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Bulgaria

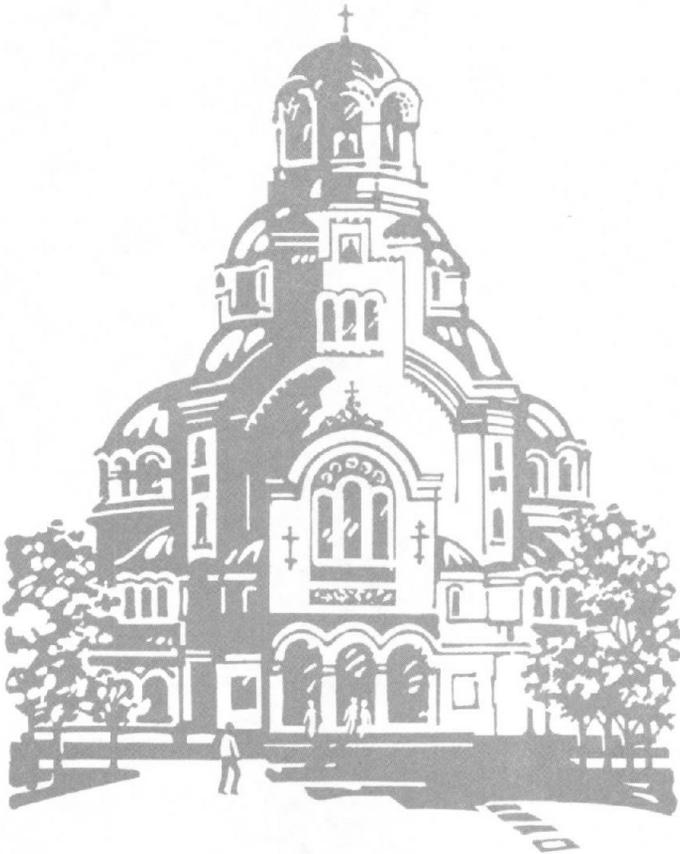
a country study



Bulgaria

a country study

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Foreword

This volume is one in a continuing series of books prepared by the Federal Research Division of the Library of Congress under the Country Studies/Area Handbook Program sponsored by the Department of the Army. The last page of this book lists the other published studies.

Most books in the series deal with a particular foreign country, describing and analyzing its political, economic, social, and national security systems and institutions, and examining the interrelationships of those systems and the ways they are shaped by cultural factors. Each study is written by a multidisciplinary team of social scientists. The authors seek to provide a basic understanding of the observed society, striving for a dynamic rather than a static portrayal. Particular attention is devoted to the people who make up the society, their origins, dominant beliefs and values, their common interests and the issues on which they are divided, the nature and extent of their involvement with national institutions, and their attitudes toward each other and toward their social system and political order.

The books represent the analysis of the authors and should not be construed as an expression of an official United States government position, policy, or decision. The authors have sought to adhere to accepted standards of scholarly objectivity. Corrections, additions, and suggestions for changes from readers will be welcomed for use in future editions.

Louis R. Mortimer
Chief
Federal Research Division
Library of Congress
Washington, D.C. 20540

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Preface

Beginning in 1989, Bulgaria passed through a time of political, social, and economic transition that changed many of its basic institutions and subjected society to stresses unknown in the forty-five years of totalitarian communist rule. Events that occurred after the ouster of Todor Zhivkov in 1989 demanded a new and updated version of *Bulgaria: A Country Study*. Although Bulgaria was one of the most closed communist societies until 1989, subsequent relaxation of tensions and restrictions has made available an increasing amount of reliable information about both the communist and the post-Zhivkov eras. Scholarly articles and periodical reports have been especially helpful in compiling this new treatment of the country. The most useful of those sources, together with a smaller number of key monographs, are cited at the end of each chapter.

The authors of this edition have described the changes in Bulgaria occurring in the last twenty years, with special emphasis on the last three. They have used the historical, political, and social fabric of the country as the background for these descriptions to ensure understanding of the context of the important recent events that have shaped the Bulgaria we see today. The authors' goal was to provide a compact, accessible, and objective treatment of five main topics: historical setting, society and its environment, the economy, government and politics, and the military and national security.

In all cases, Bulgarian personal names have been transliterated from Cyrillic according to a standard table; place-names are rendered in the form approved by the United States Board on Geographic Names; in the case of Sofia, the conventional international variant is used instead of the transliterated form (Sofiya). Unlike the previous edition of the Bulgaria study, this volume adds the diacritic (ˇ) to the letter "u" to distinguish the distinctive Bulgarian vowel from the conventional "u" also used in Bulgarian. On maps, English-language generic designations such as *river*, *plain*, and *mountain* are used. Organizations commonly known by their acronyms (such as BCP, the Bulgarian Communist Party) are introduced first by their full English names.

Measurements are given in the metric system; a conversion table is provided in the Appendix. A historical chronology is provided at the beginning of the book, and a glossary and bibliography appear at the end. To amplify points in the text of chapters 2 and 3, tables in the Appendix provide statistics on performance and trends in the economy and various aspects of Bulgarian society.

The body of the text reflects information available as of June 1992. Certain other portions of the text, however, have been updated. The Introduction discusses significant events that have occurred since the completion of research, and the Country Profile includes updated information as available.

Table A. Chronology of Important Events

Period	Description
SEVENTH CENTURY	
ca. 630	First federation of Bulgar tribes formed.
681	Byzantine Empire recognizes first Bulgarian state.
NINTH CENTURY	
811	First Bulgarian Empire defeats Byzantine Empire, begins expanding.
870	Tsar Boris I accepts Christianity (Eastern Rite Orthodox) for Bulgaria.
893–927	Reign of Tsar Simeon, first golden age; maximum size of First Bulgarian Empire.
TENTH CENTURY	
924	Simeon defeated by Byzantines; first empire begins decline.
ELEVENTH CENTURY	
1014	Byzantines inflict major military loss on Tsar Samuil.
1018	Bulgaria becomes part of Byzantine Empire.
TWELFTH CENTURY	
1185	Asen and Peter lead revolt against Byzantine Empire, reestablishing Bulgarian state with capital at Tŭrnovo.
THIRTEENTH CENTURY	
1202	Tsar Kaloian makes peace with Byzantine Empire, achieves full independence, and begins Second Bulgarian Empire.
1204	Treaty with Rome recognizes pope and consolidates western border of Bulgarian Empire.
1218–1241	Reign of Ivan Asen II, second golden age of Bulgaria and period of territorial expansion.
1241	Tatar raids and feudal factionalism begin, causing social and political disorder.
1277	Peasant revolt; “swineherd tsar” Ivailo takes power.
ca. 1300	Tatar raids end.
FOURTEENTH CENTURY	
1323–1370	Under Mikhail Shishman and Ivan Aleksandŭr, territorial and commercial expansion resumes.

Table A. —Continued

Period	Description
1385	Sofia captured by Ottoman Empire.
1389	Turks defeat Serbs at Kosovo Polje, exposing remaining Bulgarian territory to Ottoman occupation.
FIFTEENTH CENTURY	
1453	Constantinople falls to Ottoman Empire, ending Byzantine Empire.
SIXTEENTH CENTURY	
ca. 1600	Ottoman Empire reaches peak of its power and territorial control.
SEVENTEENTH CENTURY	
1688	Suppression of Bulgarian revolt against Ottomans at Chiprovets ends Catholic influence in Bulgaria.
EIGHTEENTH CENTURY	
1741	Hristofor Zhefarovich completes his <i>Stematografia</i> , seminal work on Bulgarian cultural history.
1762	Paisi of Hilendar writes a history of the Bulgarian people, using vernacular Bulgarian.
NINETEENTH CENTURY	
1804	Serbia is the first Slavic land to take arms against Ottoman Empire.
1806	Sofroniï Vrachanski publishes first book printed in Bulgaria.
1815	Bulgarian volunteers join Serbian independence fighters.
ca. 1820	End of <i>kürdzhalüstoo</i> , anarchic period precipitated by breakdown of Ottoman authority in Bulgarian territory.
1835	Neofit Rilski opens first school teaching in Bulgarian, using Petür Beron's secular education system.
1840	First girls' school teaching in Bulgarian opens.
1844	First periodical printed in Bulgaria.
1856	First <i>chitalishte</i> (public reading room) opens.
1860	Bishop Ilarion Makariopolski declares Bulgarian diocese of Constantinople independent of Greek Orthodox patriarchate.

Table A.—Continued

Period	Description
1862	Georgi Rakovski forms first armed group for Bulgarian independence.
1870	Bulgarian Orthodox Church declared a separate exarchate by Ottoman Empire.
1875	September Uprising, first general Bulgarian revolt against Ottoman rule, crushed.
1876	April Uprising spurs massacres of Bulgarians by Ottomans and European conference on autonomy for Christian subjects of Ottoman Empire.
1878	Russo-Turkish War of 1877-78 ends in Treaty of San Stefano, creating an autonomous Bulgaria stretching from Aegean Sea to Danube.
1878	In Treaty of Berlin, Western Europe forces revision of Treaty of San Stefano, returning area south of Balkan Mountains to Ottoman Empire; a smaller Bulgaria retains autonomy within the empire.
1879	Tŭrnovo constitution written as foundation of Bulgarian state; Alexander of Battenburg elected prince of Bulgarian constitutional monarchy.
1886	Alexander deposed by army officers.
1887	Stefan Stambolov begins seven years as prime minister, accelerating economic development; Ferdinand of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha accepts Bulgarian throne.
1891	Social Democratic Party, later Bulgarian Communist Party, founded.
1899	Bulgarian Agrarian Union founded to represent peasant interests.
TWENTIETH CENTURY	
1903	Suppression of Ilinden-Preobrazhensko Uprising sends large numbers of Macedonian refugees into Bulgaria and inflames Macedonian issue.
1908	Ferdinand declares Bulgaria fully independent of Ottoman Empire and himself tsar.
1912	First Balkan War pushes Ottoman Empire completely out of Europe; Bulgaria regains Thrace.

Table A.—Continued

Period	Description
1913	In Second Balkan War, Bulgaria loses territory to Serbia and Greece; Bulgarian nationalism on the rise.
1915-18	Bulgaria fights in World War I on side of Central Powers; decisive defeat at Dobro Pole (1918) forces Ferdinand to abdicate in favor of his son Boris III.
1919	Treaty of Neuilly-sur-Seine awards Thrace to Greece, Macedonian territory to Yugoslavia, Southern Dobruja to Romania, sets Bulgarian reparations, and limits Bulgarian army.
1919	Under Prime Minister Aleksandŭr Stamboliŭski, agrarians become dominant political party; socialist parties also profit from postwar social unrest.
1923	After four years of drastic economic reform and suppression of opposition, Stamboliŭski assassinated by Macedonian extremists.
1923-1931	Coalition Tsankov and Liapchev governments suppress extremists; social tensions rise with world economic crisis of 1929.
1934	In Balkan Entente, Greece, Romania, Turkey, and Yugoslavia reaffirm existing Balkan borders; Bulgaria refuses participation, is isolated.
1934	Right-wing coup by Zveno coalition begins dictatorship, abolishes political parties; Macedonian terrorism ends.
1935	Boris III deposes Zveno and declares royal dictatorship that remains in effect until 1943.
1941	Bulgaria signs Tripartite Pact, allying it with Nazi Germany in World War II; Bulgaria refrains from action against Soviet Union for duration of war.
1943	Boris III dies, leaving three-man regency to rule for his underage son Simeon II.
1943-44	Allied air raids damage Sofia heavily; activity of antiwar factions in Bulgaria increases.
1944	As Bulgarian government seeks peace with Allies, Red Army invades; temporary Bulgarian government overthrown by communist-led coalition.

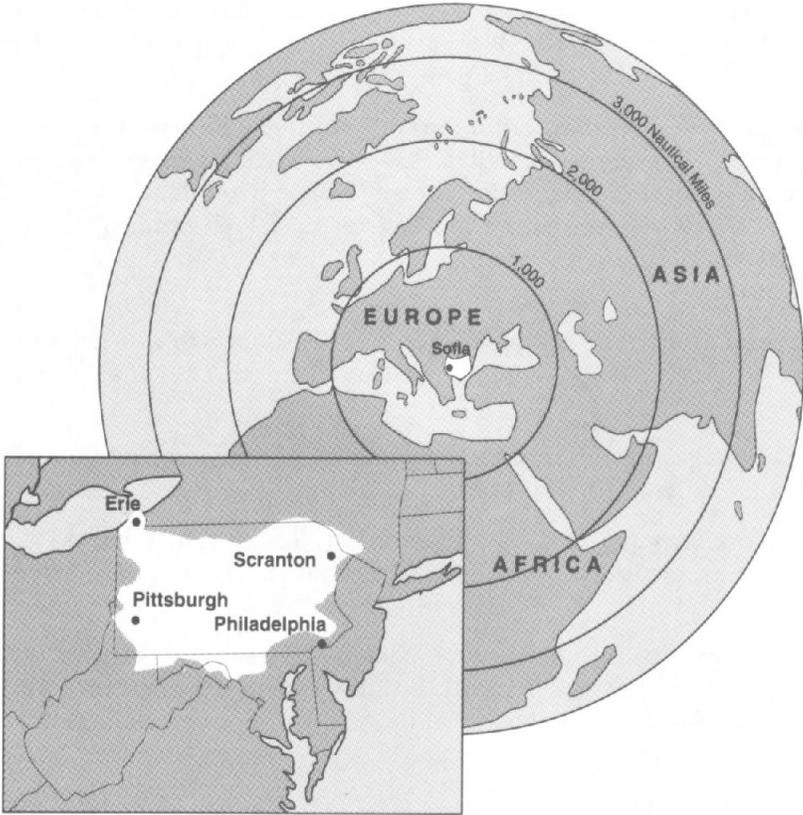
Table A.—Continued

Period	Description
1946	Georgi Dimitrov of the Bulgarian Communist Party (BCP) becomes prime minister of the new Republic of Bulgaria.
1947	Dimitrov constitution goes into effect; remaining opposition parties to BCP silenced; state confiscation of private industry completed.
1948-49	Muslim, Orthodox, Protestant, and Roman Catholic religious organizations restrained or banned.
1949	Joseph V. Stalin chooses Vŭlko Chervenkov to succeed Dimitrov; period of Stalinist cult of personality, purges of Bulgarian BCP, and strict cultural and political orthodoxy begins.
1950	Large-scale collectivization of agriculture begins, continuing through 1958.
1953	Death of Stalin begins loosening of Chervenkov's control, easing of party discipline.
1956	Todor Zhivkov becomes first secretary of BCP.
1957-58	After Soviet invasion of Hungary, Bulgaria cracks down on nonconformism to party line in culture and politics.
1962	Nikita S. Khrushchev annoints Todor Zhivkov as successor to Chervenkov; Zhivkov becomes prime minister and is unchallenged leader for the next twenty-seven years.
1968	Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia tightens government control in Bulgaria.
1971	New constitution specifies role of BCP in Bulgarian society and politics.
1978	Dissident Georgi Markov assassinated in London.
1981	Economic restructuring in New Economic Model brings temporary economic upswing, no long-term improvement.
1981	Under direction of Liudmila Zhivkova, Bulgaria celebrates its 1,300th anniversary.
1984	First program of assimilation of ethnic Turkish minority begins.
1987-88	Dissident groups begin to form around environmental and human rights issues.

Table A.—Continued

Period	Description
1989 Summer	Second Turkish assimilation program brings massive Turkish emigration, increased dissident activity, and international criticism.
1989 Fall	Massive antigovernment demonstrations trigger party dismissal of Zhivkov.
1990	Three BCP-dominated governments are formed and dissolved; round table discussions between BCP and opposition parties begin to formulate reform legislation.
1990 June	First multiparty national election since World War II gives majority in National Assembly to Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP, formerly BCP) with large opposition block to Union of Democratic Forces (UDF), which has refused participation in government.
1990 July	Tent-city demonstrations begin in Sofia, continue through summer.
1990 August	UDF leader Zheliu Zhelev chosen president.
1990 September	Zhelev meets with French and American leaders, receives pledges of economic support.
1990 November–December	General strike forces resignation of government of Prime Minister Andrej Lukanov; interim coalition government formed under Dimitür Popov.
1991 January	Initial phase of economic reform, including price decontrol on some commodities, goes into effect.
1991 Spring	Arable Land Law begins redistribution of land to private farmers.
1991 July	New constitution approved by National Assembly; national elections set for October.

Country Profile



Country

Formal Name: Republic of Bulgaria.

Short Form: Bulgaria.

Term for Citizens: Bulgarian(s).

Capital: Sofia.

Geography

Size: Approximately 110,550 square kilometers.

NOTE—The Country Profile contains updated information as available.

Topography: Mostly hills interspersed with plateaus, with major flatlands in north (Danubian Plateau, extending across entire country) and center (Thracian Plain). Main mountain ranges Balkan (extending across center of country from west to east, forming central watershed of country) and Rhodope (west to east across southern section of country); Rhodope includes two major groups, Pirin (far southwest) and Rila (west central).

Climate: Divided by mountains into continental (predominant in winter, especially in Danubian Plain) and Mediterranean (predominant in summer, especially south of Balkan Mountains). Rainfall also variable, with largest amounts at higher elevations.

Society

Population: 1990 estimate 8,989,172; 1990 growth rate negative 0.35 percent; 1989 population density eighty-one per square kilometer.

Languages: Official state language Bulgarian; main national minority language Turkish.

Ethnic Groups: In 1991, Bulgarians (85.3 percent), Turks (8.5 percent), Gypsies (2.6 percent), Macedonians (2.5 percent), Armenians (0.3 percent), Russians (0.2 percent).

Religion: In 1991 Bulgarian Orthodox (85 percent), Muslim (13 percent), Jewish (0.8 percent), Roman Catholic (0.5 percent). Significant increase in public worship and observance of religious holidays beginning 1990.

Health: In post-World War II era, state health care facilities became available to large part of population through polyclinic system, with all medical services free. In 1990 state control removed to promote diversity and specialization and reduce bureaucracy. Serious shortages of medical supplies and treatment, early 1990s.

Education and Literacy: Education compulsory between ages seven and sixteen. Complete literacy claimed 1990. Extensive growth in education system in post-World War II era, with rigidly Marxist ideological curriculum; complete restructuring, modernization, and depoliticization program begun 1990.

Economy

Gross National Product (GNP): Estimated at US\$47.3 billion, or US\$5,300 per capita in 1990. Growth rate of gross domestic product (GDP) 2.8 percent 1985–89, after continuous shrinkage

through 1980s. Economic growth slowed in 1991 because of large-scale restructuring of economy from centralized planning to privatized market system.

Energy: Critical shortage of conventional fuels beginning with interruption of supplies from Soviet Union in 1990; heavy reliance on nuclear power from Kozloduy Nuclear Power Plant. Some small hydroelectric power plants. Main coal source Maritsa Basin (low-calorie, high-pollutant lignite); little domestic natural gas, oil, or hard coal.

Industry and Mining: Dramatic postwar growth in chemical, electronics, ferrous metals, and machinery industries, at expense of light industries such as food processing and textiles. Relatively narrow industrial base concentrated in several industrial centers, with inefficient use of fuels and raw materials. Major mining centers confined to lignite, iron ore, zinc, copper, and lead.

Agriculture: Redistribution of land from large-scale state farms to private ownership begun 1991; private plots, much more productive per hectare, vital to domestic food supply. Major crops: corn, tomatoes, tobacco (fourth largest exporter in world), attar of roses (world's largest exporter), grapes, wheat, barley, sugar beets, oilseeds, soybeans, and potatoes. Most numerous livestock: pigs, sheep, and chickens.

Exports: US\$16 billion in 1989, of which 60.5 percent machinery and equipment, 14.7 percent agricultural products; 10.6 percent manufactured consumer goods; 8.5 percent raw materials, metals, and fuels. Largest export markets in 1989 Soviet Union, German Democratic Republic (East Germany), Czechoslovakia, Iraq, Libya.

Imports: US\$15 billion in 1989, of which raw materials and fuels 45.2 percent, machinery and equipment 39.8 percent, manufactured consumer goods 4.6 percent, agricultural products 3.8 percent. Largest import suppliers in 1989 Soviet Union, German Democratic Republic (East Germany), Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany), Austria.

Balance of Payments: Hard currency trade surpluses maintained through 1985, when hard currency shortage caused recurring major trade deficits. Economic crisis of 1990–91 caused moratorium on hard-currency interest payment on foreign debt (US\$10 billion in 1990).

Exchange Rate: Floating exchange rate established 1990, ending

limitation of conversion to within Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (Comecon). First conversion tables issued by Bulgarian National Bank in 1991; official conversion value in 1991, 18 leva to U.S. dollar.

Inflation: Removal of price controls on selected categories of goods in 1991 led to severe but uneven price rises. On average, housing rose by 3.7 times, clothing three times, food six times in 1991 compared with 1989.

Fiscal Year: Calendar year.

Fiscal Policy: Governmental economic planning system remained centralized under noncommunist administration in 1991. Profit taxes (50 percent on profits of nonagricultural enterprises in 1990) most important state revenue source. Also turnover taxes on retail sales, excises on tobacco and alcohol, and individual income tax (less than 10 percent of total state revenue). Extensive state subsidies remained on selected economic activities in 1991.

Transportation and Communications

Railroads: Total freight carried 83 million tons in 1987; total passengers carried 110,000,000 in 1987. In 1987, 4,300 kilometers of track, of which 4,055 kilometers standard gauge, 245 kilometers narrow gauge, 917 kilometers double track, 2,510 kilometers electrified.

Civil Aviation: National line, Balkan Airline, carried 2,800,000 passengers and 24,213 tons of freight in 1987, using eighty-six major transport aircraft. International flights to major European cities and Algiers, Damascus, Baghdad, Kuwait, and Tunis. Usable airports 380, of which 20 with runways longer than 2,400 meters, 120 with permanent-surface runways. Major airports at Burgas, Khaskovo, Pleven, Plovdiv, Ruse, Silistra, Sofia, Stara Zagora, Tŭrgovishte, Varna, Vidin, and Yambol.

Highways: In 1987, 36,908 kilometers total, 33,535 kilometers hard surface, of which 242 kilometers motorway (highway); 940,000,000 passengers and 917,000,000 tons of freight transported in 1987.

Inland Waterways: In 1987, 470 kilometers; Danube River, along northern border, major commercial waterway.

Ports: Burgas and Varna on Black Sea; Lom, Ruse, Svishtov, and Vidin on Danube.

Pipelines: For crude oil, 193 kilometers; for refined petroleum

products, 418 kilometers; for natural gas, 1,400 kilometers in 1986. Conveyed 21,000,000 tons in 1987.

Telecommunications: In 1987, 4,053 postal and telecommunications offices, 2.23 million telephones, 80 radio and 43 television transmitters; in 1990, 1,980,000 radio and 2.1 million television receivers. Two television networks broadcast to nineteen stations in 1991, with amplification to rural receivers. Three radio networks. Membership in Intervision East European television network and access to French satellite broadcasts.

Government and Politics

Government: Strong central government, with system of nine provinces (consolidated in 1987 from 28 districts), run by people's councils with limited autonomy and authority over local services, publicly owned enterprises, and administration. After ouster of Todor Zhivkov in 1989, communist party retained control of government but titles of head of state and party chief were separated. First noncommunist government elected 1991. Since 1990, president was head of state, prime minister was chief executive and head of fourteen-member Council of Ministers (cabinet). Unicameral legislature (National Assembly, Narodno sŭbranie) with 400 delegates; election law simplified in 1991 for direct representation by district. Legislative decision making slowed by distribution of seats between Union of Democratic Forces (UDF) and Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP; formerly Bulgarian Communist Party, BCP).

Politics: Until 1989, BCP had complete control in one-party system with only nominal opposition. Opposition parties legalized after Zhivkov ouster in 1989. In 1990 BCP/BSP lost control of Council of Ministers when internal splits and strong opposition forced resignation of its last government, replaced by caretaker coalition government representing major parties. UDF, coalition of over twenty parties and movements, assumed leading role in 1991; with Movement for Rights and Freedoms, it formed working legislative majority after 1991 election and controlled Council of Ministers. Numerous smaller parties, notably Bulgarian Agrarian National Union and Bulgarian Social Democratic Party, remained active.

Foreign Relations: After collapse of Soviet-dominated Warsaw Pact and Comecon in 1991, sought acceptance into European community and improved relations with Balkan neighbors. In absence of Warsaw Pact protection, national security sought through detente with former enemy Turkey and Western support. International image improved by major reform in diplomatic corps in 1991.

International Agreements and Memberships: Member of United Nations and most of its specialized agencies. Also member of International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank, and General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT).

National Security

Armed Forces: Included army, air force, and navy; until 1990 under complete control of BCP. Administered in three military districts with president as commander in chief, advised by National Security Council, and chain of command through Ministry of National Defense to General Staff. Commission on National Security provided legislative oversight of national security decisions. In 1990 army had 97,000 active-duty personnel, including 65,000 conscripts; the air force 22,000, of which 16,000 were conscripts; the navy 10,000 active-duty personnel, half of which were conscripts. In 1991 total active-duty personnel reduced to 107,000, over 80 percent of which conscripts. Significant manpower reductions and organizational streamlining continued in 1992.

Major Military Units: In 1990, army organized in eight motor rifle divisions and five tank brigades. Major force structure change in 1991-92, reducing tank and mechanized infantry in favor of defensive systems (antitank, air defense). In 1991 navy, also being downsized, had small diesel submarines, small frigates, corvettes, missile craft, patrol vessels, coastal and inshore minesweepers, administered from Varna with bases at Atiya, Balchik, Burgas, and Sozopol. Air force had three MiG interceptor regiments, two MiG fighter regiments, limited numbers of fighter and other helicopters. Soviet SS-23 missile launchers remained in Bulgaria in 1992.

Military Budget: In 1990 defense expenditures estimated as equivalent of US\$1.7 billion, about 3.6 percent of GNP.

Internal Security Forces: Drastic reform of State Security forces undertaken after ouster of Todor Zhivkov in 1989, to end their role as independent state enforcers of social discipline. In 1991 National Service for the Defense of the Constitution charged with identifying subversive or terrorist activities. Ministry of Internal Affairs reorganized, and its domestic and foreign surveillance arms cut deeply and put under strict civilian control in 1991. Power of militia (national police force, formerly chief enforcer of totalitarian rule) greatly reduced in 1990.



Figure 1. Administrative Divisions of Bulgaria, 1991

Introduction

FOR MOST OF ITS HISTORY, Bulgaria has been a small, agricultural nation whose location at the nexus of the European and Asian continents brought strong cultural and political influences from both east and west. Because of its location in the Balkans, on the border of Asiatic Turkey, and just across the Black Sea from the Russian and Soviet empires, Bulgaria received much attention from the commercial, political, and military powers surrounding it. Some of that attention was beneficial; much of it was harmful. In spite of foreign influences, which included centuries of occupation by the Byzantine and Ottoman empires and absolute loyalty to the Soviet Union in the twentieth century, Bulgarian cultural and social institutions maintained a unique national identity that was again struggling to reemerge after the collapse of the Soviet Empire in 1989.

When Bulgaria achieved autonomy within the Ottoman Empire in 1878, it was completely without modern political and social institutions with which to govern itself and deal with the outside world. Over the next seventy years, the process of inventing those institutions was rocky and uneven, both internally and in foreign relations. In spite of a very progressive constitution, Bulgaria's constitutional monarchy was plagued by frequent changes of government and governmental philosophy until World War II. The impact of a world depression and being on the losing side of both world wars also hindered Bulgaria's development before another expanding power, the Soviet Union, incorporated it into another empire as a result of Soviet victory in World War II. Then, when it emerged from the shadow of the Soviet Union in 1989, Bulgaria was faced again with inventing institutions that would enable its society, its economy, and its government to prosper in a world that had been evolving apart from them for many years.

The Byzantine and Ottoman occupations eclipsed the significant cultural developments of two golden ages (in the tenth and thirteenth centuries) when independent Bulgarian kingdoms dominated their region. Despite the centuries of occupation, village cultural and church life retained basic elements of ethnic identity that fostered a national revival as Ottoman power dwindled in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

After finally regaining its independence at the end of the nineteenth century, modern Bulgaria stood in the shadow of European

power politics through the first nine decades of the twentieth century. In that period, three successive major geopolitical antagonisms largely determined Bulgaria's place in the world: the Ottoman Empire versus Slavic Europe, the Axis powers versus the Allies, then the Warsaw Pact (see Glossary) opposing the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO—see Glossary). In all three cases, Bulgaria stood as a minor player placed at the critical frontier separating the sides. Besides those conditions, Bulgaria's location amid the constant turmoil of the Balkans also shaped domestic life and foreign policy, even in the relatively uneventful postwar totalitarian years.

For the first forty-five years of the post-World War II era, Bulgaria was the East European country most closely allied to the Soviet Union, as well as the Warsaw Pact member most dependent economically on Soviet aid. During that time, all aspects of life that a totalitarian government could control were redrawn according to the Soviet model—from overemphasis on heavy industry to the content of works of literature. When the totalitarian era ended in 1989, it left behind many of the rigid structures and stereotypes formed by such imitation. Although Bulgaria had strayed from the prescribed Soviet path in noncontroversial areas such as glorification of the nation's 1,300-year history and token decentralization of economic planning, the machinery of independent national policy making was decidedly rusty when the post-Soviet era suddenly dawned.

At that point, Bulgaria was seemingly more independent of the power struggles of stronger neighbors than ever before in its history. But this liberation also deprived the nation of the economic and military security those neighbors had provided. The early 1990s saw a major reshaping of the economic power balance on the European continent. Because most of Eastern Europe emerged from the economic and political dominance of the Soviet Union at the same time, competition among the former Soviet client states for new economic and political positions was very keen. In this new context, Bulgaria, a nation of about 9 million persons located at the periphery of Europe, required particular energy and leadership to establish itself as an integral part of Europe. At the same time, energy and leadership were necessarily diverted to solving internal ethnic and political problems—most notably the integration into society of a substantial and vocal Turkish minority and the cultivation of an efficient government structure based on coalitions among Bulgaria's traditionally numerous political parties. In the background of those issues was an economy impoverished

by decades of dependence on resources from the Soviet-led Comecon (Council for Mutual Economic Assistance—see Glossary) and poorly balanced Soviet-style central economic planning.

Before World War II, Bulgarian society was overwhelmingly agricultural, supported by rich farmland that grew a variety of grains, vegetables, fruits, and tobacco for domestic use and export. Well into the twentieth century, rural life remained steeped in village traditions that had not changed for many centuries, even under Ottoman rule. Cities such as Sofia and Plovdiv were islands of commercial activity and points of contact with other cultures. The fast-paced industrialization and agricultural collectivization programs of the postwar communist regimes brought four decades of intense migration into urban areas; in 1990 two of every three Bulgarians lived in a city or town. The migration process also reduced the isolation of remaining rural populations, which maintained contact with friends and relatives in the cities. Despite this process, however, the traditional dichotomy between cities and villages was still quite visible in the national elections of 1990 and 1991: Bulgaria's urban population largely supported economic and political reform platforms, whereas the rural regions expressed skepticism about reform by supporting the more conventional programs of the Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP, formerly the Bulgarian Communist Party (BCP)).

Besides speeding urbanization, postwar industrial policy put most means of production under central BCP control. The state also took over the Bulgarian financial system, and agriculture underwent a series of collectivization phases between 1947 and 1958. Following the standard recipe for centralized economic planning, heavy industry received a high proportion of state investment compared with agriculture and consumer production. The ever-increasing quotas of five-year plans for all those sectors, however, reflected unrealistic expectations. Although later five-year plans aimed at more realistic goals, the centralized Bulgarian economic system failed consistently to increase output, although it devoted huge amounts of resources to the effort. Throughout the communist era, heavy industries lacked incentives because of state subsidies, and state-run agriculture never matched the productivity of small private plots. The Zhivkov government trumpeted major economic reform programs in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, but they all remained within the restrictions of the centralized system, contributing nothing to Bulgaria's economic advancement.

As in the other East European countries, central planning of the economy produced severe environmental damage in Bulgaria. Damage was more localized in Bulgaria because its designated role

in Comecon required fewer “smokestack industries” than that of Poland, Czechoslovakia, or the German Democratic Republic (East Germany). Nevertheless, cities such as Ruse, Dimitrograd, and Srednogorie suffered severe environmental deterioration from manufacturing activities under the communist regimes, which disregarded pollution in the name of progress. In 1988 public concern over environmental quality spawned the first Bulgarian protest groups, which played a central role in the overthrow of Zhivkov and then evolved into permanent opposition parties with strong public support.

In October 1991, the Grand National Assembly passed a Law on Protection of the Environment, and the next cabinet included a member of the Ekoglasnost environmental group as minister of the environment. Despite these measures, however, the critical need for economic growth in the postcommunist era hindered environmental recovery efforts. In 1992 auto emissions, heavy industry emissions, and power plants remained beyond government control although they contributed heavily to air pollution; excessive use of chemicals in agriculture polluted many Bulgarian lakes and streams; and reliance on nuclear power generated by unsafe equipment threatened a major radiation crisis.

Besides industrialization and urbanization, other important changes had occurred under the conventional communist totalitarian dictatorships that ruled Bulgaria under Georgi Dimitrov (1947–49), Vŭlko Chervenkov (1949–56), and Todor Zhivkov (1956–89). Centuries before, the Russian Empire had fought the first in a long series of wars with the Turks. Those wars conferred on Russia the stature of protector of the Slavs in the Ottoman Empire. In 1944, as Axis power retreated in Europe, a strong Rusophile element remained in Bulgarian society. Accordingly, Bulgarians welcomed the arrival of the Red Army, whose presence ended Bulgaria’s participation as an Axis ally in World War II and laid the foundation of the postwar political system. Interwar commercial and cultural relations with Western Europe (especially Germany and Italy) were curtailed when the postwar communist regimes intensified Bulgaria’s traditionally close ties with the Russian Empire/Soviet Union. In 1949 this policy shift was codified by Bulgaria’s membership in Comecon, which created a new network of East European trade relationships and subsidies dominated by the Soviet Union.

Between 1947 and 1989, Bulgarian foreign and economic policy followed scrupulously the policies of the Soviet Union. Intermittent periods of rapprochement and hostility between the Soviet Union and the West were mirrored in relations between Bulgaria

and the NATO countries of Europe. Thus, for example, Zhivkov pulled back from newly invigorated relations with Western Europe in order to lend vigorous support to the Soviet invasions of Czechoslovakia in 1968 and Afghanistan in 1979. Bulgaria also followed the Soviet lead in assisting developing nations and supporting wars of national liberation.

The Bulgarian constitutions of 1947 and 1971 borrowed heavily from Soviet constitutional models, and, especially in its early stages, the Bulgarian centrally planned economy followed Soviet guidelines. Periods of economic experimentation also coincided in the two countries; Zhivkov's first large-scale restructuring of the Bulgarian system occurred in the early 1960s, at the same time that Nikita S. Khrushchev experimented with unorthodox economic methodology in the Soviet Union. Zhivkov was able to experiment more freely because the Bulgarian system was much smaller and more homogeneous and because Bulgaria had earned a place as the most trusted and loyal of the Comecon member nations. By the mid-1980s, economic imitation of the Soviet Union had turned earlier skepticism into cynicism in large parts of the Bulgarian public.

The communist regimes of the postwar era did accomplish significant improvement in national education and health care. Although the basic structure of prewar Bulgarian education remained intact after 1947, the primary goal of centralized education planning was to bring Marxist theory to as many Bulgarians as possible; hence promotion of literacy and expansion of primary and secondary education proceeded much more rapidly under the communist regimes. On a basic level, those goals were reached through a combination of rapid urbanization of the population and mandatory training for children and adults. But the state education program was a carefully regimented, technology-oriented imitation of the Soviet Union's system. After Zhivkov, the public education system and universities officially banned political indoctrination and activity in their institutions. Because many teachers and textbooks remained from the era when only the party line was acceptable, however, transition efforts encountered stubborn resistance in some quarters.

The communist era had provided very basic health care in state regional clinics available to most Bulgarians. Under the socialist health system, indicators such as average life expectancy, infant mortality rate, and physicians per capita improved steadily between 1947 and 1989. Nevertheless, post-Zhivkov governments embarked on decentralization and modernization programs to improve specialized care and raise the incentives for health care personnel and

entrepreneurs in private facilities. In the early 1990s, the new programs underwent a difficult transition period that yielded uneven results.

The overthrow of Zhivkov's orthodox communist regime in 1989 produced especially dramatic changes in Bulgarian political and economic life. By the mid-1980s, the Zhivkov regime already had wielded power for thirty years; by that time, the regime's inability to deal with new political and economic realities was obvious to many Bulgarians, especially the educated classes. Zhivkov took token political restructuring measures in the late 1980s, but by 1988 formidable opposition groups were forming around such issues as environmental standards and the chronic failure of the economic system to raise the standard of living. In 1989 Zhivkov's heavy-handed campaign to assimilate or exile Bulgaria's large Turkish minority depleted the labor force and evoked strong protest from the international community and many groups within Bulgaria. Shortly after an all-European environmental conference in Sofia provided an international audience for protesting groups, the Bulgarian Communist Party (BCP) ousted Zhivkov to avoid losing power entirely.

Although the BCP strategy succeeded in the short run, Zhivkov's communist successors were unable to meet the multitude of demands that society unleashed upon them once the symbol of monolithic state power had disappeared. Having lost the solid support of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union by 1990, the BCP hesitated between full commitment to political and economic reform and maintaining its still formidable grip on such sectors of Bulgarian society as management of heavy industry and administration of provincial government. A few months after Zhivkov's ouster, the party had changed its name to the Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP) and introduced a series of government reform programs. But opposition groups, combined in the Union of Democratic Forces (UDF), refused to form a coalition government with the BSP or to support BSP reform proposals. Because the UDF represented a growing majority of Bulgarian society, by the end of 1990 the UDF strategy of non-participation had forced a political stalemate and resignation of the last communist-dominated cabinet, headed by Andrej Lukanov. This development negated the broad 100-day economic reform plan that Lukanov had proposed in the fall of 1990.

The old central planning system that remained in place in 1990 had included excessive emphasis on heavy industry, distorted pricing, declining agricultural productivity, and isolation from foreign markets. By the end of 1990, those failures had brought the Bulgarian

economy to a severe crisis that included a drop of 11.5 percent in net material product (NMP—see Glossary), drastic increases in unemployment, curtailment of all payments to foreign creditors, and a drop in the standard of living.

The period following Lukanov's fall was one of extreme crisis; social unrest was very high, but political factions could not find an acceptable compromise course. Finally, Dimitŭr Popov, a judge with no political affiliation, became prime minister of a coalition cabinet that would run the government until the 1991 national elections chose a new National Assembly. Resolution of this crisis was due in large part to the negotiating skills of President Zheliu Zhelev.

In 1991 Bulgaria experimented with government coalitions to promote major reform programs. Important legislative packages included depoliticization of the army, the police, courts, state prosecutors, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; amnesty for political prisoners; restoration of property to political émigrés and victims of repression; and reform of the local government system that remained a stronghold of socialist bureaucrats. In 1991 such reform legislation encouraged loans from the World Bank (see Glossary) and other Western sources.

In mid-1991, all political factions agreed that economic reform was the government's top priority, but BSP members of parliament obstructed reform proposals that would bring temporary but severe economic dislocation. Instead, they favored a more gradual approach that would not threaten party members still entrenched in state industrial policy making. Although the National Assembly passed major legislation in 1991 on land redistribution, private commercial enterprises, and foreign investment, the key step of enterprise privatization remained unresolved in early 1992, and the land act required wholesale revision.

Privatization brought many difficult dilemmas for a system that until recently had been centrally planned. The new government had to distinguish state enterprises worth rehabilitation from those that should be replaced by totally new private enterprises. Restitution was needed for Bulgarians whose capital property had been seized by the communist state, but resolution of claims proved extremely complex. And rapid privatization inevitably displaced large numbers of workers from former state enterprises, damaging productivity, national morale, and earning power. In February 1992, the World Bank cited the lack of privatization legislation in delaying a loan of \$US250 million. Both the Popov government and the government of Filip Dimitrov that followed spent months in fruitless debate of redistribution and regulation of large industries formerly operated by the state.

A vital economic support element, energy supply, became a critical problem in late 1991 when the Soviet Union first ended coal supply and later when Russia ended subsidized electric power supply to Bulgaria following the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Because Bulgaria's domestic energy base was quite inadequate to support an industrial system designed when outside energy supplies were plentiful and cheap, economic recovery depended on the single nuclear power plant at Kozloduy—a facility judged unsafe by both domestic and international authorities in 1991. Lacking foreign currency to import fuels, however, Bulgarian policy makers placed their hopes on Kozloduy's shaky technology to provide as much as half the country's electricity throughout the 1990s.

Political developments in 1991 made accelerated economic reform more likely. Remaining Zhivkov-era officials finally lost some of their power to obstruct the transition away from authoritarian government and a centrally planned economy. After considerable delay, in July the Grand National Assembly, which had been elected specifically to draft a new constitution, produced a document approved by a majority, but far from all, of its legislators. Some constituent groups in UDF refused to sign because they believed the constitution defended interests of the BSP, which was still the majority party at that point. Among vital innovations in the constitution were government by separation of powers, specification of the principles of a market economy, and full protection of citizens' private property rights.

The constitution also set conditions for election of a new National Assembly under reformed election laws. The new laws simplified the extremely cumbersome system used in 1990 and reduced the size of the National Assembly from 400 to 240. In the national election of October 1991, Bulgarian politics followed its long tradition of fragmentation when forty-two parties and other groups posted candidates. Of that number, thirty-five failed to receive enough votes for representation in the legislature. UDF candidates, running on three separate tickets, together won a plurality but not a majority of seats. The BSP held the next largest block of seats, making the twenty-four-vote block of the Movement for Rights and Freedoms (MRF) capable of swinging majority votes for the UDF or obstructing reform legislation. Because the MRF represented the substantial ethnic Turkish minority, many Bulgarians feared that the UDF would be coerced into pro-Turkish positions. The MRF blunted some criticism by announcing support of most of the UDF reform platform, however, shortly after the election.

The fourteen-member cabinet formed by Prime Minister Dimitrov, leader of the UDF, was young (average age forty-nine),

professional, and included no BSP or MRF members. Among Dimitrov's structural reforms in the cabinet (reduced from seventeen to fourteen members) was abolition of the Ministry of Foreign Economic Relations, formerly a stronghold of Zhivkovite officials. For the first time, a civilian was named minister of defense. Key cabinet figures were Minister of Defense Dimitür Ludzhev, Minister of Foreign Affairs Stoian Ganev, and Minister of Internal Affairs Iordan Sokolov. As in previous cabinets, economic policy was divided among several ministries. Dimitrov, who introduced no formal program when he was appointed, listed ending inflation, raising productivity, and stabilizing the economy as his chief goals.

Despite the triumph of nonsocialist factions in the October elections, however, the Bulgarian government remained unsettled in the winter of 1991-92. Key constituent groups such as labor unions and the Turkish population continued to be somewhat aloof from the UDF coalition as 1992 began, and the coalition itself was constantly strained by the diversity of its membership. In 1992 the former communists remained the country's largest party, and the oversized government bureaucracy created by the communist regimes still controlled many parts of the national administration. But, unlike his predecessor, Dimitrov had no opposition ministers in his cabinet, and the UDF possessed a legislative majority if it could avoid internal fragmentation and keep the loyalty of the MRF.

With the environmental demonstrations of 1988, Bulgarian society renewed a long-dormant tradition of public protest, and such activities continued during the crisis years of 1990-92. The volatile ethnic issue of Turkish minority rights evoked many boycotts and protests by both Turks and Bulgarians between 1990 and 1992. And industrial strikes, most organized by the Podkrepa labor union, protested working conditions and unemployment throughout 1991 and early 1992.

Although Bulgarian society was ethnically relatively homogeneous, especially compared with neighboring Yugoslavia, the Turkish minority of about one million (estimates varied from 900,000 to 1.5 million in 1991) continued to present a delicate political problem in 1992. Bulgarian-Turkish animosity was based on the indelible Bulgarian memory of five centuries of occupation and cultural suppression by the Ottoman Empire. On the Turkish side, hostility was based on more recent memories of forced assimilation and restriction of human rights by the Zhivkov regime. The Zhivkov government had justified repression of the Turkish minority by appealing to ethnic Bulgarian fears that empowering Turks within Bulgaria would once again threaten Bulgarian security.

When Zhivkov fell, restoration of long-withheld civil rights became a central issue in the newly open political atmosphere.

Minority rights found expression in the new political order; the MRF was formed to advance those rights, and the UDF somewhat cautiously advocated full use of the Turkish language in schools and full civil rights for all Turkish citizens of Bulgaria. Especially in eastern Bulgaria where the Turkish population was largest, a strong undercurrent of hostility grew in 1991 and 1992 between ultranationalist Bulgarians and their Turkish neighbors. Only a Supreme Court decision allowed the MRF to post candidates in the 1991 election, and the issue of restoring the teaching of Turkish in Bulgarian schools remained quite sensitive in 1992. In late 1991, the BSP, shorn of its parliamentary majority, accelerated its attacks on the MRF as a subversive organization working for Turkey—a desperate effort to build new support among Bulgarians fearful of new foreign domination.

In early 1992, the political situation left Turkish citizens with only partially restored civil rights, and school boycotts were called in some areas where the use of Turkish remained restricted. On this issue, the Bulgarian court system, which had been a purely political institution under the Zhivkov regime, was unable or unwilling to exercise fully the independence granted the judiciary in the new constitution. This was partly because the new antidiscrimination language of that document had never before been tested and partly because of the lingering tradition of judicial dependency on political officials. Meanwhile, politicians generally treated the Turkish issue with great caution in 1991 and early 1992. Nationalist factions attacked the governing UDF for its legislative “alliance” with the MRF, suggesting that UDF compromises would jeopardize national security. These conditions lessened the likelihood that the National Assembly would finally attack and resolve the “national question.”

Bulgarian foreign policy also changed markedly in the years following 1989. As in domestic affairs, a strong body of opinion favored maintaining pre-1989 policy, in this case continuing to cultivate the Soviet Union as protector and economic benefactor. Actual policy sought a compromise that would not only change political relations but also ensure continued supply of raw materials, especially fuels. Negotiations with the Soviet government yielded promises of continued supply, but by 1991 the Soviet republics responsible for delivery were able to ignore the commitment. This situation deteriorated further when the Soviet Union dissolved into constituent republics in the fall of 1991. By January 1992, Bulgaria had established relations with Belarus, Russia, Ukraine, and

the Baltic states in an effort to reestablish supply lines. In November 1991, Bulgaria joined a new economic association for East European cooperation and trade, formed by economic organizations in most of the former East European Comecon member countries, as well as in Russia, Kazakhstan, and Ukraine. The aim was to restore economic relations among those countries on a new basis.

A top foreign policy priority of the Dimitrov government was dismantling the bureaucracy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which was still dominated by BSP functionaries under Prime Minister Popov. Shortly after his appointment, Minister of Foreign Affairs Ganev secured the recall of several ineffectual senior diplomats. In early 1992, he reviewed the performance of all ministry personnel in order to streamline the organization and purge remaining members of Zhivkov's state security establishment, which had been notorious for conducting espionage from diplomatic outposts.

Beginning in 1990, President Zheliu Zhelev and other Bulgarian officials met with Western officials to stress Bulgaria's commitment to economic and political reform and cement relations with the United States and the European Community (EC—see Glossary). The EC was the primary focus because Bulgarian policy makers saw acceptance into the European federation as the best way to avoid isolation and hasten internal reform. With this goal in mind, top-level diplomatic attention was divided among many West European countries, while overtures to Eastern Europe declined noticeably. In late 1991, France, Germany, Greece, and Italy promised to support Bulgarian membership in the EC, although at that point at least seven countries were ahead of Bulgaria on the list of prospective EC members. In 1991 Bulgaria did achieve associate status in the EC, together with Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Poland. From the Western viewpoint, a stable Bulgaria offered a calming influence on the turbulent Balkans, where the disintegration of Yugoslavia in 1991 threatened to trigger wider conflict over ethnic and economic issues.

Bulgaria viewed the Yugoslav crisis of the second half of 1991 as a serious threat to regional stability. President Zhelev reiterated Bulgaria's policy of nonintervention and the right of self-determination for all people in Yugoslavia. This declaration was mainly to reduce accusations and fears in Serbia that Bulgaria would assume a direct role in weakening the Yugoslav Federation (now reduced to Serbia and Montenegro) and renew century-old claims on Macedonian territory. Zhelev's reassurances were also aimed at Greece, which feared annexation of its part of Macedonia into

a state of Greater Macedonia. Following its advocacy of self-determination for Balkan states, Bulgaria recognized the four former Yugoslav secessionist republics, Bosnia and Hercegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, and Slovenia, in the winter of 1991. In late 1991, Bulgaria strongly backed mediation of the conflict between Serbia and Croatia by the EC and the United Nations, and Bulgaria embargoed military supplies and arms bound for Yugoslavia.

Meanwhile, relations with Turkey improved after the triumph of the UDF in the fall 1991 election. The UDF-MRF coalition pursued a treaty of friendship, cooperation, and security to match the treaty signed with Greece in October 1991. By early 1992, high-level military talks had substantially eased tension with Turkey, which maintained troops in eastern Thrace close to the Bulgarian border. Meanwhile, Foreign Minister Ganev was seeking a trilateral summit meeting with Turkey and Greece to enhance regional security as well as a "mini-Helsinki" conference of Balkan states, to enhance regional security. Cultivation of Turkey had the strategic role of counterbalancing Greece and Serbia, two regional powers potentially allied against Bulgaria over the Macedonia issue in 1992.

The overthrow of Zhivkov revealed a deep fascination in Bulgarian society with the culture and ideals of the United States, and a desire for closer relations. Although United States aid to Bulgaria remained quite small compared with aid given to Poland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia in the early 1990s, high-level official contacts in that period were more friendly and frequent than ever before. President Zhelev stated Bulgaria's position very forcefully on two visits to Washington (1990 and 1991), and Prime Minister Dimitrov had a productive stay in March 1992 that gained a promise that the United States would accord Bulgaria the same status as the three major East European aid recipients. In November 1991, the United States officially granted Bulgaria most-favored-nation status.

The demise of the Warsaw Pact in 1991 left Bulgaria without the military protection of the Soviet Union and its allies. To bolster its security position, Bulgaria obtained NATO assurances about Turkey's military ambitions and established a special relationship with NATO headquarters in 1991. Meanwhile, the Bulgarian military establishment underwent reforms comparable to those elsewhere in society. A central aim of the Dimitrov government was to bring the military under civilian control, to end the separate, elite status that followed the Soviet model, and to make the military an open institution integrated into society. An immediate stimulus for this reform was the role of national military establishments in Yugoslavia's bloody internal conflict and in the failed coup

in the Soviet Union in 1991. (The Bulgarian military had taken no part in any of the political turmoil of 1989-91.) The depolitization of the military decreed by the Bulgarian government in 1990 reduced BSP influence in the ranks. As in other phases of Bulgarian life, positions of power remained for some time thereafter in the hands of reactionaries from the Zhivkov era. By the end of 1991, however, about 85 percent of generals active in 1989 had retired voluntarily or under pressure. The resignations resulted in a net reduction of ninety-three generals from a top-heavy officer corps. The military reform campaign also sought to lift the status of the military as a profession and to foster positive relations between the civilian and military communities. In 1992, however, a shortage of army officers was partly attributed to the military's negative image in society.

Arms and spare-part supply to the Bulgarian military suffered greatly when the overthrow of Zhivkov caused the Soviet Union to abandon long-term contracts. At the same time, the disproportionately large Bulgarian arms industry, a pillar of the centrally planned economy, was hit hard by the loss of its Soviet market. The new government limited the activities of Kintex, Bulgaria's notorious arms export agency, by prohibiting sales to terrorists and totalitarian regimes. A long-term conversion program begun in October 1991 gave new civilian production assignments to many arms plants.

The Bulgarian military had a long history of cooperation with its Soviet counterpart. Weapons systems, doctrine, and training were interchangeable throughout the postwar era, and the Bulgarian military relied on Soviet fuel supplies even more heavily than the civilian economy. The sudden end of the Soviet partnership in 1990, followed shortly by removal of the communist symbols and dogma that had supported military morale, caused considerable turbulence and confusion.

New international responsibilities also affected the Bulgarian military establishment. To abide by the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe signed by the Warsaw Pact and NATO in 1990, Bulgaria also faced reductions in military manpower and armaments beginning in 1991. Bulgaria sought to retain the Soviet SS-23 missiles installed in the 1980s, however, on the grounds that they predated the relevant nuclear disarmament treaty and were vital to national defense.

As the 1990s began, Bulgaria was in a completely new phase of national existence. For this phase to succeed, Bulgaria needed both a substantive new self-image and a believable new international posture. The postwar communist period had changed society

by forcible industrialization and urbanization; those processes were accompanied by regimentation that suppressed cultural and economic individuality, and by isolation from influences and challenges outside the Soviet sphere. Then, in keeping with the wave of democratization that had swept most of Eastern Europe in 1989, Bulgaria made an abrupt about-face and began experimenting with democratic institutions in a manner unprecedented in the country's political history. After nearly fifty years of totalitarianism, and having had marginal success with democratic institutions prior to World War II, Bulgaria's experimentation was quite cautious at first. By 1992, however, a new generation of capable leaders had instilled impressive momentum in the transformation process. Although the slow pace of economic restructuring promised continued hardship, a large part of Bulgarian society was committed to reform, and hard-line revisionism and social unrest had declined in early 1992.

Besides adapting Western-type political and economic institutions to unique domestic requirements, Bulgaria's most difficult task was to overcome its Cold-War image as an obscure and somewhat sinister nation whose total loyalty to the Soviet Union had led it to support terrorists and assassins. By 1992 progress in that direction was significant; Western approval raised Bulgaria's status closer to that of Poland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia, the three former Soviet client states whose democratization had given them a head start toward integration into the fabric of Europe. As it strengthened its connections to the West in 1992, Bulgaria finally had an opportunity to develop social and political institutions appropriate to its needs under reduced pressure from large-power European politics.

December 31, 1992

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In the months following completion of this manuscript, Bulgaria underwent serious political upheaval, and its economy failed to move toward reform nearly as fast as planners had hoped. The Dimitrov government elected in late 1991 showed early promise in promoting economic reform and democratization. By mid-1992, however, Dimitrov's leverage was reduced by shifting factions in his political coalition and by rising public skepticism that Bulgaria's painful reform program would yield a better standard of living.

In 1992 Dimitrov's UDF coalition dominated political dialogue and enjoyed a narrow majority in the National Assembly. This position required that the coalition remain unified within itself and allied with the much smaller MRF. But in the second half of 1992,

UDF policies increasingly alienated influential parts of Bulgarian society such as the Orthodox Church, parts of the media, trade unions, and private businessmen. An atmosphere of escalating confrontation was the result.

Meanwhile, the MRF was taking increasingly independent stands on many issues, using the influence provided by the party's swing-vote position in parliament. In October 1992, judging the UDF response to its demands inadequate, the MRF finally joined the Bulgarian Socialist Party and dissident UDF members in a parliamentary vote of no confidence in the Dimitrov government. By destroying the Dimitrov coalition, the vote created another crisis period in which Bulgaria was unable to choose a government. Nearly two months later, Liuben Berov, an unaffiliated economics professor, was approved as prime minister after both the UDF and the BSP had failed to form governments.

The fate of the leading parties thus changed drastically at the end of 1992. The BSP, which had remained aloof from political struggle during the UDF's dominant period, found itself with the political influence of a parliamentary plurality as the new government took office. This happened in spite of the continued split between BSP conservatives allied with former communist party chief Aleksandŭr Lilov and the reformist branch of the party. Observers questioned whether the BSP would use its new influence to promote reform or to preserve the remaining Zhivkov-era party bastions in state industry and provincial government. In early 1993, BSP support of the Berov government was decidedly pragmatic, and experts saw a strong likelihood that support would be withdrawn (and the government automatically toppled) if policies displeased the BSP or if a new election would be advantageous to the BSP.

Meanwhile, the disparate membership of the UDF wrote another chapter in the acrimonious history of the coalition. The group again split formally when one faction of constituent parties formed a new coalition, the New Union for Democracy. Although Berov had pledged to continue the UDF reform program, UDF members of parliament refused all support for the Berov government. Relations between the UDF and its former allies in the MRF remained hostile. Several attempts at forming new coalitions and alliances failed for various reasons in early 1993. The most notable coalition was the Bulgarian Democratic Center, whose loss of two key member parties left a void in the center of the political spectrum.

Besides the confusion of a fragmented political base, the Dimitrov government left unforeseen financial woes. According to one

estimate, Bulgaria's internal debt doubled in 1992. The reasons were inflation (which reached 6.6 percent per month in early 1993), the Dimitrov government's concealing of budget deficits by withholding funds from certain industries, and government assumption of the debts of state companies. After the government had borrowed heavily from the Bulgarian National Bank to pay its debts, only an estimated 5 percent of domestic credit remained for private investment. Experts forecast the same figure for 1993, leaving no prospect of meaningful support for a larger private sector.

In April 1993, Berov's coalition government was able to draft a budget bill containing the same deficit as in 1992, despite the debt left by Dimitrov. To do this, spending on education, health care, culture, and national defense were reduced significantly; the Ministry of National Defense would receive only half the money it requested. Nevertheless, the proposed deficit, 7.9 percent of the gross national product (GNP—see Glossary), caused concern among international lenders.

Economic reform in 1992 had limited success. The amended land redistribution law passed in March 1992 effectively abolished collective farms; nominally, nearly 80 percent of Bulgaria's total arable land had been reclaimed by individual owners by midyear. Although the legislative machinery was in place, however, by mid-1993 less than 20 percent of designated land had actually been restored, and Zhelev criticized the Berov government for neglecting this aspect of economic policy. In April 1993, farmers demonstrated in Sofia against inequities they perceived in the land law.

The political crisis stopped vital privatization legislation in late 1992, delaying the pilot privatization of 100 companies. Berov had called privatization the top priority of his government when he took office, and adjustments were made in existing laws to make conversion easier. Nevertheless, almost no privatization activity took place in the first four months of 1993. In early 1993, President Zhelev recommended that privatization be delayed until a large-scale national program, similar to those used in the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland, could be prepared. Meanwhile, inefficient state industries went deep into recession, cancelling the effects of what had been a rather successful economic stabilization plan in 1991.

International lenders, whose assistance was considered a vital ingredient in restructuring Bulgaria's economy, responded unevenly to the events of 1992. Lenders demanded faster progress toward a market system, but Bulgarian policy makers were wary of losing public support by further cutting state subsidies for social programs. In late 1992, Bulgaria agreed to repay part of the interest overdue

to its international commercial creditors, as a good-faith step toward a 1993 debt settlement agreement. The additional expense, however, promised to exacerbate the budget deficit.

Prospects for Bulgaria's commercial relations with Western Europe improved in late 1992 and early 1993. In March 1993, Bulgaria signed an agreement with the EC to establish a free-trade zone with that group over a ten-year transition period. A strong incentive for the Europeans was bolstering Bulgaria as a stabilizing influence in the chaotic Balkans. In an April resolution on its relations with Bulgaria, the European Parliament (the legislative assembly of the EC) declared that no further guarantees of reform were needed because Bulgaria was on an irreversible line toward a market economy—a judgment likely encouraged by Balkan geopolitics. The new EC-Bulgarian accords were to go into effect in June 1993.

In March 1993, Bulgaria also signed a free-trade agreement with the European Free Trade Association (EFTA). Although at that point only 3.5 percent of Bulgaria's exports went to EFTA member nations (Austria, Finland, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Sweden, and Switzerland), the terms of the agreement made substantial expansion possible. Were the agreement ratified, 95 percent of Bulgarian industrial exports would have tariff-free access, while agricultural exports would be governed by bilateral arrangements.

Besides the drive for inclusion in West European economic groupings, the primary issue of Bulgarian foreign policy in early 1993 was preventing expansion of the Yugoslav crisis. In keeping with its own consistent policy of nonintervention, Bulgaria warned the other Balkan states to refrain from military involvement that might return the entire region to the chaos that preceded World War I. Bulgaria opposed lifting the arms embargo on Bosnian Muslims, predicting that such a move would expand the conflict between Muslims and Serbs. Meanwhile, Bulgarian diplomats remained in constant contact with Greece and Turkey while reiterating Bulgarian support for the independence of all four former Yugoslav republics: Bosnia and Hercegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, and Slovenia. Berov traveled to Moscow in March to discuss the Balkan situation, trade, repayment of Russian debts to Bulgaria, and economic cooperation. No concrete decisions were made, although the Bulgarian and Russian representatives noted their nations' harmony on the Balkan question. In early 1993, Bulgaria confirmed its intention to rely on Russia and Ukraine as primary military suppliers, choosing to maintain longstanding relations rather than incur the greater expense of refitting Bulgarian forces with Western

equipment. According to official Bulgarian statements, no security threat was perceived from instability in any former Soviet republic.

Ethnic minority issues remained without solution in 1992, although no major open conflict resulted from continued tension between minorities and Bulgarian nationalists. Although 1992 human rights legislation improved the legal status of minorities, unemployment hit them especially hard, and as many as 40,000 Turks left Bulgaria in 1992. In the fall of 1992, the Roma (Gypsies) formed their first-ever national political organization in response to their dire economic conditions. Prime Minister Berov, whose government was nominally based on the ethnic-Turkish MRF, openly discussed pressure tactics used by both Turks and Bulgarian nationalists to influence ethnic self-identification in ethnically mixed regions. In 1993 those tactics still included campaigns against restoration of Turkish names (following Zhivkov's mass renaming campaign) and campaigns against use of Turkish in schools with Turkish populations, as well as forcible Turkicization of Bulgarian Muslims preferring to live as Bulgarians. Berov pledged to prevent human rights abuses on both sides, but little concrete change occurred in the first half of 1993.

Bulgaria began the fourth year of the post-Zhivkov era with prospects less optimistic than in the previous years. The momentum of economic reform was slowed significantly by continued high unemployment, rising inflation, low productivity, the resistance of Zhivkov-era holdovers in large state industries, and, increasingly, the cynicism of the Bulgarian public toward the usefulness of short-term sacrifice on the road to a market economy. The ominously growing shadow of the former Bulgarian Communist Party hung over the country, whose political system again collapsed into chaos in late 1992. International prospects seemed somewhat better, mainly because Bulgaria's designated role as a Balkan island of stability prompted increased Western support even when internal political and economic conditions failed to match Western expectations. But in 1993, the road from communism was proving much more rocky than most Bulgarians had anticipated; for many Bulgarians, living standards were lower than under the Zhivkov regime, and patience was wearing thin.

May 15, 1993

Glenn E. Curtis

Chapter 1. Historical Setting



Tsarevets Hill in Veliko Tŭrnovo, capital of the Second Bulgarian Empire

THE HISTORY OF THE LAND now known as Bulgaria has been determined by its location between Asia and Europe, by its proximity to powerful states competing for land and influence at the junction of trade routes and strategic military positions, and by the strong national territorial drive of various Bulgarian states. Before the Christian era, Greece and Rome conquered the region and left substantial imprints on the culture of the people they found there. The Bulgar tribes, who arrived in the seventh century from west of the Urals, have occupied the region continuously for thirteen centuries. Over time Bulgarian culture merged with that of the more numerous Slavs, who had preceded the Bulgars by one century. After converting to Christianity and adopting a Slavic language in the ninth century, the Bulgarians consolidated a distinct Slavic culture that subsequently passed through periods of both expansionist independence and subordination to outside political systems.

From the ninth until the fourteenth century, Bulgaria was a dominant force in the Balkans because of its aggressive military tradition and strong sense of national identity. The chief rival and neighbor, the Byzantine Empire, left a lasting political imprint on two Bulgarian empires as it competed with them for regional domination. Marking the deterioration of both the Byzantine and the Bulgarian political structures, the fall of Constantinople to the Ottoman Turks in 1453 began four centuries of Turkish suppression of Bulgarian cultural and political institutions.

By the eighteenth century, however, weakening Ottoman control allowed a Bulgarian cultural revival. In the next century, Western political ideas gradually combined with the reborn Bulgarian national consciousness to form an independence movement. The movement was complicated by internal disagreement on aims and methods, the increasing weakness of the Ottoman foothold in Europe, and the conflicting attitudes of the major European powers toward Bulgaria. Russia gained distinction as Bulgaria's protector by driving out the Turks in 1877, but France and Britain curbed Russian power in the Balkans by forcing establishment of a limited autonomous Bulgarian state under Turkish rule. The instrument of that limitation, the Treaty of Berlin, revived longstanding Bulgarian territorial frustrations by placing the critical regions of Macedonia and Thrace beyond Bulgarian control. Both of those disputed regions had substantial Bulgarian populations. During

the next sixty years, Bulgaria would fight unsuccessfully in four wars, in a variety of alliances, to redress the grievance. None of the four wars brought substantial new territory to Bulgaria.

Beginning in 1878, Bulgaria was nominally ruled by members of West European royal houses under a parliamentary form of government. Prime Minister Stefan Stambolov unified the country during its first decade, but extremist political parties exerted substantial influence from the beginning. Between 1878 and the declaration of full independence in 1908, Bulgaria passed through a period of peaceful modernization with expansion in industry, science, education, and the arts. Modernization and industrialization sowed the seeds of class conflict, however, nurturing strong socialist and agrarian opposition parties in the decades that followed independence.

The period between 1912 and 1944 was full of irredentist wars and internal political turmoil. By 1900 Serbia and Greece were the major territorial rivals, but a World War I alliance with Germany gained Bulgaria little advantage over them. After the war, the agrarian reform government of Aleksandŭr Stamboliŭski had failed to unite the country by 1923. The series of unstable factions and forms of government that followed Stamboliŭski was broken only by Bulgaria's participation as an Axis ally in World War II. Again no territory was gained, but World War II brought Soviet occupation, the end of the monarchy, and forty-one years of unbroken communist rule beginning in 1948. During that entire period, Bulgaria was the closest East European imitator of Soviet internal and foreign policy. The years 1948 through 1989 were a time of collectivization, heavy industrialization, drastic restriction of human rights, and close adherence to Soviet Cold-War policy.

Early Settlement and Empire

The land now known as Bulgaria attracted human settlement as early as the Bronze Age. Almost from the first, however, existing civilizations were challenged by powerful neighbors.

Pre-Bulgarian Civilizations

The first known civilization to dominate the territory of present-day Bulgaria was that of the Thracians, an Indo-European group. Although politically fragmented, Thracian society is considered to have been comparable to that of Greece in the arts and economics; these achievements reached a peak in the sixth century B.C. Because of political disunity, however, Thrace then was successively occupied and divided by the Greeks, the Persians, the Macedonians, and the Romans. After the decline of the Macedonian Empire of Alexander the Great, a new Thracian kingdom



*Thracian burial mound near Shipka Pass, central Bulgaria
Courtesy Sam and Sarah Stulberg*

emerged in the third century B.C. Occupied by the Romans, it remained a kingdom within the Roman Empire until the emperor Vespasian incorporated it as a district in the first century A.D. Roman domination brought orderly administration and the establishment of Serditsa (on the site of modern Sofia) as a major trading center in the Balkans. In the fourth century A.D., when the Roman Empire split between Rome and Constantinople, Thrace became part of the Eastern, or Byzantine, Empire. Christianity was introduced to the region at this time. Both the Latin culture of Rome and the Greek culture of Constantinople remained strong influences on ensuing civilizations.

The Slavs and the Bulgars

Waves of Huns, Goths, Visigoths, and Ostrogoths invaded and plundered the Balkans beginning in the third century A.D. None of these invaders permanently occupied territory. Small Slavic groups began settling outlying regions in the fifth century, and by the seventh century the Slavs had overcome Byzantine resistance and settled most of the Balkans. The Slavs brought a more stable culture, retained their own language, and substantially slaviced the existing Roman and Byzantine social system.

The immigration of the first Bulgars overlapped that of the Slavs

in the seventh century. Of mixed Turkic stock (the word *Bulgar* derives from an Old Turkic word meaning “one of mixed nationality”), the Bulgars were warriors who had migrated from a region between the Urals and the Volga to the steppes north of the Caspian Sea, then across the Danube into the Balkans. Besides a formidable reputation as military horsemen, the Bulgars had a strong political organization based on their khan (prince). In A.D. 630 a federation of Bulgar tribes already existed; in the next years the Bulgars united with the Slavs to oppose Byzantine control. By 681 the khan Asparukh had forced Emperor Constantine V to recognize the first Bulgarian state. The state, whose capital was at Pliska, near modern Shumen, combined a Bulgarian political structure with Slavic linguistic and cultural institutions.

The First Golden Age

The First Bulgarian Empire was able to defeat the Byzantine Empire in 811 and expand its territory eastward to the Black Sea, south to include Macedonia, and northwest to present-day Belgrade (see fig. 2). The kingdom reached its greatest size under Tsar Simeon (893–927), who presided over a golden age of artistic and commercial expansion. After moving deep into Byzantine territory, Simeon was defeated in 924.

Meanwhile, Rome and Byzantium competed for political and cultural influence in Bulgaria. The Eastern Empire won in 870, when Bulgaria accepted Eastern Rite (Orthodox) Christianity and an autocephalous Bulgarian Church was established. This decision opened Bulgaria to Byzantine culture (and territorial ambitions) through the literary language devised for the Slavs by the Orthodox monks Cyril and Methodius. Establishment of a common, official religion also permanently joined the Bulgarian and Slavic cultures.

After reaching its peak under Simeon, the First Bulgarian Empire declined in the middle of the tenth century. Byzantine opposition and internal weakness led to a loss of territory to the Magyars and the Russians. Bulgaria remained economically dependent on the Byzantine Empire, and the widespread Bogomil heresy (see Glossary) opposed the secular Bulgarian state and its political ambitions as work of the devil. Seeking to restore a balance of power in the Balkans, the Byzantines allied with the Kievan Russians under Yaroslav and invaded Bulgaria several times in the late tenth century. Although the Bulgarians expanded their territory again briefly under Tsar Samuil at the end of the tenth century, in 1014 the Byzantines under Basil II inflicted a major military loss. By 1018 all of Bulgaria was under Byzantine control. For nearly two

centuries, the Byzantines ruled harshly, using taxes and the political power of the church to crush opposition. The first and second Crusades passed through Bulgaria in this period, devastating the land.

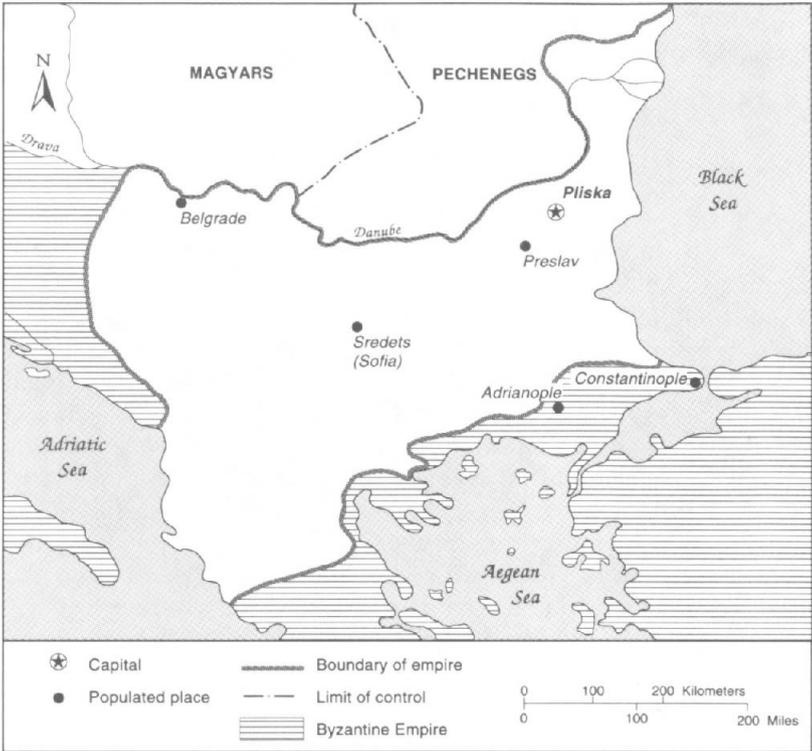
The Second Golden Age

By 1185 the power of the Byzantine Empire had again waned because of external conflicts. The noble brothers Asen and Peter led a revolt that forced Byzantine recognition of an autonomous Bulgarian state. Centered at Tŭrnovo (present-day Veliko Tŭrnovo), this state became the Second Bulgarian Empire. Like the First Bulgarian Empire, the second expanded at the expense of a preoccupied Byzantine Empire. In 1202 Tsar Kaloian (1197–1207) concluded a final peace with Byzantium that gave Bulgaria full independence. Kaloian also drove the Magyars from Bulgarian territory and in 1204 concluded a treaty with Rome that consolidated Bulgaria's western border by recognizing the authority of the pope. By the middle of the thirteenth century, Bulgaria again ruled from the Black Sea to the Adriatic. Access to the sea greatly increased commerce, especially with the Italian Peninsula. Tŭrnovo became the center of Bulgarian culture, which enjoyed a second golden age.

The final phase of Bulgaria's second Balkan dominance was the reign of Kaloian's successor, Ivan Asen II (1218–41; see fig. 3). In this period, culture continued to flourish, but political instability again threatened. After the death of Ivan Asen II, internal and external political strife intensified. Sensing weakness, the Tatars began sixty years of raids in 1241, the Byzantines retook parts of the Second Bulgarian Empire, and the Magyars again advanced. From 1257 until 1277, aristocratic factions fought for control of the Bulgarian throne. Heavy taxation by feudal landlords caused their peasants to revolt in 1277 and enthrone the "swineherd tsar" Ivailo. After 1300 Tatar control ended, and a new period of expansion followed under Mikhail Shishman (1323–1330) and Ivan Aleksandŭr (1331–1370). As before, however, military and commercial success paralleled internal disorder; the social chaos of the previous century continued to erode the power of Bulgarian leaders. Meanwhile, Serbia had risen as a formidable rival in the Balkans, and the Ottoman Turks had advanced to the Aegean coast. In the late fourteenth century, Bulgaria was weakened by the division of its military defenses between the two perceived threats.

Ottoman Rule

The Ottoman Empire was founded in the early fourteenth century by Osman I, a prince of Asia Minor (see Glossary) who began



Source: Based on information from Christ Atanasoff, *The Bulgarians*, Hicksville, New York, 1977, 36; and Hermann Kinder and Werner Hilgemann, *The Anchor Atlas of World History*, 1, Garden City, New York, 1974, 130.

Figure 2. The First Bulgarian Empire under Simeon, A.D. 893-927

pushing the eastern border of the Byzantine Empire westward toward Constantinople. Present-day European Turkey and the Balkans, among the first territories conquered, were used as bases for expansion far to the West during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The capture of Constantinople in 1453 completed Ottoman subjugation of major Bulgarian political and cultural institutions. Nevertheless, certain Bulgarian groups prospered in the highly ordered Ottoman system, and Bulgarian national traditions continued in rural areas. When the decline of the Ottoman Empire began about 1600, the order of local institutions gave way to arbitrary repression, which eventually generated armed opposition. Western ideas that penetrated Bulgaria during the 1700s stimulated a renewed concept of Bulgarian nationalism that eventually combined with decay in the empire to loosen Ottoman control in the nineteenth century.

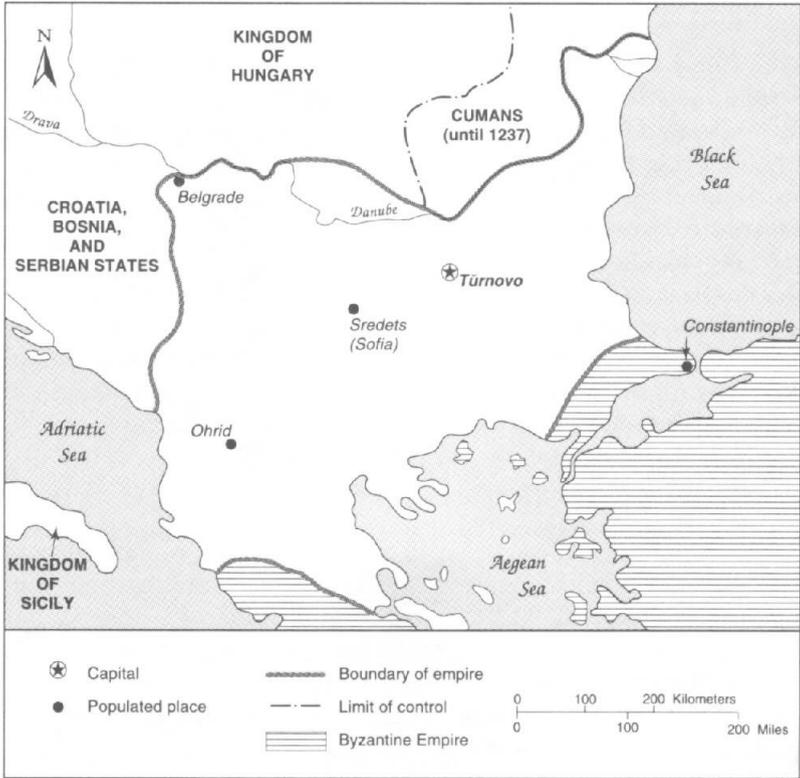
Introduction of the Ottoman System

Ottoman forces captured the commercial center of Sofia in 1385. Serbia, then the strongest Christian power in the Balkans, was decisively defeated by the Ottomans at the Battle of Kosovo Polje in 1389, leaving Bulgaria divided and exposed. Within ten years, the last independent Bulgarian outpost was captured. Bulgarian resistance continued until 1453, when the capture of Constantinople gave the Ottomans a base from which to crush local uprisings. In consolidating its Balkan territories, the new Ottoman political order eliminated the entire Bulgarian state apparatus. The Ottomans also crushed the nobility as a landholding class and potential center of resistance. The new rulers reorganized the Bulgarian church, which had existed as a separate patriarchate since 1235, making it a diocese under complete control of the Byzantine Patriarchate at Constantinople. The sultan, in turn, totally controlled the patriarchate.

The Ottomans ruled with a centralized system much different from the scattered local power centers of the Second Bulgarian Empire. The single goal of Ottoman policy in Bulgarian territory was to make all local resources available to extend the empire westward toward Vienna and across northern Africa. Landed estates were given in fiefdom to knights bound to serve the sultan. Peasants paid multiple taxes to both their masters and the government. Territorial control also meant cultural and religious assimilation of the populace into the empire. Ottoman authorities forcibly converted the most promising Christian youths to Islam and trained them for government service. Called *pomaks*, such converts often received special privileges and rose to high administrative and military positions. The Ottoman system also recognized the value of Bulgarian artisans, who were organized and given limited autonomy as a separate class. Some prosperous Bulgarian peasants and merchants became intermediaries between local Turkish authorities and the peasants. In this capacity, these *chorbadzhi* (squires) were able to moderate Ottoman policy. On the negative side, the Ottoman assimilation policy also included resettlement of Balkan Slavs in Asia Minor and immigration of Turkish peasants to farm Bulgarian land. Slavs also were the victims of mass enslavement and forcible mass conversion to Islam in certain areas.

Bulgarian Society under the Turks

Traditional Bulgarian culture survived only in the smaller villages during the centuries of Ottoman rule. Because the administrative apparatus of the Ottoman Empire included officials of many nationalities, commerce in the polyglot empire introduced Jews,



Source: Based on information from Christ Atanasoff, *The Bulgarians*, Hicksville, New York, 1977, 37; and Hermann Kinder and Werner Hilgemann, *The Anchor Atlas of World History*, 1, Garden City, New York, 1974, 204.

Figure 3. The Second Bulgarian Empire under Ivan Asen, 1218-41

Armenians, Dalmatians, and Greeks into the chief population centers. Bulgarians in such centers were forcibly resettled as part of a policy to scatter the potentially troublesome educated classes. The villages, however, were often ignored by the centralized Ottoman authorities, whose control over the Turkish landholders often exerted a modifying influence that worked to the advantage of the indigenous population. Village church life also felt relatively little impact from the centralized authority of the Greek Orthodox Church. Therefore, between the fourteenth and seventeenth centuries, the villages became isolated repositories of Bulgarian folk culture, religion, social institutions, and language.

Early Decay and Upheaval in the Empire

Notable Bulgarian uprisings against the Ottomans occurred in

the 1590s, the 1680s and the 1730s; all sought to take advantage of external crises of the empire, and all were harshly suppressed. Beginning in the 1600s, local bandits, called *hajduti* (sing., *hajdutin*), led small uprisings (see fig. 4). Some writers now describe these uprisings as precursors of a Bulgarian nationalist movement. Most scholars agree, however, that *hajdutin* activities responded only to local misrule and their raids victimized both Christians and Muslims. Whatever their motivation, *hajdutin* exploits became a central theme of national folk culture.

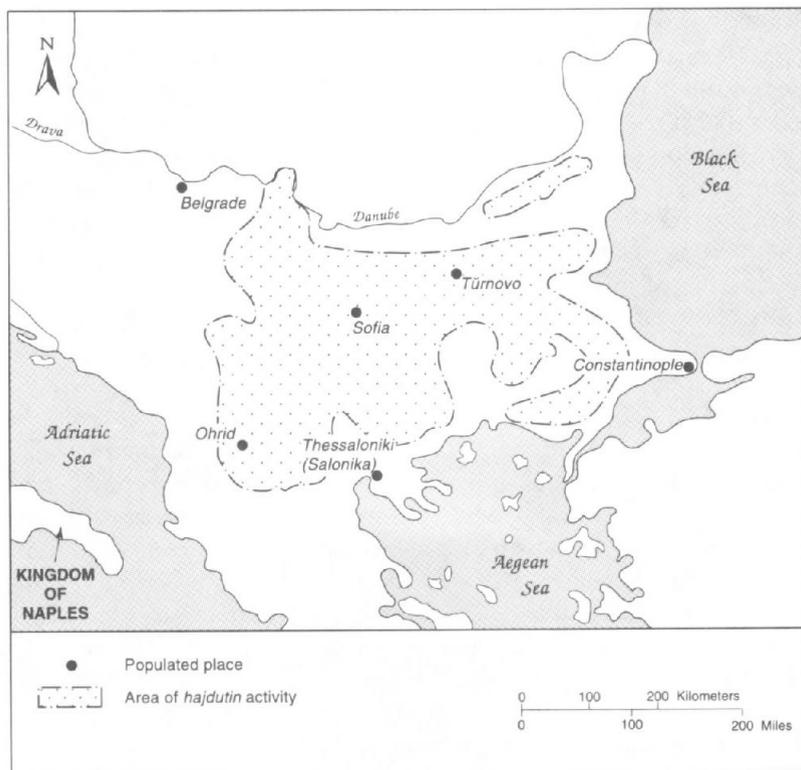
By 1600 the Ottoman Empire had reached the peak of its power and territorial control. In the seventeenth century, the empire began to collapse; the wealth of conquest had spread corruption through the political system, vitiating the ability of the central government to impose order throughout the farflung empire. For the majority of people in agricultural Bulgaria, centralized Ottoman control had been far from intolerable while the empire was orderly and strong. But the growing despotism of local authorities as the central government declined created a new class of victims. Increasingly, Bulgarians welcomed the progressive Western political ideas that reached them through the Danube trade and travel routes. Already in the 1600s, Catholic missionaries in western Bulgaria had stimulated creation of literature about Bulgaria's national past. Although the Turks suppressed this Western influence after the Chiprovets uprising of 1688, the next century brought an outpouring of historical writings reminding Bulgarian readers of a glorious national heritage.

National Revival, Early Stages

For Bulgaria the eighteenth century brought transition from static subservience within a great Asian empire toward intellectual and political modernization and reestablishment of cultural ties with Western Europe. The monasteries of an increasingly independent Bulgarian church fostered national thought and writing; Western influences altered the nature of commerce and landholding in the Balkans; and the forcible assimilation of Bulgarian culture into a cosmopolitan Asian society ended, allowing Bulgarian national consciousness to reawaken. At the same time, social anarchy inhibited the liberation process. These developments set the stage for a full national revival.

The Written Word

In the eighteenth century, all Slavic cultures moved away from the formal Old Church Slavonic language that had dominated their literatures for centuries. The literary language that emerged was



Source: Based on information from Ilcho Dimitrov (ed.), *Kratka istoriia na Bŭlgariia*, Sofia, 1981, 153; and Hermann Kinder and Werner Hilgemann, *The Anchor Atlas of World History*, 1, Garden City, New York, 1974, 208.

Figure 4. Hajdutin Activity in the Ottoman Empire, 1600-1800

much closer to the common vernacular, eventually making books accessible to a much wider readership. In 1741 Hristofor Zhefarovich published his *Stematografia*, a discussion of the cultural history of the Serbs and the Bulgarians. The book displayed the Bulgarian coat of arms and praised the glorious past of the Bulgarian people. In 1762 Father Paisi of Hilendar wrote a history of the Bulgarian peoples in a mixture of Old Church Slavonic and vernacular language. Circulated in manuscript form for nearly one hundred years, the book was a lively, readable celebration of the Bulgarian past and a call for all Bulgarians to remember their heritage and cultivate their native language. Paisi's history inspired generations of writings on Bulgarian patriotic themes. In part, its influence was strong because Paisi wrote at a monastery on Mt. Athos, the largest spiritual center in the Balkans and an early receptacle of ideas

of the European Enlightenment (see Glossary). Paisi's follower Sofroniĭ Vrachanski further developed the literature by using a much more vernacular language to advance secular ideas of the Enlightenment in translations of Greek myths and his original *Life and Tribulations of the Sinner Sofroniĭ*. Sofroniĭ also published the first printed book in Bulgaria in 1806.

Commerce and Western Influences

Under the Ottoman Empire, the Mediterranean and Asian trade routes met in Bulgaria. Fairs and regional markets eventually brought tradesmen into contact with their foreign counterparts. After centuries of exclusion from population centers by Turkish policy, Bulgarians began migrating back to the towns, establishing an urban ethnic presence. By the eighteenth century, trade guilds included many workers in cloth, metal, wood, and decorative braid. The estate holders of Macedonia also profited from growing European cotton markets. Some Bulgarian merchants assumed positions as intermediaries between Turkish and European markets, grew rich from such connections, and established offices in the major European capitals. As the Bulgarian cultural revival spread from the monasteries into secular society, these newly wealthy groups promoted secular art, architecture, literature, and Western ideals of individual freedom and national consciousness. Of particular impact were the ideals of the French Revolution, introduced through commercial connections at the start of the nineteenth century.

The end of centralized Ottoman power over Bulgarian territory brought several decades of anarchy, called the *kŭrdzhaliiŭstvo*, at the end of the eighteenth century. As at the end of the Second Bulgarian Empire four hundred years before, local freebooters controlled small areas, tyrannized the population, and fought among themselves. Political order was not reestablished in Bulgaria until 1820. Meanwhile, large population shifts occurred as Bulgarians fled the taxation and violence inflicted by this anarchic condition; the new communities they founded in Romania and southern Russia were important sources of cultural and political ideas in the nineteenth century.

The Bulgarian national revival took place in the larger context of Christian resistance to Turkish occupation of Eastern and Central Europe—a cause whose momentum increased as the Ottoman Empire crumbled from within. Russia fought a series of wars with the Turks between 1676 and 1878, and was given the right to protect Christians living under Ottoman rule in treaties signed in 1774 and 1791. Those treaties granted semiautonomy to the Romanian

regions of Wallachia and Moldavia, which gave hope that Russia might provide similar help to Bulgaria during the *kürdzhalııstvo*. Intellectual ties between Bulgaria and Russia promoted the adoption of Russian revolutionary thought along with Western influences. In 1804 Sofroniı offered the help of the entire Bulgarian people to Russian armies fighting the Turks and moving toward Bulgarian territory. By 1811 a special volunteer army of several thousand Bulgarians had been formed, in the hope that Russian success against the Turks would liberate Bulgaria. Although the Russians did not aid the Bulgarians directly at that time, Russia remained crucial to Bulgarian foreign relations from that time to the late twentieth century.

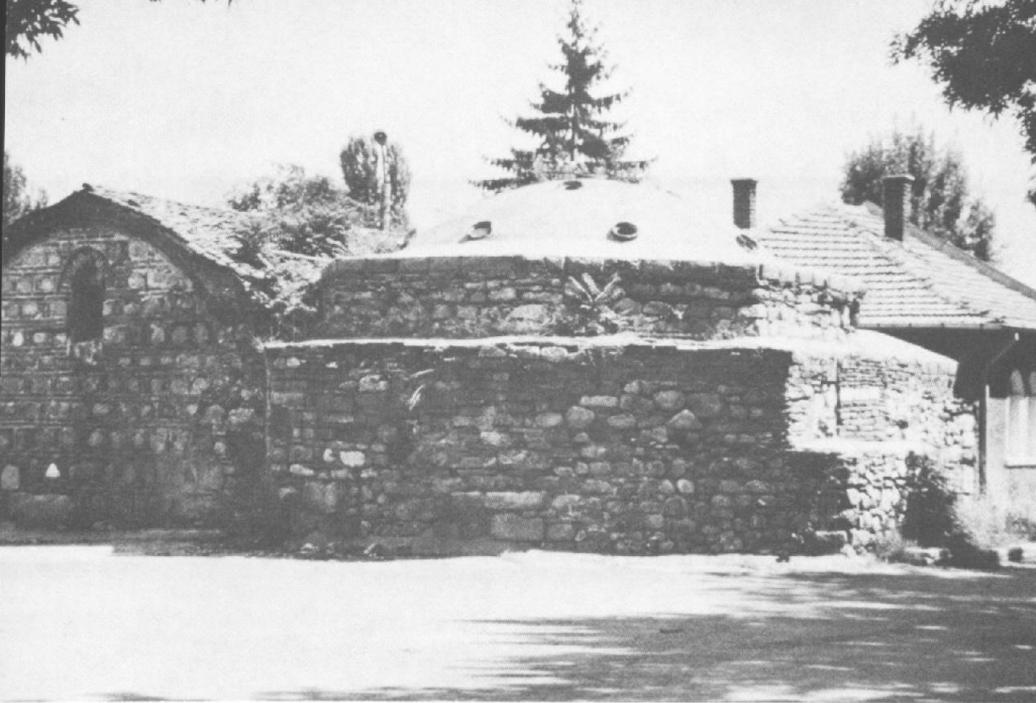
European and Russian Policies, 1800

By 1800 the Ottoman Empire was universally labeled “The Sick Man of Europe.” The empire was precariously near total collapse and ready to be dismantled by a powerful neighbor, just as the Byzantine Empire had been dismantled by the Ottomans. In this case the logical successor was Russia, an expanding empire with strong religious and cultural ties to the captive Slavic groups. Russia also had a continuing desire to achieve access to the Mediterranean Sea. Russian military power reached its peak with the defeat of Napoleon’s invading army in 1812, but throughout the nineteenth century France and Britain used diplomatic and military means to counterbalance Russian influence in the Balkans and the Bosphorus. This implicit defense of the Ottoman Empire delayed Bulgarian independence, but the intellectual basis of revolution grew rapidly in the nineteenth century.

The Bulgarian Independence Movement

Revolution in the Balkans

In 1804 Serbia began a series of uprisings that won it autonomy within the Ottoman Empire by 1830. Especially in the campaigns of 1804 and 1815, many Bulgarians in areas adjacent to Serbia fought beside the Serbs. When the Greeks revolted against Turkish rule in 1821, Bulgarian towns provided money and soldiers. Several hundred Bulgarians fought in the six-year Greek uprising, some of them as commanders, and some became part of the government of independent Greece. Bulgarians also fought the Turks in Crete; in addition, they fought with the Italian revolutionary Giuseppe Garibaldi and with other nationalist uprisings against the Habsburgs in 1848–49. In spite of Bulgarian sympathy for national liberation movements nearby, and although the ideals of those



Turkish mosque, Kyustendil
Courtesy Sam and Sarah Stulberg

movements permeated the Balkans from 1804 on, the anarchy of the early 1800s confined expression of Bulgarian national feeling primarily to the cultural realm until the 1860s.

Cultural Expressions of Nationalism

In 1824 Dr. Petŭr Beron, a member of the Bulgarian emigrant community in Romania, published the first primer in colloquial Bulgarian. His book also explained a new system of secular education to replace the outdated precepts of monastery pedagogy, and Beron's suggestions strongly influenced the development of Bulgarian education in the nineteenth century. In 1835 a school was opened in Gabrovo according to Beron's design. Under direction of the monk Neofit Rilski, it was the first school to teach in Bulgarian. Similar schools opened in the ensuing years, and in 1840 the first school for girls opened in Pleven. Education grew especially fast in trading towns such as Koprivshitsa and Kalofer in the foothills of the Balkans, where textiles and other trades created a wealthy merchant class. In the 1840s, the first generation of Western-educated Bulgarians returned home. Forming a cosmopolitan intelligentsia, they diversified and expanded Bulgarian schools in the following decades.

In the first half of the 1800s, special educational and cultural ties developed with Russia and France. In 1840 the Russian government

began awarding grants for Bulgarian students to study in Russia. The total number of students in the Russian program was never high, but several graduates were leaders in the independence drive of the 1870s. Several notable Bulgarians of that generation also were educated in France and at Robert College, founded as a missionary institution in Constantinople.

Parallel with educational advancement, Bulgarian book printing advanced substantially after 1830. Before that date only seventeen original Bulgarian titles had been printed; but by mid-century, printing had replaced manuscript copying as the predominant means of distributing the written word. The first periodical was printed in Bulgarian in 1844, beginning an outpouring of mostly ephemeral journals through the nineteenth century. Censorship before 1878 meant that the majority of such journals were printed in the Romanian emigrant centers, outside the Ottoman Empire. Most Bulgarian-language periodicals printed within the empire came from Constantinople, showing the cultural importance of that city to the Bulgarian National Revival. After 1850 Bulgarian émigré periodicals, supporting a wide variety of political views toward the national independence movement, played a vital role in stimulating Bulgarian political consciousness.

In the mid-1800s, a number of cultural and charitable organizations founded in Constantinople supported and directed Bulgarian national institutions that resisted Ottoman and Greek influence. The social institution of the *chitalishte* (literally “reading room”) played an important cultural role beginning in 1856. Established in population centers by adult education societies, the *chitalishte* was a center for social gatherings, lectures, performances, and debates. Because it was available to the entire public, this institution spread national cultural and political ideals beyond the intelligentsia to the larger society. By 1878 there were 131 such centers.

The Bulgarian National Revival also stimulated the arts in the nineteenth century. Dobri Chintulov wrote the first poetry in modern Bulgarian in the 1840s, pioneering a national literary revival that peaked in the 1870s. Translation of Western European and Russian literature accelerated, providing new influences that broke centuries of rigid formalism. Painting and architecture now also broke from the prescribed forms of Byzantine church art to express secular and folk themes. Bulgarian wood-carving and church singing assumed the forms that survive today.

Religious Independence

The Bulgarian church achieved new independence in the nineteenth century. The Ottoman Empire had left the Bulgarian church

hierarchy under the Greek Patriarchate of Constantinople for four centuries, disregarding the differences between the two Orthodox churches. (The last separate Bulgarian church jurisdiction, the archbishopric of Ohrid, was absorbed in 1767.) Early in the 1800s, few of the Bulgarian church leaders most closely connected with Enlightenment ideas sought separation from the Greek Orthodox Church. But in 1839, a movement began against the Greek Metropolitan of Tŭrnovo, head of the largest Bulgarian diocese, in favor of local control. In 1849 the active Bulgarian community of Constantinople began pressing Turkish officials for church sovereignty. Other large Bulgarian dioceses both inside and outside Bulgaria sought a return to liturgy in the vernacular and appointment of Bulgarian bishops. The first concession came in 1848, when the Greek patriarch of Constantinople allowed one Bulgarian church in that city.

Because a decade of petitions, demonstrations, and Ottoman reform suggestions had brought no major change, in 1860 Bishop Ilarion Makariopolski of Constantinople declared his diocese independent of the Greek patriarchate. This action began a movement for ecclesiastical independence that united rural and urban Bulgarians and began a bitter Greek-Bulgarian dispute. The Turks and the Russians began to mediate in 1866, seeking a compromise that would ensure the security of each in the face of increasing regional unrest. In 1870 the Ottoman sultan officially declared the Bulgarian church a separate exarchate. The Greek patriarchate, which never recognized the separation, excommunicated the entire Bulgarian church; but the symbolism of the Ottoman decree had powerful political effect. The new exarchate became the leading force in Bulgarian cultural life; it officially represented the Bulgarians in dealing with the Turks, and it sponsored Bulgarian schools. The novel administrative system of the exarchate called for lay representation in governing bodies, thus introducing a note of self-government into this most visible institution.

Early Insurrections

The social and cultural events of the National Revival moved parallel to important political changes. Bulgarian aid to the Russians in the Russo-Turkish wars of 1806–12 and 1828–29 did nothing to loosen Ottoman control. Then the Ottoman Empire ruthlessly quelled major Bulgarian uprisings in 1835 (in Tŭrnovo), 1841 (in Niš), and in 1850–51 (in Vidin). Those uprisings still bore the disorganized qualities of the *hajduti*, but, together with smaller movements in intervening years, they established a tradition of insurrection for the next generation. Meanwhile, beset by European

enemies and internal revolutions, the Turks entered a reform period in 1826. They replaced the elite but increasingly untrustworthy Janissary forces with a regular army and officially abolished the feudal land system. These changes reduced oppression by the local Turkish rulers in Bulgaria. In the 1830s, Sultan Mahmud II centralized and reorganized his government to gain control over his corrupt officials and follow European administrative models. Although these changes had little direct effect on Bulgaria, they clearly signaled to the Slavic subjects of the empire that reform was now possible.

Balkan Politics of the Mid-Nineteenth Century

By 1850 the emerging Bulgarian nationalist movement had split into two distinct branches. The moderates, concentrated in Constantinople, favored gradual improvement of conditions in Bulgaria through negotiations with the Turkish government. This was the approach that created a separate Bulgarian exarchate in 1870. The moderates believed that the protection of the Ottoman Empire was necessary because a free Bulgaria would be subject to Balkan politics and great-power manipulation. The radical faction, however, saw no hope of gradual reform. Following their understanding of European liberal tradition and Russian revolutionary thought, the leaders of this faction aimed first for liberation from all outside controls. Liberation, they believed, would automatically lead to complete modernization of Bulgarian society.

The crushing of the large-scale Vidin peasant revolt in 1851 brought intervention by Britain and France, who bolstered and protected the Ottoman Empire throughout the nineteenth century as a counterweight to Russian expansion. To prevent destabilizing unrest, Britain and France forced the Turks to introduce land reform in western Bulgaria in the early 1850s and a series of major social reforms in 1856 and 1876. Nominally, those measures included equal treatment for non-Muslims in the empire and parliamentary representation for Bulgarians and Serbs. These changes, however, were the cosmetic product of Turkey's need for Western support in major wars with Russia. They did nothing to blunt the nationalist drive of the Bulgarian radicals.

The First Independence Organizations

In 1862 Georgi Rakovski assembled the first armed group of Bulgarians having the avowed goal of achieving independence from the Ottoman Empire. Rakovski, well-educated and experienced in the 1841 uprising and the drive for ecclesiastical independence, envisioned a federal republic including all Balkan nations except

Greece. His fighters were to stir a full-scale national uprising after crossing into Bulgaria from assembly points in Romania and Serbia. But the Serbs, who had supported the Bulgarians while they were useful in opposing the Turks, disbanded the Bulgarian legions in Serbia when they no longer served that purpose. Although Rakovski died in 1867 without achieving Bulgarian independence, he united the émigré intelligentsia, and the presence of his army influenced Turkish recognition of the Bulgarian church in 1870.

The Bulgarian Secret Central Committee, founded by émigré Bulgarians in Bucharest in 1866, continued Rakovski's mission under the leadership of Vasil Levski and Liuben Karavelov. These ideologues refined Rakovski's idea of armed revolutionary groups, creating a cadre of intellectuals who would prepare the people to rise for independence. Beginning in 1868, Levski founded the first revolutionary committees in Bulgaria. Captured by the Turks, he became a national hero when he was hanged in 1873. In 1870 Karavelov founded the Bulgarian Revolutionary Central Committee (BRCC) in Bucharest. The death of Levski temporarily shattered the group, but the committee resumed its activities when Georgi Benkovski joined its leadership in 1875. By this time, the political atmosphere of the Balkans was charged with revolution, and the Ottoman Empire looked increasingly vulnerable. Britain, Russia, and Austria-Hungary were growing concerned about the implications of those trends for the European balance of power. In 1875 Bosnia and Hercegovina revolted successfully against the Turks, and the next year Serbia and Montenegro attacked the Ottoman Empire.

The Final Move to Independence

In the early 1870s, the BRCC had built an intricate revolutionary organization, recruiting thousands of ardent patriots for the liberation struggle. Finally, in 1875 the committee believed that external distractions had weakened the Ottoman Empire enough to activate that struggle. Local revolutionary committees in Bulgaria attempted to coordinate the timing and strategy of a general revolt. Armed groups were to enter Bulgaria from abroad to support local uprisings, and diversionary attacks on Ottoman military installations were planned. Despite these efforts at coordination, the BRCC strategy failed. Although planned as a general revolt, the September Uprising of 1875 occurred piecemeal in isolated locations, and several local revolutionary leaders failed to mobilize any forces. The Turks easily suppressed the uprising, but the harshness of their response attracted the attention of Western Europe; from that time, the fate of Bulgaria became an international issue.

Following the failure of the September Uprising, Benkovski reorganized the BRCC and made plans for a new revolt. The April Uprising of 1876 was more widespread, but it also suffered from poor coordination. Poor security allowed the Turks to locate and destroy many local groups before unified action was possible. Massacres at Batak and other towns further outraged international opinion by showing the insincerity of recent Turkish reform proposals. The deaths of an estimated 30,000 Bulgarians in these massacres spurred the Bulgarian national movement. An international conference in Constantinople produced proposals to curb the Muslim fanaticism responsible for the Bulgarian massacres and give local self-government to the Christians on European territory in the empire. Two autonomous Bulgarian regions were proposed, one centered at Sofia and the other at Tŭrnovo. When the sultan rejected the reforms, Russia declared war unilaterally in early 1877. This was Russia's golden opportunity to gain control of Western trade routes to its southwest and finally destroy the empire that had blocked this ambition for centuries. Shocked by the Turkish massacres, Britain did not oppose Russian advances.

San Stefano, Berlin, and Independence

In eight months, Russian troops occupied all of Bulgaria and reached Constantinople. At this high point of its influence on Balkan affairs, Russia dictated the Treaty of San Stefano in March 1878. This treaty provided for an autonomous Bulgarian state (under Russian protection) almost as extensive as the First Bulgarian Empire, bordering the Black and Aegean seas. But Britain and Austria-Hungary, believing that the new state would extend Russian influence too far into the Balkans, exerted strong diplomatic pressure that reshaped the Treaty of San Stefano four months later into the Treaty of Berlin. The new Bulgaria would be about one-third the size of that prescribed by the Treaty of San Stefano; Macedonia and Thrace, south of the Balkans, would revert to complete Ottoman control. The province of Eastern Rumelia would remain under Turkish rule, but with a Christian governor (see fig. 5).

Whereas the Treaty of San Stefano called for two years of Russian occupation of Bulgaria, the Treaty of Berlin reduced the time to nine months. Both treaties provided for an assembly of Bulgarian notables to write a constitution for their new country. The assembly would also elect a prince who was not a member of a major European ruling house and who would recognize the authority of the Ottoman sultan. In cases of civil disruption, the sultan retained the right to intervene with armed force.

The final provisions for Bulgarian liberation fell far short of the



*Statue of Iane Sandanski, nineteenth-century revolutionary, Melnik
Courtesy Sam and Sarah Stulberg*

goals of the national liberation movement. Large populations of Bulgarians remained outside the new nation in Macedonia, Eastern Rumelia, and Thrace, causing resentment that endured well into the next century. (Bulgarians still celebrate the signing of the Treaty of San Stefano rather than the Treaty of Berlin as their national independence day.) In late 1878, a provisional Bulgarian government and armed uprisings had already surfaced in the Kresna and Razlog regions of Macedonia. These uprisings were quelled swiftly by the Turks with British support. During the next twenty-five years, large numbers of Bulgarians fled Macedonia into the new Bulgaria, and secret liberation societies appeared in Macedonia and Thrace. One such group, the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization (IMRO), continued terrorist activities in the Balkans into the 1930s.

The Decades of National Consolidation

Despite strong dissatisfaction with the frontiers imposed by the European powers, a new Bulgarian state was born in 1878. And despite early political uncertainty, the first thirty-four years of modern Bulgaria were in many ways its most prosperous and productive.

Forming the New State

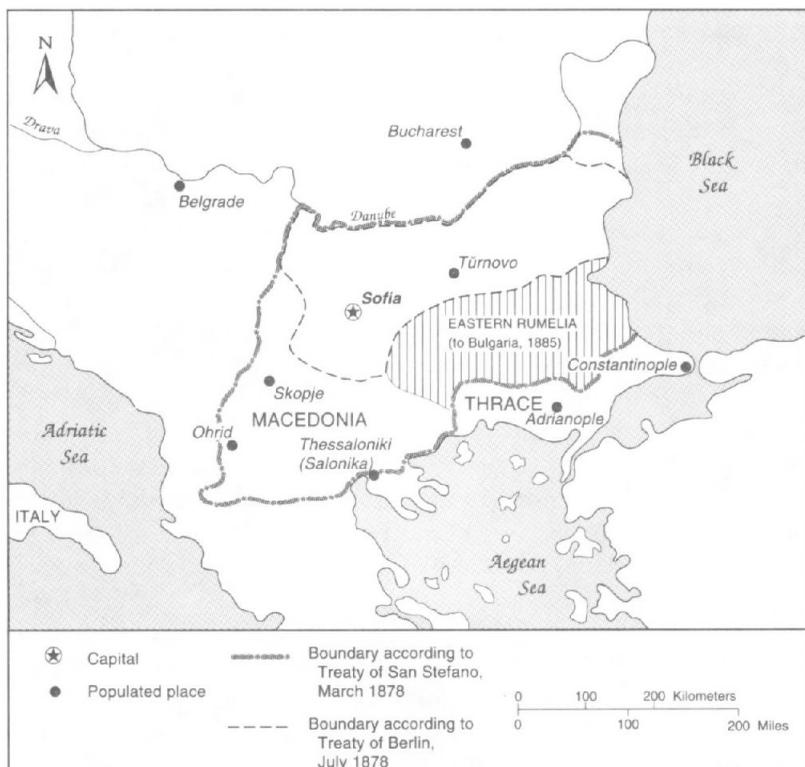
In 1879 a constituent assembly was duly convened in Tŭrnovo. Partly elected and partly appointed, the assembly of 230 split into conservative and liberal factions similar to those that had existed before independence. The liberals advocated continuing the alliance of peasants and intelligentsia that had formed the independence movement, to be symbolized in a single parliamentary chamber; the conservatives argued that the Bulgarian peasant class was not ready for political responsibility, and therefore it should be represented in a second chamber with limited powers. The framework for the Tŭrnovo constitution was a draft submitted by the Russian occupation authorities, based on the constitutions of Serbia and Romania. As the assembly revised that document, the liberal view prevailed; a one-chamber parliament or *sŭbranie* would be elected by universal male suffrage. Between the annual fall sessions of the *sŭbranie*, the country would be run jointly by the monarch and a council of ministers responsible to parliament. The liberals who dominated the assembly incorporated many of their revolutionary ideals into what became one of the most liberal constitutions of its time. The final act of the Tŭrnovo assembly was the election of Alexander of Battenburg, a young German nobleman

who had joined the Russians in the war of 1877, to be the first prince of modern Bulgaria.

From the beginning of his reign, Alexander opposed the liberal wing in Bulgaria and the Tŭrnovo constitution. After two years of conflict with the liberal council of ministers headed by Dragan Tsankov, Alexander received Russian backing to replace Tsankov. When the Russian Tsar Alexander II was assassinated, Russian policy changed to allow a grand national assembly to consider the constitutional changes desired by Prince Alexander. The assassination had spurred conservatism in Russia, and the Bulgarian liberals had alarmed the Russians by refusing foreign economic aid in the early 1880s. To the dismay of the liberals, Russia intervened in the election of the constitutional *sŭbranie*, frightening voters into electing a group that passed the entire package of amendments. Liberal influence was sharply reduced by amendments limiting the power of the *sŭbranie*. But, because the conservative approach to governing Bulgaria had little popular support, Alexander made a series of compromises with liberal positions between 1881 and 1885. The Tŭrnovo constitution was essentially restored by agreement between Tsankov and the conservatives in 1883, and the constitutional issue was resolved. In only the first two years of Bulgaria's existence, two parliaments and seven cabinets had been dissolved, but more stable times lay ahead.

By 1884 the conservative faction had left the government, but the liberals split over the high price of purchasing the Ruse-Varna Railway from the British, as required by the Treaty of Berlin. As on earlier issues, the more radical faction sought to reduce the influence of the European powers who had imposed the Treaty of Berlin. This group was led by Petko Karavelov, brother of revolutionary leader Liuben Karavelov and prime minister in the mid-1880s.

The most important issue of that period was Bulgaria's changing relationship with Russia. Bulgarian hostility towards the Russian army, refusal to build a strategic railway for the Russians through Bulgaria, and poor relations between Prince Alexander and Tsar Alexander III of Russia all contributed to increasing alienation. Because conservative Russia now feared unrest in the Balkans, Karavelov tried to appease the tsar by quelling the uprisings that continued in Macedonia. Radical factions in Bulgaria were persuaded to lower their goals from annexation of Macedonia and Thrace to a union between Bulgaria and Eastern Rumelia. When a bloodless coup achieved this union in 1885, however, Russia demanded the ouster of Prince Alexander and withdrew all Russian



Source: Based on information from R.J. Crampton, *A Short History of Bulgaria*, Cambridge, 1987, frontispiece.

Figure 5. Territorial Changes in Bulgaria, 1878–85

officers from the Bulgarian army. Greece and Serbia saw their interests threatened, and the latter declared war on Bulgaria.

The Bulgarian army won a brilliant victory over Serbia, with no Russian aid, at the Battle of Slivnitsa. Although the victory was a source of great national pride for Bulgaria, Russia continued to withhold recognition of the union with Eastern Rumelia until Prince Alexander abdicated. Finally, Russian-trained Bulgarian army officers deposed the prince in August 1886.

The Stambolov Years

When Alexander left behind a three-man regency headed by Stefan Stambolov, the Bulgarian government was as unstable as it had been in its first year. A Russian-educated liberal, Stambolov became prime minister in 1887 and ceased tailoring Bulgarian policy to Russian requirements. The tsar's special representative in

Bulgaria returned to Russia after failing to block a *sūbranie* called to nominate a new prince. Russo-Bulgarian relations remained chilly for the next ten years, and this break further destabilized Bulgarian politics and society. Stambolov brutally suppressed an army uprising in 1887 and began seven years of iron control that often bypassed the country's democratic institutions but brought unprecedented stability to Bulgaria. Meanwhile, Ferdinand of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha, a Catholic German prince, accepted the Bulgarian throne in August 1887.

Independence from the Ottoman Empire brought drastic economic and social changes to Bulgaria at the end of the nineteenth century. Industrialization proceeded rapidly (thirty-six major factories opened between 1878 and 1887), and a new class of industrial labor formed from displaced artisans and agricultural workers. Harsh working conditions led the urban poor to the cause of socialism, and in 1891 the Social Democratic Party was formed. (Later transformation of one of its factions into the Bulgarian Communist Party made that organization the oldest communist party in the world.) Town-centered trade and the guild structure were swept away by an influx of West European commerce to which Bulgaria had been opened by the terms of the Treaty of Berlin.

Despite industrialization, Bulgaria remained primarily an agricultural country. Liberation eliminated the Ottoman feudal landholding system. Bulgarian peasants were able to buy land cheaply or simply occupy it after Turkish landlords left, and a system of village-based small landholding began. Agricultural production rose in spite of heavy government land taxes. Many peasants were forced into the urban work force by taxes or high interest on borrowings for land purchase. Until the end of the nineteenth century, the vast majority of the Bulgarian population were small landholders or independent small tradesmen.

Russia and the other great powers did not recognize Ferdinand as rightful prince of Bulgaria until 1896. Supporters of Prince Alexander who remained in power used this failure as a weapon against the policies of Ferdinand and Stambolov. In 1890 a widespread plot against the government was discovered. As before, the basis of the plot was dissatisfaction with Stambolov's refusal to intercede with the Turks on behalf of Macedonian independence. In a masterful diplomatic stroke, Stambolov represented the insurrection to the Turks as an example of potential chaos that could be avoided by minor concessions. Fearing the Balkan instability that would follow an overthrow of Ferdinand, the Turks then ceded three major Macedonian dioceses to the Bulgarian exarchate. Stambolov thus gained solid church support and an overwhelming victory

in the 1890 election, which legitimized his government among all Bulgarian factions and reduced the threat of radical plots.

In the next years, Stambolov and the People's Liberal Party he had founded in 1886 exerted virtually dictatorial power to suppress extreme nationalism and opposing parties and create conditions for economic growth. After the 1886 coup, the army was strictly controlled. Voters were intimidated to ensure the reelection of incumbent officials, and political patronage grew rampant. Using his own and Ferdinand's ties with Germany and Austria-Hungary, Stambolov built a capitalist Bulgarian economic system on foreign loans, protectionism, an expanded industrial and transport infrastructure, and a strict tax system for capital accumulation. Especially important to the Bulgarian economy was completion of the Vienna-to-Constantinople Railway through Bulgaria in 1888 and the Burgas-Yambol Railway in the early 1890s. Stambolov derived strong political support from the entrepreneurs who benefited from his industrial policy. The Stambolov era marked the victory of executive over legislative power in the Bulgarian political system.

Legitimacy of the Bulgarian throne remained an important symbolic issue in the early 1890s, and the threat of assassination or overthrow of the prince remained after Stambolov consolidated his power. Therefore, Stambolov found a Catholic wife for Ferdinand and maneuvered past Orthodox Church objections in 1893 to ensure Ferdinand an heir that would stabilize the throne. That heir, Boris, was born the next year. Meanwhile, Stambolov's autocratic maneuvering and tough policies won him many enemies, especially after the stabilization of the early 1890s appeared to make such tactics unnecessary. In 1894 Ferdinand dismissed his prime minister because the prince sought more power for himself and believed that Stambolov had become a political liability. The next year, Macedonian radicals assassinated Stambolov.

The Rule of Ferdinand

The new administration was mainly conservative, and Ferdinand became the dominant force in Bulgarian policy making. His position grew stronger when Russia finally recognized him in 1896. The price for recognition was the conversion of Prince Boris to Orthodoxy from Catholicism. The Russian attitude had changed for two reasons: Alexander III had died in 1894, and new Turkish massacres had signaled a collapse of the Ottoman Empire that would threaten Russian and Bulgarian interests alike. In the next twenty years, no strong politician like Stambolov emerged, and Ferdinand was able to accumulate power by manipulating factions. Several liberal and conservative parties, the descendants of the two preliberation

groups, held power through 1912 in a parliamentary system that seldom functioned according to the constitution. The Bulgarian Social Democratic Party took its place in the new political order, advocating class struggle, recruiting members from the working class, and organizing strikes.

After relations with Russia had been repaired, Bulgaria's international position stabilized, allowing the economy to continue growing undisturbed until 1912. In this period, the government continued active intervention in agriculture and industry; it promoted new agricultural methods that improved the yield from fertile lands still being reclaimed from the Turks in 1900. Bulgarian economic growth continued because of a combination of factors: borrowing from West European industrial countries, a strong banking system, and a generally sound investment policy. Between 1887 and 1911, the number of industrial plants grew from 36 to 345. But the government's financial policy greatly increased the national debt, which by 1911 was three times the national budget and required 20 percent of the budget for interest payment. New land taxes and grain tithes were levied in the 1890s, leading to peasant revolts. In 1899 the Bulgarian Agrarian Union was founded, the result of a decade of growing rural discontent and resentment against the intellectual and governing class. Within two years, the union had evolved into an official party, the Bulgarian Agrarian National Union (BANU), which was accepted by most Bulgarian peasants as truly representing their interests. Soon, Bulgarian politicians viewed BANU as the most potent political group in the country.

The Macedonian Issue

Macedonian unrest continued into the twentieth century. Between 1894 and 1896, the government of Konstantin Stoilov reversed Stambolov's policy of controlling Macedonian extremists. When he sought to negotiate with the Turks for territorial concessions in Macedonia at the end of the century, Stoilov found that he could not control IMRO. By 1900 that group, which advocated Macedonian autonomy over the standard Bulgarian policy goal of annexation, had gained control of the Macedonian liberation movement inside Bulgaria. Russia and the Western powers now held Ferdinand responsible for all disruptions in Macedonia, causing suspicion of all Bulgarian activity in the Balkans. Greece and Serbia also laid claim to parts of Macedonia, giving them vital interests in the activities of IMRO as well. In 1902 Russia and Austria-Hungary forced Serbia and Bulgaria to cut all ties with IMRO.

In 1903 Macedonian liberation forces staged a widespread revolt, the Ilinden-Preobrazhensko Uprising. Despite strong public support for the Macedonian cause, Bulgaria sent no help, and the Turks again suppressed opposition with great violence. Large numbers of refugees now entered Bulgaria from Macedonia.

In the next four years, Austria-Hungary and Russia sought a formula by which to administer Macedonia in a way satisfactory to Bulgarian, Serbian, and Greek interests and approved by Constantinople. Although nominal agreement was reached in 1905, Serbian, Greek, and Bulgarian sympathizers clashed in Macedonia in 1906 and 1907. After the death of its leader Gotse Delchev in the 1903 uprising, IMRO's influence decreased. Bulgarian public sympathy for the Macedonian cause also diminished, and by 1905 the government's attention turned to internal matters.

Inspired by the 1905 uprisings in Russia, a series of riots and demonstrations between 1905 and 1908 were a reaction by workers, the poor, and some of the intelligentsia to several issues: domestic repression, government corruption, and the handling of the Macedonian issue. In 1906 anti-Greek riots and destruction of Greek property were ignited in some parts of Bulgaria by Greek claims to Macedonia. In spite of heavy fines and prohibitions against striking, a rail strike occurred in 1906, and in 1907 Prime Minister Nikola Petkov was assassinated.

Full Independence

The strikes and demonstrations remained isolated and had little practical effect, so Ferdinand remained in firm control. In 1908 the Young Turks, an energetic new generation of reformers, gained power in the Ottoman Empire. Their ascendancy temporarily restored the international self-confidence of the empire and threatened a renewed Turkish influence in the Balkans. To protect the territory it occupied in Bosnia and Hercegovina, Austria-Hungary annexed those regions. While the Turks were preoccupied with that situation, Ferdinand nationalized the Bulgarian section of his main international rail line and declared himself tsar of a fully independent Bulgaria. The Western powers, again seeing the threat of Ottoman collapse, were appeased by Russian-arranged financial compromises that saved face for the Turks. But tension between Bulgaria and Turkey increased dramatically after Ferdinand's declaration.

The arbitrary nature of Ferdinand's declaration also brought loud criticism from democratic-minded Bulgarian factions. Nonetheless, the grand national assembly held at Tŭrnovo in 1911 to incorporate

the terms of independence into the constitution, ratified Ferdinand's title and expanded his power in conducting foreign affairs.

By 1911 the BANU, led by Aleksandŭr Stamboliŭski, had become the largest and most vocal opposition faction. Although the BANU never gained more than 15 percent of a national vote before World War I, the party had a large, unified following in the peasant class victimized by poor harvests, usurious interest rates, and high taxes. Stamboliŭski's political philosophy put the peasant and rural life ahead of all other classes and lifestyles. Hating bureaucrats and urban institutions, he proposed a government that would provide representation by profession rather than party, to ensure a permanent peasant majority. His goal was to establish a peasant republic that would replace the conventional parliamentary apparatus established at Tŭrnovo. The BANU was a controversial and powerful force in Bulgarian politics for the next two decades.

The Balkan Wars and World War I

Full independence made Bulgaria a more aggressive party in the complex of Balkan politics. The end of Ottoman occupation heightened territorial ambitions that involved Bulgaria and its neighbors in three wars within four years.

The First Balkan War

The period from 1908 to 1912 was one of colliding interests in the Balkans and collapse of the system created by the Treaty of Berlin. Beginning in 1908, the Young Turks attempted to consolidate Turkish influence in the Balkans while ensuring equality for all nationalities in their empire. Rivals Italy and Austria threatened to intervene on behalf of an Albanian revolt against the Turks in 1909. Russia then urged a Bulgarian-Serbian alliance to keep such foreign powers at bay and ensure continued Slavic control in the region. In 1912, after long negotiations, Serbia and Bulgaria reached temporary agreement on the disposition of Macedonia, the chief issue dividing them. Subsequent agreements by Greece with Serbia, Bulgaria, and Montenegro completed the Balkan League—an uneasy alliance designed by Russia to finally push the Turks out of Europe and curtail great-power meddling in the Balkans. The First Balkan War, which began in October 1912, coincided with Italy's campaign to liberate Tripoli from the Turks. Bulgarian forces moved quickly across Ottoman Europe, driving the Turks out of Thrace. However, the Bulgarians then overextended their position by a fruitless attack toward Constantinople. In the peace negotiations that followed, Bulgaria regained Thrace,

but the fragile alliance against the Turks collapsed over the unresolved issue of Macedonia.

The Second Balkan War

The final removal of the Turks from Europe posed the problem of dividing Ottoman territory and heightened the worries of the European great powers about balancing influence in that strategic region. Disagreement about the disposition of Macedonia quickly rearranged the alliances of the First Balkan War and ignited a Second Balkan War in 1913. The Treaty of London that had ended the first war stipulated only that the Balkan powers resolve existing claims among themselves. The Bulgarians, having had the greatest military success, demanded compensation on that basis; the Serbs and Greeks demanded adjustment of the 1912 treaty of alliance to ensure a balance of Balkan powers; and the Romanians demanded territorial reward for their neutral position in the first war. Even before the First Balkan War ended, a strong faction in Bulgaria had demanded war against Serbia to preserve Bulgaria's claim to Macedonia. Ferdinand sided with that faction in 1913, and Bulgaria attacked Serbia. Turkey, Greece, and Romania then declared war on Bulgaria because they all feared Bulgarian domination of the Balkans if Macedonia were not partitioned. Because most Bulgarian forces were on the Serbian frontier, Turkish and Romanian troops easily occupied Bulgarian territory by mid-1913, and Bulgaria was defeated. The Treaty of Bucharest (1913) allowed Bulgaria to retain only very small parts of Macedonia and Thrace; Greece and Serbia divided the rest, humiliating Bulgarian territorial claims and canceling the gains of the First Balkan War (see fig. 6). This loss further inflamed Bulgarian nationalism, especially when Bulgarians in Serbian and Greek Macedonia were subjected to extreme hardship after the new partition. At this point, Russia, whose warnings Bulgaria had defied by attacking Serbia, shifted its support to the Serbs as its Balkan counterbalance against Austro-Hungarian claims.

World War I

The settlement of the Second Balkan War had also inflamed Bosnian nationalism. In 1914 that movement ignited an Austrian-Serbian conflict that escalated into world war when the European alliances of those countries went into effect.

Prewar Bulgarian Politics

Supported by Ferdinand, the government of Prime Minister Vasil Radoslavov declared neutrality to assess the possible outcome of

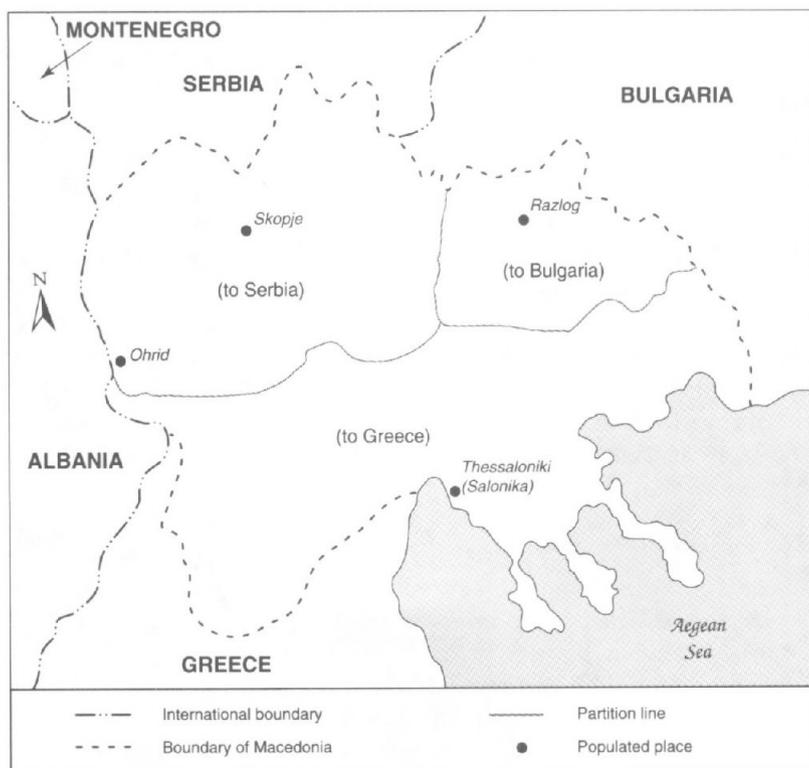
the alliances and Bulgaria's position relative to the Entente (Russia, France, and Britain) and the Central Powers (Austria-Hungary and Germany). From the beginning, both sides exerted strong pressure and made territorial offers to lure Bulgaria into an alliance. Ferdinand and his diplomats hedged, waiting for a decisive military shift in one direction or the other. The Radoslavov government favored the German side, the major opposition parties favored the Entente, and the agrarians and socialists opposed all involvement. By mid-1915 the Central Powers gained control on the Russian and Turkish fronts and were thus able to improve their territorial offer to Bulgaria. Now victory would yield part of Turkish Thrace, substantial territory in Macedonia, and monetary compensation for war expenses. In October 1915, Bulgaria made a secret treaty with the Central Powers and invaded Serbia and Macedonia.

Early Successes

Catching the Entente by surprise, Bulgarian forces pushed the Serbs out of Macedonia and into Albania and occupied part of Greek Macedonia by mid-1916. British, French, and Serbian troops landed at Salonika and stopped the Bulgarian advance, but the Entente's holding operation in Greece turned into a war of attrition lasting from late 1916 well into 1917. This stalemate diverted 500,000 Entente troops from other fronts. Meanwhile, Romania had entered the war on the Entente side in 1916. Bulgarian and German forces pushed the poorly prepared Romanians northward and took Bucharest in December 1916. The Bulgarians then faced Russia on a new front in Moldavia (the part of Romania bordering Russia), but little action took place there.

Stalemate and Demoralization

Once the Bulgarian advance into Romania and Greece halted, conditions at the front deteriorated rapidly and political support for the war eroded. By 1916 poor allocation of supplies created shortages for both civilians and soldiers, and a series of government reorganizations provided no relief. By 1917 the military stalemate and poor living conditions combined with news of revolution in Russia to stir large-scale unrest in Bulgarian society. The agrarians and socialist workers intensified their antiwar campaigns, and soldiers' committees formed in army units. Bolshevik antiwar propaganda was widely distributed in Bulgaria, and Russian and Bulgarian soldiers began fraternizing along the Moldavian front. In December 1917, Dimitür Blagoev, founder and head of the Social Democratic Party, led a meeting of 10,000 in Sofia, demanding



Source: Based on information from Christ Atanasoff, *The Bulgarians*, Hicksville, New York, 1977, 214.

Figure 6. Division of Macedonia at the Treaty of Bucharest, 1913

an end to the war and overthrow of the Bulgarian government. A wave of unrest and riots, including a “women’s revolt” against food and clothing shortages, swept through the country in 1918.

The government position weakened further when the Treaty of Bucharest, which divided the territory of defeated Romania among the central powers, left part of the disputed Romanian territory of Dobruja outside Bulgarian control. Having failed to secure even the least important territory promised by its war policy, the Radoslavov government resigned in June 1918. The new prime minister, Aleksandŭr Malinov, tried to unite the country by appointing the agrarian Aleksandŭr Stamboliŭski to his cabinet. But Malinov had vowed to fight, and the BANU leader refused the post as long as Bulgaria remained in the war. By September the Bulgarian army was thoroughly demoralized by antiwar propaganda and harsh conditions. A battle with the British and French at Dobro Pole brought

total retreat, and in ten days Entente forces entered Bulgaria. On September 29, the Bulgarians signed an armistice and left the war.

Capitulation and Settlement

The retreat from Dobro Pole brought a soldier revolt that was crushed by German troops near Sofia. But the parties in power forced Ferdinand to abdicate at the end of September because they feared full-scale revolution and blamed the tsar for the country's chaotic state. Ferdinand's son Boris was named tsar, becoming Boris III. The immediate cause of social upheaval ended with the armistice, but shortages and discontent with the Bulgarian government continued. An ineffective coalition government ruled for the next year, then a general election was called. Meanwhile, Bulgaria was again left far short of the territorial goals for which it had declared war. In the Treaty of Neuilly-sur-Seine (November 1919), Thrace was awarded to Greece, depriving Bulgaria of access to the Aegean Sea. The newly formed Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes took Macedonian territory adjoining its eastern border, and Southern Dobruja went to Romania (see fig. 7).

The treaty limited the postwar Bulgarian Army to a small volunteer force; Yugoslavia, Romania, and Greece were to receive reparations in industrial and agricultural goods; and the victorious Allies were to receive monetary reparations for the next thirty-seven years. On the other hand, the payment schedule was significantly improved in 1923, and Bulgaria's loss of 14,100 square kilometers was much less than the territorial losses of its wartime allies. Nationalist resentment and frustration grew even stronger because of this outcome, however, and Bulgaria remained close to Germany throughout the interwar period.

The Interwar Period

The period after World War I was one of uneasy political coalitions, slow economic growth, and continued appearance of the Macedonia problem. Although social unrest remained at a high level, Boris kept firm control of his government as World War II approached.

Stamboliiski and Agrarian Reform

The 1919 election reflected massive public dissatisfaction with the war reparations, inflation, and rising taxes that prolonged the chaotic living conditions of the war. The socialist and agrarian parties tightened their organizations and increased membership. The left wing of the Bulgarian Workers' Socialist-Democratic Party (BWSDP) numbered only 25,000 in 1919, and the BANU emerged



Source: Based on information from R. J. Crampton, *A Short History of Bulgaria*, Cambridge, 1987, frontispiece.

Figure 7. Territorial Changes According to the Treaty of Neuilly-sur-Seine, 1919

as the largest party in the country. The BANU received 28 percent of the 1919 vote, giving it a plurality but not a majority in the new *sŭbranie*. Stamboliŭski sought to include the Bulgarian Communist Party (BCP)—which had finished second in the election—and the BWSDP in a coalition government. (The BCP and the BWSDP were the two factions of the Bulgarian communist movement that had sprung from the Social Democratic Party founded in 1891; they would remain separate until the former was disbanded after World War II.) Stamboliŭski could not permit the two factions the control they desired, however, so they refused participation.

The postwar governing coalition thus included only factions to Stamboliŭski's right. The first major test for the Stamboliŭski government was a transport strike that lasted from December 1919 until February 1920. Fomented by the communists and the social democrats and joined by urban workers and middle-class Bulgarians, the striker protests were quelled harshly by the army and the

Orange Guard, a quasi-military force that Stamboliški formed to counter mass demonstrations by the parties of the left.

Suppression of the strike, mobilization of the peasant vote, and intimidation at the polls gave the BANU enough support to win the parliamentary election of 1920 over the communists and form a non-coalition government. Tsar Boris and much of the Bulgarian middle class preferred the agrarians to the communists and social democrats, whom they feared much more. Stamboliški immediately began drastic economic reforms. He abolished the merchants' trade monopoly on grain, replacing it with a government consortium; broke up large urban and rural landholdings and sold the surplus to the poor; enacted an obligatory labor law to ease the postwar labor shortage; introduced a progressive income tax; and made secondary schooling compulsory. All aspects of the radical reform policy aimed at ridding society of "harmful" classes of society such as lawyers, usurers, and merchants, distributing capital and obligations more evenly through society, and raising the living standards of the landless and poor peasants.

In foreign policy, Stamboliški officially abandoned Bulgaria's territorial claims, which he associated with a standing army, monarchy, large government expenditures, and other prewar phenomena that the agrarians deemed anachronistic. After the war, no major power was available to protect Bulgarian interests in the Balkans. For this reason, the traditional approach to foreign policy was discarded in favor of rapprochement with all European powers and the new government of Kemal Atatürk in Turkey, membership in the League of Nations (see Glossary), and friendship with the new Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes (later the Kingdom of Yugoslavia). Relations with Turkey were greatly improved by Bulgarian support of Atatürk's revolutionary Turkish Republic in 1920.

Reconciliation with Yugoslavia was a necessary step toward Stamboliški's ultimate goal of a multiethnic Balkan peasant federation. Improved Yugoslav relations required a crackdown on the powerful Macedonian extremist movement. Accordingly, Stamboliški began a two-year program of harsh suppression of IMRO in 1921; in 1923 Yugoslavia and Bulgaria agreed at the Niš Convention to cooperate in controlling extremists.

The Fall of Stamboliški

Led by a large Macedonian group in Sofia, the strong nationalist elements remaining in Bulgaria found the new pacifist policy alarming. The urban working class, unaided by agrarian reforms, gravitated to the communists or the socialist workers. Inflation and

industrial exploitation continued. Many of Stamboliški's subordinates inflamed social tensions by taking very dogmatic positions in favor of peasant rights. The Bulgarian right, silent since the war, reorganized into a confederation called the National Alliance. Stamboliški's Orange Guard jailed the leaders of that group in 1922, temporarily stopping its momentum. Meanwhile, in late 1922 and early 1923, Macedonian nationalists occupied Kiustendil along the Yugoslav border and attacked government figures to protest rapprochement with Yugoslavia and Greece. Stamboliški responded with mass arrests, an accelerated campaign against IMRO terrorism, a purge of his own fragmented and notoriously corrupt party, and a new parliamentary election. These dictatorial measures united the agrarians' various opponents (IMRO, the National Alliance, army factions, and the social democrats) into a coalition led by Aleksandŭr Tsankov. The communists remained outside the group. Bulgaria's Western creditors would not protect a government that had rejected their reparations policy. In June 1923, Stamboliški was brutally assassinated by IMRO agents, and the conspirators shortly took control of the entire country with only scattered and ineffectual agrarian resistance.

The Tsankov and Liapchev Governments

Tsankov formed a new government, which Boris III quickly approved. An uprising by the communists, who had hoped the two major coalition factions would destroy each other, was easily suppressed in September 1923. Nonetheless, dominated by the Macedonian freedom factions and the National Alliance, Tsankov's government failed to restore order. When Tsankov outlawed the Bulgarian Communist Party in 1924, the militant communists led by exiles Georgi Dimitrov and Vasil Kolarov became dominant in that organization. The first response to this change was the bombing of Sveta Nedelia Cathedral in Sofia while the tsar was present in 1925, killing over 100. This attack brought a new government reign of terror against the communists and the agrarians. Disunited Macedonian factions also continued terrorist attacks from their virtually separate state at Petrich, causing alarm in Western Europe. In 1926 Tsankov was replaced by Andrei Liapchev, a Macedonian who remained prime minister for five years.

Liapchev generally was more lenient toward political opposition than Tsankov; the communists resurfaced in 1927 under cover of the labor-based Bulgarian Workers' Party, and an Independent Workers' Trade Union became the center of political activity by labor. IMRO also had much more latitude under the Macedonian prime minister; this meant that political assassinations and terrorism

continued unabated. IMRO raids into Yugoslavia ended Bulgarian rapprochement with that country, and the Macedonians demanded preferential economic treatment under Liapchev. But compared with the years preceding, the late 1920s brought relative political stability to Bulgaria. Liapchev led a conservative majority in the *sŭbranie* and had the confidence of Boris. The press was relatively free, and educational and judicial institutions functioned independently. Industrial and agricultural output finally exceeded prewar levels, and foreign investment increased. But even after substantial reduction, Bulgaria's reparations payments were 20 percent of her budget in 1928, and the return to the gold standard that year weakened the economy one year before the onset of world depression.

In foreign policy, Liapchev tried unsuccessfully to improve British and French World War I reparation terms and bring Bulgaria out of its postwar diplomatic isolation. The country had already improved its international image by participating enthusiastically in the League of Nations, which reciprocated by forcing Greek invasion troops to leave southern Bulgaria in 1926. Boris made two European tours in the late 1920s to strengthen diplomatic ties.

In the late 1920s, the Macedonian independence movement split over the ultimate goal of its activity. The supremacist faction sought incorporation of all Macedonian territory into Bulgaria, while the federalist faction (including the IMRO terrorists) sought an autonomous Macedonia that could join Bulgaria or Yugoslavia in a protective alliance if necessary. Violence between the two groups reinforced a growing public impression that the Liapchev government was unstable.

The Crises of the 1930s

Political Disorder and Diplomatic Isolation

The world economic crisis that began in 1929 devastated the Bulgarian economy. The social tensions of the 1920s were exacerbated when 200,000 workers lost their jobs, prices fell by 50 percent, dozens of companies went bankrupt, and per capita income among peasants was halved between 1929 and 1933. A wave of strikes hit Bulgaria in 1930–31, and in 1931 the Liapchev government was defeated in what would be the last open election with proportional representation of parliamentary seats.

Liapchev's coalition fell apart, his defeat hastened by the rise of a supra-party organization, Zveno—a small coalition with connections to most of the major Bulgarian parties and to fascist Italy. The main goal of Zveno was to consolidate and reform existing

political institutions so that state power could be exerted directly to promote economic growth. After 1931 Zveno used the economic crisis to instill this idea in the Bulgarian political system. In 1931 the new government coalition, the People's Bloc, readmitted the BANU in an attempt to reunite Bulgarian factions. But the BANU had become factionalized and isolated; its representatives in the coalition largely pursued political spoils rather than the interests of their peasant constituency.

Meanwhile, the Macedonian situation in the early 1930s blocked further attempts to heal Balkan disputes. Four Balkan conferences were held to address the Macedonian problem; but Bulgaria, fearing IMRO reprisals, steadfastly refused to drop territorial demands in Macedonia or quell Macedonian terrorist activities in the region. Such activities had continued under all Bulgaria's postwar governments, but the People's Bloc was especially inept in controlling them. The situation eventually led to the Balkan Entente of 1934, by which Yugoslavia, Greece, Turkey, and Romania pledged to honor existing borders in the Balkans. For Bulgaria the isolation inflicted by this pact was a serious diplomatic setback in southeastern Europe.

In 1932 Aleksandŭr Tsankov founded Bulgaria's first serious fascist party, the National Socialist Movement, which imitated the methods of Hitler's Nazi party. Although Tsankov's party never attracted a large following, its activities added to the chaotic fragmentation that forced the People's Bloc from power in May 1934.

Fragmentation of the People's Bloc coalition and the threat posed by the Balkan Entente led Zveno and various military factions to stage a right-wing coup. Under the leadership of Colonel Damian Velchev and Kimon Georgiev, the new prime minister, the new government began taking dictatorial measures. The government also took immediate steps to improve relations with Yugoslavia and made overtures to Britain and France. Diplomatic relations resumed with the Soviet Union in 1934, despite a marked increase in internal repression of communists and suspected communists. A concerted drive by the Bulgarian military against IMRO permanently reduced the power of that organization, which by 1934 had exhausted most of its support in Bulgarian society. The fact that sponsorship of Balkan terrorism finally ceased to hinder Bulgarian foreign policy was the single lasting contribution of the Velchev-Georgiev government.

The Zveno group abolished all political parties, citing the failure of such institutions to provide national leadership. The press was muzzled. Henceforward the state would be authoritarian and centralized; the *sŭbranie* would represent not political parties but the

classes of society: peasants, workers, artisans, merchants, the intelligentsia, bureaucrats, and professionals. Velchev also proposed a wide-ranging program of social and technical modernization. In 1935, however, Tsar Boris III became an active political force in Bulgaria for the first time. Disillusioned by the results of the 1934 coup, Boris took action to regain his power, which the new regime had also curtailed. Boris used military and civilian factions alarmed by the new authoritarianism to maneuver the Zveno group out of power and declare a royal dictatorship.

The Royal Dictatorship

In the years following 1935, Boris relied on a series of uncharismatic politicians to run Bulgaria, weaken the political power of Zveno and the military, and keep other factions such as the BANU, the communists, and the national socialists from forming alliances against him. Boris chose not to restore the traditional political supremacy of the *sŭbranie* and ignored demands by many public figures to write a new Bulgarian constitution. In 1936 a broad coalition, the People's Constitutional Bloc, brought together nearly all leftist and centrist factions in a nominal opposition that had the blessing of the tsar. Boris delayed holding a national election until 1938. At that time, only individual candidates were allowed in a carefully controlled election procedure that excluded party candidate lists. Boris claimed that domination of the new *sŭbranie* by pro-government representatives justified his nonparty system, although the People's Constitutional Bloc seated over sixty delegates. Elections in the next two years were strictly limited in order to maintain Boris's control over his parliament.

The Interwar Economy

In the years between the world wars, Bulgarian efforts to raise agricultural and industrial standards closer to those of Western Europe yielded uneven results. Until the mid-1930s, political unrest, steep reparations payments, and the world financial crisis stymied growth. Reparations payments were finally canceled in 1932, however, and the stability of the royal dictatorship brought economic improvement in the late 1930s. Half the European average in 1930, per-capita agricultural production improved markedly when government control forced diversification, new methods, and new markets into the system. In the 1930s, a 75 percent increase in membership of agricultural cooperatives bolstered the financial stability of the agricultural sector, particularly benefiting small landholders. The most notable agricultural trend between the wars was

the switch to industrial crops, especially tobacco, which replaced wheat as Bulgaria's top agricultural export. The predominance of small agricultural plots increased, however; in 1944 only 1 percent of holdings were over twenty hectares and the number of landless families had decreased (see *Agriculture*, ch. 3).

In the 1930s, Germany bought a huge percentage of Bulgaria's agricultural exports (67.8 percent in 1939), reinforcing economic dependency by selling finished industrial products for nonconvertible currency—a distinct advantage for the Bulgarian economy and a boon to the Bulgarian standard of living. Boris tried to balance German trade by expanding British and French markets, but he found little interest in either country. Although industry remained distinctly secondary to agriculture, contributing only 5.6 percent of the Bulgarian gross national product (GNP—see *Glossary*) in 1938, between 1929 and 1939 Bulgarian industry grew at an average rate of 4.8 percent, well ahead of the European average for the period. The role of state-owned enterprises dwindled steadily in the 1930s; by 1944, only coal mines, electrical power, railroads, and banks remained predominantly in that category. While large state-sponsored enterprise diminished, small private industries flourished in the 1930s. At the same time, Bulgarian commerce became largely state-controlled and centralized in Sofia, and the social and political dichotomy between rural and urban Bulgaria was even sharper as World War II began.

Foreign Policy in the Late 1930s

By 1939 Bulgaria had moved inexorably into the fascist sphere of Germany and Italy. The country was tied to the former for economic reasons and because Germany promised territorial revision for Bulgaria, and to the latter because Boris was married to the daughter of King Victor Emmanuel III of Italy. In the late 1930s, Bulgaria continued to seek rapprochement with Yugoslavia; a friendship treaty was signed in 1937 and a renunciation of armed intervention in 1938. Germany's takeover of the Sudetenland from Czechoslovakia in 1938 ended the anti-German Little Entente alliance of Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, and Romania and pushed Yugoslavia closer to Bulgaria. When World War II began in September 1939 with the German invasion of Poland, Bulgaria declared neutrality, but this position was inevitably altered by big-power relationships.

The Nazi-Soviet alliance of 1939 improved Bulgaria's relations with the Soviet Union, which had remained cool, and yielded a Bulgarian-Soviet commercial treaty in 1940. The pro-Western

Bulgarian Prime Minister Georgi Kioseivanov was deposed that year in favor of pro-German Bogdan Filov, who reduced cultural ties with the West and instituted a Nazi-type youth league. Meanwhile, Boris strove to maintain neutrality, rejecting Soviet treaty offers in 1939 and 1940. Boris also rejected membership in the Balkan Entente and in a proposed Turkish-Yugoslav-Bulgarian defense pact because such moves would anger Italy, Germany, the Soviet Union, or all three. Under pressure from Hitler, Romania ceded southern Dobruja to Bulgaria by the Treaty of Craiova in 1940. Needing Bulgaria to anchor its Balkan flank, Germany increased diplomatic and military pressure that year. The massing of German troops in Romania prior to Germany's invading Greece removed all remaining flexibility; aware that German troops would have to pass through Bulgaria to reach Greece, Bulgaria signed the Tripartite Pact with Germany and Italy in March 1941.

World War II

As in the case of World War I, Bulgaria fought on the losing German side of World War II but avoided open conflict with the Russian/Soviet state. Again the strains of war eroded public support and forced the wartime Bulgarian government out of office. But World War II heralded a drastic political change and a long era of totalitarian governance.

The Passive Alliance

Having failed to remain neutral, Boris entered a passive alliance with the Axis powers. The immediate result was Bulgarian occupation (but not accession) of Thrace and Macedonia, which Bulgarian troops took from Greece and Yugoslavia, respectively, in April 1941. Although the territorial gains were initially very popular in Bulgaria, complications soon arose in the occupied territories. Autocratic Bulgarian administration of Thrace and Macedonia was no improvement over the Greeks and the Serbs; expressions of Macedonian national feeling grew, and uprisings occurred in Thrace. Meanwhile, the Germans pressured Bulgaria to support the eastern front they had opened by invading the Soviet Union in June 1941. Boris resisted the pressure because he believed that Bulgarian society was still sufficiently Russophile to overthrow him if he declared war. After the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor ended United States neutrality, Bulgaria declared war on Britain and the United States, but continued diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union throughout World War II. Acceleration of domestic war protests by the BCP in 1941 led to an internal crackdown on

dissident activities of both the right and left. In the next three years, thousands of Bulgarians went to concentration and labor camps.

The German eastern front received virtually no aid from Bulgaria, a policy justified by the argument that Bulgarian troops had to remain at home to defend the Balkans against Turkish or Allied attack. Hitler reluctantly accepted this logic. Boris's stubborn resistance to committing troops was very popular at home, where little war enthusiasm developed. Nazi pressure to enforce anti-Jewish policies also had little support in Bulgarian society. Early in the war, laws were passed for restriction and deportation of the 50,000 Bulgarian Jews, but enforcement was postponed using various rationales. No program of mass deportation or extermination was conducted in Bulgaria.

Wartime Crisis

In the summer of 1943, Boris died suddenly at age 49, leaving a three-man regency ruling for his six-year-old son, Simeon. Because two of the three regents were figureheads, Prime Minister Bogdan Filov, the third regent, became de facto head of state in this makeshift structure.

The events of 1943 also reversed the military fortunes of the Axis, causing the Bulgarian government to reassess its international position. Late in 1943, the Allies delivered the first of many disastrous air raids on Sofia. The heavy damage sent a clear message that Germany could not protect Bulgaria from Allied punishment. Once the war had finally intruded into Bulgarian territory, the winter of 1943-44 brought severe social and economic dislocation, hunger, and political instability. The antiwar factions, especially the communists, used urban guerrilla tactics and mass demonstrations to rebuild the organizational support lost during the government crackdown of 1941. Partisan activity, never as widespread as elsewhere in the Balkans during the war, increased in 1944 as the Red Army moved westward against the retreating Germans. To support antigovernment partisan groups, in 1942 the communists had established an umbrella Fatherland Front coalition backing complete neutrality, withdrawal from occupied territory, and full civil liberties.

Early in 1944, Bulgarian officials tried to achieve peace with the Allies and the Greek and Yugoslav governments-in-exile. Fearing the German forces that remained in Bulgaria, Filov could not simply surrender unconditionally; meanwhile, the Soviets threatened war if Bulgaria did not declare itself neutral and remove all German armaments from Bulgaria's Black Sea coast. Unable to gain the protection of the Allies, who had now bypassed Bulgaria in their

strategic planning, Bulgaria was caught between onrushing Soviet forces and the last gambits of the retreating Nazis. At this point, the top priority of Bulgarian leaders was clearing the country of German occupiers while arranging a peace with the Allies that would deprive Soviet forces of an excuse to occupy Bulgaria. But in September 1944, the Soviet Union unexpectedly declared war on Bulgaria, just as the latter was about to withdraw from the Axis and declare war on Germany.

The Soviet Occupation

When Soviet troops arrived in Bulgaria, they were welcomed by the populace as liberators from German occupation. On September 9, 1944, five days after the Soviet declaration of war, a Fatherland Front coalition deposed the temporary government in a bloodless coup. Headed by Kimon Georgiev of Zveno, the new administration included four communists, five members of Zveno, two social democrats, and four agrarians. Although in the minority, the communists had been the driving force in forming the coalition as an underground resistance organization in 1942. The presence of the Red Army, which remained in Bulgaria until 1947, strengthened immeasurably the communist position in dealing with the Allies and rival factions in the coalition. At this point, many noncommunist Bulgarians placed their hopes on renewed relations with the Soviet Union; in their view, both Germany and the Allies had been discredited by the events of the previous fifteen years. In 1945 the Allies themselves expected that a benign Soviet Union would continue the wartime alliance through the period of post-war East European realignment.

The armistice signed by Bulgaria with the Soviet Union in October 1944 surrendered all wartime territorial gains except Southern Dobruja; this meant that Macedonia returned to Yugoslavia and Thrace to Greece. The peace agreement also established a Soviet-dominated Allied Control Commission to run Bulgaria until conclusion of a peace treaty. Overall war damage to Bulgaria was moderate compared to that in other European countries, and the Soviet Union demanded no reparations. On the other hand, Bulgaria held the earliest and most widespread war crimes trial in post-war Europe; almost 3,000 were executed as war criminals. Bulgaria emerged from the war with no identifiable political structure; the party system had dissolved in 1934, replaced by the pragmatic balancing of political factions in Boris's royal dictatorship. This condition and the duration of the war in Europe eight months after Bulgaria's surrender gave the communists ample opportunity to exploit their favorable strategic position in Bulgarian politics.

Communist Consolidation

Initial Maneuvering

In the months after the surrender, the communist element of the Fatherland Front gradually purged opposition figures, exiled Tsar Simeon II, and rigged elections to confirm its power. In December 1945, a conference of foreign ministers of the United States, Britain, and the Soviet Union theoretically allocated two seats to the newly consolidated opposition BANU in the Bulgarian Council of Ministers, but BANU leaders demanded an immediate national election and removal of communist ministers. Because the BANU was now a unified party with substantial political backing, these demands created a governmental stalemate with the Fatherland Front for one year. In a national referendum in September 1946, however, an overwhelming majority voted to abolish the monarchy and proclaim Bulgaria a people's republic.

The next month, a national election chose a *sūbranie* to draft a new constitution. In a widely questioned process, Fatherland Front candidates won 70 percent of the votes. At this point, however, opposition to the front remained strong, as communist power grew steadily. In early 1947, opposition to aggressive communist tactics of confiscation and collectivization generated a loose anticommunist coalition within and outside the Fatherland Front, under BANU leader Nikola Petkov. The power struggle, which centered on the nature of the new constitution, reached its peak when the Paris peace treaty of February 1947 required that Soviet forces and the Allied Control Commission leave Bulgaria immediately. Once the United States ratified its peace treaty with Bulgaria in June 1947, the communist-dominated Fatherland Front arrested and executed Petkov and declared Bulgaria a communist state. Petkov's coalition was the last organized domestic opposition to communist rule in Bulgaria until 1989.

After 1946 Fatherland Front governments maintained nominal representation of noncommunist parties. But those parties increasingly bowed to the leadership of communist Prime Minister Georgi Dimitrov, who had been appointed in 1946. After two years of post-war turmoil, Bulgarian political and economic life settled into the patterns set out by the new communist constitution (referred to as the Dimitrov Constitution) ratified in December 1947. Dimitrov argued that previous Bulgarian attempts at parliamentary democracy were disastrous and that only massive social and economic restructuring could ensure stability. By the end of 1947, Bulgaria had followed the other East European states in refusing reconstruction aid from the Marshall Plan (see Glossary) and joining the



*Graffiti-covered tomb of Georgi Dimitrov, first president of communist Bulgaria, Sofia, 1991
Courtesy Sam and Sarah Stulberg*

Communist Information Bureau (Cominform—see Glossary). In 1948 the Fatherland Front was reorganized into an official worker-peasant alliance in accordance with Cominform policy. In December 1947, BANU leader Georgi Traikov had repudiated traditional agrarian programs; after a thorough purge that year, his party retained only nominal independence to preserve the illusion of a two-party system. All other opposition parties disbanded.

The Dimitrov Constitution

Dimitrov guided the framing of the 1947 constitution on the model of the 1936 constitution of the Soviet Union. The Bulgarian document guaranteed citizens equality before the law; freedom from discrimination; a universal welfare system; freedom of speech, the press, and assembly; and inviolability of person, domicile, and correspondence. But those rights were qualified by a clause prohibiting activity that would jeopardize the attainments of the national revolution of September 9, 1944. Citizens were guaranteed employment but required to work in a socially useful capacity. The constitution also prescribed a planned national economy. Private property was allowed, if its possession was not “to the detriment of the public good.” By the end of 1947, all private industry had

been confiscated and financial enterprises nationalized in the culmination of a gradual government takeover that began in 1944. The first two-year plan for economic rehabilitation began in 1947 (see *Postwar Economic Policy*, ch. 3).

Chervenkov and Stalinism in Bulgaria

In 1948 the newly formed Soviet empire in Eastern Europe was threatened by a split between Yugoslav President Josip Broz Tito and Soviet leader Joseph V. Stalin. After expelling Yugoslavia from the Cominform, Stalin began exerting greater pressure on the other East European states, including Bulgaria, to adhere rigidly to Soviet foreign and domestic policy. He demanded that the communist parties of those countries become virtual extensions of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) by purging all opposition figures. The Bulgarian government curtailed religious freedom by forcing Orthodox clergy into a Union of Bulgarian Priests in 1948, taking control of Muslim religious institutions, and dissolving Bulgarian branches of Roman Catholic and Protestant churches in 1949. The most visible political victim of the new policy was Traicho Kostov, who with Georgi Dimitrov and Vasil Kolarov had led the BCP to power in 1944. Accused by Dimitrov of treason, Kostov was shot in December 1949. Dimitrov died before Kostov's execution, Kolarov soon afterward. To fill the power vacuum left by those events, Stalin chose Vŭlko Chervenkov, a trusted protégé. Chervenkov would complete the conversion of the BCP into the type of one-man dictatorship that Stalin had created in the Soviet Union. Chervenkov assumed all top government and party positions and quickly developed a cult of personality like that of his Soviet mentor. At Stalin's command, Chervenkov continued purging party members from 1950 until 1953, to forestall in Bulgaria the sort of Titoist separatism that Stalin greatly feared. Rigid party hierarchy replaced the traditional informal structures of Bulgarian governance, and the purges eliminated the faction of the BCP that advocated putting Bulgarian national concerns ahead of blind subservience to the CPSU.

The Chervenkov period (1950-56) featured harsh repression of all deviation from the party line, arbitrary suppression of culture and the arts along the lines of Soviet-prescribed socialist realism, and an isolationist foreign policy. By early 1951, Chervenkov had expelled one in five party members, including many high officials, in his campaign for complete party discipline. In 1950 a new agricultural collectivization drive began. In spite of intense peasant resistance, the collectivization drive continued intermittently until the process was virtually complete in 1958.

Foreign and Economic Policies

The independent course taken by Tito's Yugoslavia in 1948 caused Bulgaria to seal the Yugoslav border; a 1953 Balkan Pact among Greece, Yugoslavia, and Turkey further isolated Bulgaria, which by that time had cut all relations with Western countries. The Soviet Union now was Bulgaria's only ally. It supplied military and economic advisers and provided the model for Bulgarian social services, economic planning, and education in the early 1950s. Over 90 percent of Bulgarian exports and imports involved Soviet partnership, although the Soviets often paid less than world prices for Bulgarian goods. Because the primitive, mainly agricultural Bulgarian economy closely resembled that of the Soviet Union, Soviet-style centralized planning in five-year blocks had more immediate benefits there than in the other European states, where it was first applied in the early 1950s.

After Stalin

The death of Joseph Stalin in March 1953 had strong repercussions in Bulgaria. By that time, Chervenkov had already moved slightly away from hard-line Stalinist domestic repression and international isolation, but the lack of clear ideological guidance from post-Stalin Moscow left him in an insecure position. Official approval in 1951 of Dimitür Dimov's mildly heretical novel *Tiutiuin* (Tobacco) had loosened somewhat the official constraints on literature and other cultural activities. In 1953 Bulgaria resumed relations with Greece and Yugoslavia, some political amnesties were granted, and planners discussed increasing production of consumer goods and reducing the prices of necessities. At the Sixth Party Congress in 1954, Chervenkov gave up his party leadership but retained his position as prime minister. Todor Zhivkov, most prominent in the postwar generation of Bulgarian communist leaders, assumed the newly created position of first secretary of the party Central Committee. Several purged party leaders were released from labor camps, and some resumed visible roles in the party hierarchy.

In spite of the 1954 party shifts, Chervenkov remained the unchallenged leader of Bulgaria for two more years. The economic shift away from heavy industry toward consumer goods continued in the mid-1950s, and direct Soviet intervention in Bulgarian economic and political life diminished. By 1955, some 10,000 political prisoners had been released. In an attempt to win political support from the peasants, Chervenkov eased the pace of collectivization and increased national investment in agriculture. However, events in the Soviet Union ended this brief period of calm.

The Fall of Chervenkov

In 1955 the Belgrade Declaration restored Soviet-Yugoslav friendship and reinstated Tito to the fraternity of world communist leaders. Because Chervenkov had branded Tito and the Yugoslavs as arch-villains during his rise to power, this agreement eroded his position. Then, in February 1956, Nikita S. Khrushchev denounced Chervenkov's patron Stalin and Stalin's cult of personality at the twentieth congress of the CPSU. Unwilling to stray from the Soviet party line, the BCP also condemned the cult of personality (and, implicitly, Chervenkov's authoritarianism), advocating instead collective leadership and inner-party democracy. In his 1956 report to party leaders, Zhivkov expressed this condemnation and promised that the party would make amends for past injustices—a clear reference to the fate of Kostov and Chervenkov's other purge victims in the party. Having had his entire regime repudiated by the party leader, Chervenkov resigned. Zhivkov, who had thus far remained below Chervenkov in actual party power, now assumed the full powers of his party first secretary position. The 1956 April Plenum became the official date of Bulgarian de-Stalinization in party mythology; after that event, the atmosphere of BCP politics changed significantly.

Intellectual Life

The thaw in Bulgarian intellectual life had continued from 1951 until the middle of the decade. Chervenkov's resignation and the literary and cultural flowering in the Soviet Union encouraged the view that the process would continue, but the Hungarian revolution of fall 1956 frightened the Bulgarian leadership away from encouragement of dissident intellectual activity. In response to events in Hungary, Chervenkov was appointed minister of education and culture; in 1957 and 1958, he purged the leadership of the Bulgarian Writers' Union and dismissed liberal journalists and editors from their positions. His crackdowns effectively ended the "Bulgarian thaw" of independent writers and artists inspired by Khrushchev's 1956 speech against Stalinism. Again mimicking the Soviet party, which purged a group of high officials in 1957, the BCP dismissed three party leaders on vague charges the same year. Among those removed was deputy prime minister Georgi Chankov, an important rival of Zhivkov. The main motivation for this purge was to assure the Soviet Union that Bulgarian communists would not fall into the same heretical behavior as had the Hungarian party in 1956. Through the political maneuvers of the mid-1950s, Todor Zhivkov enhanced his position by identifying with the "Bulgarian"

rather than “Soviet” branch of the BCP at the same time as he aligned himself with the new anti-Stalinist faction in the Soviet Union. He established especially close ties with Khrushchev at this time.

Domestic Policy and Its Results

Most aspects of life in Bulgaria continued to conform strongly to the Soviet model in the mid-1950s. In 1949 the Bulgarian educational system had begun a restructuring process to resemble the Soviet system, and the social welfare system followed suit. In the mid-1950s, Soviet-style centralized planning produced economic indicators showing that Bulgarians were returning to their prewar lifestyle in some respects: real wages increased 75 percent, consumption of meat, fruit, and vegetables increased markedly, medical facilities and doctors became available to more of the population, and in 1957 collective farm workers benefited from the first agricultural pension and welfare system in Eastern Europe.

In 1959 the BCP borrowed from the Chinese the phrase “Great Leap Forward” to symbolize a sudden burst of economic activity to be injected into the Third Five-Year Plan (1958–1962), whose original scope was quite conservative. According to the revised plan, industrial production would double and agricultural production would triple by 1962; a new agricultural collectivization and consolidation drive would achieve great economies of scale in that branch; investment in light industry would double, and foreign trade would expand (see *The First Five-Year Plans*, ch. 3). Following the Chinese model, all of Bulgarian society was to be propagandized and mobilized to meet the planning goals. Two purposes of the grandiose revised plan were to keep Bulgaria in step with the Soviet bloc, all of whose members were embarking on plans for accelerated growth, and to quell internal party conflicts. Zhivkov, whose “theses” had defined the goals of the plan, purged Politburo members and party rivals Boris Taskov (in 1959) and Anton Yugov (in 1962), citing their criticism of his policy as economically obstructionist. Already by 1960, however, Zhivkov had been forced to redefine the impossible goals of his theses. Lack of skilled labor and materials made completion of projects at the prescribed pace impossible. Harvests were disastrously poor in the early 1960s; peasant unrest forced the government to raise food prices; and the urban dissatisfaction that resulted from higher prices compounded a crisis that broke in the summer of 1962. Blame fell on Zhivkov’s experiments with decentralized planning, which was totally abandoned by 1963.

The Zhivkov Era

Beginning in 1961, Todor Zhivkov skillfully retained control of the Bulgarian government and the BCP. His regime was a period of unprecedented stability, slavish imitation of Soviet policies, and modest economic experimentation.

Zhivkov Takes Control

Zhivkov was able to weather the social unrest of 1962 by finding scapegoats, juggling indicators of economic progress, and receiving help from abroad. In 1961 Khrushchev had once again denounced Stalin, requiring similar action in the loyal Soviet satellites. In October Chervenkov, who had retained considerable party power, was ousted from the Politburo as an unrepentant Stalinist and obstructor of Bulgarian economic progress (see The Chervenkov Era, ch. 4). When Khrushchev visited Bulgaria in 1962, the Soviet leader made clear his preference for Zhivkov over other Bulgarian party leaders. Within months Yugov had lost his party position, and Chervenkov was expelled from the party. Thus, in spite of disastrously unrealistic economic experimentation of the sort that contributed to Khrushchev's ouster in 1964, Zhivkov had greatly strengthened his position as party first secretary by the time his Soviet patron had fallen.

In the early 1960s, Zhivkov improved ties with the Bulgarian intelligentsia by liberalizing censorship and curbing the state security forces (see Zhivkov and the Intelligentsia, ch. 4). He also mended relations with the agrarians by granting amnesties to BANU members and appointing the leader of the party as head of state. These measures gave Zhivkov a political base broad enough to survive the fall of Khrushchev, but they did not prevent an army plot against him in 1965. Zhivkov used the plot as a reason to tighten control over the army and move security functions from the Ministry of the Interior to a new Committee of State Security, under his personal control. Several other plots were reported unofficially in the late 1960s, but after 1962 Zhivkov's position as sole leader of Bulgaria went without serious challenge.

Zhivkov's Political Methodology

In the 1960s, Zhivkov moved slowly and carefully to replace the deeply entrenched Old Guard in party positions. He believed that only an energetic, professional party cadre could lead Bulgaria effectively. Therefore, he gradually moved a younger group, including his daughter Liudmila Zhivkova and future party leader Aleksandŭr Lilov, into positions of power. At the same time, he

juggled party positions enough to prevent any individual from becoming a serious rival. Unlike Chervenkov, with his Stalinist personality cult, Zhivkov cultivated an egalitarian persona that kept him in contact with the Bulgarian people. Unlike contemporaneous communist leaders in other countries, Zhivkov displayed a sense of humor even in formal state speeches. Because of the strong tradition of egalitarianism in Bulgarian political culture, the contrast of his approach with that of Chervenkov served Zhivkov very well.

The Constitution of 1971

In 1968 the Prague Spring outbreak of heretical socialism in Czechoslovakia caused the BCP to tighten control over all social organizations, calling for democratic centrism and elimination of unreliable elements from the party. This policy kept the BCP on a unified path in complete support of Soviet interests; it also led to a new Bulgarian constitution and BCP program in 1971. Approved by the Tenth Party Congress and a national referendum, the 1971 constitution detailed for the first time the structure of the BCP (highly centralized, in keeping with policy after 1968) and its role in leading society and the state. BANU was specified as the partner of the BCP in the cooperative governing of the country. A new State Council was created to oversee the Council of Ministers and exercise supreme executive authority (see *The Constitution of 1971*, ch. 4). In 1971 Zhivkov resigned as prime minister to become chairman of the State Council, a position equivalent to Bulgarian head of state. The new constitution also defined four forms of property: state, cooperative, public organization, and private. Private property was limited to that needed for individual and family upkeep.

Foreign Affairs in the 1960s and 1970s

In the first decade of the Zhivkov regime, Balkan affairs remained central to Bulgarian foreign policy, and relations with the Soviet Union remained without significant conflict. Because the Soviet Union showed relatively little interest in the Balkans in the 1950s and 1960s, Bulgaria was able to improve significantly its relations with its neighbors. In 1964 an agreement with Greece ended the long postwar freeze caused by Greek membership in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO—see Glossary). Bulgaria paid partial wartime reparations to Greece, and relations were normalized in culture, trade, and communications after the initial agreement. Turkish-Bulgarian relations were hindered by irritation over the Turkish minority issue: throughout the postwar period, wavering Bulgarian policy on internal treatment and emigration

of Bulgarian Turks was the chief obstacle to rapprochement, although bilateral agreements on emigration and other issues were reached in the 1960s and 1970s (see *The Turkish Problem*, ch. 4; *Foreign Policy*, ch. 4).

Relations with Yugoslavia also were strained in the postwar years. The age-old Macedonian dispute was the principal reason that Yugoslavia remained untouched by Zhivkov's Balkan détente policy. In the mid-1960s, Tito and Zhivkov exchanged visits, but by 1967 official Bulgarian spokesmen were again stressing the Bulgarian majority in Yugoslav-ruled Macedonia, and a new decade of mutually harsh propaganda began. Although the polemic over Macedonia continued through the 1980s, it served both countries mainly as a rallying point for domestic political support, and Bulgaria avoided taking advantage of Yugoslav vulnerabilities such as the unrest in the province of Kosovo. In the early 1980s, much of Bulgaria's anti-Yugoslav propaganda aimed at discrediting heretical economic policy applications (feared by every orthodox communist neighbor of Yugoslavia) in Yugoslav Macedonia. In 1981 Zhivkov called for establishment of a Balkan nuclear-free zone that would include Romania, Greece, Turkey, and Yugoslavia. The concept was notable not because of its practical implications (Bulgaria was generally unsupportive of regional cooperation, and the potential participants had strongly differing international positions), but as a Soviet device to remove NATO nuclear weapons from Greece and Turkey at a time of superpower tension over European weapons installations.

In the 1970s, Zhivkov actively pursued better relations with the West, overcoming conservative opposition and the tentative, tourism-based approach to the West taken in the 1960s. Emulating Soviet détente policy of the 1970s, Bulgaria gained Western technology, expanded cultural contacts, and attracted Western investments with the most liberal foreign investment policy in Eastern Europe. Between 1966 and 1975, Zhivkov visited Charles de Gaulle and the pope and established full diplomatic relations with the Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany). As in 1956 and 1968, however, Soviet actions altered Bulgaria's position. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in late 1979, which Bulgaria supported vigorously, renewed tension between Bulgaria and the West. Bulgarian implication in the attempted assassination of Pope John Paul II in 1981 exacerbated the problem and kept relations cool through the early 1980s.

Bulgaria also followed the Soviet example in relations with Third-World countries, maintaining the image of brotherly willingness to aid struggling victims of Western imperialism. Student exchanges

already were common in the 1960s, and many Bulgarian technicians and medical personnel went to African, Asian, and Latin American countries in the 1970s and 1980s. Cultural exchange programs targeted mainly the young in those countries. Between 1978 and 1983, Zhivkov visited seventeen Third-World countries and hosted leaders from at least that many.

Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, Bulgaria gave official military support to many national liberation causes, most notably in the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (North Vietnam), Indonesia, Libya, Angola, Afghanistan, the Horn of Africa, and the Middle East. In 1984 the 9,000 Bulgarian advisers stationed in Libya for military and nonmilitary aid put that country in first place among Bulgaria's Third-World clients. Through its Kintex arms export enterprise, Bulgaria also engaged in covert military support activities, many of which were subsequently disclosed (see *Arms Sales*, ch. 5). In the 1970s, diplomatic crises with Sudan and Egypt were triggered by Bulgarian involvement in coup plots. Repeated discoveries of smuggled arms shipments from Bulgaria to Third-World countries gave Bulgaria a reputation as a major player in international arms supply to terrorists and revolutionaries. Arms smuggling into Turkey periodically caused diplomatic problems with that country in the 1970s.

Domestic Policy in the 1960s and 1970s

Zhivkov's domestic policy in the late 1960s and 1970s emphasized increased production by Bulgaria's newly completed base of heavy industry, plus increased consumer production. The industrial base and collectivization of Bulgarian agriculture had been achieved largely by emulating Khrushchev's approaches in the early 1960s; but after Khrushchev fell, Zhivkov experimented rather freely in industrial and agricultural policy. A 1965 economic reform decentralized decision making and introduced the profit motive in some economic areas. The approach, a minor commitment to "planning from below" in imitation of Yugoslavia's self-management program, was abandoned in 1969. Taking its place, a recentralization program gave government ministries full planning responsibility at the expense of individual enterprises (see *The Era of Experimentation and Reform*, ch. 3).

Meanwhile, a new program for integration and centralization of agriculture was born in 1969. The agricultural-industrial complex (agropromishlen kompleks—APK) merged cooperative and state farms and introduced industrial technology to Bulgarian agriculture. In the 1970s, the APK became the main supporting structure of Bulgarian agriculture (see *Agriculture*, ch. 3). The social

and political goal of this program was to homogenize Bulgarian society, ending the sharp dichotomy that had always existed between rural and town populations and weakening the ideological force of the BANU. If the traditional gulf between Bulgarian agricultural and industrial workers were eliminated, the BCP could represent both groups. Despite this large-scale reorganization effort, the Bulgarian tradition of small peasant farming remained strong into the 1980s.

In keeping with the détente of the 1970s, Bulgaria sought independent trade agreements with the West throughout that decade, to furnish technology and credit not available within the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (Comecon—see Glossary). Economic cooperation and license agreements were signed with several West European countries, most notably West Germany. Although the Western demand for Bulgarian goods remained generally low and Western commodities proved unexpectedly expensive in the late 1970s, Bulgaria's expansion of Western trade in that decade was unusually high for a Comecon member nation (see Foreign Trade, ch. 3).

The Political Atmosphere in the 1970s

Through the mid-1970s, Zhivkov continued balancing the older and younger generations and the reformist and conservative factions in his party, with only occasional purges of key officials. But in 1977, the purge of liberal Politburo member Boris Velchev introduced a massive reorganization of provincial party organizations that ousted 38,500 party members. This move was designed to limit the atmosphere of liberalization that had followed the 1975 Helsinki Accords (see Glossary). That mood and an economic crisis caused by oil shortages in the 1970s aroused discontent and demonstrations in Bulgaria in the late 1970s.

At the end of the decade, two more crises confronted Zhivkov: in 1978 the murder of exiled writer Georgi Markov was widely attributed to Bulgarian State Security, damaging the country's international image; and in 1980 the Polish Solidarity (see Glossary) movement alarmed the entire Soviet Bloc by attracting an active anticommunist following in a key Warsaw Pact (see Glossary) country. Although the magnitude of Bulgarian social discontent was much less than that in Poland, the BCP ordered production of more consumer goods, a reduction of party privileges, and limited media coverage of Poland in the early 1980s as an antidote to the "Polish infection."

Meanwhile, in 1980 Zhivkov had improved his domestic position by appointing his daughter Liudmila Zhivkova as chair of the

commission on science, culture, and art. In this powerful position, Zhivkova became extremely popular by promoting Bulgaria's separate national cultural heritage. She spent large sums of money in a highly visible campaign to support scholars, collect Bulgarian art, and sponsor cultural institutions. Among her policies was closer cultural contact with the West; her most visible project was the spectacular national celebration of Bulgaria's 1,300th anniversary in 1981. When Zhivkova died in 1981, relations with the West had already been chilled by the Afghanistan issue, but her brief administration of Bulgaria's official cultural life was a successful phase of her father's appeal to Bulgarian national tradition to bind the country together.

Bulgaria in the 1980s

Despite the resumption of the Cold War, by 1981 several long-standing problems had eased in Bulgaria. Zhivkova had bolstered national pride and improved Bulgaria's international cultural image; Zhivkov had eased oppression of Roman Catholics and propaganda against the Bulgarian Orthodox Church in the 1970s, and used the 1,300th anniversary of the Bulgarian state for formal reconciliation with Orthodox church officials; the Bulgarian media covered an expanded range of permissible subject matter; Bulgaria contributed equipment to a Soviet space probe launched in 1981, heralding a new era of technological advancement; and the New Economic Model (NEM), instituted in 1981 as the latest economic reform program, seemingly improved the supply of consumer goods and generally upgraded the economy.

However, Zhivkova's death and East-West tensions dealt serious blows to cultural liberalization; by 1984 the Bulgarian Writers' Conference was calling for greater ideological content and optimism in literature. Once fully implemented in 1982, NEM was unable to improve the quality or quantity of Bulgarian goods and produce. In 1983 Zhivkov harshly criticized all of Bulgarian industry and agriculture in a major speech, but the reforms generated by his speech did nothing to improve the situation. A large percentage of high-quality domestic goods were shipped abroad in the early 1980s to shrink Bulgaria's hard-currency debt, and the purchase of Western technology was sacrificed for the same reason, crippling technical advancement and disillusioning consumers. By 1984 Bulgaria was suffering a serious energy shortage because its Soviet-made nuclear power plant was undependable and droughts reduced the productivity of hydroelectric plants (see Energy Generation, ch. 3). Like the cutback in technology imports, this shortage affected all of Bulgarian industry. Finally, Bulgarian

implication in the plot to assassinate Pope John Paul II in 1981 and in international drugs and weapons trading impaired the country's international image and complicated economic relations with the West (see Security and Intelligence Services, ch. 5).

The problem of the Turkish minority in Bulgaria continued into the 1980s. Because birth rates among the Turks remained relatively high while Bulgarians approached a zero-growth birth rate in 1980, Bulgarian authorities sought to mitigate the impact of growing Turkish enclaves in certain regions. Hence, Bulgaria discontinued its liberal 1969 emigration agreement with Turkey (ostensibly to prevent a shortage of unskilled labor resulting from free movement of Turkish workers back to their homeland), and in 1984 began a massive campaign to erase the national identity of Turkish citizens by forcing them to take Bulgarian names. Official propaganda justified forced assimilation with the assertion that the only "Turks" in Bulgaria were descended from the Bulgarians who had adopted Islam after the Ottoman occupation in the fourteenth century. This campaign brought several negative results. Bulgaria's international image, already damaged by events in the early 1980s, now included official discrimination against the country's largest ethnic minority. The resumption of terrorist attacks on civilians, absent for many years, coincided with the new policy. And Bulgaria's relations with Turkey, which had improved somewhat after a visit by Turkish President Kenan Evren to Bulgaria in 1982, suffered another setback.

Bulgaria's close reliance on the Soviet Union continued into the 1980s, but differences began to appear. Much of Zhivkov's success had come from the secure support of Nikita Khrushchev's successor, Leonid Brezhnev, with whom Zhivkov had a close personal relationship. By contrast, relations between Zhivkov and Brezhnev's successor, Iurii V. Andropov, were tense because Zhivkov had supported Andropov's rival Konstantin Chernenko as successor to Brezhnev. The advent of Mikhail S. Gorbachev as Soviet party leader in 1985 defined a new generational difference between Soviet and Bulgarian leadership. Gorbachev immediately declared that Bulgaria must follow his example in party reform if traditional relations were to continue.

By this time, the image of the BCP had suffered for several years from well-publicized careerism and corruption, and from the remoteness and advancing age of the party leadership (Zhivkov was seventy-four in 1985). The state bureaucracy, inordinately large in Bulgaria since the first post-liberation government of 1878, constituted 13.5 percent of the total national work force in 1977. Periodic anticorruption campaigns had only temporary effects. The

ideological credibility of the party also suffered from the apparent failure of the NEM, whose goals were being restated by 1984. Although the BCP faced no serious political opposition or internal division in the early 1980s, the party launched campaigns to involve Bulgarian youth more fully in party activities. But these efforts had little impact on what party leaders perceived as serious and widespread political apathy (see *The Bulgarian Communist (Socialist) Party*, ch. 4). Thus, by 1985 many domestic and international signs indicated that the underpinning of the long, stable Zhivkov era was in precarious condition.

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The most comprehensive English-language treatment of Bulgarian history is Richard J. Crampton's *A Short History of Modern Bulgaria*, which covers in detail the period from liberation (1878) to 1985. *The Bulgarian Communist Party from Blagoev to Zhivkov*, by John D. Bell, provides a political history from the viewpoint of the BCP, beginning with the pre-1900 origins of that party and concluding in 1984. *Modern Bulgaria: History, Policy, Economy, Culture*, edited by Georgi Bokov, contains a long historical section whose useful detail can be separated from its bias as a state publication of the Zhivkov era. Cyril Black's chapter "Bulgaria in Historical Perspective" in *Bulgaria* (edited by L.A.D. Dellin) is a balanced overview and perspective of all periods of Bulgarian history. And the "History and Political Traditions" chapter of Robert J. McIntyre's *Bulgaria: Politics, Economics, and Society* describes the evolution of political institutions from the First Bulgarian Empire to the late 1980s. (For further information and complete citations, see Bibliography.)

