BULGARIA:

TEXTBOOK AND REALITY

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Recently, I have been noticing that the Cold War seems often to be characterized as an unfortunate event of our distant past. The present, by contrast, is the age of Detente - of developing mutual understanding with the socialist world. I fervently hope that this is so. If this is indeed the direction in which we wish to move, it seems to me that an essential step to take will be to bring our textbooks up to date in their approach to socialist society.

To sample what the books available to our schools in fact have to say on this subject, I selected those that concentrate on Eastern Europe or The Balkans, and that are to be found in the Education Library at the University of Regina. Some of these are written as texts, others as "background" books (historical, geographical cum "in-depth" travel) on the area. I restricted myself to what was available in the Education Library, as this is where teachers and education students would most commonly go to seek background material if they wished to talk about this area. 1)

Within the books on Eastern Europe or The Balkans, I concentrated particularly on what they had to say about Bulgaria, because I have a great deal of firsthand knowledge of that country. My research experience there includes three visits, all since 1971, during which I travelled the length and breadth of the country and talked with countless people, rural and urban, in a wide range of different occupations. During my most recent stay there, in 1974-75, I lived for nearly half a year in a cooperative farm village, gathering sociological information on the
current way of life, and collecting dozens of life histories of the villagers.

The books I studied are listed at the end of this paper. All of them are the offerings of major publishers. 2)

Misinforming Another Generation

I'm afraid that I must report that the contents of these texts can hardly contribute to peace and informed mutual understanding. From one to another they are full of contradictions: for instance, some tell us that the Soviet Union has kept Bulgaria enslaved and impoverished by forcing it to remain an agrarian country, serving as supplier of raw materials; others tell us that Bulgaria has undergone forced-pace industrialization, to provide the Soviet Union with manufactured goods! But despite these contradictions, the books do have something in common; that is that they contain almost exclusively misinformation - in the form of distortion, in the form of omission, and in the form of just plain false "information". This is the case even when one takes into account (as I did) the fact that many of them were written ten or more years ago.

For a start, look at the "information" in Living in Eurasia, (Donnelly and Ewing), a geography text published in 1966: "Bulgaria," we are told, "is still another country in which farming is difficult. Most farms are small, especially those close to villages. Many contain only one to six acres. The peasants of Bulgaria are careful, hard-working farmers, but most of them use old-fashioned tools and methods. Modern machinery is rare. Most farmers are not able to buy it"
(Donnelly and Ewing, 137). This is a fairly true description of Bulgaria before World War II. But all of it has been false for at least twenty years. Bulgarians began to organize cooperative farms back in the 1920's. Some of these (29 of them) survived right through the period of fascist control of the country (1930's to 1940's) to September 9, 1944, when the Bulgarian people overturned the fascist (Nazi-allied) regime and began socialist reconstruction of the country. Having deep native roots in the country, the cooperative movement progressed very rapidly under socialist conditions, and it took only a decade to complete the cooperatization of farming. By the mid-fifties, virtually all land was in cooperatives; there were no more "6 acre farms". By 1959-60, many of these cooperative farms had merged into large-scale, several-village units, of several thousand hectares each, based on highly mechanized farming. (Now they average nearly 30,000 hectares each.)

It would be quite comical, if it weren't so destructive, that Donnelly and Ewing talk about six acre farms and old-fashioned tools and methods. The only old-fashioned tools in Bulgaria now are in ethnographic museums, though the farmers were indeed using wooden plows in 1944. Today, virtually all agricultural tasks are mechanized, except the picking of fancy table fruits. Wine grapes, cotton, and grain are harvested by teams of huge combines. Early vegetables are grown in automated hothouses. Orchards and fields are sprayed by airplane. Hardly anyone in the countryside does unskilled hand labour any more. Rural workers are mainly highly trained specialists: agronomists, zootechnicians, mechanics, agricultural aviators, economists and the like.
Donnelly and Ewing offer us just as false a picture of Bulgarian industry: "... Bulgaria has few large industries. The government has tried to increase manufacturing, but with little success. There are sawmills on some mountain streams, near stands of timber. There are flour mills in the grain-growing areas. There also are tanneries, tobacco factories, and textile mills" (Donnelly and Ewing, 138). Again, a reasonable description of Bulgaria in the 1930's, presented in the mid-sixties as if nothing had changed in the interim. Sawmills on the mountain streams - charming and backward!

In fact, even at the time Donnelly and Ewing were writing, tremendous advances in industrialization had already been made in Bulgaria. The peasant youth who had struggled to undermine the fascist regime during the 1930's and 1940's, from their mountain bases, had become the scientists, engineers, technicians and construction workers of the 1950's and 1960's. They had built the basic industries required for the industrialization of the country - the steel, engineering, and petro-chemical works - and the new towns to go with them. Thousands upon thousands of them had begun their learning of modern skills in voluntary youth brigades, which built everything from railways and roads through mountain passes to workers' apartment developments in a miraculously short time. It is fascinating to listen to them - now the men and women in their 40's - talk for hours about those early days in the youth brigades: the excitement and joy with which they threw themselves into building up their country, their pride in their accomplishments.

If we look even at one decade, from 1956 to 1965, we find that:
Production of machine tools and other industrial equipment in 1965 was 3.8 times the 1956 level; Consumer goods, 2.7 times; Power production, 4 times; Iron and steel extraction and production, 7.1 times; Engineering and metalworking, 6.2 times; Chemical and rubber, 5.4 times; Building materials, 4.7 times; and so forth. The average of all industrial output in 1965 was 3.2 times the 1956 level.

The increases in production for the next decade, 1966 to 1975, have continued to be just as impressive, iron and steel production in 1975 being 30 times the 1956 level; engineering and metalworking, 24 times; production of machine tools and factory equipment, 11 times.

The Authors

The degree of discrepancy between the "information" given by Donnelly and Ewing and the realities of Bulgarian development is, regrettably, not unusual. One cannot help wondering why books purporting to inform are filled with so much fiction. It is impossible, of course, to read the minds of the authors to discover their motives. Many of them (all those under the age of 40) have been educated entirely in the Cold War period themselves, as have most of the teachers who read their books. Such authors may sincerely believe what they are writing. If they have the conviction that improvement of conditions is impossible in socialist countries, they might indeed believe that everything is the same as in the 1930's. We can credit them, at best, with being merely grossly uninformed on their subject. Others of the authors have backgrounds (service in Bulgaria in the U.S. foreign service in the 1940's; emigrees from socialist Europe) that give one
more grounds to ponder over their intentions. Whether the authors are merely naive and uninformed or are deliberately falsifying, we have good reason to ask why they are entrusted with writing our texts.

In thinking about the authors, it is worth noting some of the observations of David Pratt, in his article "The Social Role of School Textbooks in Canada" (in: Zureik and Pike, 100-126):

Authors are typically successful teachers in their thirties or forties who have risen in the administrative hierarchy of the schools... textbook authors are not as a rule academics.... The similarity of treatment of topics among different textbooks suggests use of common secondary sources rather than original research.

A bit later (122), Pratt refers to the fact that "... a time-lag of about two decades exists between the leading edge of academic thought and school textbooks". It seems to me that there is a very close connection between this "time-lag" and the "use of common secondary sources" (i.e. other textbooks, for example). Witness the following as an instance of this process:

A few pages ago, I quoted a selection from Living in Eurasia (Donnelly and Ewing, Silver Burdett Co. [a subsidiary of Time, Inc.] 1966). Donnelly and Ewing told us:

Bulgaria is still another country in which farming is difficult. Most farms are small, especially those close to villages. Many contain only one to six acres. The peasants of Bulgaria are careful, hardworking farmers, but most of them use old-fashioned tools and methods. Modern machinery is rare. Most farmers are not able to buy it." (137)

... Bulgaria has few large industries. The government has tried to increase manufacturing, but with little success. (138)

Compare this with a selection from a 1960 text, Old World Lands (H. Barrows; W.J. Gage and Co.):
More than four fifths of the seven million people in Bulgaria make their living by farming and raising livestock. Most of the farms are very small. Many contain only one to six acres.

The peasants of Bulgaria are careful, hard working farmers, even though most of them use old-fashioned tools and methods. Wooden plows, pulled by oxen are common. Modern machinery is rare. Most farmers are too poor to have it. Most fields are too small to use it.

Bulgaria has few industries of much size. It has tried to increase manufacturing, but with little success. (346)

Perhaps you will agree with me that there is a slight similarity between the first selection and the second? We might wonder how old was the source that the second one came from, and how old the source of that source was. If we could trace them, perhaps we would find ourselves back in a (pre-socialist) time period during which the description given was true. But why are we offered this description about the present? Again, if it is a given fact that there can be no improvement under socialist conditions, then perhaps the authors presume that decades-old descriptions are still true. 3)

Modes of Misleading

One of the ways the authors of the texts misinform us is through various stylistic devices, which are not as blatant as the quotations above, but just as effective in leaving the reader with the impression that "all is not well" in socialist societies. These devices allow them to damn what they are describing by implication and innuendo, while presenting themselves as writers who give a "fair" and "balanced" picture of events. One of the simplest of these is to suggest that, although conditions are very bad in the country in question, because of the cruelty and malice (apparently unmotivated) of the regime in
power, matters will surely improve with time because the people themselves are such brave, hardworking and honest souls. Some of the other devices are more subtle. I shall briefly review a few of them:

1) The setting of an atmosphere of foreboding, gloom, despair.

All that is easygoing and prettily charming ends in Italy ... where the Balkan zone begins we enter a world of the tragic ... a place where the miseries and crimes of the past live on and are a palpable burden ... Even the natural landscape has the aspect of a lunar hell ... (Stillman, 9-10)

Although government controls and restrictions have been somewhat relaxed in Bulgaria, its cities seem almost as gloomy as those in Albania. Sofia ... is marked by an air of listlessness, its pace of living reduced to that of a small rural town. (Kostich, 135-136).4)

The overwhelmingly negative mood is exacerbated by the chapter titles and the headings. Typical are:

Brave Peoples in a Tragic Region (Stillman)
Challenge to the Kremlin (Stillman)
Bulgaria, Land of Blood and Roses (Perl)
Bulgaria, the Bear-Cub Satellite (Perl)
Satellite Countries Yearning for Freedom (Donnelly and Ewing)

And by certain recurrent items of vocabulary, such as:

dark, drab, greyness, bleak, old-fashioned, peasants, illiterate, indoctrinate, propaganda, disillusionment, conformity, hopefully, unfortunately, freedom, Soviet control, secret police, puppet governments, satellite countries, iron curtain

and many others.

Although I said I would review these devices briefly, I cannot help responding to Kostich's description of Sofia (Bulgaria's capital). I wish every one of my readers the pleasure of spending the afternoon there, any day of the week after working hours (working hours start and finish earlier than ours). Every afternoon seemed like a holiday
to me: streets and parks crowded with people—walking and talking, sitting on benches reading, gathering around newstands and in bookstores, shopping and window-shopping. Adult education lectures on a myriad of subjects are crowded with people of all ages. So are neighborhood civic and political meetings. People hurry to the theatres, cinemas, concert halls, opera, and to the special childrens' puppet theatres (any of which one can attend for about a quarter). When there actually is a holiday, the atmosphere is even gayer: people abound in the streets, going to meet their friends, to visit; dressed in their best, carrying flowers and gifts. "Listlessness" indeed!

2) Presenting leftovers from the past as if they were the prevailing conditions; ignoring the direction of change.

This is often done through the choice of photographs and captions. Examples:

The old woodcutter that De Vorsey and Hodgkins show us, dressed in the peasant clothing of decades ago. Beside this photo is the question: "What hope is there that Bulgaria can improve her economic condition?" (384)

The photo in Stillman (16), of a mother and daughter embracing by a window. The caption reads: "A warm embrace between a mother and daughter in a Sofia slum typifies close family feeling in Bulgaria. These slums are particularly run-down, lacking all conveniences such as indoor toilets and running water."

"How unfortunate"—we are supposed to feel—"that such lovely people have to live in such conditions." It is true that, even today, one can find an occasional urban house without indoor plumbing; undoubtedly, there were more of them in the 1960's. What Stillman doesn't tell us, is that these are becoming rarer every year, that most urban people (and virtually all rural people) live in good new homes. (With a
population of 8 million, Bulgaria has been putting up about 45,000 new dwellings a year for several decades now.) Besides, to call the locales in which the remaining old houses are located "slums" belies the actual living conditions of the people there. Stillman also does not tell us that people in old houses are all awaiting the construction of specific new apartments - they know in which building the apartment they intend to buy or rent will be located, and when construction is planned, and they know that their present house will not be torn down until the new apartment is finished.

3) Describing developments or situations that might appear positive, and implying that they are really the reverse; the "although" and "despite" device:

In Stillman's The Balkans, there is a series of photographs of a wedding. The caption under one of them describes the food served:

The reception meal, though abundant, consists of simple foods such as a meat soup, cucumber salad, meat with potatoes, pudding, slices of the wedding bread, tea and plum brandy. (119; emphasis mine).

Yes, he lists a rather plenteous sounding array of foods. But that persuasive "though" leaves us with a feeling of "Isn't it an awful shame that they have to settle for quantity in lieu of having any really festive food?"

Again in Stillman, in a section on current life, he says:

An increasing number of people in the streets of the capital seem to have spent their limited incomes to appear well dressed. (109)

What did he observe? The people are well dressed. What does he tell us. First of all, that they appear well dressed (not that they are well dressed). Things are not always what they appear - right?
Secondly, that they have managed to appear well dressed despite "their limited incomes". "Such unfortunate, brave, long-suffering people", we are supposed to feel, "making sacrifices despite their difficult conditions in order to look nice and be able to hold their heads up".

What Stillman doesn't bother to tell us is that the real income per capita in Bulgaria had more than doubled between 1952 and 1965 (about the time he was writing; it has more than trebled by now). He also doesn't indicate that income (at least cash income) tells us little about the standard of living, since so many essentials are provided out of social consumption funds at little or no charge - i.e. health, education, credit for buying or building homes, rent (maximum 5% of income), vacations, access to cultural life and to sports, and much else besides.

Moving on to Kostich, he tells us about the introduction of economic planning in the late 1940's. He says, in part:

The economic and social development of a nation would be regulated by the two or five year plans drafted by the government. The plans designated the output, the sources of raw materials, and the distribution of products of each industrial plant, as well as the operation of domestic and foreign trade. In farming, precise production schedules stated what should be sown and how much should be harvested of each crop. The government planned how many students should be admitted to a given type of school and what their future would be. (118)

Between the lines, this tells us that the planning process curtails the freedom of the people. This is clearly implied in phrases such as "precise production schedules stated what should be sown" or "The government planned how many students should be admitted to a given type of school . . ." (Emphasis mine). This entirely distorts the relationship between planning and individual freedom. If planning
departments indicate how many chemical engineers will be needed in four years, and only that number of students is accepted for admission to study in the departments of chemical engineering at the various institutes, then those students are free to look forward to the certainty of a job in the field they are training for. The remaining students who applied are free to choose another area of study, and free from having to face unemployment (which doesn't exist in Bulgaria).

Perl's remarks about education and employment run along similar lines:

For those who do not go to the higher schools, education is very narrow and is designed to slip the student neatly into a lifetime slot in factory work or some other skilled or semiskilled occupation. (205; emphasis mine).

The additional implication here is that people are not allowed to change their occupations. In reality, everyone is encouraged to continue studying throughout life to increase their skills and knowledge (and to change their occupation as a result). This encouragement is very concrete, including such assistance as in-plant technical colleges and even paid time off from work to study for exams. Besides this, people who find themselves unsuited to their occupation are entirely free to choose another.

Returning to Kostich, and his remarks about planning quoted above, I should add that when he refers to "plans drafted by the government", he fails to tell us that, before those plans are finalized, the relevant portions are distributed to all affected groups in the Districts - trade union locals, cooperative farm work teams, neighborhood civic organizations, women's and youth organizations, local Communist Party branches and others - for discussion and proposal.
of revisions. This is a time-consuming process for the people, but one that results in a substantial input of their suggestions before the plans are completed and re-submitted to them for acceptance.

4) Sleight of hand reasoning:

Donnelly and Ewing, in introducing their section on Eastern Europe, tell us:

We also call these countries "satellite" countries. As satellites revolve around a large heavenly body in the solar system, so these countries "revolve" around Soviet Russia. (124)

The logic of their argument in other words is: We call these countries satellites because the definition of "satellite" is such and such; defining the term "satellite" demonstrates that "these countries" fit that category. Enough said on that one.

Such slippery reasoning is carried over into the study exercises provided for the pupils. For example, in one of the Chapter Reviews in DeVorsey, there is an exercise called "Finding One Reason Why", which begins like this:

Select any three of the passages which are listed below, and explain them by giving one reason why they are true.

a. Communism demands total obedience from conquered people in all phases of life.

b. The new communist countries of the Transition Zone (Eastern Europe) were, in outward form, independent nations, but in fact they really [sic] Soviet colonies. (413)

The readers are expected to assume, with the author, that the statements are true. They are merely asked to "explain" them "by giving one reason why they are true". (Emphasis mine).
Underlying Assumptions

It is time now to look at some of the underlying assumptions about the socialist world, from which our authors reason when writing descriptions (or reproducing others' descriptions) of Bulgaria.

The main "givens" that they all share (and that guide their selection of "information") can be summarized quite briefly as follows:

1) The people are enslaved
   a) Because their country is a Soviet satellite
   and b) Because they are ruthlessly ruled by the (minority) Communist Party, which allows them no participation in public life or government,
   and c) They tolerate this because of fear or because they don't know better.

2) The economy is backward
   a) Because Bulgaria is forced (by the Soviet Union) to be a supplier of raw materials and agricultural produce, and a dependent importer of basic manufactured goods,
   or b) Because Bulgaria has undergone forced industrialization to supply the Soviet Union and others with manufactured goods
   and c) Because socialism retards industrialization, the development of science, and improvement in the productivity of agriculture.

3) As a result of these conditions, the standard of living is low; the people are poor.

4) And their cultural life is at a very low level.

Let us go over these points:

1) a) In all discussions I had with Bulgarians about images
of their country in "the West", the Soviet Satellite idea was the one about which they consistently expressed the strongest feelings, and the most specific requests that I counter the idea. Bulgarians who were sophisticated about international politics were familiar with it. Some people had never heard of it, had difficulty believing it, and were profoundly shocked by it. They expressed, first of all, a deep feeling of love for and brotherhood with the Soviet people - very consistently, with much emotion, and to a degree that was startling to me at first until I became accustomed to it and learned to expect it. These feelings have a long history, of course, dating back to the role of the Russian army, late in the nineteenth century, in freeing Bulgaria from five hundred years of Ottoman rule. Incidentally, many authors cite the Russian language requirement in Bulgarian schools as one of the examples of Soviet dominance: "The study of Russian is compulsory in the grade schools . . ." (Perl, 205). This requirement of Russian language study dates back to the nineteenth century, long before there was a Soviet Union!

Bulgarians - from ordinary agricultural workers to intellectuals - explain and describe in detail the crucial role the Soviet Union played (and continues to play) in making the development of their country after 1944 possible, as well as the indispensable material and moral support the Soviet Union gave to the Bulgarian partisan struggle in the years preceding 1944 and in the final uprising against the fascist regime in September, 1944. They describe with particular feeling the years immediately after the war, when the Soviet Union had suffered immense human and material destruction, and nevertheless
found the means to provide Bulgaria with the machinery, equipment, and technological expertise to launch the development of modern industry and mechanized agriculture. They also stress the fact that large numbers of Bulgarian youth were educated in the Soviet Union after the war, returning with the necessary knowledge to establish modern scientific education in Bulgaria, and to carry on themselves the further development of their country.

The Soviet Satellite, puppet government stereotype includes, of course, the presumption of unwillingness on the part of the Bulgarian people to have as close a relationship of mutual dependence with the Soviet Union as they in fact have. Such a presumption cannot survive many conversations with real live Bulgarians. Yet it appears throughout the texts:

As civil war raged with renewed fury in the Balkans (in 1944), the Soviet armies advanced westward. First Rumania and then Bulgaria surrendered and came under Russian occupation. (Kostich, 108)

Today, the Soviet Union binds Bulgaria with both cultural and economic ties. Nor is the Soviet Union likely to relax its hold on Bulgaria . . . (Perl, 180).

Bulgaria has no historical rapport with the Western allies as a basis for the risk of an independent stance toward the Soviet Union. (Perl, 187)

. . . the uneasy Bulgarians wait for the Soviets to reward their loyalty. Poor and primitive, Bulgaria is the only remaining Russian satellite which makes Russia appear economically advanced. (Stillman, 109)

1) b) The idea that socialist countries are governed by ruthless, "totalitarian" regimes is perhaps the most basic of the themes in the texts. Teachers' guides to the texts are generally very explicit about what points should be taught in this regard. For example,
the Teacher's Guide and Key (Dicker and Wells) to Western Europe, Eastern Europe (DeVorsey and Hodgkins) states that:

Communism is a form of organization for life in which the government exercises control over most human activities. Total control requires total obedience. (Dicker and Wells, K28).

Some authors go even further and declare that "Communist" regimes tell every citizen which job he must take, where he must live, or even which recreational clubs he must join (so that he can be indoctrinated there, of course):

Government controls and guidance of living have more subtle results as well. Escape from an overcrowded home is made available by numerous Communist-controlled clubs, associations, and labor unions ... (Kostich, 137).

Along the same lines, Kostich says of the "ruthless enforcement of Communist policies" (120) that:

Lack of freedom, the privations resulting from social and economic disruptions, and the overriding sense of uncertainty and insecurity affecting most people reduced the men and women of the Balkan nations to robotlike creatures concerned only with immediate survival. (Kostich, 120)

He is talking here about the 1940's and 1950's, the same period that the people of Kirilovo (the village in Central Bulgaria where I lived) described to me as the most exciting and rewarding in their lives. It was the time when they sat up all night at meetings to debate whether they should organize a cooperative farm in their village and, having done so, to debate every detail of how it would operate, and to discuss for hours the merits and faults of possible candidates they might put forward for leadership. It was the time when there was so much to be done on every side that people vied with
each other over who could work the most and sleep the least. It was the time — as an old grandmother (who was a prize-winning harvest worker in those days) told me — when rural workers like herself went to work singing, with flowers in their hair, because at last they were working for themselves instead of for rapacious landlords.

Before going on to talk about the question of one-party government, I should mention that Bulgaria happens to be governed by two parties, the Bulgarian Communist Party and the Bulgarian Agrarian Party, the latter being very active in the countryside among the cooperative farmers. The BAP (Bulgarian Agrarian Party) is widely represented in the bodies of state power, including the State Council and the Council of Ministers. One hundred BAP members are people's representatives in the National Assembly. Ten thousand BAP members are on district, municipal and local people's councils, and many of them hold responsible posts there as presidents, deputy presidents, secretaries of executive committees and the like. The BAP is active not only in implementing but in the formulation of policy.

I should add that numerous people's representatives are not members of any political party. In general, these belong to the Fatherland Front, the mass membership civic organization which has branches in every village and every urban neighborhood. Fatherland Front members, as I observed at their meetings, discuss and formulate (and implement) proposals on every imaginable subject of concern — from how to pave the neighborhood sidewalks, to how to insure that all in the area have their regular health checkups, to how to improve proposed national legislation.
Incidentally, one does not have to be a member of the Communist Party to serve in leading positions outside of government either. For instance, there are 750 BAP members serving as Chairmen, deputy-Chairmen, and managerial board members of agro-industrial complexes (large-scale cooperative-farm-cum-industrial organizations).

Although there are two parties in the Bulgarian government, it is clearly and explicitly stated by both of them that the leading party in the Bulgarian state is the Bulgarian Communist Party. Does this mean then that the government is "totalitarian"?

From a Teacher's Resource Guide:

Explain that the alleged goal of Communism is rule by the people and equality for all . . .

Explain that leaders in our country consider the governments of Eastern Europe to be types of dictatorships. (Dicker, 17)

A few remarks on the idea that only one party means dictatorship:

First of all, it is just plain silly. Can anyone look around the world and truly conclude that the number of parties in a country is an index of the degree of freedom or participation the people enjoy?

Secondly, it is uninformed. And I must say here that many misinterpretations (in "the West") of the role of Communist Parties are based on sincere but ethnocentric misunderstandings of what a Communist Party actually is, and why its membership always includes only a minority of the population. A Communist Party, in the context of Socialist societies, is not analogous to the electoral parties that we have experience with, which compete with other similar parties to
win the adherence of the maximum possible number of people. Rather, it
is a leadership organization, composed of those people who have applied
for membership because they want to make participation in political
affairs the center of their lives. It makes great demands on the time
and energies of its members. Whatever their place of work, they are
expected to set an example for others in all areas of civic and produc-
tive life, and to strive to develop the political understanding and
public participation of their fellow workers through the vehicle of
all kinds of organizations (trade unions, women's and youth organiza-
tions, Fatherland Front, and the like). They are expected to take a
great deal of initiative, within all organizations they belong to, in
developing policy, and in identifying problems and seeking solutions
to them. Needless to say, this is a highly responsible role, and not
one that all citizens choose to undertake.

I found that the Communists, in Kirilovo village and
elsewhere, were in general highly respected individuals; that people
brought problems to them and consulted with them. My impression was
that there was good reason for this, beyond whatever positions the
individual Communists happened to hold. That is, I myself found them
to be the people who, through inclination and experience, tended to
have the greatest insight into the problems and the directions of
development of their society.

Now, what of the supposed lack of choice for the
people in elections. I have mentioned that one needn't be a Communist
to be elected. But is the election process merely a ritual "rubber
stamping" of a slate imposed by the Party? Here, it must be understood
that it is not the election itself that is most important in socialist society, but the process of selecting candidates. In Bulgaria, candidates are not proposed just by political parties. They are put forward by a variety of organizations - among them, the Fatherland Front, trade union and cooperative farm organizations, and others. Elections are not popularity contests between candidates people have never seen. Rather, candidates are selected on the basis of extensive discussion by people who know them well through the organizations in which they are active. (And these same people can, and do, recall them at any time when they are not satisfied with their performance). Once this process of selection is complete, and a slate compiled, the election itself does tend to be a confirmation of that slate. However, even at this stage, there is the opportunity to reject a candidate; when there is a substantial vote against a candidate, which occasionally happens, the organization which put the candidate forward is asked to substitute another.

It is worth noting that a similar process precedes the so-called "rubber stamping" of legislation by bodies such as the National Assembly. Before a piece of legislation is put to the National Assembly (or to lower level councils) for final approval, it is subjected to extensive discussion and revision in a variety of organizations, many of which are entitled to initiate legislation, and in the mass media. Therefore, by the time it comes to a vote, there is little chance that it will still contain material objectionable to the members. It also happens, rather frequently in fact, that new legislation that proves undesirable in practice is quite soon revoked.
Some readers will object that, even if all this is true, the people are "not free to vote out the Communists". This objection is absurd, simply because it imagines that "the Communists" are simply a group who happen to be in government and that if they were "voted out", Bulgarian (or other socialist) society would revert to some previous form of organization. In Bulgaria, previous forms of organization of society are simply obsolete; no one considers going back to them. When I put such questions to people, they looked at me with the sort of kind indulgence one accords an imbecile. "Why in the world would we want to go back to living in a backward, poverty-stricken society of peasants, struggling all our lives to add one more acre to a six acre holding?", was their attitude. (In 1946, dwarf peasant holdings of up to three hectares made up 42.6% of all holdings, and included only 14.2% of the land.)

1) c) Regarding why the people continue to tolerate "Communist oppression", the traditional explanation in the texts is that it is too dangerous to do otherwise.

Voting was by open ballot, cast under watchful eyes of the secret police. They kept records as to the way each person voted . . . (Kostich, 110).

However, the more sophisticated, current explanation is that the people are deluded into imagining that certain admitted improvements in their conditions were brought about by "Communism".

Could communism in Eastern Europe stand the test of free elections? Probably, especially since it has changed its more violent methods of suppression. Many people believe that their own progress is the result of communism. They tell you that their parents were goat herders, or worked as peasants on the large estates; that
they themselves didn't learn to read and write until the Communists arrived. They praise the new iron and steel works, the schools, correspondence courses, tractors and combines, space technology, and the present economic plan ... They realize that they have traded freedom for their security. (DeVorsey and Hodgkins, 411-412)

2) a) It is not true that socialist economic integration has relegated Bulgaria to the role of an exploited supplier of raw materials.

As long as COMECON assigns Bulgaria the role of supplier of raw materials (and only very limited industrial goods) to the Soviet Union and other Soviet-bloc countries, there is little hope for a drastic change in the Bulgarian economy. (Perl, 201).

Taking Bulgarian trade with the Soviet Union as an example, it is a fact that machinery, equipment, and complete plants account for between a third and a half of Bulgarian imports from that country. These imports have played a crucial role in Bulgaria's industrialization. Now that this industrialization has taken place, however, industrial commodities of non-agricultural origin constitute 64.9 percent of Bulgaria's exports to the Soviet Union (1975). Of total exports to the Soviet Union, 47.9 percent are machinery and equipment (including the most sophisticated computer, engineering, and electronic equipment), as compared with 4.7% in 1955.

Industrial products of agricultural origin now (1975) constitute 32.1 percent of exports to the Soviet Union. Much of this category is processed goods such as bottled wine, brandy and cigarettes. Unprocessed agricultural produce now makes up only 3 percent of Bulgarian exports to the Soviet Union.

Of course, some authors acknowledge Bulgaria's industrialization, and explain that as being due to the evil machinations
of "the Communists".

The smaller nations of Eastern Europe were forced to follow the Soviet model. Each was pushed into a program of heavy industrialization. (DeVorsey and Hodgkins, 360).

Since the Communists found in the Balkans neither a vast underprivileged social class nor a large industrial population, they could have no ideological justification for the Communist government unless they quickly created either one or both of these groups. Rapid industrial development - industrialization - would create the large social layer of industrial workers on one hand. On the other hand, it would withdraw thousands of independent farmers from rural areas. They would be transformed into industrial workers while the farm population would be correspondingly weakened and made receptive to the idea of collectivization. Since these policies necessarily disrupted the lives of millions of people, persuasion had to be replaced entirely by coercion. (Kostich, 120)

2) b) That agricultural production has not increased in Bulgaria is perhaps the most ludicrous of the propositions of our authors.

Bulgaria's lands have been collectivized and its industries nationalized. Yet there have been no important noticeable gains in either agricultural or industrial production. The future does not hold out much promise. The farm equipment is largely obsolete, the transportation system is inadequate, and the investment capital for improvements is lacking. (DeVorsey and Hodgkins, 384)

Bulgarian agriculture is, in fact, among the most modern in the world. It is rapidly on its way to becoming completely industrialized. Since 1971, Bulgarian cooperative and state farms have been merged and reorganized into 160 huge Agro-Industrial Complexes, encompassing all agriculture in the country. These include highly specialized enterprises, concentrating on large-scale production
of particular crops (or livestock - such as 50,000 swine per enterprise), combined with processing plants and other industries. The Agro-Industrial Complexes are creating conditions in which there are skilled jobs available (both in agriculture and industry) in the countryside for the current generation of youth with advanced education. They are leading to decentralization of industry, and re-development of rural community life on a new basis.

As to the development of science, on 50 of the Agro-Industrial Complexes the "poor, primitive, hard-working peasants" we have heard so much about are operating computers which, in eight minutes, can analyze data for an Agro-Industrial Complex of 40,000 hectares, and provide sets of recommendations for the application of mineral fertilizers appropriate for all the varying conditions of its crop lands.

The cooperative farmers working at the Agro-Industrial Complexes put in an eight-hour day, earn wages on a par with factory workers, eat hot meals in cafeterias, go to rest homes when they've been ill, have minimum three-week paid holidays (virtually free, at resorts in the mountains or seaside, if they wish). Women have maternity leaves like industrial workers - six months with full pay; another six months at the minimum wage; up to another two years without pay; their jobs held for them with no loss of seniority; the time credited to pensions. They can retire on pension at 55. Men receive their pensions at 60. (If they prefer to continue working, they are still entitled to their pensions.) An ordinary village household might include an agronomist, a fruit picker, an accountant, and a factory worker. It is hard, indeed, to find the peasantry.
Even before the organization of the Agro-Industrial Complexes, agricultural mechanization and output had increased dramatically. Between 1956 and 1972, arable land with irrigation equipment had increased from 8.2% to 22.1%. During this period, the power resources of agriculture increased four-fold, and the supply of chemical fertilizers more than 13 times. Tractors (in 15 h.p. units) increased from 24,283 to 136,000; combines from 4,118 to 23,380. During the same period, hundreds of thousands of agricultural workers received technical training. By 1971-72, average wheat yields per hectare (winter wheat) had reached 3,382 kg. (compared with 1,262 kg. in 1949-52). Maize yields had quadrupled. Output in other crops and in livestock had increased at similar rates.

3) Regarding the standard of living: It is absolutely true that Bulgarian grocery stores do not stock fifteen different brands of laundry detergents; Bulgarian washing machines appear to run rather well on just two or three varieties. And, yes, automobiles are very expensive, there is a waiting list to buy them, and not everyone has one. (In the village of Kirilovo, there were 80 cars for 350 households.) It is also true that 30 years ago villagers died of readily treatable illnesses unless they could persuade a wealthy landowner to drive them to an urban hospital in his horse-carriage.

Today, villages are on paved roads and are supplied with regular bus service to other villages and nearby towns and cities. If you go to a typical village of about 1,000 people, you will find a clinic with resident physician and nurse or midwife, and a visiting dentist. Even villages near the cities have these medical facilities
as well as schools, day care centres, shops (grocery, clothing, hardware, bakery), post office, and restaurant. They also have electricity (yes, and television sets), and almost always running water. Quite commonly, as yet, they do not have indoor toilets. So, I suppose that from the toilet view of history, they are backward.

But note that in 1939, infant mortality (nationally) was 138.9 per thousand; by 1972, it had dropped to 26.2 per thousand live-born children. In 1935-39, the average life expectancy was 51.75. By 1965-67, it had increased to 70.66 (men: 68.81; women: 72.67).

4) And finally, Culture:

Having cited perhaps over-many statistics already, I shall ask the reader's indulgence for just a few more. (All figures from 1975.) For a population somewhat over 8 million, Bulgaria published in that year more than 46 million books (nearly 4,000 titles), and 850 periodicals with an annual circulation of over 52 million copies. There were 500 newspapers. (It was a common experience for me to walk into a village house and see a 70 year old grandmother reading two or three different newspapers). There were 10,500 libraries, and 4,250 library clubs (cultural centres for reading, lectures and drama), 3,750 of them in villages. Attendance at theatres numbered over 6 million. There were over 12 thousand amateur artistic groups, with 370,500 performers.

A final word, regarding rural Culture. I live in Saskatchewan. It would be very hard for me to find here a rural community with the cultural facilities of a typical Bulgarian village. These include (besides the library itself), a theatre-meeting hall-
cultural centre, complete with orchestra pit, dressing rooms, and film projection equipment. In addition to the performances of local drama, music and dance groups, the theatre offers an international repertoire of films (two different ones each week), as well as performances of visiting theatrical and music groups (both folk and classical). The cultural centre also houses the many adult education classes and winter study circles. And in Bulgaria, almost everyone studies.

CONCLUSION

When I arrived in the village of Kirilovo (in central Bulgaria near the city of Stara Zagora) to begin my research, I met with the Village Council. I explained that I wanted to get a more, realistic picture of life in their community, and of how their current way of life was created, than was provided in current books in use in my country. Then I read to them quotes like the one on page 7 above from Barrows. At first they just laughed. When I persuaded them that most people in my country believe the statements I read to them, then they stopped laughing. They and their fellow-villagers threw themselves wholeheartedly into the months-long task of showing me how they live and telling me the history of their community and their country, as they experienced it.

In presenting a very favorable view of the realities of Bulgarian life today, I wish to make it very clear to my reader
that I in no way imagine Bulgarian society to be free of unresolved problems. Bulgarians would be amused at such a naive notion. There are plenty of problems, and they are discussed, often with considerable heat, everywhere - from town-hall type village or neighborhood meetings to the mass media. That I have not presented these problems here is due to the fact that I felt a strong necessity to provide a picture of the very positive developments in Bulgarian society - a picture that is not generally available to a North American reader.

Who is Indoctrinating?

It is interesting to note that most of the authors have something to say about the education of youth in Eastern Europe, along the lines of "... the Communist indoctrination of youth from the day-care nursery through the university ..." (Perl, 203). I believe it would be worth our while to look again at our own education and ask ourselves: "Who is indoctrinating?"
FOOTNOTES

1) I originally intended to look at books in use in the Saskatchewan social studies curriculum; however, I found that this curriculum hardly touches at all on the world outside of Canada, and contains no books dealing with my subject.

That teachers depend on textbooks as their mentors has been confirmed in relation to a less exotic subject than socialist societies; namely, Canadian History, as indicated in the following remarks from the report of the National History Project:

Other questions dealing with books for a Canadian history teacher's library or books that might be useful in the preparation of classes revealed a similar lack of knowledge about source materials. The great majority of our respondents could name only two or three very standard textbooks used by their students. Fewer than 20 percent had adequate knowledge of sources of information on which they might rely as teachers. (Hodgetts, OISE, 102)

2) Most of them are American, incidentally, but I have no great confidence that my findings would have been very different had they been Canadian.

3) Pratt comments also on the publication and authorization processes:

The centripetal tendency of the authors' output is compounded by the existence of official authorization committees. A textbook that fails to obtain authorization may not even pay for the cost of its publication; but a text which achieves authorization and retains it for a decade or more can reap enormous profits. It is therefore in the interest of publishing houses to ensure that textbook content is acceptable to authorizing committees, and this common sieve through which textbooks pass probably serves to eliminate expressions of divergent opinions on social issues. (121)

It seems to me that this question - the interrelation between the authorization process and the limits on what publishers will accept - is a question that must be pursued further in research to
Some starts have been made in this direction - for example in the article by James Lorimer - "Canadian Textbooks and the American 'Knowledge Industry'" in: Quill and Quire, 1971.

Yugoslavia, incidentally, is usually presented as a desirable contrast, being "free" of Soviet control, in the view of the authors, and "closer to the West". "Since Yugoslavia's separation from the Soviet bloc the earlier grayness of city life has begun to vanish". (Kostich, 136). Could this lack of "grayness" have to do with the fact that Yugoslavia is the only (so-called) "socialist" country with massive unemployment? - they don't tell us.
REFERENCES

Texts and "Background" Books Discussed


Statistics

Note: I did not wish to clutter the paper with individual page references for every single statistic cited. All statistics cited were drawn from the following sources:


Additional References

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