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## INFORMATION REPORT

## REPORT

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The following is a survey of living conditions in present-day Bulgaria as far as inhabitants of cities and towns are concerned. Some of the data applies to the peasantry, but the report is not concerned primarily with Bulgaria's 6,000,000 peasants whose standard of living has changed comparatively little during the last 50 years.

1. Wages in Bulgaria range from 5,000 to 30,000 leva per month; the average wage is approximately 10,000-12,000 leva. Few wage earners receive more than 15,000 leva per month with the exception of Communist Party officials and industrial executives such as factory managers and senior engineers who often receive as much as 30,000 leva per month. Factory workers earn between 180 and 420 leva per day; shockworkers and miners earn slightly higher wages as a result of special incentive bonuses. A doctor in charge of a hospital receives an average of 16,000 leva per month; ordinary medical practitioners receive somewhat less; senior nurses and midwives receive 11,000 leva; and junior orderlies are paid 8,500 leva per month.<sup>1</sup>
2. Prices in general bear no relation to wages; few people can afford to buy anything beyond a minimum of essentials in spite of the fact that practically all types of day-to-day articles, except luxury lines, are on sale. A list of prices of foods, clothing, and fuel is enclosed in the Appendix. It is apparent from the list that no average family can invest in an extremely poor quality radio networked at 40,000 leva or even afford a kitchen pail at 1,300 leva very often. Few can afford a telephone rental of 4,000 leva per year.
3. All family budgets are dominated by the cost of food; all wages left after the deduction of essentials are spent for food. Essentials include rent (controlled average, 1,000 leva per month), water (200 leva), and electricity (500 leva) or fuel; insurance contributions are paid by the employer. Education is

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free, and medical attention is free except for the cost of prescriptions. A new dress, a theater ticket, recreational expenses, and even fuel for central heating can be afforded only at the expense of food. The allocations of rationed food at lower prices are so small that all consumers are forced to make supplementary purchases on the Free Market. However, since the Bulgarian is a hardy animal normally content to exist on bread, soup, and cheese, food prices acutely affect only those families (chiefly the remnants of the middle class) who realize that their children are regularly underfed.<sup>2</sup>

4. The standard of living in Bulgaria today is extremely uniform; there are no very rich (excepting the new aristocracy of Communist officials) and very few really poor (excepting the peasantry). Property owners, although not yet completely eliminated, have either been ejected from their houses or restricted to the use of one or more rooms according to the size of their family. Communist practice seems to favor the allocation of one room to two persons; the new blocks of apartments under construction are mainly one- or two-unit dwellings with a small proportion of three-room units. The building program is not yet sufficiently advanced to have an appreciable effect on the serious over-crowding in all large towns.
5. Working class standards have risen somewhat in spite of the persecution of the small former middle class and the depreciation of their standard of living caused by the rise in the cost of living. The peasant who has become an industrial worker finds better accommodations in the towns than he had in his village; many workers today have more money in their pockets than they did 10 years ago. Working conditions have improved, and workers do not demand the refinements taken for granted by workers in Western Europe.
6. There are no shortages, in the accepted sense of the word, because of rationing by price. Improved distribution methods in 1951 have eliminated the lack of fruits and vegetables in the towns which was a bad feature of the 1950 system.
7. Socialism has brought little change to the Bulgarian villages. Electric power has been brought into many districts, but no effort has been made to alleviate the appalling overcrowding or to improve sanitary conditions. Postwar lack of consumer goods in the villages is being overcome slowly, but the peasant is generally indisposed toward paying the inflated prices demanded.
8. Approximately 50 percent of the peasants are now members of cooperative farms and resent the change in their traditional way of life and their new obligations; however, they are still able to make a living from their residue of private property, weave their own wool, and make their own household equipment. Many peasants can still sell their produce in local markets and work their land, whether it is co-opted or not, from dawn to dusk, feeling most contented without outside interests; the cynical government is exploiting this state of mind.<sup>3</sup>



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2. Source Comment: Over the past two years there has been a very marked improvement in the amount of consumer goods available. Prices in general have not risen unduly, although the de-rationing of clothing in March 1951 came as a rude shock when it was realized that high Free Market prices were

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substituted for the fairly reasonable rationed prices in force until then. Wages, however, have hardly moved at all in recent years, with the result that the middle class is being reduced to the level of the working class, which in turn is comparatively better off since canteens, government-operated rest centers, and similar institutions provide facilities at reduced controlled prices and any surplus earnings can be spent on goods, recreation, food, and drink, which are still regarded as luxuries by the vast majority of Bulgarians.

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3. ☐ Comment: There seems to be a sincere desire on the part of the Communist government to repay the worker with bread and circuses for its exploitation of his labor. But the average Bulgarian worker, whose father or grandfather was inevitably a peasant, does not shrink from a good day's work and unthinkingly finds cause for thanks in his reward. This unthinkingness, which is part of the Bulgarian's lack of intellectual equipment, coupled with his lack of discipline, makes him easy bait for any dictatorship. A strong central authority is the only answer to Bulgaria's present problems and the average Bulgarian does not mind. Indeed a dictatorship which panders to his needs is for the Bulgarian the best form of government he has ever known.

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☐ Comment: The exchange rate is 797 leva per stable pound.

## APPENDIX:

<u>Item</u>	<u>Rationed Price</u> <u>(leva per kilo)</u>	<u>Free Market Price</u> <u>(leva per kilo)</u>	<u>Remarks</u>
<u>a. CLOTHING</u>			
Pair of shoes	6,000 leva		This is only a typical selection of prices, all types of clothing being on sale. In most cases, however, material is bought by the meter and clothing is made up by a tailor. <input type="checkbox"/>
Woman's summer dress	5,000 leva		
Man's suit	15,000 leva		
Man's overcoat	20,000 leva		
Length of material	3-10,000 leva		
Shirt	2,500 leva		
<u>b. FUEL</u>			
Pirin coal	5,800 leva per ton		Pernik coal, 2nd grade, is normally adequate for the ordinary customer if he is prepared to wait until the depot has the best type of the grade.
Pernik coal (1st grade)	3,800 leva per ton		
Pernik coal (2nd grade)	2,800 leva per ton		
Wood	8,000 leva per ton		

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c. FOOD (The list below is not exhaustive of all unrationed food available)

Meat (carcass)	280 (1st quality beef)	Not available, except for very important people: 340 (3rd quality) 450 (2nd quality) 600 (1st quality)	Seasonal variations in price. Six other qualities of rationed meat are available at prices lower than 280 leva per kilo. Ration card categories and scales are as follows: 1: Shockworkers, etc.: 600 grams per week; 2: Children up to 18: 500 grams per week; 3: Office workers, etc.: 300 grams per week; and 4: Not "usefully employed", i.e., housewives, etc.: 200 grams per week.
Ham	---	1,000	
Salami	---	500	
Bread	30 per 800 gram brown loaf 50 per 800 gram white loaf (for very important people only)	50 per 800 gram brown loaf 150 per 800 gram white loaf	Ration for ordinary consumer is 400 grams per day. Some categories of heavy manual workers receive double rations.
Flour	---	300	One annual allocation of one kilo per ordinary bread ration card at 80 leva.
Barley	---	110	Only legally obtainable when it represents production surplus to State quota.
Spaghetti	---	300	
Corn	---	10-15 per cob	Only legally obtainable when it represents production surplus to State quota.
Rice	120	500	Allocation probably the same as oil, below.
Fish	---	300-480	Luxury fish, e.g. Sturgeon, higher.
Chicken	---	500-700	Per bird.
Egg	---	25-60 per egg	Seasonal variation.

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Sugar	---	240	
Milk	---	100	Some seasonal variation in price, but supplies only guaranteed for children.
Butter	750	850-900	Only children under 18 are entitled to a ration of butter, but the average family cannot in any case afford this price.
Oil (cooking, sunflower)	150	650	Ration scales for oil are the same as for meat except that the allocation is on a monthly, instead of a weekly, basis.
Lard	---	650	
Cheese (Milk)	280	400	Probably the allocation is the same as that of oil, above.
(Cream)	---	500	
Potatoes	---	30-160	Seasonal variation.
Onions	---	20	In season.
Apples	---	60	In season; this is an average price for poorer quality autumn fruits.
Carrots	---	15	
Beer	---	80	
Wine	---	265	
Slivova	---	1,200	
Tea	---	---	Unobtainable, except on black market.
Coffee	---	---	Unobtainable, except on black market.
Cigarettes (1st quality)	---	60	Pack of 20.
(2nd quality)	---	45	Pack of 20.

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