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BULGARIA

AGRICULTURE /0200/
Delivery Quotas /0203/

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SOCIAL STRUCTURE /3000/
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SOFIA HOLDS PEASANTS TO BE SOCOND-CLASS
CITIZENS.

SOURCE TRIESTE: A Bulgarian emigrant who recently arrived in the West.

DATE OF OBSERVATION: March 1956.

EVAL. COMMENT: This valuable report well describes the plight of the Bulgarian peasantry.

The standard of living in Bulgaria is one of the lowest in Europe, and the standard of living of the Bulgarian peasants is much lower than that of the Bulgarian industrial workers, as a result of the Regime's agricultural policy. The reported incident at the village of KOVATCHEVTSI is unknown here.

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Source gave the following account of the peasants' life in present day Bulgaria:

"The Communists who preached union and brotherhood between workers and peasants have created an abyss between the two classes. The peasants feel that the workers have been favored

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at the former's expense, and look upon the living conditions of the workers as better than their own. In an effort to create a working class- the proletariat - the Communists have favored urbanism. They offered to those peasants willing to leave the farms better paid jobs in the city. Communist propaganda tends to demonstrate that the peasants are a type of second-class citizen who still needs protection and guidance. The frequent appeals of the Communist Party for a "march from the city to the country in order to help the farm cooperatives" are interpreted by the peasants as though the city people were being sent as missionaries to teach them.

"I had been guilty of never realizing the true value of the Bulgarian peasants as good citizens and patriots. My years of internment brought me in closer touch with them, and I was able to see the great social injustice which exists in "socialist" Bulgaria, the injustice toward the Bulgarian peasants in order to serve foreign interests. Even if the Bulgarian peasants have become resigned to the Communist Regime, they hate it nonetheless. The character of the Bulgarian village has not become warped as it has in the city. The peasants offer resistance even if they are discouraged by their hopeless lives. It has been noticed that the Communists who are active in the city are lost in the rural mass when they are sent to the country where it is hard for them to be effective.

I remember in 1950 when the peasants of KOVATCHEVTZI in SAMOKOV province refused to deliver their quotas of hay to the State. The poor harvest had compelled them to purchase hay in other provinces in order to feed their livestock. The militia tried in vain to force the peasants to deliver the quotas. Each peasant told the president of the communal council, /fnu/ NIKOLOV: "Here's the day; here's the cart; now you handle it! We certainly don't mean to let our livestock starve." President NIKOLOV called the Secretary of the Communist Party of SAMOKOV to the village. The latter accused the peasants of organized rebellion against the orders of the Party and the government. The peasants were told to gather in the village square where the instigators were to be ferreted out. The Party secretary of SAMOKOV asked the peasants why they had refused to obey the orders of the president of the communal council. The peasants did not say a word. After a long pause, the secretary repeated the question. Finally, a young peasant, son of a widow of World War II, and he himself just discharged

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from the military service, stopped forward. He calmly said he was in no position to hand over the quota because he had two cows and two calves, and the hay he had was only enough to feed them halfway through winter. Several other peasants then stopped forward to back the young man. The secretary turned to the young peasant and asked him, as a former member of the Bulgarian "people's army," to set an example for the other peasants by handing over his quotas within three hours, without reflecting. The secretary said that Valko CHERVENKOV himself would see to it that his animals were fed. This statement did not change the young peasant's mind. He replied he would not do it, and left the square. Then something happened that neither I nor the peasants of KOVATCHEVTZI will ever forget. The secretary of the Party in SAMOKOV grabbed the rifle of a militiaman standing nearby and with one shot killed the young peasant. The peasants turned and went home in silence. Toward evening of the same day, every peasant handed over the required quota. During the spring of 1951 part of the livestock of KOVATCHEVTZI starved to death.

Now all the peasants of KOVATCHEVTZI have joined the kolkhoz. The men have gone from the village and have left their wives to work on the kolkhoz. When I returned to SOFIA, and until I left Bulgaria, I used to meet peasants from KOVATCHEVTZI who had come to the capital to look for work or to visit relatives.

If it can be said that in 11 years the Communists have done something to improve the living conditions of the city workers, the same cannot be said for the peasants. The peasants do not even own that they produce, and the bread is taken out of their mouths. The young people have left the villages, not so much from a sense of adventure, as to be able to eat. The housemaids' market on Lenin Square /former "Sveta Nedelja" square/ is full of young country girls from the villages of the province of SOFIA and elsewhere. The well-fed wives of Communist big-shots usually hire maids. In making their choice they are quite competent because many of them in the past were themselves housemaids. However, when they choose a maid, young peasant girls who belong to the DSNM /Dimitrov's Youth Union/ are excluded. The housewives are afraid the girls might make much of their membership in the Communist organization and be disobedient as a result."

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