

# *Bulgaria: A Study in Satellite Non-Conformity*

By E. O. STILLMAN AND R. H. BASS

THE record of the Communist regime in Bulgaria over the 10-odd years of its existence, especially in the two and one-half years since the death of Stalin, presents a highly illuminating case study in Soviet-satellite relationships. It reveals that the Bulgarian course not only has differed throughout from the general satellite pattern but also, in the post-Stalin period, has consistently been out of step with the major shifts in Soviet policy faithfully mirrored in the rest of the orbit.

Only enough need be said concerning the nine-year record of the Bulgarian Communist regime in the Stalinist period (1944-53) to show that the regime's divergence from the general satellite pattern then lay in the greater precocity with which it sought to ape the Soviet model, in contrast to its post-Stalin reluctance to follow the rest of the orbit in hewing to changed Moscow policies. After a brief initial period in which it nominally shared power with the Agrarians and other left-wing parties in the Fatherland Front coalition government, the Bulgarian Communist Party (BCP) in 1945 began a process of ruthless liquidation of these allies, culminating in the trial and execution of the Agrarian Party leader Nikola Petkov in September 1947.

Concurrently with the elimination of political opposition, the regime embarked upon a doctrinaire program designed to remake Bulgaria's backward rural economy in the image of the USSR. Its plans were formulated in plain disregard of the fact that the country already possessed an egalitarian land system plagued more by under-capitalization than by inequities in farm ownership, and that it also lacked the broad material resources essential to the building of a modern industrial state.

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The collectivization program, in particular, was pushed ahead with much greater energy and speed than in the other satellites. Starting with no more than 110 units in 1944, the regime first extended a thin network of collectives throughout the countryside, establishing at least one unit in each rural community. This objective achieved, a period of shock offensives followed during 1948-50. In the last twelve months of this period alone, the regime organized 31.7 percent of the arable land and 369,145 peasant households into 979 collective farms, and by the end of 1951, fully 51.7 percent of the arable land in Bulgaria and 52 percent of the rural population had been absorbed.<sup>1</sup>

Equally significant was the fact that the Bulgarian regime, in carrying out this program, rejected the cautious organizational tactics of its sister satellites. Generally speaking, the collective farm in the other satellites took multiple forms, of varying degrees of severity in their impact on the private property rights of the individual peasant. (In Czechoslovakia and Poland there were four types, in Hungary three, in Rumania two.) Only the most advanced of these approached the thoroughly communized character of the Soviet prototype, or *arrel*. In Bulgaria the single form was the "Labor-Cooperative Agricultural Farm" (TKZS), the regime apparently considering it unnecessary to grant even the most reluctant peasant a choice of lesser evils. Up to April 1950, this form recognized the peasants' theoretical rights of unrestricted sale and mortgage of his land, but even these purely nominal rights were emasculated by revisions in 1950-51.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The regime actually claimed 60.5 percent of the arable land by 1951, but the accuracy of this claim is questionable. For a full discussion of the problem, see *Satellite Agriculture in Crisis*, F. Praeger, New York, 1954, p. 62.

<sup>2</sup> The new Exemplary Standard Statute of the TKZS, introduced April 5, 1950, still recognized the peasant's right of sale but restricted him to a single purchaser—the TKZS or its individual members. This right was finally abrogated on August 31, 1951. See *Izvestia na Presidium*, September 4, 1951.

Bulgarian policies of capital investment in the pre-New Course era were similarly dogmatic in their aping of the Soviet model. The Two-Year Plan (1947-48) assigned only 6 percent of total funds to agriculture in a nation where 80 percent of the population lived on the land. The first Five-Year Plan (1948-53), while more than doubling this amount, still brought gross expenditures for agriculture to only a meager 13 percent of total investments.<sup>3</sup> Farm production remained far below its pre-war level, yet the plan envisaged no more than a 37 percent increase as against a 226 percent increase in the industrial output of producers' goods.<sup>4</sup>

### New Course—Bulgarian Style

AGAINST this backdrop, it would have been quite normal had Premier Vulko Chervenkov, in his September 8, 1953 address outlining the Bulgarian version of the New Course, spoken in the same tone of conciliation, concession and retreat voiced by his counterparts elsewhere in the orbit.<sup>5</sup> Yet just the reverse was true. While the other satellite leaders exhibited open embarrassment over the failures of earlier years, Chervenkov endorsed the regime's record in these unequivocal terms:

The general policy of the party has been tried and has brought about the fulfillment of the Five-Year Plan in four years. The fulfillment of the Second Five-Year Plan must bring the complete domination of socialism in our entire economy, in the further development of our industry, transportation, science and arts, and in the further improvement of the material and cultural well-being of the workers. This will happen only by following stubbornly and unconditionally the general policy of the Bulgarian Communist Party.<sup>6</sup>

This basic note of firmness was not weakened by Chervenkov's indulgence in a certain modicum of routine Communist self-criticism. Thus, he conceded shortcomings in the performance of the Machine Tractor Stations (MTS), in the organization and administration of the collective farms, in the functioning of the bulk-purchasing agencies and retail food outlets, and in other sectors of the economy. He admitted that the bureaucracy had grown inflexible and arbitrary and stood in need of reform and revitalization. In the same vein, he acknowledged the de-

sirability of higher living standards, reviewing past official price-reduction measures and promising more reductions in the future.

All this was but perfunctory lip-service to the spirit of the New Course. For nowhere in his speech did Chervenkov announce any substantial retreat from established positions. He offered no significant and concrete concessions either to the peasantry or to the urban workers. His major contention, indeed, was that essentially the state economic apparatus was functioning well and merely needed a few minor adjustments rather than any fundamental reform.

Thus, in agriculture, there would be no change in basic policies, but merely a shift in emphasis along certain lines:

More means must be invested in development . . . for modernization and mainly for strengthening the MTS with a material basis and cadres; for strengthening cooperative and state farms, for new tractors, combines . . . electrification and irrigation. . . .

Similarly, in industry, greater emphasis would be placed on the production of consumer goods, but efforts to develop heavy industry would continue on a more realistic basis:

We have no need to tackle a task which would be beyond our strength—namely, to develop in our country all branches of heavy industry . . . The socialist camp enables the member countries to plan their industrialization so that each develops those branches of heavy industry for which it has the most favorable conditions. . . .

The ratio between the rates of development of heavy and light industry during the second Five-Year Plan must be changed to increase consumer goods production and it should be understood that in the future . . . in the general continuous growth of public production, priority will be given to increasing consumer goods production.<sup>7</sup>

Another significant divergence from the general New Course pattern in the other satellites was Chervenkov's marked attention to foreign policy. He devoted a considerable portion of his September 8 speech to a review of the Korean armistice and a critique of American policy in Europe, curiously coupling the latter with an almost warm appeal for the resumption of diplomatic relations between the United States and Bulgaria.<sup>8</sup> He also seized the opportunity to review Bulgaria's relations with Greece and Yugoslavia and to stress Bulgarian willingness to conduct correct and friendly relations with all neighboring states, Cominformist, Titoist, or capital-

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> Diplomatic relations were suspended in 1949 following the Bulgarian Government's refusal to retract its demand for the recall of United States Minister Donald Heath. The Bulgarian Government charged that Heath had been in contact with Traicho Kostov, who was tried and executed (December 16, 1949) for treason.

<sup>3</sup> See *Economic Survey of Europe in 1948*, Geneva, 1949, p. 203.

<sup>4</sup> *Rabotnichesko Delo*, December 29, 1948.

<sup>5</sup> For example, Hungarian Premier Imre Nagy, in a statement published in *Szabad Nep*, July 5, 1953, said: "We must note and state frankly before the entire nation that the objectives of the augmented Five Year Plan are beyond our strength, its implementation is vastly overtaxing our resources . . . The development of the socialist heavy industry cannot be an end in itself . . ."

<sup>6</sup> *Rabotnichesko Delo*, September 9, 1953.

# THE BULGARIAN PRESS ON CONSUMER GOODS . . .



*Caption:* No comment.

—From *Sturshel*, Sofia, February 4, 1955.

ist. These overtures, again, reflected Bulgaria's own special need for a relaxation of tensions in southeastern Europe more than any sphere-wide design prescribed by Moscow.

Taken as a whole, therefore, the Bulgarian New Course as enunciated by Chervenkov showed striking variations from the pattern in the other satellites. By comparison, however, it was a remarkably astute effort. Chervenkov's determined refusal to hold out explicit promises gave his speech the outward appearance of a relatively rigid policy pronouncement, but actually it allowed the regime a high degree of flexibility in revising its policies later. Further, it clearly reaffirmed the official doctrine with respect to collectivization and served unmistakable notice that the regime in 1953 was primarily concerned with the stability of the existing order rather than with its revision in response to transient currents of reform.

The 15 months following the September 8 address may be rated as a period of slow and cautious readjustment. The second Five-Year Plan (1953–1957), as outlined by Vice-Premier Chankov in March 1954, reflected a desire to eliminate "major disproportions" in the economy.<sup>9</sup> It took the form, however, not of a drastic redistribution of investments between the industrial and agricultural sectors, but rather of increased investments in *both* major branches of the economy.

Within the industrial sector, the output of producers' goods was to be expanded at a faster rate, the final goal being set at a 78 percent increase over 1952 as compared with an expansion of only 48 percent in light and consumer goods production. But the earlier attempt to achieve industrial diversity was to be curtailed in favor of intensive development of the raw materials and power base. No less than 28 percent of the capital investments earmarked for industry was to go for electrification, while investments in coal extraction were to exceed those of the first Five-Year Plan by 500 percent.

BCP directives on the second Five-Year Plan suggested further that, in addition to increased capital investments, the regime would rely heavily on a substantial augmentation of labor productivity.<sup>10</sup> Stepped-up mechanization, reorganization of work, intensified "socialist competitions," and an increased supply of skilled labor were scheduled to raise work productivity in industry by no less than 35 percent by 1957.

<sup>9</sup> Chankov's speech: Radio Sofia, March 1, 1954.

<sup>10</sup> *Rabotnicheskio Delo*, March 6, 1954.



Mechanization was to be furthered by increased imports of capital equipment under a network of new trade agreements with other orbit countries. The provisional trade protocol with the Soviet Union, made public on February 11, 1954, set the pattern for these agreements, providing for an exchange of Soviet industrial equipment, tractors, agricultural machines, automobiles, chemicals, and cattle for Bulgarian non-ferrous metals, ores, foods and wood products.<sup>11</sup>

The regime's approach to the problem of living standards also displayed considerable caution. The price reductions of August 2, 1953, were followed by another round of cuts on March 28, 1954.<sup>12</sup> Officially it was claimed that the first reductions augmented the national purchasing power by 900 million *leva* (132.3 million U. S. dollars) and the second by 970 millions (U. S. 142.6 million). The actual benefit from these

<sup>11</sup> Similar agreements concluded with Czechoslovakia (May 22) and with Hungary (June 17) confirmed Bulgaria's specialization as a raw materials and agricultural producer. Imports included electrical and transportation equipment, machinery and chemicals.

<sup>12</sup> *Rabotnichesko Delo*, March 28, 1954. Price cuts ranged from 5 to 12 percent on food items and 5 to 25 percent on footwear, hosiery, and fabrics.

reductions was partially nullified, however, by a compulsory state loan in the amount of 400 million *leva* (U. S. 58.8 million) announced on February 9, 1954. Subscriptions to the loan were limited to private as against corporate persons, which meant that individual citizens had to bear the entire burden without aid from state enterprises and collective farms. Thus, in effect, they were forced to "contribute" to the expenses of the second Five-Year Plan a significant percentage of the money which the state had promised them for the purchase of consumer goods.

### No Retreat in Agriculture

**B**ULGARIAN agricultural policy during this period was founded on three basic premises: that investments could be increased substantially; that work discipline in the TKZS would improve in response to better leadership and higher material incentives; and that collectivized agriculture, as opposed to small-scale private cultivation, could retain its predominance over the Bulgarian countryside. Implementation of the policy began on October

## ... AND ON LIVESTOCK PRODUCTION



*Caption above:* In Novi Pazar county cattle-breeding is lagging. The average milk production amounts to 440 liters per cow per annum.

*Caption below:* —Why do you need grass, Grannie?  
—To feed my goat.  
—Why do you need a goat?  
—Ha! . . . She gives me more milk than your cows.

—From *Sturshel*, April 29, 1955.

13, 1953, with a decree cancelling tax arrears for the TKZS and reducing compulsory delivery quotas.<sup>13</sup> This was followed the next day by an announcement that agricultural investments would be doubled during the remainder of the current economic plan.<sup>14</sup> The regime then launched an intensive propaganda campaign to publicize the shortcomings of the collective farms in preparation for the third National Conference of the TKZS, scheduled to convene on December 1, 1953.

Speaking at the Conference, Premier Chervenkov emphasized the urgent need for greater numbers of trained technicians as well as for their proper utilization by the TKZS and local party organizations. He echoed the Soviet complaint that too many agricultural experts preferred to sit behind desks in the government ministries rather than work in the fields. He further stressed that, while the regime would not press for the forcible establishment of additional collectives, it would bend its energies to the task of strengthening and improving the existing TKZS network.

These trends were definitively confirmed by the principal speeches and decisions of the Sixth Party Congress in February 1954. Viewing the second Five-Year Plan as a whole, Vice-Premier Chankov told the Congress that capital investments in agriculture and livestock breeding would increase 2.3 times, as compared with the years 1948–52, amounting to an absolute total of 3 billion *leva* (U. S. 441.2 million) for the 5-year period.<sup>15</sup> The production of livestock would receive special priority in an effort to reattain the prewar level of 1939, and particularly extensive measures would be taken to increase the number of livestock on the TKZS.

During the ensuing months, the regime hewed rigidly to the program which it had imposed upon itself. In particular, it continuously urged self-improvement by individual TKZS, stressing the need for free initiative from below, "collective farm democracy," and an end to arbitrary and nepotistic practices by TKZS chairmen. It clearly hoped that such reforms on the local level would help to turn the tide toward increased production.

Yet, either because it was not entirely confident of the efficacy of these remedial measures or because it

<sup>13</sup> *Otechestven Front*, October 13, 1953.

<sup>14</sup> *Radio Sofia*, October 14, 1953.

<sup>15</sup> Similarly, the Law on the State Plan for 1954, promulgated in April, called for a sharp 58.8 percent increase in capital investments for agriculture over 1953. The overall increase for agriculture and industry combined was to be 41.2 percent, with a rise of only 13.9 percent in investments for heavy industry alone. *Rabotnichesko Delo*, April 10, 1954.

recognized the need of a more tranquil atmosphere during the crucial period of readjustment, the Bulgarian regime acted throughout 1954 to reinforce its economic decisions by both external and internal political moves. In the external field, the regime displayed considerable eagerness to implement its already announced policy of normalizing relations with Greece and Yugoslavia. In May 1954 a provisional agreement to re-establish diplomatic relations with Athens was concluded, and in October Bulgaria further agreed to pay reparations to Greece substantially on the latter's terms despite Greek participation (with Turkey and Yugoslavia) in the pro-Western Balkan Alliance.

Efforts to restore friendly relations with Yugoslavia were also pressed with determination. A new Yugoslav ambassador was received in Sofia in December 1953; a month later a railroad agreement was concluded; and in the spring of 1954 a joint Yugoslav-Bulgarian Border Commission began work. By the end of 1954, not only had the border problem been successfully resolved, but a new Bulgarian-Yugoslav trade agreement had been reached—the first such agreement between a Cominform country and the Tito regime since the rupture of relations in 1948.

#### Political Pacification Moves

**B**UT, successful as these diplomatic moves were in relieving external pressures, they could not be of more than marginal assistance to the regime in solving its internal difficulties. For this reason, rather than because of a more subtle intent to move in the direction of a long-range ideological rapprochement, the regime in mid-1954 became the first satellite to attempt a reconciliation with its own eclipsed "national" Communists and long-persecuted agrarian leaders. Linked with this was a systematic effort to effect the return of prominent Bulgarian oppositionists in exile.

The clear aim of this new departure in satellite internal policy was to inspire confidence and respect, not through the older device of terror, but by creating the illusion that the regime's former enemies and critics—each with his own following among the people—had joined hands with the ruling party in the belief that its program had come to excel their own. The timing of the campaign clearly pointed to its real motivation. The initial moves came not long after revelations in the Bulgarian press that an officially sponsored nation-wide program of "criticism and self-criticism" had frequently degenerated into "slander" against the party and the government. When the

moves were made, moreover, it was already known that the 1954 harvest would not come up to official expectations.

The campaign began with a relatively undramatic, yet revealing, development. In August 1954 the government unexpectedly honored Vice-Premier Anton Yugov by awarding him the Order of Georgi Dimitrov on his fiftieth birthday. This was chiefly significant because Yugov had been prominently associated with the "nationalist" wing of the BCP, which fell into discredit after the 1949 trial of Traicho Kostov, former No. 2 party leader, on "Titoist" charges. Although Yugov had continued to hold various government posts, he was definitely under a political cloud until the regime's sudden gesture marked the beginning of his restoration to top-level influence.<sup>16</sup>

The next few months witnessed a whole series of new conciliation moves. September saw the sudden reappearance in Sofia of two former members of the Bulgarian National Committee in exile, Petur Trifunov and Milerad Mladenov, who publicly "renounced" their "past errors," attacked the futility and corruption of life in exile, and declared their "hope" and "desire" to contribute to the building of the "new Bulgaria." It also saw the curious trial of General Ivan Vulkov, 83-year-old participant in the 1923 *coup d'etat* against the government of the Agrarian Party leader Alexander Stambolisky. Vulkov was sentenced to death for his "crimes" of thirty years earlier, which allegedly included the assassination of Stambolisky (killed in the 1923 revolt) and responsibility for a subsequent reign of terror in which numerous agrarian and Communist "anti-Fascist fighters" were "murdered."

On the heels of the Vulkov trial came the release from prison of Tsvetan Maximov and Asen Pavlov, both former lieutenants of the liquidated agrarian leader Nikola Petkov.<sup>17</sup> This was followed in November by the sudden resurrection from obscurity of Stoyl Stefanov, venerable leader of the prewar Bulgarian National Agrarian Union (BNAU), who signified his reconciliation with the regime by appealing to the peasants to join a revived Agrarian Party within the Communist-controlled Fatherland Front.

<sup>16</sup> Yugov, prior to his decline, had held the powerful post of Minister of Interior. Since his return to favor, he has risen to No. 2 position in the BCP next to Chervenkov. Other members of the "nationalist" wing have likewise been restored to leading party positions.

<sup>17</sup> Maximov had been an organizer and leader of the Agrarian Youth, and Pavlov had been Minister of Agriculture in the Fatherland Front coalition government of 1944-46.

Thus, an ever-increasing number of individuals who had once been of either national or regional importance re-emerged from enforced retirement or from the state's political prisons. Each was asked to pay a two-fold price: to denounce the Bulgarian anti-Communist exiles and, more significantly, to endorse the hastily contrived and synthetic friendship between the Communists and the relics of Bulgaria's past agrarian tradition.

In December the regime made another symbolic gesture by declaring the Stambolisky Museum in Sofia a national monument, following this up with a one-year extension of the amnesty affecting illegal escapees from the country.<sup>18</sup> In short, no effort was spared to impart vigor and conviction to a campaign the two major objectives of which were to discredit and undermine the anti-Communist opposition at home and abroad, and to foster the impression among the peasantry that the Communists and agrarians were once again working together in its interest.

Still, at the end of 1954, the regime was forced to acknowledge that its big politico-economic offensive had not succeeded in solving the crucial agricultural problem. This acknowledgment was implicit in the hasty adoption of a series of additional economic measures. New decrees easing livestock, tobacco and cotton delivery quotas for the collective farms were announced, effective January 1, 1955.<sup>19</sup> On January 31 the Central Committee of the BCP approved a comprehensive supplementary plan for bolstering the TKZS.<sup>20</sup> The 1955 State Budget, made public on February 1, reflected determination to increase capital investments in agriculture still further.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>18</sup> The amnesty, originally announced in 1953 coincident with the celebration of the tenth anniversary of "liberation," received relatively little publicity at first, but it subsequently assumed considerable importance as a regime propaganda tool.

<sup>19</sup> *Izvestia na Presidium*, December 31, 1954. Obligatory cotton and tobacco delivery quotas for collective farms were slightly reduced, and changes in livestock production requirements likewise had the effect of reducing meat quotas for the TKZS by some 20 percent.

<sup>20</sup> *Zemедельско Zname*, February 3, 1955. The plan's most important provisions were: (a) Decreases in cash and kind payments by the TKZS to the MTS; (b) reductions in seed prices; (c) reductions in compulsory insurance premium payments by TKZS installations; (d) a reduced interest rate on commercial and corporate (i. e., TKZS) construction loans; (e) higher state purchase prices for grains, fruits, vegetables, and linseed and other oils.

<sup>21</sup> *Otechestven Front*, February 2, 1955. The budget allowed for 16 new MTS, and delivery of 2,206 tractors (measured in 15 h. p. units), 871 combines and 497 trucks. The tractor figure falls below the 2,719 promised for 1954, but the unit allotments of other types of farm machinery are appreciably increased.

## Admission of Defeat

HOWEVER, it was not until the Fourth National Conference of the TKZS, February 15-17, that the regime saw fit to make a full confession of failure. When he addressed the conference, Premier Chervenkov's tone and emphasis showed a considerable change from his confident declarations at the Third National Conference in December 1953:

We did not attain success in our work for higher average yields, and we were not able to fulfill the decisions of the Sixth Party Congress . . . Production [in 1954] was poor. Such average yields as 120-130 kilograms of wheat or 50-60 kilograms of tobacco per decare [0.2741 acre] are very low and inexcusable . . . The inevitably resulting difficulties were overcome only thanks to existing state reserves.<sup>22</sup>

Chervenkov explained that this state of affairs was partly due to "natural calamities" and bad weather, but he stressed that "the main reason, in the end, lies in our work and ourselves." He also made the following critical observations based on a personal inspection tour of the country's most highly collectivized areas:

The reasons for poor results [were] bad labor organization, poor management! Robberies occur and everybody points to the thieves, but nobody arrests them. People work the fields intensively, but for months at a time not a single administrator goes there. The president of the kolkhoz . . . the party secretary . . . the president of the control council . . . and many members—relatives of the executives—have withdrawn huge sums in advance and much in produce . . . Members of the control council . . . take for personal use more land than is permissible and arbitrarily award themselves a great number of "work days" for "control work." In too many kolkhozes the responsible administrators use their positions for personal benefit . . . Comrades, such occurrences are too frequent, and they are of the most dangerous kind . . . The abuse of position, the thefts, the corruption must not be tolerated; they must be fought.<sup>23</sup>

The Minister of Agriculture also addressed the conference, giving some revealing indications of the extent of losses incurred in consequence of the conditions described by Chervenkov:

. . . the rice was not harvested and thrashed on time. As a result, the rice fermented and was unusable . . . There are more than three million kilograms of such rice in the country . . . Because of [other] faults, our economy lost thousands of tons of raw cotton from the 1954 crop and the state was forced to import cotton from abroad . . . We lost thousands of tons of oriental tobacco . . . Because of the non-fulfillment of the grain plan . . . the food supply

<sup>22</sup> *Zemедельско Zname*, February 17, 1955. Average yields of wheat and tobacco in 1930-37 were 135 and 91 kilograms per decare, respectively. See *Statistical Yearbook of Bulgaria*, Sofia, 1939.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

of the population was threatened and the state had to dig into its reserves.<sup>24</sup>

These revelations called for decisive measures. Three days after the conference adjourned, 39 persons were convicted on 240 counts of theft of communal property. Two were sentenced to death, five others to 20 years imprisonment, and the rest to varying prison terms ranging up to 15 years.<sup>25</sup> In another trial two days later, five party functionaries received long jail sentences for embezzling funds belonging to collective farms.<sup>26</sup> On March 13 Chervenkov, speaking at a district party meeting in Pleven, voiced the following warning:

The party member does not possess and is not entitled to possess any privileges and favors not shared with other citizens . . . The party cannot tolerate members who are covetous of more important and easier jobs, or who show willingness to benefit themselves or their relatives.<sup>27</sup>

These and other steps which followed were evidence of the essential pragmatism of Bulgarian policy. By its acts and decisions during January and February, the regime implicitly conceded the failure of half-measures and recognized that popular discontent was both deep-seated and widespread. The focal point of this discontent in Bulgaria's agrarian society was not the imposition of long factory hours and low wages as in industrialized Czechoslovakia, but the rapacity and incompetence of the Communist bureaucracy entrenched in the country's 2,747 collective farms.

After chastising these elements by means of the show trials, the regime proceeded to consolidate and reorganize 108 existing state farms into 49 expanded units capable of pooling their equipment and requiring fewer administrators.<sup>28</sup> On April 24, 1955, new price reductions were granted affecting foodstuffs, textiles and farm implements.<sup>29</sup> Finally, on May 20, a decisive step was taken to stimulate initiative and enterprise among both collectivized and private farmers through a decree providing for a certain measure of decentralization in agricultural planning. In announcing this belated decision, the regime acknowledged that the centralized methods of agricultural planning hitherto employed "contain major shortcomings":

Experience shows . . . that it is not necessary to assign every farm a sowing plan . . . because this inhibits the development of initiative for improved farm management

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> *Orchestven Front*, February 20, 1955.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, February 22, 1955.

<sup>27</sup> Radio Sofia, March 13, 1955.

<sup>28</sup> *Rabornichesko Delo*, March 20, 1955.

<sup>29</sup> Reductions on food items ranged from 10 to 33 percent, on clothing and textiles 10-45 percent, and on farm implements 12-17 percent. Radio Sofia, April 24, 1955.



by producers. Detailed planning of agriculture from the center in numerous cases also fails to take entirely into account local climatic, soil and economic conditions.<sup>30</sup>

In effect, the decree provided that henceforth the state would be content to formulate its unconditional minimum requirements and would leave it to the TKZS, the MTS and private farmers to determine, within certain limits, how these demands should be met. Plans worked out by individual collectives and other units were expected to remain subject to close supervision and approval by ministerial departments.<sup>31</sup> Still, there is no doubt that the effect of the decree was to heighten the farmers' sense of participation in shaping their own economic future.

It is still too early to estimate whether these new policies are achieving the results hoped for by Bulgaria's Communist rulers, or, for that matter, whether such results can ever be attained within the framework of the existing Communist system. Nevertheless it does appear that the regime has finally yielded before the overwhelming pressure of economic necessity and is now attempting to impart the greatest possible flexibility to institutions which are the legacy of the Stalinist era.

## Conclusion and Outlook

**T**HUS, the Bulgarian course in the post-Stalin period has consistently departed from the general pattern observable in the rest of the Soviet orbit. During 1953-54, the Bulgarian regime executed no major retreat from Stalinist policies such as marked the New Course in the Soviet Union and, much more so, in the other East European satellites. Now, in a year which has been chiefly marked by a contraction of internal concessions in those countries, Bulgaria has at last acknowledged the failure of the halfway remedies of 1953-54 and is moving toward a broadening, rather than a contraction, of its program of internal economic reform and foreign conciliation.

One important conclusion that may be drawn from the Bulgarian example is that the conventional theory which pictures the satellites as uniformly following a hard and inflexible policy line handed down by Moscow is open to question. The truth seems to be that local conditions—in particular, the structure of the economy, the morale of the party and bureaucratic

apparatus, and the degree and effectiveness of popular resistance—influence individual satellite policy as much as does any sphere-wide design.

The anomalies of Bulgarian policy further suggest that there may be need for a reassessment of the character and significance of the New Course itself. These anomalies become comprehensible only if the New Course is equated not so much with a detailed program of fixed character as with a general set of principles still applicable, with variations, throughout the Soviet orbit. Restated in these terms, it becomes a broad and flexible plan calculated to relieve the most obvious internal and external tensions and thus permit the development of the economic and political potential of the orbit countries in a more pragmatic and rational fashion.

Considered as a whole, the events of 1953-55 suggest that the Bulgarian version of the New Course—which may be defined as a cautious re-appraisal of the legacy of Stalinism—may have been truer to the original conception, as redefined above, than the violent and excessive shifts of policy witnessed in Hungary and Czechoslovakia. The decollectivization crises, the spread of industrial indiscipline, and the deterioration of party morale in these two satellites can only have been the consequences of an incautious policy—a policy which ignored the fundamental strains and centrifugal tendencies of any Communist society.

The Bulgarian regime, on the contrary, was content to move slowly and cautiously, preferring to face the consequences of insufficient rather than of precipitate and ill-considered action. Having avoided any exaggerated reversal of policy detrimental to stability, it finds itself in the enviable position, as compared with its fellow satellites, of having to retract nothing.

This record of cautious and grudging experimentation is very likely explicable in terms of the nation's geographical position, exposed as it is to the most direct pressures from Titoist Yugoslavia and the Balkan Alliance. Because of these pressures, it seems probable that Moscow considers Bulgaria's internal stability and the integrity of its frontiers of more vital importance than any relatively insignificant reinforcement of the Soviet bloc's overall economic strength through increased Bulgarian productive efficiency.

Hence, despite the fact that Bulgaria again appears to be moving in a divergent direction from the rest of the orbit in the era of the "new New Course," its continued pursuit of a cautious, gradualistic policy of internal economic reform probably meets with Kremlin approval. It is hardly conceivable that Moscow would insist upon a reversal of this policy at the sacrifice of political security.

<sup>30</sup> Radio Sofia, May 20, 1955.

<sup>31</sup> The regime's reluctance to loosen its economic grip and its essential mistrust of the peasantry were reconfirmed in July by a decree attempting to classify all arable land into four categories of suitability for cultivation of specific crops. (See *Izvestia na Presidium*, July 12, 1955.) So far as is known, however, this measure did not abrogate the earlier decision to decentralize planning.



# *The Road to Stalinism*

An excerpt from *The Origin of the Communist Autocracy*, by Leonard Schapiro \*

*Editor's Note:* The following passage is from Mr. Schapiro's recently published comprehensive study of the early phases of Soviet rule in Russia. The excerpt, taken from Mr. Schapiro's final chapter (and slightly abridged for reasons of space) deals with the motives and forces underlying Lenin's consolidation of control in 1921, which in the author's view paved the way for Stalin's later usurpation of power. For an analytical review of the book, and for an explanation of the various political groups and concepts mentioned in the text below, the reader is referred to "Lenin's Counterrevolution," by Ronald Thompson, p. 38.

THE victory of the Bolsheviks in November 1917 did not mean the victory of a united party. The struggles which reached their culmination at the Tenth Party Congress in March 1921 need have caused no surprise. Lenin's rapid and sudden switches of doctrine in response to the exigencies of policy placed considerable strain on the loyalty of his bewildered followers. One need only recall as instances the sudden abandonment in April 1917 of the two orthodox phases of revolution; the repeated promise of revolutionary war jettisoned in favor of an immediate peace on any terms in March 1918; the rapid ending of workers' control; and the sudden and unheralded switch from war communism to the New Economic Policy. To anyone who based his conduct on a political theory it was no easy matter to follow Lenin through these many mutations of his policy.

Yet for all this, it was not solely or primarily from the failure of Lenin's followers to realize as rapidly as Lenin the practical reasons for his switches of theory that the most serious opposition arose inside the Russian Communist Party. Indeed, some of the most fundamental departures both from orthodox theory and from party promises took place without arousing any serious opposition within the Communist Party at all.

Perhaps this ready acceptance by the Russian Communists of the need to subordinate theory to keeping in power is best illustrated by their attitude to that all important question, the state in a socialist society. It will be recalled that the Russian Social Democrats,

alone of all European Marxists, had accepted as an item of their program the "dictatorship of the proletariat". Marx had used this phrase almost casually, on isolated occasions, to designate the temporary form which the struggle of the proletariat with its opponents would take immediately after its seizure of power. He had never defined or elaborated the shape which he thought a revolutionary government would assume in practice. But since in Marx's conception the proletarian revolution was to take place at a moment when the vast exploited majority finally rose against a small minority of exploiters, it was plain that this dictatorship would be temporary and shortlived. Moreover, since the seizure of power by the proletariat would inaugurate the advent of the classless society, and since the state existed only as a device for preventing class conflict from erupting into violence, it followed, in Marxist analysis, that the state must begin to wither away progressively from the moment that the proletariat had seized and consolidated its power.

On the very eve of the Bolshevik revolution Lenin still fully accepted this analysis. In his *State and Revolution*, written in August and September 1917 while he was in hiding—a work written with care and much thought, and a statement of principles to which he attached the utmost importance—Lenin fully accepted the classical Marxist analysis. "The proletarian state," he wrote, "will begin to wither away immediately after its victory, since in a society without class contradictions, the state is unnecessary and impossible". True, it would not, as the anarchists demanded, simply be abolished overnight. But neither, according to Lenin, would it resemble, while it lasted, the state which it had overthrown, with its police and other machinery of repression. Supported as it would be by the overwhelming mass of the population, it would enforce its will "almost without any special machinery."<sup>1</sup> These words, it should be emphasized, were not part of the demagoguery with

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<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Sochineniia* (Works), 3rd edition, Vol. XXI, Moscow 1935-7, pp. 388, 431-2.