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BULGARIA

MORALE AND GENERAL MOOD /2000/
Political Situation /2004/

PROPAGANDA /2600/
Radio /2603/

AUDIENCE ANALYSIS INTERVIEW WITH A UNIVERSITY
WOMAN.

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

DATE OF OBSERVATION: March 1956.

EVALUATION COMMENT: This report is a sequel to TRIESTE RFE Item No. 4242/56. For the number of broadcasting stations, radio receiving sets and radio listening fees, please consult Weekly Information Letter Nos. 171 and 173.

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Source's Opinion about the Future Organization of the Country.

Source expressed her feelings about the future organization of Bulgaria as follows:

"I have always been of the opinion that the Bulgarian people did not deserve their present fate and are not guilty of bringing about the present state of affairs. I have never belonged to a political party. However, that does not mean that I have no ideas or desires about the future organization of Bulgaria if she should ever be freed from the Communist yoke.

"I hate political extremism and political careerism which runs counter to the best interests of the Bulgarian people. First of all, I believe a future, free Bulgaria should have intelligent and cultured statesmen at the helm.

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Only intelligent, cultured persons can be true patriots. I think that if the Communist leaders were cultured and intelligent, Communism would not be so despised. But intelligence and culture are incompatible with Communism; the Communist ceases to be one when he can be considered intelligent and cultured. A democratic government should be set up in a future, free Bulgaria. However, during the early years of liberation, some emergency measures must be adopted in order to prevent Communism from camouflaging itself under another symbol and threatening the freedom of the Bulgarian people. The Communist Party will have to be outlawed. The constitution of TIRNOVO will have to be restored and with it the monarchy. If elimination of the monarchy is in the interest of the people - and the people themselves request it - the action should be taken within the framework of the Constitution of TIRNOVO. Future Bulgarian statesmen must be patriotic democrats who have never been compromised by collaboration with the Communists. Before the war, Bulgaria had good administrators, even if they were not excellent statesmen. What I have said reflects the opinion of most of the healthy-minded Bulgarian people. Personally, I would prefer a constitutional monarchy with a parliament composed of all democratic parties.

"Bulgaria has never been a capitalistic country in the true sense of the word. However, I am of the opinion that this form of economy is essential if we want to return to pre-war Bulgaria. It is advisable, however, to limit by law the excessive accumulation of capital in private hands. Private enterprise should be given a free hand as long as it does not run counter to the best interests of the government and society. Heavy industry and foreign trade should be kept under government control. Collectivization must not be continued under any form whatsoever. When the Bulgarian people have re-acquired the right to carry on private enterprise it will be up to them to decide whether they want to set up unions of collectives of property and work. The Bulgarian peasants must not be forced to deliver quotas to the State, and must not be obliged to carry out economic plans of any kind whatsoever. There must be a just land reform. The land upon which the State agricultural agencies now operate must be distributed among peasants who do not own land. A free Bulgaria must be centered round a national industry /samobitna, nacionalna, / that is an industry which will use the raw materials which today are being exported.

"The idea of setting up a European Federation is not very popular in Bulgaria. This is logical if we consider that Bulgaria is waiting for her liberation from Communism. A European Federation based on the status quo among

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nations would not help the process of liberation. Besides, many people are of the opinion that conditions are not yet ripe for such a step. What is more, many European countries still bear a strong stamp of nationalism, and this would make it still more difficult to set up a Federation in Europe. I heard on the radio that such Federation would do away with the antagonisms which exist among the peoples of Europe. On the contrary, in Bulgaria the consensus of opinion is that no Federation is possible until these antagonisms are eliminated. The problems of the Saar and Cyprus seem to confirm this opinion. A Bulgarian Federation is also frowned upon in Bulgaria."

Source's Opinion about Radio and Press in the Country.

Source expressed herself about radio and press in her country as follows:

"The Bulgarian Communists have succeeded in obliging the Bulgarian people to listen to the government radio. They have done this by effective jamming of Western broadcasts, and by the introduction of wired radio /jhitzni radiouredbi./ More and more wired sets are being used because they are more convenient than ordinary radio sets. Besides, the installation of wired radio is free of charge in the villages.

"The radio is a cultural necessity in the hands of educated people, but it can become an instrument of terror in the hands of the Communists. I know many people who for years have refused to listen to the Bulgarian government radio stations. Now these stations have a larger number of listeners for the simple reason that the people are used to hearing the same things over and over again. If they did not hear them at least once a day, they would feel they were in a vacuum. I cannot really say that there is a particular reaction against government broadcasts, unless we consider whether what has been broadcast is true, or try to understand the substance of what they have heard. It should be pointed out that the government stations' programs have improved and are more varied than they were a few years ago. Now these stations offer classical music, classical dramas, standard and contemporary operas, and Bulgarian popular music which has been rehabilitated." There are five radio stations in Bulgaria: 'Hristo Botev' station, Radio SOFIA I, Radio SOFIA II, Radio STARA ZAGORA, and Radio STALIN. The latter have no established programs. Most of their programs are re-broadcasts of the SOFIA stations. The 'Hristo Botev' station also has short-wave broadcasts in Macedonian, Serbocroatian, Turkish, Italian, English, French, Greek, etc. This is the

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most popular station in Bulgaria. Broadcast time varies with the season. Normally, all stations broadcast in the morning from 0600 to 0900; in the afternoon from 1200 to 1400; in the evening from 1700 to 2200 hours. /The 'Hristo Botev' station broadcasts until 2400 hours. All times are Bulgarian./ The Bulgarian people are used to learning the truth about certain situations. After 12 years of experience the people know that when the Bulgarian Telegraphic Agency insists on denying something, what is being denied is almost surely true.

"The Bulgarian Communists have imposed their broadcasts on the people by installing radio sets everywhere where people gather. If you stand in line outside a cinema, you hear the radio; if you are waiting for your turn at the public baths, you hear the radio; if you stand in line to buy some vegetables, the radio blares at you; if you are waiting your turn for treatment at some clinic, or if you are in a shop or in any public place, during intermissions at the movies or the theater, in the city transportation vehicles and on the trains, wherever you are you can hear the radio. On some occasions Party bosses and agit-props organize 'mass listening sessions.' These sessions are usually held when the radio announces some 'national initiative' such as loans, 'peace week,' the 'Bulgarian-Soviet Friendship Month,' etc. To conclude, Radio SOFIA broadcasts cannot be compared with Western broadcasts in any way.

"Nothing can be said about reaction to wired radio broadcasts. It should be pointed out that no one is forced to listen to these broadcasts or to be linked up with the public installation. These installations are the best way of guiding listening to radio broadcasts, that is of putting the people under the guardianship of a person trusted by the Regime. This person offers listeners only such news and programs which are favorable to the Regime. To work up interest in these broadcasts, the chiefs of this service often organize local broadcasts. For example, I personally heard the broadcasts from 'Radio Kovachevtzi.' The local bigwigs broadcast lectures and speeches, invite young village singers to 'sing on the radio' in order to stimulate interest among the parents. Records have an important role in this activity. Through popular songs and dance music, various inhabitants of the village are greeted; local news is transmitted; engagements, weddings, etc., are announced. Thus wired radio programs are made more interesting than the normal wireless radio sets, especially now that jamming has made listening to Western broadcasts practically impossible. There is no limit on the number of wired or wireless radio sets one may own.

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"I saw a TV set for the first time here in TRIESTE a few hours ago. I have heard that steps are being taken to introduce TV into Bulgaria.

"I never read government newspapers in Bulgaria, and if I know something about them it is because they served as wrapping paper in every retail store. I often attended block meetings where 'collective readings' were organized, as well as the so-called 'comments on newspapers and magazines.' In recent times, I saw Western magazines displayed in the shopwindows of news agencies in SOFIA.

"Correspondence with government radio stations concerns only greeting announcements made on certain holidays, birthdays, namedays, marriages, and request music."

Radio Facilities.

"Since 1945 I have owned a 6-tube 'SIEMENS' radio set of German manufacture. During the years I was interned at KOVACHEVTZI, I was not able to use my set. For this reason the set is still in good working condition. Every set owner must pay a radio fee at the nearest post office. I do not know upon what principle the fee is based. It differs according to the power of the set, and sometimes differs from year to year for the same set. Perhaps the fee is based on the number of set owners. In 1954, I paid a yearly fee of 36 leva; in 1955, 32 leva.

"I have no idea of the number of radio sets in Bulgaria. However, I am sure the number is growing constantly. I saw a great many radio sets - both of foreign and domestic makes - sold at low prices. I am of the opinion that in SOFIA every other family owns a radio set. If the Communist census figures are exact, there are 800,000 inhabitants in the Bulgarian capital, which would mean about 200,000 families. On the basis of a set for every second family, that would mean there are about 100,000 sets. I do not know whether there are sets which can only pick up medium wave-lengths, or whether such sets are being manufactured in Bulgaria. Every set I have ever seen, whether of foreign or domestic make, has both medium and short-wave bands. On the other hand, I am convinced that radio sets are a rarity in the province. In the village of KOVACHEVTZI, where I was interned in 1949, there was not a single set. However, that year, a set was purchased for the village reading room which also served as headquarters for the Communist Party.

"It was difficult to obtain a radio set immediately after the war when sets were not to be found on the market and were only supplied through the now extinct Ministry

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of Propaganda. Now, every Bulgarian citizen, without political discrimination, can buy a set on the market, provided he has the money. Recently, many sets of Czech, Soviet, East German, and Bulgarian makes have been put on the market. Radio sets are not sold at rural State stores, so the peasants who want to buy sets go to shops in the big towns.

"The Bulgarian industry turns out 4-tube sets which are popular because of their reasonable price. They are very attractive in their bakelite cabinets. The names of these sets are: 'Rodno Radio,' 'Pioner,' and 'Hristo Botev 50.' Prices are: 760, 800 and 1,100 leva. Imported radio sets are bigger and more powerful, and prices range from 1,200 leva up. The 'Belorus' and 'Kiev' sets of Soviet make, which sell for about 4,000 leva each, are sold only at wired radio broadcasting stations. Bulgarian sets are guaranteed for a year. During this period, any breakdown - not the fault of the owner - is repaired free of charge by the factory, or the broken set is replaced by a new one. Spare parts are sold only at radio repair workshops which are part of the industrial combine. Toward the end of 1955 I had two tubes in my set changed. The tubes were of Bulgarian manufacture.

"Wired radio broadcasts are widespread in SOFIA, but I think the people do not listen to them. In fact, I never saw a wired radio in any of the private homes I visited. Where these wired sets are used most is in restaurants, stores, and other State and public agencies. These sets are also widely used in the villages. All the villages surrounding SOFIA are equipped with these sets. Wired radio sets are mass produced in Bulgaria and cost only 220 leva, including all charges. The Communists are very much concerned with making these radios popular with the people. Interest is aroused by broadcasting special programs with the participation of local artistic and musical talent, or programs in which the local bigwigs are good-naturedly criticized. This kind of program appeals to the simple tastes of the country people, who are not on a high enough cultural level to appreciate the programs from Radio SOFIA or Western broadcasts.

End.