Since October 1983, however, he has been Todor Zhivkov's personal "assistant," an obviously prestigious and influential position, although its formal status is not exactly defined. It would not be too far-fetched to conclude that in the context of the rivalry between Filipov and Zhivkov, Zhivkov's protege won out over Filipov's.

The other decision by the Council of Ministers represented the defeat of an idea that, if not conceived was at least personally sponsored by Zhivkov, namely, the abolition of the State Committee for Science and Technical Progress. Last February Zhivkov announced that the committee was "no longer necessary," suggesting that it would be closed down.9 In May
the chairman of the committee, Nikola Todoriev, was given another governmental post without being replaced, but no step was taken to abolish the committee. Now it appears that the committee will stay, since the State Council has appointed a new chairman.

Considering the increased emphasis placed on scientific and technical progress by the February plenum, Zhivkov's suggestion to abolish the agency responsible for this seemed contradictory, to say the least. Later, the insistence on scientific and technical progress in the Bulgarian-Soviet long-term program signed in June might have contributed to the reprise of the committee.

The newly appointed chairman, Stoyan Markov, aged 43, is an electronics engineer with considerable experience in party and governmental work in the economic sector. After having headed the Industry Department of the BCP's CC (1979-1984), he was First Deputy Chairman of the State Committee for Science and Technical Progress (January-May 1984) and has been First Deputy Minister of Machine Building since May 1984. He is a member of the BCP's CC and can be regarded as a trusted and, probably, an efficient party aparatchik with good professional knowledge.

Rada Nikolaev

1 See item 2 above.

2 See Bulgarian Situation Reports/5, 7, 10 and 11, Radio Free Europe Research, 28 March, 24 May, 2 September, and 7 October 1985, items 2, 3, 2, and 1, respectively, as well as item 4 below.

3 Rabotnichesko Delo, 28 October 1985.

4 See Bulgarian SR/10, RFER, 2 September 1985, item 1b.

5 Rabotnichesko Delo, 24 September 1985.

6 Ibid., 24 October 1985; see item 2 above.


10 See Bulgarian SR/7, RFER, 24 May 1985, item 1.
4. **Continuing Problems with Water Supplies**

Summary: Recent reports of prolonged water cuts and poor crop yields have highlighted the problems of water supply in Bulgaria. Legislation in March, concerned principally with the management and pricing of the service, was stiffened by a ministerial decree of October 2 that introduced new sanctions against waste. Meanwhile discussion in the press makes it clear that industrial overuse is the main cause of the present difficulties.

* * *

In recent years Bulgaria has had increased difficulty in maintaining the supply of water to industry, agriculture, and private consumers. This summer the problem became acute, and the government was forced to replace its repeated exhortations with stern and unpopular measures. On September 15 drastic price increases were announced that affected both domestic and industrial supplies, and on October 2 the Council of Ministers issued a decree intended to ensure "the more economical use of available water supplies and the discovery of new sources."

Although the decree said that the water supply was to be considered "a primary responsibility" of local administrators, the majority of its provisions were mere reformulations of earlier decrees. They called for industry to increase its recycling of water, to establish independent sources of its own, and to reduce its reliance on drinkable sources. They stipulated that all existing plans for the construction of purification plants be implemented and that the Committee for Geology and the Vodokanalproekt public utilities institute step up their research into the technology of pump-operated wells. The new measures contained, however, an ominous note confirming the power of local authorities to order cuts and to withhold water supplies from households and enterprises that are found to be excessively wasteful of water.

On October 7 Radio Sofia, commenting on an inquiry into water usage in 17 of Bulgaria's districts, acknowledged that there had been extensive cuts this summer and that a number of villages in Vratsa district had been without drinking water for an entire week. A similar admission was made in the English-language Sofia News, which referred to threats to the "drinking water supply for people and livestock in some parts of the country."

Despite the Bulgarian media's characteristic reluctance to specify the extent and duration of the cuts, they have been more than forthcoming with details of the prolonged drought, which is widely blamed for Bulgaria's present difficulties. On March 25
Rabotnichesko Delo reported that the rainfall of the previous six months had been 45-65% of the average and that only in the extreme south and southeast had there been adequate rain. On April 4 the same newspaper revealed that the reservoirs at Batak and Belmeken were empty, and on April 26 a correspondent from Pazardzhik reported that reservoirs in that region were at their lowest level in 15 years.

Although the drought has persisted in most regions of Bulgaria, it is clear from other articles and from ministerial statements that it is considered only one of a number of causes of the present crisis. The fact that the decree issued on October 2 dealt with managerial responsibilities, already the subject of legislation on 18 March 1985, suggests that there are serious deficiencies in the organization of water services and that comparatively little has been done to make industry and the public economize.

Industrial wastefulness has been criticized in a number of strongly-worded newspaper articles. In May Rabotnichesko Delo indicted 18 enterprises in Sofia for their failure to economize water, while Narodna Mladezh criticized the Velur factory in Lovech for using drinking water in manufacturing. The L. I. Brezhnev metallurgical plant at Kremikovtsi was blamed for serious complications at the Iskar reservoir near Sofia.

Although enterprises have repeatedly been ordered to establish separate supplies and to recycle water whenever possible, it appears that very few have made significant changes. An article in Rabotnichesko Delo restricted its praise to Sofia, where, it claimed, between 6,000,000 and 8,000,000 cubic meters would be piped from independent sources the following year. A later article, however, found it difficult to name many enterprises in the city that could be commended for their rational use of water and was obliged to include such marginal consumers as Sofia University and the Stefan Makedonski Theater.

Some commentators have shown an awareness of the difficulties facing industrial managers. Investment planners have rarely provided the resources needed for recycling and the drilling of wells, and for this reason Rabotnichesko Delo exonerated the Bulgarska Kozhuharska Industriya factory from its general criticism of enterprises in Sofia. Furthermore, many of the sources that industry could use are contaminated. Ikonomicheski Zhivot referred to the problem of pollution resulting from the excessive use of nitrate fertilizers and admitted that this had seriously affected underground deposits of water in the districts of Tolbuhin, Silistra, Sliven, and Stara Zagora. Too few purification plants have been established, often despite the decisions of central bodies and the specific allocation of funds. A long press critique of environmental policy mentioned the case of the coastal Burgas district, where a decision to build such a plant was made.
years ago but has still not been implemented by local planners. Even though the region was allocated 2,500,000 leva in 1985, the bulk of the money for the project (1,500,000 leva) was reallocated by regional councils. The problem of completing and maintaining such installations has, moreover, been highlighted by the shortcomings at the Metodi Shatarov acid-battery factory, where a plant was left unfinished by the Ministry for Machine-building and was allowed to pollute the Maritsa River.13

Inadequate technology has forced Bulgarian industry to rely on public water supplies. Trud lamented on September 23 that the quantity of water required for certain industrial processes was "several times greater per unit than ... in developed countries." Other factors also hinder an economy drive. Bulgarian plumbing standards are acknowledged to be low, so low, in fact, that one prominent article claimed that drips and bursts might account for as much as 30% of all the drinking water used.14 At the Runo factory in Sofia alone 39,709 cubic meters were lost after a pipe had burst.15 Part of the problem is a shortage of qualified plumbers. Narodna Mladezh discovered that the brigade charged with the repair and renewal of pipes and other installations in Lovech was only eight strong instead of the planned fourteen. It also conceded that there was a shortage of water-meters and that those that had been installed were frequently faulty.16

If industry has been selected as the chief target for admonishment, the domestic use of drinking water has nonetheless been cited as excessive and wasteful. Trud, complaining of the scarcity of national resources, lamented that per capita consumption was one of the highest in Europe and criticized such habits as washing (instead of sweeping) floors and balconies, cooling drinks in cold water rather than refrigerators, and washing cars with clean drinking water. The newspaper also found fault with the national do-it-yourself craze which, it argued, was responsible for exacerbating the faultiness of plumbing.17

The price rises in September were a further admission of the failure of exhorting the public and industry to economy. Despite the misgivings about the volume of domestic consumption, the burden of the increase fell on industry, the costs of which were raised from 0.11 to 0.40 leva per cubic meter. It is to be assumed that penalties specified in earlier legislation, for excessive use and for failing to meter consumption,18 will continue to apply but at different rates.

The continuing effects of the water shortage on the Bulgarian economy can be illustrated but not accurately quantified. Statements about the causes of the energy shortage have tended to refer to the reduction in the supply of hydroelectricity but have often overlooked the importance of thermal and, more recently, nuclear power.19 In 1983
hydroelectricity accounted for only 7.9% of the national grid supply.

Given the industry's reliance on water supplies, some losses in production are to be expected in this sector; and it is significant that the legislation introduced in March 1985 provided for financial compensation for enterprises affected by cuts and natural shortages as well as by deficiencies in new water installations.20

The effect of the crisis on agriculture is hard to determine, since the Bulgarian authorities have yet to report the size of this year's harvest. Although Radio Sofia has featured isolated reports that suggest that the situation is relatively normal,21 Sofia News has adopted an altogether different tone, warning that "an unprecedented springtime drought literally destroyed a large proportion of the crops, placing in doubt, among other things, even the guaranteed minimum of farm workers' wages."22 Recent reports in Western papers also suggest that the harvest is poor. The Financial Times observed that Britain was to ship substantial amounts of barley to Bulgaria and speculated that the cause was a shortfall of at least 1,300,000 tons in the wheat crop.23 It is quite probable that recent negotiations for loans from foreign banks have been made necessary as much by the agricultural shortfall as by the need for advanced technology. If this is the case, the drought and the failings of the energy and water supply system will complicate the modernization of industry and the full implementation of the NEM.

Stephen Ashley

1 See Bulgarian Situation Report/6, Radio Free Europe Research, 6 May 1983, item 4.

2 See ibid., no. 11, 7 October 1985, item 3.

3 Rabotnichesko Delo, 3 October 1985, p. 6.


5 Darzhaven Vestnik, no. 28, 9 April 1985, pp.300-301.

6 13 May 1985.

7 24 September 1985.

8 Rabotnichesko Delo, 4 April 1985, p. 1.
10 Ibid., 4 April 1985.
12 14 August 1985.
14 Ibid., 4 April 1985.
17 23 September 1985.
18 Darzhaven Vestnik, no. 28, 9 April 1985, p. 300.
19 See Bulgarian Situation Report/10, RFER, 2 September 1985, item 2.
20 Darzhaven Vestnik, no. 28, 9 April 1985, pp. 300-301.
21 Radio Sofia, 10 October 1985, 9.00 A.M.
22 18 September 1985, p. 8.

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