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[Redacted]

6.2(d)

BULGARIA: Talks With Opposition Announced

Communist Party leaders yesterday agreed to open roundtable talks with dissident groups next week as 10,000 people ignored warnings and demonstrated against the regime. The National Assembly closed yesterday after voting unanimously to name Petur Mladenov Commander in Chief of the armed forces to replace ousted leader Zhivkov. It also promised action next month to repeal the constitutional provision guaranteeing the party's leading role and laws restricting demonstrations and the formation of independent groups. The Assembly also repealed 11 parts of the penal code on crimes against the state and announced the release of more than 50 political prisoners. The legislature's chairman, however, called on the Ministry of Interior to prevent—legally—a repetition of "violations of public order during mass events." [Redacted]

6.2(d)

Comment: The government's sudden willingness to meet with the opposition indicates the regime was shaken by the raucous demonstration Thursday against postponing elimination of the Communist monopoly on power. Efforts by some dissident leaders to control future demonstrations may fail if the government appears to be using the talks to stall the reform process. The mandate the National Assembly chairman gave the Ministry of Interior increases the risk of confrontation between the demonstrators and the riot police. [Redacted]

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