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READ AND DESTROY

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BULGARIA

COMMUNIST PARTY

Idology

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/0603/

MORALE AND GENERAL MOOD

/2000/

Political Situation

/2004/

Foreign Relations

/5002/

LABOR

/1900/

Unemployment

/1917/

BULGARIAN ROUNDUP

SOURCE ATHENS: Confidential source.

DATE OF OBSERVATION: November 4 1956.

EVALUATION COMMENT: Subsource who is familiar with the situation in Bulgaria, gives his personal opinion of which one part needs certain corrections and another some additional remarks.

The information given on precautionary measures taken in Bulgaria in order to prevent events similar to those which took place in Hungary, as well as on the population's attitude toward these events is confirmed from official sources /see the leader of 'Rabotnichesko Delo' of November 5, 1956 headlined 'Under the Invincible Banner of the Party' and by reports and articles published in the West /such as "The Times" of November 3 and 5, 1956, the BELGRAD correspondent of "Daily Express" on November 9, and a Reuter VIENNA dispatch of the same date./

The latest Bulgarian history beginning with the liberation from the Turkish yoke contains numerous examples of anti-Russian attitude in Bulgaria. A remarkable and correct evaluation of the present attitude of the Bulgarians toward the USSR is supplied by the SOFIA correspondent of

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"The Times," who in an article published on November 3 1956 headlined "Resignation in Bulgaria" pointed out that "the Russians are as unpopular in Bulgaria as elsewhere in Eastern Europe."

The same article correctly stresses that "the Yugoslav and Polish examples naturally had their echo in Bulgaria, particularly among the intellectuals, who see in nationalism the only way to greater freedom under the present system." Under the category of intellectuals we also understand the Bulgarian students, who do not enjoy greater privileges than their counterparts, in the rest of the captive countries.

The expressed doubts of source in view of the future policy of MOSCOW with regard to the captive countries and of that of the Bulgarian Communist regime, do not lack logical motivation, which however is not yet based on real foundations. Especially the BCP shows clearly that it does not even consider a deviation from its present policy. If anything, just the contrary!

On October 31, the Ministerial Council and the CC of the BCP published a communiqué to the effect that owing to adverse climatic conditions and heavy hailstorms the grain yield in some regions of the country has been considerably low. This fact and the feeding of bread and flour to the cattle have led to certain measures, which had to be taken in order to ensure the food supply of the population /Ed.: introduction of ration cards/ which measures, however, were abolished on November 10 1956. We are of the opinion that the events in Hungary have strengthened CHERVENKOV's position with the ruling MOSCOW-trained Communist team in the CC of the BCP and the Ministerial Council, as well as with the KREMLIN. In the above mentioned leader of "Rabotnichesko Delo" of November 5 1956 "Under the Invincible Banner of the Party," CHERVENKOV's policy is qualified as "political wisdom, which took precautionary measures early enough to wipe out with an iron hand the petty-bourgeois tendencies and barred the way to the alien to the principles of the BCP petty-bourgeois laxity." CHERVENKOV never enjoyed sympathies and popularity among the Bulgarians, because he is regarded as an obedient tool of the KREMLIN and as the main responsible for the present state of affairs in the country.

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The present percentage of collectivized land in Bulgaria is 77.3 per cent /from BALGARANOV's report on the occasion of the September 9 1956 celebrations, published in "Rabotnichesko Delo" of September 9 1956./

The data supplied on the number of unemployed in Bulgaria is believed to be authentic, in spite of contradictory information on this subject supplied in earlier reports /see for instance ATHENS RFE Item No. 7438/56 giving the figure of 150,000 unemployed in SOFIA alone, while RFE BERLIN Item No. 5181/56 stated that there are 350,000 to 400,000 unemployed in the country./

Radio SOFIA reported the number of foreign tourists who visited Bulgaria this year to be 8,220. By constructing many new hotels and improving the transportation means leading to major spas, the regime plans to considerably increase the tourist traffic next year.

a With the above corrections and completions, this report is useful contribution toward the study of the situation in the country and especially of the policy of the Bulgarian Communist regime.

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Since the revolt in Hungary the Bulgarian Government has taken extraordinary security measures. Detachments of security forces were moved into the SOFIA area, and the streets today are patrolled, even in the remotest districts of the capital, by two rifle or sub-machinegun armed security-force-men in addition to the normal police patrols. These security-force-men are to be seen at all street corners at all hours of the day or night. Apart from this the government found it unnecessary to take special military precautions since the greater part of the Army was already on a war basis, participating in the annual military maneuvers and, hence, under the immediate orders of the Minister of Defense.

The population, said source, is not excited about the Hungarian revolt. They had seriously thought that after the Polish success and after the initial stages of the Hungarian revolt, it would prove easy for all captive countries, including themselves, to ease the Soviet bonds and break away from the rigid controls. For this reason, they apparently

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had made up their minds not to stage any revolt of their own. They had thought that the benefits accruing to the Poles and the Hungarians would automatically fall into the quiescent arms of the Bulgarians, Rumanians and Czechs.

Now that they see that the Hungarian revolt is being so ruthlessly crushed, they are unwilling to risk any uprising even were they prepared for one. For two reasons, says source: Firstly, the students who normally are in the vanguard of any uprising, would never lead a revolt in Bulgaria as it happened in Poland and Hungary. The Bulgarians have no anti-Russian tradition as have the Poles, Hungarians and Czechs, and the students are better off in Bulgaria than is the average person. Students, mainly coming from peasant families and who would have no chance whatsoever under another regime to continue their university studies are now receiving a scholarship grant from the government of 430 leva monthly during the years of their studies. At the end of that time they know they have to reimburse the money loaned, interest free, on the basis of between ten and twenty per cent salary deductions. But they are all convinced that they will obtain better jobs owing to their education and will easily repay these loans.

Secondly, there is a feeling now current in Bulgaria that the Russians, once they have demonstrated their strength against the Hungarians, will be forced to ease up in the captive countries instead of reverting to ruthlessness and oppression, because they have finally been made to realize the strength of the anti-Russian feeling in these countries, and will realistically determine to improve their relations rather than impose their force. This will take the form, so the Bulgarians believe, of eased food, taxation and requisitioning conditions, of a let-up in collectivization, possibly of greater consumer goods supplies and a lessening of the bars to the outside world.

Source stated that in the whole the lot of the Bulgarian people today was somewhat easier than it had been two years ago, although the rationing for dark bread had been re-instituted in the country areas, where farmers had been feeding it to animals since it was cheaper than grain. Source said that grain cost 1.70 to 1.80 leva a kilo, whereas the dark bread cost only 1.50 leva a kilo. Rationing is now one-half kilo per person. Heads of families must inform the authorities of the number of persons in their families and of

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the baker with whom they intend to trade. This rationing does not apply to white bread.

For the average Bulgarian there has been a relaxation of terror. No longer are there the midnight arrests, the dreaded knock on the door. In fact, source said he could recall of no case of arrest for other than purely criminal grounds such as embezzlement within the past year. Concentration camps have been almost entirely liquidated. Bulgarians can now travel and go to restaurants several times a month, if they can afford it, without anyone questioning where they may have obtained their money.

Yugoslav Visit A Failure

The visit of the Bulgarian parliamentarians to Yugoslavia was a failure, said source. He had spoken to Todor ZHIVKOV, the First Party Secretary, who told him that the delegation had not even seen TITO, that it had visited only one collective farm and that, therefore, he, ZHIVKOV, was unable to give any details of the Yugoslav agricultural program to his government; that no agreements had been reached between them.

Source learned that one of the reasons for the failure was that the Yugoslav had originally scheduled an 18-day visit, which was to have taken the Bulgarians to SKOPJE for the last three days. The Bulgarians, not wanting to get into any discussions on Macedonia, cut their visit short to fifteen days, of which only the last seven hours were spent in SKOPJE. Apparently, the Yugoslavs had complained somewhat bitterly that the Bulgarians had not lived up to their agreement to teach Macedonian at the Bulgarian Macedonian area schools and that while the Yugoslavs had hired Bulgarian schoolmasters to teach Bulgarian at the Bulgarian minority area schools, the Bulgarians, in their turn, had not yet made any move to engage Yugoslav Macedonian schoolmasters, and that purely Macedonian laws, now in effect in Yugoslav Macedonia, had not been put into effect in Bulgarian Macedonia, where the Bulgarian laws were still being enforced.

Source got the impression from Bulgarian sources that TITO is very worried indeed over the entire Polish and Hungarian revolt, particularly the latter. He fears that Russian troops may enter his own country. This he would not fear if he thought that the West, NATO, etc. would automatically come

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into any war on his side and against the Russians, But he fears that the West will merely stand aside and let him fight it out alone. This opinion has been strengthened by the West's failure to provide any help whatsoever for the Hungarians. That is why TITO is now making more than daily hints in his newspapers and radio talks concerning revivifying the "Balkan Entente" and why he is making such efforts to have Greece and Turkey patch up their differences. He is sure that if he were to be attacked in such a manner that the "Balkan Entente" members would come to his help, then NATO and the US would be forced to come into it also.

CHERVENKOV's Prestige

CHERVENKOV, who had gained prestige with the Bulgarian people following his ousting and replacement by YUGOV, gradually lost favor in recent months and, since he is known to be a STALIN-type, ruthless Russian, should lose even more over the Hungarian repressions.

This year was a fair agricultural year ^{for} Bulgaria, said source. But the food shortage and bread rationing are caused by the export of wheat. For example, when Yugoslavia was still not certain whether she would obtain US aid /or not, the Russians promised 300,000 tons of wheat, and of that amount Bulgaria was forced to ship 105,000 tons. This was duly entered in the bookkeeping as a repayment of part of Bulgaria's debt to Yugoslavia, which amounts to some five million dollars, of which three million are for transport fees owed on Bulgarian rail transport through Yugoslavia. In addition, Bulgaria sent an annual quota between 60 and 70,000 tons of wheat to Albania.

The country has been 67 per cent collectivized agriculturally, and not 30 per cent as stated by "New York Times."

Unemployment

There is acute unemployment in the country. The figure source heard /there are no official statistics/ was 200,000 throughout the country and 70,000 in SOFIA alone. To cope with this, source was told the Bulgarian Government intended to send technicians and experts abroad. He heard that 30,000 specialists were to be sent to Czechoslovakia, 2,000 to Syria to help institute a silo system, and between three and four hundred specialists to India.

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In the cities food is adequate although expensive, said source. Coal has remained at the same rate -- 112 leva per ton for ordinary cheap coal, and 240 leva for the better quality anthracite, which is usually only bought by Communist officials and diplomatic representatives.

In SOFIA are now between 30 and 40 new "Pobeda" taxis, and the old ones have been scrapped. They are expensive -- the shortest ride costing ten leva which is approximately a half day's pay for the average man.

Tourism

The Government is making a determined effort to promote tourism next year. A member of the Government told source that they intended to transform VARNA into the "Number One" tourist town of Europe, even building a casino. When source queried if they would play domino -- because gambling is anathema to a good Communist -- he was answered seriously: no, roulette. After all the people like to play.

Hundreds of men are now to be seen working on the asphalt roads between SOFIA and BURGAS, and SOFIA and VARNA. Granite cobblestone roads are to be encountered on mountain passes. Roads between PLOVDIV and HASKOVO are also to be brought up to "Number One" condition. The government expects a heavy traffic of tourist buses from Czechoslovakia and other Iron Curtain countries, as well as Russian ships to call in at VARNA in increasing numbers. A new tourist dollar rate is being discussed for the next year, but the figure varies. Some say between 12 and 13 leva to the dollar, since the present black-market rate /very difficult to obtain and very risky/ is between 17 and 21 leva.

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