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BULGARIA

STANDARD OF LIVING (3200)

Food (3201)  
Housing (3202)  
Luxuries (3203)  
Wages (3206)  
Clothing (3208)

SOVIET UNION (3900)

MORALE AND GENERAL MOOD (2000)

Whisper Propaganda (2002)

PROPAGANDA (2600)

Radio (2605)

Life In SOFIA

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

DATE OF OBSERVATION: September to October 1952.

EVAL. COMMENT: A good report giving an outline of life in present-day SOFIA. Matters discussed in this report are confirmed (see Item Nos. 15218/52, 15809/52 and 387/53.)

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Everyone in SOFIA, employees as well as laborers are bitterly complaining about the low wages they receive and which are quite insufficient to cover life's daily necessities. Many of them - at least the majority - are obliged to sell out part of their furniture, clothing items or anything they might get hold of occasionally - or else utilize their savings made in the past, to make ends meet. Others still take up some handicraft at home in their spare time; for instance making women's belts, embroideries, cellophane folders for ration cards, etc. i.e. anything suitable to help the family's budget. There is one sure fact: and that is that to keep a family going it is necessary that all its members have a paid occupation as soon as they reach the age of majority.

Another source of income is the gift parcels which are sent to these few people who are fortunate enough to have relatives in American or in the Western countries, as these

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parcels can be re-sold at very good prices.

The general impression which one has at SOFIA is that everybody, women as well as men, are rather badly dressed. Those few who are well turned out are outsiders and are frowned upon by the population. They are generally black marketeers or privileged Communists.

There is a general discontent. Some Bulgarian friends of our source have repeatedly complained about the way in which Bulgarian life has been organized, and has spoken about the country's ruthless exploitation by the Soviet Union and the same Bulgarian Government. The people are convinced through correspondence and gift parcels received from abroad that Bulgaria is living in a state of utter misery. Nobody but the Communists believe that Socialism is being constructed within the country and that "the period of well-being for everybody will come."

"Today the people's greatest exploiter is the State, the Communist Party," say the Bulgarians.

The Bulgarian, non-Communist citizen, is particularly embittered by the material conditions in which the Soviet citizens are living in Bulgaria. Many of them have automobiles, and are habitués of the best restaurants, live in spacious and luxurious apartments and receive big salaries. The difference between the tenor of life of the average Bulgarian citizen and the Soviet citizen is very evident and profound. For instance, a Bulgarian engineer receives a salary varying from 400 to 800 Leva per month. It is this inadequate treatment which embitters the Bulgarian intellectual more than anything else. All Bulgarians whom our source had occasion to meet were unanimously speaking badly about the Communist regime in Bulgaria and against the Soviet Union. And their most fervent desire is that Bulgaria might be able to liberate herself from Communism, and that a true democratic regime might be restored within the country. Many of these people made no secret of their intention to escape to the Western countries as soon as they would have an occasion to do so. The war to come is the principal topic of conversation, and they consider this war to be necessary and indispensable for Bulgaria's liberation from Communism, and all agree that, in view of the strong Police organization at present existing in today's Communist Bulgaria, it would be quite impossible to get rid of the present regime without a war.

The housing crisis is still very acute at SOFIA and even today there are still apartments of one sole room inhabited by various people. Also the food situation is rather difficult, especially regarding fruit, milk, vegetables, cheese, sugar, etc. - all products of first necessity. Naturally all these difficulties create increasing discontent among the

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population - but very seldom, or never does anyone openly manifest his discontent. Everybody is afraid to give himself away or to fall into the hands of the militiamen.

All those who still have a radio set listen to the transmission from the Western countries, and the news is rapidly transmitted to friends and acquaintances. Our source was regularly informed about all world events through Bulgarian friends at SOFIA, who received such information from the Western world either directly or through friends.

Everywhere nothing but Russian music can be heard. Dances and banquets are attended only by Communists or persons who enjoy the Party's confidence and on invitation only. The average citizen can only visit a few public places which have been reserved for his entertainment, and which can be frequented without any special invitation, but under the continual surveillance of the militia and the organs of the Darjavna Sigurnost (State Security.) It quite often happened that public dances organized for the normal citizens were suspended by the militia under various pretenses.

The monetary reform has made life even more difficult for the Bulgarian citizen, and increased the general discontent which is - though timidly and with much caution, shared by the same Communists. The savings of the Bulgarian citizens were reduced to nil from one moment to another, and, after the reform, they are left without anything. Our source has the definite conviction that Communism is gradually and day by day losing ground in Bulgaria. The "old" Communists (the ones from before the war) are the first ones to desert the Party's ranks, and the first one who try to re-establish the friendly relations they used to have in past with the "reactionaries." They are the ones who are hurt most by the present regime, and most deluded by Communism. The great majority of the Party's inscribed members are opportunists who stay in the Party for their convenience, i.e. because otherwise they would lose their employment, or be sent to a concentration camp, or else be deported to the country's internal regions. But in case of war and at the slightest evidence of weakness on the Communist side, the number of the Party's inscribed members will be reduced to even less than 15 per cent of the population.

End.