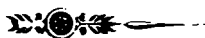


Mc N A I R P A P E R S

NUMBER 15

BULGARIA'S QUEST FOR SECURITY AFTER THE COLD WAR

By OSCAR W CLYATT, Jr



THE INSTITUTE FOR NATIONAL STRATEGIC STUDIES

A popular Government, without popular information, or the means of acquiring it, is but a Prologue to a Farce or a Tragedy; or, perhaps both. Knowledge will forever govern ignorance; And a people who mean to be their own Governors, must arm themselves with the power which knowledge gives.

—James Madison to W. T. Barry
August 4, 1822

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February 1993

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BULGARIA'S QUEST FOR SECURITY
AFTER THE COLD WAR

I. BULGARIAN RELATIONS WITH RUSSIA



IN LESS THAN TWO YEARS after the fall of long-time party boss Todor Zhivkov, Bulgaria abandoned its status as the Soviet Union's most loyal ally—"the sixteenth republic." As of August 1, 1991 Bulgaria became the first and only former Warsaw Pact member to renounce its bilateral friendship and security treaty with the Soviet Union. That step toward national self-assertion reflected steady erosion of the power of the Bulgarian Communist Party, as well as of Soviet influence. Those developments occurred rapidly, especially in a country long thought condemned to dependence on its "big brother." The movement also had a tentative quality. The democratic opposition that first emerged—unlike in the more developed countries of Eastern Europe—a scant three years earlier, was aware that Bulgaria's newly won democracy and independence were not irreversible. Strong conservative forces threatened their gains internally. Diplomatic and economic isolation in the most unstable corner of Europe following the collapse of the Warsaw Pact and CEMA (the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance) held menace from outside.

The opposition Union of Democratic Forces (UDF), led by President Zhelyu Zhelev, argued for a prudent but steady reduction of ties with the Soviet Union, accommodation with Bulgaria's Balkan neighbors, and eventual integration into Western economic and political life. The pro-Soviet forces drew their strength from the Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP—the former Communist party), the defense and security forces, and from nationalists who viewed Turkey and Bulgaria's large ethnic Turkish population as Bulgaria's primary threat. They could also cite Bulgaria's vital trade dependence on the Soviets

which grew in later years to 75 percent of the country's foreign trade. The conservatives pushed for retaining, or renewing ties with the Soviet Union.

The debate on relations with the Soviets began in earnest with the formal abolition of the military structures of the Warsaw Treaty Organization as of April 1, 1991. It involved the full range of national issues, from dependence on the USSR for spare parts for military equipment to lingering sentiments of pan-Slavism. The approach of the August 4, 1991, deadline for renunciation or renewal of the Bulgarian-Soviet treaty of 1967 gave the debate urgency. Problems of negotiating a new treaty—especially the question whether it would contain restrictive military assistance clauses similar to those in the new Rumanian-Soviet treaty—dominated public attention over the spring and summer of 1991.

As so often in the past, the decision raised larger questions of Bulgaria's identity as a nation-state which lent extraordinary emotional force to the debate. The discussion evoked memories of the winning of Bulgaria's independence from Turkey by Russian forces, and of Bulgaria's dependence on Russia for protection through much of its subsequent history.

Profound changes in Bulgaria and in the Soviet Union during 1990-91 sharpened differences that had long endured under the placid surface of the relationship. Not least among these changes was the new freedom of discussion that allowed Bulgarians, and Russians, for the first time to voice their views openly over long suppressed differences. As political and economic problems in the two countries drove them along their separate ways, however, old stereotypes persisted. Old forms of relations—especially in trade—tended to reassert themselves. In March 1990 Soviet Prime Minister Nikolay Ryzhkov approvingly told visiting BSP Prime Minister Andrey Lukanov that among the new regimes in Eastern Europe he thought the "Bulgarian variant" was closest to the Soviet.¹ The Soviets long nurtured the belief that Bulgarians were always closer to them than were the other Eastern European peoples, and did not easily discard expectations of Bulgarian subservience.

This attitude was reinforced by other high-level BSP visitors to Moscow. Like Lukanov, they showed a desire to maintain their traditional close ties with the Soviets; BSP leader Aleksandur Lilov assured Gorbachev in Moscow in May 1990 that while a big change was needed in democratizing public life, it must be within the framework of "the socialist choice."² Lilov ingratiatingly added that the BSP opposed extremism, and was for a "civilized competition" in which the sides pursued a nonconfrontational approach to change. He concluded that everyone must build upon the best achievements of the past. During his visit of September 1990, Lukanov agreed with Gorbachev that ties and obligations of traditional friendship must be preserved. Their mutually shared goal of transition to a "socially oriented market economy" depended primarily on "reaching a constructive social consensus" and overcoming "the destructive trends which certain extremist circles were trying to impose on society."³ Lukanov subsequently told a reporter that relations with the Soviet Union were "vitally important for us and will continue to play a major role in our present economic situation."⁴

The newspaper *Duma*, the renamed former Bulgarian Communist party daily *Rabotnichesko Delo*, echoed these sentiments in criticism of President Zhelev for his September 1990 visit to the United States. The paper drew an invidious comparison between Zhelev's quest for aid and the almost simultaneous visit by Lukanov to Moscow, which was apparently hastily arranged to upstage Zhelev. The paper branded as "unethical words" Zhelev's purported comment on his visit that more had been achieved in the past forty-eight hours than in the previous forty-eight years. While welcoming any aid Zhelev or Lukanov might obtain and admitting that there might be "disputable elements" in past economic relations with the USSR, the paper cautioned that Bulgaria was erasing the past too lightly. It noted that perhaps rivers of gold were not flowing from the Soviet Union to Bulgaria, but something at least had flowed for many years. Moreover the price of receiving had been lighter because Bulgaria had also given in return. The article ended with a warning that the wheel could turn once more.

Do not certain people deceive us when they force us to ignore the fact that tomorrow grand world politics and neighborly laws can again hit us and inflict on us not only a political but also an economic blow, which could have unforeseeable consequences?⁵

In view of such strongly held pro-Soviet sentiments, neither Gorbachev nor the Soviet ambassador to Sofia, Viktor Sharapov, could be faulted for speaking of Bulgaria's continuing "special relationship" with the Soviet Union. That special relationship, Sharapov told the Bulgarian Journalists' Union members in May 1991, might appropriately be reflected in a special treaty.⁶

Decline of Economic Relations

Such expectations of continued relations in the same old way could not be sustained. Growing differences arising from the decline of the Soviet and Bulgarian economies, internal political developments in both countries, and the radical trend of events generally in Eastern Europe undermined them. Foremost elements were Soviet inability, or unwillingness, to continue its role as preponderant supplier of raw materials and markets for Bulgarian manufactured goods, and the shock of the Soviet invasion of Vilnius in January 1991. The result was a steady erosion in relations over the period 1990-91.

As production and reserves declined in both countries, recriminations over nonfulfillment of delivery agreements grew. Driven as much by economic disability as desire to blackmail—although the latter motive was never absent—Soviet economic policy toward Bulgaria exhibited extreme fluctuations. When then Prime Minister Georgy Atanasov of the BSP visited Soviet Prime Minister Ryzhkov in Moscow in January 1990 the two sides agreed to sign a trade protocol and to coordinate their trade for the period 1991-95. They were still living in the old days of the five-year plans.⁷ Those talks were apparently concluded in March 1990 during Lukanov's first

visit to Moscow as prime minister, and an agreement was reached to continue bilateral trade on a bilateral clearing basis for three years.

This agreement, however, did not survive. Lukanov received the bad news on his second trip to Moscow of 1990, September 26-27, when he went to plead for an increase of oil supplies and a continuation of the clearing arrangement. The Soviet side announced that as of January 1, 1991, the Soviet Union planned to convert to a system of trade with its CEMA partners based on payments in hard currency at world prices. They would also cut oil deliveries.

Lukanov sought to soften the impact of these setbacks in his September 28 report to parliament. He assured the deputies that Gorbachev had undertaken to protect the relationship from shocks, and stressed that he had received a commitment for deliveries of oil at a level of 600,000 tons per month, beginning with September. But he admitted that the new trade agreement was extremely unfavorable and would result in a "drastic deterioration in trade conditions with the USSR." Neglecting to mention that he had been rebuffed in his request for additional oil, Lukanov defended Soviet policy by citing poor economic conditions in the USSR. He argued that the Soviets had subsidized the Bulgarian economy in the past at about two billion rubles per year by delivering commodities at below world prices and passed along Soviet complaints about Bulgarian economic performance, exhorting Bulgarian workers to greater productivity. He urged them to take a "serious" attitude toward production earmarked for the Soviet market in order to improve its quality and to fulfill quotas. Lukanov lamely reported that the Soviets had reaffirmed other supply agreements.

This much-reduced agreement, too, proved inconsequential, except for its negative impact on the Bulgarian economy. And, as Lukanov himself suggested, the agreement had a political point as well economic motives. Explaining Soviet comments about the "special relationship" to journalists, Lukanov said his Soviet interlocutors were aware of Bulgaria's strong economic dependence on the Soviet Union and had assured

him this would be taken into consideration. His political contacts had, in addition, mapped out how these renewed economic relations could be implemented and had made specific suggestions. But the arrangement would depend on Bulgarian performance.

From this point on, I repeat, it is up to us to provide guarantees, within the framework of our agreements, for pursuing our relations with the Soviet Union and for obtaining ... basic raw materials and energy sources from the USSR, though the amount will be reduced compared with the past.⁸

Even so, by January 16, 1991, the sides were again negotiating an oil delivery agreement. This time the promised amount had dropped from the 600,000 tons per month, which was apparently never delivered, to slightly over 400,000 tons.⁹ *Duma* took the opportunity to draw public attention to the importance of the Soviet connection by criticizing the government's five-day moratorium on gasoline purchases by private drivers.

Still Soviet oil deliveries continued to decline. A Western journalist with good access in Sofia reported in May that the Soviets had reneged on their energy contracts with Bulgaria, whose energy-intensive industries were dependent on Soviet supplies. Thus until 1989 Bulgaria had imported eleven million tons of oil per year from the USSR. In 1990 that figure dropped by 20 percent to 7.8 tons. And while the Soviets had agreed to deliver 400,000 tons per month in 1991, Bulgaria received only 200,000 tons each month in January and February.¹⁰

CEMA Is Dead—Long Live CEMA

There appeared signs of a turn in terms of trade, if not quantities, following three more high-level visits to Moscow in the spring of 1991. Academician Nikolay Todorov, BSP chairman of the Grand National Assembly, who was critical of

"radicals who want to sever historically valuable and economically important ties with the Soviet Union," led a parliamentary delegation to Moscow in April. He announced his purpose as obtaining the restoration of trade by barter and clearing arrangements and thought he had succeeded in getting deliveries of oil, coking coal, and other necessary raw materials restored. Todorov billed these developments as a thaw in relations after a year of drift. He declared that a treaty with the Soviet Union was in preparation and would be signed when Prime Minister Dimitur Popov visited Moscow.¹¹

In the end, Popov's visit did not result in a treaty, although he had announced that a new bilateral agreement on trade relations based on a new clearing system would be negotiated with Moscow in mid-May.¹² In his meetings with new Soviet Prime Minister Valentin Pavlov, Popov, who was said to be a "non-party" man, "clearly formulated Bulgaria's demands for an end to the stagnation and devastation of Bulgaro-Soviet relations, of which Bulgaria was the most affected party." The sides reportedly discussed the question of a transitional period in bilateral relations, including barter trade, and oil deliveries. Pavlov bluntly told Popov that the decline in economic relations was due to lack of mutual understanding, errors, and unprofessional handling of affairs and irresponsibility before Pavlov's and Popov's time.

Nevertheless, the meeting reportedly ended with understanding and an undertaking to reach economic agreements, including one between Bulgaria and the Russian Republic. The sides also reportedly exchanged drafts of a proposed treaty to replace the state treaty of 1967.

There remained skepticism, however, about the Soviets' intentions toward Bulgaria. Bulgarian TV's Moscow correspondent Asen Geshakov commented that "despite the atmosphere of mutual understanding in the talks, it did not become quite clear how far the Soviet side was prepared not to seek a linkage of the reactivation period in bilateral economic relations with 'certain clauses' in the future treaty."¹³

This new set of economic arrangements was apparently completed during a visit to Moscow on June 27 by UDF

Minister for Trade, Industry and Services Ivan Pushkarov, who came away expressing enthusiasm for the results of his trip.¹⁴ Just a month earlier, however, Pushkarov had been cited by *Duma* as blaming trade difficulties not only on objective conditions in the USSR but also on "Gorbachev's purely emotional reaction to certain manifestations in our country."¹⁵

A Deal in Moscow?

Whatever the reason—whether Todorov and Popov had struck a deal in Moscow on a new state treaty containing restrictive security clauses in return for economic concessions, or whether the Soviets themselves could no longer afford market-based trade—summer 1991 saw an apparent turnaround in Soviet trade policy toward its CEMA partners just as the abolition of that organization loomed. In June the Soviet council of ministers decided to permit settlement of trade in rubles or national currencies and barter, except for primary commodities and food. Even after the June 28 abolition of CEMA in Budapest, it was apparent that the former members would still have to cooperate in arranging their trade along old lines for some time. On July 11 the former CEMA members met in Varna to discuss economic and legal issues of possible future multilateral cooperation.¹⁶ And on July 17 the UDF newspaper *Demokratiya* reported Foreign Economic Relations Minister Atanas Papanizov's statement that the USSR would pay off its debt for Bulgarian participation in the construction of the Yamburg-Thrace gas pipeline in kind by increasing gas deliveries through 1996.¹⁷

While it was doubtful that arrangements made in the summer of 1991 would revive trade with the USSR and other former CEMA countries sufficiently to meet Bulgaria's needs, the kind of transitional period sought by Lukanov and Popov promised to help until the Bulgarian economy could develop the capacity to earn enough hard currency to pay for its imports. Bulgarians did not, however, wish to be completely dependent on Soviet trade lest their firms not be able to make

the adjustment to a market economy.¹⁸ In any case, Soviet inability, or unwillingness, to sustain traditional forms of economic relations with the former satellites seriously undermined the conservatives' case for continued, close Bulgarian-Soviet relations.

Diplomatic Neglect, and Repression in Vilnius

Other factors also conduced to the 1990-91 downturn in relations between reformist Bulgaria and the Soviet Union. One was Soviet neglect. Shevardnadze and other high-level invitees—Gorbachev and Russian Republic Prime Minister Ivan Silayev—never visited Sofia during that period. Bulgarian reaction to internal Soviet events did little to ingratiate the new Bulgarian government with the Soviets. Zhelev congratulated Boris Yeltsin for his election in June to the presidency of the Russian Republic—"blocking the conservative forces that would have pushed Russia back to dictatorship." He noted in passing that communism had not destroyed "deep-going historical, orthodox and Slav roots and feelings."¹⁹ And such Bulgarian actions as insisting on dealing with the republics and sub-republic entities in trade, as well as their abolition of their consulate in Leningrad—but not in the republic capitals of Minsk and Kiev—must have appeared to the Soviets as exploiting the decline of central power in the USSR.

Few issues, however, shared the potential of the Soviet crackdown in Lithuania in January 1991 for eliciting fear and recrimination. The incidents in Vilnius sparked demonstrations in Sofia both at the Soviet Embassy and at the Soviet War Memorial, and a threat by the free trade union *Podkrepa* to withdraw support from the UDF unless the Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a statement condemning the repression in Vilnius, which the Ministry did.²⁰ Even the BSP expressed concern over Lithuania and distanced itself from the Soviets' use of force there.²¹ President Zhelev called in the Soviet chargé whom he told of the danger of the Vilnius events for perestroika in the Soviet Union and of the anxiety they caused

in Bulgaria. Zhelev's views were made public in a statement distributed by Bulgarian embassies, which added that Bulgaria had a particular interest in Lithuania's independence.²²

The constituent parties of the UDF issued separate condemnations of the Soviet action, and the Parliament voted a resolution expressing "serious alarm." The BSP defeated, however, a motion calling for a parliamentary delegation to Vilnius. Nonetheless, the UDF sponsored its own visit, featuring a statement of support for the Lithuanians in the Lithuanian Parliament.²³ There was even a motion, discussed but not passed, calling for diplomatic recognition of Lithuania and the establishment of diplomatic relations.²⁴ The consequence of these actions was a rebuke from the Soviet ambassador for interference in Soviet internal affairs.²⁵

Abolition of the Warsaw Pact

Against this background of unaccustomed open frictions in the relationship, the placing of the treaty with the Soviet Union at the top of the agenda by the abolition of the Warsaw Pact military structures as of April 1 was bound to cause deep divisions in Bulgaria's frail new body politic. Conservatives were vocal in their concern that those who were upending the old order in Bulgaria were also bent on breaking all ties with the Soviet Union, which had long been the major prop for Bulgaria's economic and political well-being. The UDF reformers saw in Soviet trade manipulations pressure to renew the old treaty of 1967 or to conclude a new one, like Rumania's, containing security clauses binding Bulgaria to a military assistance alliance with the Soviet Union and precluding Bulgaria's joining any other security arrangements. They also suspected the Soviets of working with the conservatives, especially in brandishing the "Turkish threat," to stampede Bulgaria into close treaty relations with the Soviet Union.²⁶ Like other democrats in Eastern Europe they regarded such treaty arrangements as a limitation on their sovereignty and a threat to their newly won independence.

For all Bulgarians the question was complex and painful. Pan-slavist, pro-Russian sentiments are still real in Bulgaria, and Bulgarian leaders have always found their greatest difficulty in steering a stable course between them and demands for national sovereignty. No Bulgarian government that has opposed the Russians, as did Stefan Stambolov's anti-Russian regime of the 1880s, has long survived. Even Bulgaria's first prince, Alexander Battenberg, lost his throne trying to rule without Russian tutelage. And Bulgaria's first czar, Ferdinand of Gotha-Saxe-Coburg, spent the major part of his reign striving to regain Russian favor. On every occasion, but one, when Bulgaria has gone to war either against, or without the support of the Russians, they have lost. Long years of Communist rule during which Bulgaria, more than any other Warsaw Pact member, identified its policy with that of Moscow created deep bonds of dependence and loyalty toward the USSR in all segments of official society. Finally, security anxieties—focused on the "Turkish threat"—are genuinely felt in a Bulgaria that was only in late historical times carved out of the Turkish Empire and which has a large Turkish minority still resentful of the 1984-89 campaign of forcible assimilation. Anxiety over Turkey, and over the Soviet role in the event of a Bulgarian-Turkish conflict, was heightened by the signing of a Russo-Turkish treaty in April 1991.

Thus, when the question of abolition of, or withdrawal from the Warsaw Pact was first raised in the latter part of 1990 by Hungary and the other northern tier countries, observers perceived Bulgaria as sharing Rumania's reluctance to abandon the Pact altogether. The first open suggestion of Bulgaria's favoring the end of the Pact came in the aftermath of the Vilnius repression in January 1991. The Green party suggested, and the UDF accepted, raising the question of withdrawal in parliament.²⁷ President Zhelev clarified the reformers' attitude by readily agreeing—"like all the other East European presidents"—to Gorbachev's message proposing a late February meeting of the Political Consultative Committee in Budapest to dismantle the Pact's military structures.²⁸

The abolition of the Pact met with general approval in Bulgaria, but also evoked apprehension. Defense Minister

Colonel General Yordan Mutafchiev voiced this ambivalence in an interview in the Bulgarian Agrarian Union's paper, *Zemedelsko Zname*, on February 26, entitled "Memories Were Left in Budapest." Mutafchiev defended the Pact as having been defensive, but admitted it had some negative qualities. "Nevertheless, now we live under conditions of the new realities, and the elimination of military structures is an objective consequence of those realities." As to Bulgaria's security after the Pact, he gave an answer that corresponded closely with Gorbachev's rationale for abolishing it—looking to the longer term process of the construction of a general European security system while depending in the meantime on bilateral treaties.²⁹

Foreign Minister Viktor Vulkov gave slightly different emphasis in response to the same question. He thought there were two roads to Bulgarian security after the Pact. One was to become part of the European structures and to integrate into the all-European "standards and security systems" as soon as possible. The other was to construct other security measures on the basis of bilateral relations, preserving old treaties and concluding new, well-thought-out treaties, first of all with Bulgaria's neighbors.³⁰

Leftward on the spectrum, the outlook was less mixed. Interviewed in July after the subsequent dismantling of the political structure of the Pact and of CEMA as well, President Zhelev said,

For me, this is an historical event.... It is remarkable that within only ten days we parted with the two fundamental pillars of the totalitarian epoch and of the communist system. Just like the dissolution of CEMA, the disbanding of the Warsaw Pact actually marks the end of an era, and I am convinced that it opens the door to a new era of a united, democratic Europe.³¹

A New Treaty

Ivan Genov, deputy chairman of the BSP parliamentary group, called for attention to the need for a new bilateral treaty

soon after the Budapest political consultative committee meeting that abolished the Pact. He noted that the question was topical in connection with the upcoming expiration of the 1967 treaty. Under the latter agreement, article 10 provided for automatic extension of the treaty for five years unless one of the parties denounced it one year in advance of its expiration date of August 4, 1992. Thus August 4, 1991, became a crucial deadline in Bulgarian-Soviet relations. Apart from general pleas about the need to preserve old ties, there is little public evidence that even many conservatives wished to keep the old treaty with all its limitations on Bulgarian sovereignty. Public debate was consequently cast in terms of the need to conclude a new treaty, with or without security clauses similar to those in the Rumanian treaty. Genov made his and his party's position clear. He found it alarming that "Bulgaria has no foreign political line as regards the USSR" and that the bilateral relations were practically in stagnation.³²

Even earlier the conservatives were prepared with a position: if not the old treaty, then a new treaty that would preserve the Soviet guarantee of Bulgarian security. Lukanov commented on his September 1990 trip to Moscow that Gorbachev had reaffirmed Soviet commitments in bilateral security treaties. He acknowledged that a new approach toward Bulgarian national security was now necessary but insisted the Soviet Union played "an irreplaceable role" in security policy. He expected Soviet commitments to Bulgaria, both bilateral and multilateral, would continue to be of decisive importance to Bulgaria, then and in the future.

National Assembly chairman Todorov's announcement on his return from Moscow on April 15, 1991, that a new treaty to place Bulgarian-Soviet relations on a new basis might be signed during Prime Minister Popov's visit to Moscow in May set off a flurry of rumors.³³ Observers in Bulgaria and throughout Eastern Europe believed that Bulgaria was about to sign a treaty with security clauses similar to those of the Rumanian treaty. The announcement also stimulated opposition to such a treaty. On April 30 the presidential spokesman Ivaylo Trifonov denied a report from Prague, aired on Bulgarian

television, that Bulgaria was going to sign a treaty with the USSR like the Rumanian-Soviet treaty. He said Bulgaria's state leadership had not discussed any draft treaty with the Soviets and assured that

the stand of the Bulgarian government coincides with that of Poland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia. This position taken on the content of the future bilateral treaty will be maintained at the coming negotiations with the USSR.³⁴

As far as the public record shows, negotiations were initiated by Prime Minister Popov during his May visit to Moscow. While his position was not the same as the president's, he, too, felt obliged to discourage rumors that he was going to Moscow to negotiate, or sign a set-piece treaty. In an interview on May 8, Popov also denied reports from Prague that Bulgaria was about to sign a treaty similar to Rumania's and insisted Bulgaria was only at the stage of preparing for talks. He affirmed that Bulgaria would stand up for its interests in working out the future Bulgarian-Soviet treaty. There were no "standard" treaties, and one should not expect to find article 16 of the Rumanian treaty (military clauses) to be identical with article 16 or any other article in the Bulgarian-Soviet treaty. The two sides had exchanged drafts and were working out options. After talks had been held, the government would review the treaty and then submit it to Parliament. Expanding on his theme, Popov said such treaties as the one proposed were useful. None of the Eastern European countries was interested in breaking economic contacts with the USSR. He felt that "we should seek to broaden these contacts, but under different conditions; subordination should be ruled out." He noted that in his contacts with the Soviets there had been no mention that the former nature of relations should be retained.³⁵

Again on the eve of his trip, Popov tried to take a non-committal line on the treaty. Admitting that perhaps some of the treaty's articles might be specified during the visit, he affirmed that neither side was committed when asked if

Bulgarians would accept such clauses as had caused controversy over the Rumanian treaty. To a question about rumors of problems in relations with the Soviets, Popov raised and refuted an *Izvestiya* article that argued Bulgaria did not wish to sign such a treaty because it might hinder its incorporation into organizations such as NATO. Popov declared,

it was well known that Bulgaria has not requested, and cannot request NATO membership, because NATO's position is categorical—no Central European countries will be admitted as new members. This could increase tensions in Europe and exacerbate the confrontation with the Soviet armed forces.

He defended Bulgarian contacts with NATO as aimed at easing relations and posing no threat to any other country. But he asserted that since the Warsaw Pact shield no longer existed, the possibility of a bilateral agreement with the Soviets could not be excluded.³⁶

According to his subsequent statements to the media, Popov's Moscow meetings were devoted largely to economic issues. There appears to be no public report detailing any discussion of the treaty at the meeting, accept for the notation that drafts were exchanged. All Popov had to say was that no military clauses were discussed, that the drafts coincided 80 percent, and that it should be decided whether there was to be a new treaty by August.³⁷ These comments contradicted Popov's press statement before his trip that drafts had already been exchanged.³⁸

The Soviets were also playing the treaty issue discreetly. On May 15 Ambassador Sharapov told journalists that the Soviet Union did not intend to impose anything on Bulgaria. He also used the figure of 80 percent correspondence of the draft texts. While defending the idea of security clauses, he avowed that a treaty with Bulgaria would not necessarily be like a treaty with any other East European country. He sought to reassure that the USSR was prepared to sign the kind of treaty Bulgaria considered necessary.³⁹

Controversy Over Military Clauses

Despite these efforts to keep the issue in low key, the Popov visit and the official announcement that drafts had been exchanged stimulated intense public interest in the treaty. No one was prepared to accept that the drafts did not contain military clauses. Dr. Petur Dertliev, leader of the Social Democratic party and a leader of the UDF, affirmed that any military clauses would evoke negative memories and meet strong public opposition. Well-informed sources indicated that the door had been left open for such clauses, although Popov had denied they were being drafted. The "Rakovski Legion," a professional organization of Bulgarian officers, reacted, too, stating that the treaty should protect Bulgaria from aggression like that against Kuwait, and at the same time prevent intervention by the Soviet "military machine." The Legion favored a mutually advantageous, well-balanced, and short-term treaty of cooperation to provide spare parts and ammunition for the Bulgarian forces.⁴⁰

Even Popov's Foreign Minister Vulkov expressed open opposition to military clauses that would preclude entry into other alliances. He assured Danish journalists that unlike the old Warsaw Pact days, no secret clauses were being discussed. Everything, he said, would be made public.⁴¹

The UDF foreign policy advisor, Vladimir Filipov, who had apparently seen a draft of the treaty, told a *Demokratiya* reporter the "alarming fact" that the treaty had the character of a long-term alliance drawn up by those who regarded the USSR as Bulgaria's first foreign policy priority. He was puzzled that the military clauses came near the end of the text since they obviously constituted the core of the treaty.⁴² UDF Chairman Filip Dimitrov, while welcoming close traditional relations with the Soviet people, held the Soviet Union at arms length in an interview on the treaty. He thought that much still needed to change in the USSR and looked more to the Western orientation of the northern tier countries. He wished to see any treaty drafted in that light, and rejected article 16 of the undisclosed draft (apparently dealing with restrictive security

ties) on grounds of national sovereignty. He likewise rejected any suggestion of secret agreements.⁴³

Stung by criticisms of the treaty, the conservatives responded. In a June 2 TV interview, Minister of Defense Mutafchiev denied "reports" of secret negotiations or secret military agreements. He repeated the government's assertion that talks had not yet begun and assured that the new military doctrine would be defensive. He noted that all Soviet military experts had left the country and emphasized Bulgaria's active military diplomacy with NATO and with Greece and Turkey. TASS paraphrased him on June 3 as stressing the necessity to preserve the existing ties between the USSR and Bulgaria.⁴⁴ Mutafchiev felt military ties could not be completely severed; Bulgaria needed deliveries of military supplies, and the Soviet neighbor was a superpower. Mutafchiev branded speculations on the military clauses as "insinuations" and said it was absurd to think there would be a Soviet military intervention if the 1967 treaty were not renewed. He said military relations would develop on a mutually advantageous basis, and that treaties would also be signed on an equal basis with Balkan countries, former Pact allies, and with other European countries. Bulgaria's security would thus be sought within the European process and through bilateral treaties. This was the first time, he noted, that Bulgaria would solve the problem of its national security on its own.⁴⁵

The disclosure that the draft treaty did contain military clauses, and the apparently widely held belief that negotiations were secretly underway, added impetus to the debate over the treaty in late spring and summer, as the August 4 deadline for the renewal or denunciation of the old treaty approached. The setting of new parliamentary elections for September 29, which would determine whether the government would remain in the hands of the renamed Communist party (BSP) or pass to the democratic opposition (UDF), also gave the question of the treaty a new sense of urgency for both reformers and conservatives.

By late May the newspapers made it clear that although the draft treaty had not been publicly disclosed, its contents

were common knowledge, and the existence of military clauses were a frequent subject of newspaper commentary. Conservative journalists quickly rallied to the treaty's defense. On May 20, Petur Bochukov wrote in *Duma* of a vacuum that had developed in Eastern Europe with the disappearance of the missile threat under the INF treaty. NATO was reluctant to fill that vacuum except with innocuous activities. This situation would strengthen the hands of conservatives in the USSR and lead to instability that would be generally harmful to development in Eastern Europe. Thus the treaties contemplated between the USSR and the countries of Eastern Europe were "an indisputable element of the security structure in Europe, provided, of course that these treaties left no place for suspicion that the interests of one of the parties would be disregarded."⁴⁶

National Interests or Unreal Goals?

On May 29 the newsweekly *Anteni* published an article by Lyubomir Marinov, "Our National Interest Is the Bottom Line," defending a new treaty with military clauses by bluntly identifying the national interest with preserving the "Slavonic community" with the USSR, as Bulgaria's natural ally.

Just as blood does not turn into water, so the Slavonic community has been the mainstay of the Bulgarian soul, the Bulgarian national spirit during years of difficulty. One cannot renounce it.

Marinov argued not for renewal of the old treaty, however, but for a new one based on equality. He turned from rhetorical to substantive argument by pleading that Bulgaria could not renounce the possibility of real help for the sake of distant, transitory, and still unreal goals like "integration" with Europe. What, he asked, could be done if Bulgaria should be overrun in the meantime? A treaty with an understanding not to participate in hostile alliances was not against Bulgarian

interests, nor would it hinder European unity. While admitting there was no immediate military threat, Marinov dismissed the reformers' ideological arguments calling the Soviet Union an unstable partner and unfit because it represented a different social system. The USSR would remain a great power and a desirable partner, he asserted. Against this, he recalled an alleged remark by Turkish President Turgut Ozal that the twenty-first century would be Turkey's century in the Balkans, and bleakly reminded his readers that "The orient still remains the orient."⁴⁷

On June 5 *Demokratiya* reported Ambassador Sharapov's puzzlement over speculation about two military clauses in the soon to be signed treaty. He thought it "normal" to include military clauses in such treaties—to stipulate that if one side were attacked, the other was obligated to help, and both were obliged to refrain from joining coalitions hostile to the other side. The reporter, Tosho Lizhev, commented that these two clauses existed in both the Soviet and Bulgarian drafts.⁴⁸

Parliamentary Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Lyubomir Ivanov told Senior Lieutenant Krasimir Ivanov in an interview entitled "There are no Fatal Dates" in *Bulgarska Armiya*, also on June 5, that a new treaty was needed since the old one did not correspond to the new realities. But Bulgaria should avoid haste and determine its interests vis a vis the USSR. The country needed treaties similar to Soviet treaties with Western European countries and Turkey, and "those treaties do not contain any military-political clauses.... Bulgaria could not obtain total guarantees of its security from any state, let alone from the USSR." He rejected the conservatives' argument of the need for Soviet supply of Bulgaria's arsenals as being a part of the larger issue of marketing Bulgarian products in the USSR.⁴⁹

On June 6 rebuttal came in *Bulgarska Armiya* in an interview with Major General Kamen Petrov by Senior Lieutenant Krasimir Uzunov and Veselin Barliev entitled "Equality Must Be the Basis." Going beyond the euphemism of his title, Petrov flatly asserted that everything valuable in relations with the Eastern European countries accumulated after

World War II must be kept, and developed. The treaty was necessary and beyond any discussion. Military clauses, too, were necessary. One should not forget that Bulgaria had Soviet arms and could not manage without cooperation. Thus Bulgaria's future relations must develop on the basis of bilateral ties with the Soviets, he insisted.⁵⁰

Western Encouragement; Quayle and Woerner Visits

At that point, Bulgaria received an important signal from the West. The visits by Vice President Dan Quayle on June 7, 1991—the highest American official ever to visit Bulgaria—and by NATO Secretary General Manfred Woerner on June 12-13 did not offer Bulgaria alternative security guarantees. But they demonstrated Western interest in Bulgaria's free, independent development and encouraged reformers in the foreign ministry and elsewhere to resist pressures for hastily concluding a new security agreement with the Soviets.

During the Quayle visit, agreements were concluded for delivery of 200,000 tons of feed grain and for easing US investment through Bulgarian participation in Overseas Private Investment Corporation programs. Quayle was reportedly convinced of the "irreversibility" of reform in Bulgaria, and had told his hosts that if Bulgaria proceeded on this road it could become a factor for peace in the Balkans.⁵¹

The Woerner visit in the following week was a high visibility affair conducted in a way to give maximum exposure to Bulgarian-NATO cooperation, assuring Bulgaria of NATO's concern for its independence and reform policy, reassuring Bulgaria against the "Turkish threat," and signalling the Soviets that none of this posed any threat to the Soviet Union, which, like Bulgaria, would have a place in the European security system. Woerner accomplished all this while maintaining NATO's policy of not extending membership to Eastern European countries.⁵²

The anti-treaty reformers made the most of the visit. During a joint address by Woerner and Zhelev at Sofia

University, Zhelev depicted the visits as a crossroads for the fate of Bulgaria. He described Bulgaria's vulnerability in the context of the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact as calling for bold solutions. He praised NATO for its stabilizing role in Europe and expressed appreciation for the security assurances given by the Quayle visit, when in fact little beyond symbolic statements had come out of either visit.⁵³

Following the visits, conservatives stepped up efforts to push through a new treaty, and press reports indicate they nearly carried the day in early July. A July 4 TASS dispatch, reported in *Duma*, carried a joint declaration of the two countries' ministries of foreign affairs that acknowledged the democratic transformations in both countries, but asserted the need for them to renew the contractual basis of their relations. The dispatch added that a new treaty would be signed by the end of the year, and would supersede the 1967 treaty.⁵⁴

Emboldened by the support from the West, however, Zhelev, Foreign Minister Vulkov, and other key officials sympathetic to the reformist cause held out for no renewal of the 1967 treaty and no haste in concluding a new one. In a *Bulgarska Armiya* interview published July 18, Zhelev said that the treaty, which he acknowledged as being necessary, must recognize Bulgaria's new independence, its new statute of sovereignty, its democratic image, and the irreversibility of democratic changes in both countries. He charged there was a group seeking to make political capital of Bulgaria's difficult circumstances for the election campaign, and urged them to put the state ahead of party interests. He was realistic about contacts with NATO, saying that organization did not wish to expand the line of confrontation into Eastern Europe. Bulgaria's cooperation with NATO carried no threat toward anyone. As for the former Warsaw Pact, the demise of that organization had made Eastern European countries more free, if somewhat less secure. But while free, and neutral, they could not be so in the same way as Switzerland and Austria. He said nothing on the military clauses.⁵⁵

Duma reported on July 22 on differences between Chief of Staff of the Bulgarian Army, Colonel General Radnyu

Minchev, and Zhelev over the Soviet treaty and the military clauses. They were reported to have discussed this question during maneuvers at Novo Selo on July 20, where Minchev had made a plea for the need for technical ties in order to keep the army supplied. Minchev had denied any conflict with Zhelev a few days earlier.⁵⁶

1967 Soviet Treaty Denounced

Foreign Minister Vulkov signalled at least a temporary victory for the reformers in an interview with *Otechestven Vestnik* on July 31. Vulkov revealed that all necessary arrangements had been made for the 1967 treaty not to be automatically renewed on August 4. This decision had been discussed with the Soviets, who agreed that "the 1967 treaty [was] out of tune with the new situation in Bulgaria and the Soviet Union and with the tendencies in the two countries' relations." The government's motion to this effect was before the parliament for discussion, and the two ministries of foreign affairs would likely issue a joint declaration on nonrenewal. On the timing of a new treaty, Vulkov said that efforts should be made to sign one by August 4, 1992.⁵⁷

On August 1 the assembly voted 160-90 to accept the government's motion on nonrenewal of the treaty, with all major parties supporting the government's decision, but not without bickering over Bulgarian-Soviet relations. The same day another joint Bulgarian-Soviet declaration on the treaty, this time hewing more closely to the reformers' preferred wording, declared the two sides' intention to negotiate a new state treaty, announcing their decision under article 10 of the 1967 treaty not to renew it—but avoiding the word "denounce," and undertaking only to "speed up work" on a new treaty.⁵⁸

With that announcement, Bulgaria took a step toward independence that would have been inconceivable two years earlier. But, it was not a complete break with the past of

Bulgarian-Soviet relations. While no deadline was set for negotiating a new treaty, the announcement did call for stepping up work on the preparation and signing of a new treaty "to avoid any gap without an operating treaty ... the conclusion of which will render the present one null and void."⁵⁹ If followed up, this meant a new treaty by August 4, 1992—the expiration date of the 1967 treaty.⁶⁰

Nonetheless Bulgaria had resisted intense Soviet economic pressures, as well as the efforts of conservatives at home, to conclude a new treaty as soon as possible. They also attained their preferred language in the public specifications for the new treaty. This was no small gain considering the political weakness of the reformers in Bulgaria. The military establishment with its supply dependency on the Soviet Union, patriotic societies (especially those from the ethnic Turkish areas, which put fear of Turkey ahead of aversion to dependence on the USSR), and the BSP (ably led by such "former" Communists as Lukanov and Lilov and enjoying a majority in the assembly) proved a formidable coalition which the reformers had still not defeated. The pro-treaty side had, moreover, the support of the "non-party" prime minister, Popov, who in all likelihood had used his May visit to Moscow to make a deal with the Soviets on the issue of the treaty in return for promises of economic concessions.

The gain itself seemed tentative. It was doubtful whether the reformers had succeeded in eliminating the treaty as an issue before the election campaign, or whether the effort really did the UDF, which had already split, any good in the elections.⁶¹ The main factor remained the economy. It continued to decline over the summer. Deep market and monetary reforms which had won the approval of the IMF/World Bank, but likely not that of the Bulgarian people, had yet to show good results. In the absence of significant Western aid, or at least the establishment of close cooperative ties with the somewhat better-off countries of the northern tier, a severely fractionalized, bankrupt Bulgaria might not long have been able to withstand the pressures for a renewal of security

ties that even a much weakened USSR could exert. The attempted coup in Moscow on August 19, followed by the rapid dissolution of the Soviet Union, redeemed the reformers' bold stand.

II. THE UNITED STATES' ROLE



THE US ROLE in Bulgarian affairs grew apace with the changes that occurred in Bulgarian politics and society after 1989. Long the pariah in America's relations with Eastern Europe, Bulgaria rapidly became a favored partner. American influence and presence there have steadily increased. The United States was cautious for a time over the real prospects for democratization in Bulgaria following the fall of Zhivkov and distrustful of a regime established by the renamed Bulgarian Communist Party (the Bulgarian Socialist Party or BSP).

With the BSP's abrogation on December 29, 1989, of the measures of forced assimilation of the Turkish minority that had troubled relations since 1984 and BSP's claim to monopolize political power, however, the United States was prepared to take another look. On February 10-11 James Baker paid the first ever visit by an American secretary of state to Sofia, signalling to the BSP government its expectations of democratic reform, including free elections. The development of relations ensuing from that visit was quickened by the elections of June 1990 that, while resulting in the BSP's remaining in power, greatly enhanced the role of the democratic opposition—the Union of Democratic Forces (UDF)—and paved the way for power sharing. That evolution was confirmed by the ability subsequently demonstrated by the UDF to push Bulgaria away from its traditional security ties to the Soviet Union.

Consequently, as Bulgaria entered into its first experience with a non-Communist government in nearly fifty years, following the UDF's electoral victory in October 1991, US-Bulgarian relations achieved a degree of closeness that would have been unimaginable only two years earlier. The post-Zhivkov government had won long-sought recognition and

cooperation from the United States, but always denied to its Communist predecessor. This included US blessing and support for Bulgarian entry into international financial and assistance organizations and statements of support for Bulgarian security that stopped just short of guarantees. With continued success in consolidating democratic political and free market economic reforms in Bulgaria, the new non-socialist government was poised to achieve a diplomatic overturn in the Balkans. Leaving behind a Rumania still ruled by erstwhile Communists, as well as a strife-torn Yugoslavia, Bulgaria made good its effort to join the "northern" tier countries of Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary as favored contender for US good will and assistance. Bulgaria also obtained a valuable counterweight, in increased US involvement, to perceived threats from the NATO southern flank countries of Greece, and especially Turkey. Bulgaria also found increased US interest reassuring in its relations with its Balkan rivals Serbia and Rumania.

For the United States these trends, dependent on continued internal developments in Bulgaria, held promise of establishing a new center of stability in the volatile Balkan-Aegean region. They also provided a lever against the dangers of regional war stemming alike from Bulgarian-Turkish-Greek conflict or from the spread of ethnic conflict spawned by the Yugoslav crisis.

Security Vacuum

With the dissolution of the military structure of the Warsaw Pact on March 31, 1991, followed by the abolition of its political arrangements on July 1, Eastern Europe and the Balkans in particular were left in a security vacuum. The intrusive but stabilizing force of Soviet domination was gone. Local states were left to their own slender resources to face the unaccustomed dangers of renewed independence. Experience of the interwar period suggested that such dangers—national and ethnic hatreds, irredentism, religious divisions and political extremism—were all too real. The record, even under the Pax

Sovietica, portended a much higher likelihood of civil strife and regional conflict than of peaceful development and cooperation. The final collapse of Soviet power with the August coup—and the demise of the Soviet Union itself at year's end—confronted the states of the region with another period of troubled independence. The Yugoslav crisis confirmed that their independence would indeed be troubled.

The big question posed by these developments was whether the United States or Europe would be able to step into the role, in whatever form, of guarantor of regional stability and security of local states. Lack of success in European community efforts to mediate the conflict in the Yugoslav republics and the United States' reserved attitude toward intervention in that crisis in early 1992 held out little hope. Similarly, domestic concerns—the US budget crisis and German preoccupation with the absorption of the former GDR territories—limited the outlook for active Western assistance to the countries of the East. Finally, urgent assistance and security concerns in the Commonwealth of Independent States likewise competed for Western attention.

Nonetheless, all the countries of Eastern Europe, now including Albania, looked to the United States and the West. None courted the United States more assiduously than Bulgaria, which had sharpened its own perception of insecurity by declining to renew its mutual security pact with the Soviet Union just before the Moscow coup. In pursuing improved US relations, the new government was expanding on a policy long followed by the Zhivkov regime. With many ups and downs—the murder of exiled dissident Georgi Markov; presumptions of Bulgarian involvement in international narcotics trafficking, weapons smuggling, and terrorism; and especially charges against Bulgarian nationals in the investigation of the papal assassination plot—the Communist regime had sought, sporadically and vainly, to obtain better relations with the United States ever since the restoration of diplomatic ties in 1960. Diplomatic relations had been broken off in 1950 over Bulgarian accusations of complicity by American Minister Donald Heath in the Traicho Kostov affair.¹ The regime had

been motivated in this effort by its desire to expand its relations in order to increase its low international prestige and gain legitimacy. As economic decline forced the USSR to tighten its terms of trade with its CEMA partners during the 1980s, and especially to restrict the once favored treatment it had accorded Bulgaria, economic motives spurred the Zhivkov regime, like others in Eastern Europe, to reach out.

The atmosphere for Bulgaria's efforts improved in 1986 after a Rome court dismissed charges against Bulgarian Balkan Airline representative Sergey Antonov in the papal assassination attempt. The Zhivkov regime thereafter increasingly sought to obtain US investments, most favored nation (MFN) trading status, support for Bulgarian membership in GATT, and other economic concessions. On the political side, the Bulgarians pursued better contacts with the United States government, including high-level visits to Bulgaria, a regular, formalized "political dialogue," and a better reception for Bulgarian representatives in Washington. In short, they sought to break out of the lower category in which Washington treated them, in comparison to Poland and Hungary, under the policy of "differentiation."

The Zhivkov regime was limited, however, in what it had to offer. It continued to heed its special relationship as the Soviet Union's best ally and to follow slavishly Moscow's direction on international developments. Another impediment was the increasing rigidity of Zhivkov's personal rule in his last years. In politics he followed a conservative trend—manifested also in East Germany, Czechoslovakia, and Rumania—of resisting Gorbachev's strictures on glasnost and perestroika. As a violator of human rights exceeding even Ceausescu, the Zhivkov regime added to its long list of sins the stain of attempting to assimilate the Turkish minority by force. Economic reforms of Zhivkov's last years were largely formalistic and rhetorical. In addition, the regime's responses to overtures for cooperation and consultation on issues of narcotics and terrorism were grudging and niggardly in comparison with other Eastern European countries. Zhivkov appeared to want the economic benefits and political eclat, but

not the substance of enhanced relations with the United States and other Western countries.

For its part, the United States continued to hold Bulgaria at arms length, despite a slow upturn in relations after 1986. While the United States Government continued to watch Bulgaria's tepid efforts at economic reform, it used an increase in the frequency and level of visits to press hard on an agenda of narcotics and counterterrorism cooperation, human rights, and UN issues. The United States also sought to engage the Bulgarians on CSCE issues and regional security.²

No Longer a Satellite

The new-born Bulgarian body politic experienced a thrill of exhilaration in late 1989-90 with the realization that Bulgaria was once again free to try its own destiny. In surveying their progress on the eve of the renunciation of the security treaty with the USSR, President Zhelev commented in July 1991 that for the first time small nations such as Bulgaria had the opportunity to ensure their security independently in regional and global arrangements. He added that the strategy of seeking the support of a great power "to which we would become a satellite and which in exchange for our loyalty and servitude, would guarantee our national security, was no longer valid.... this is our great chance."³

Even the immediate successor of the Zhivkov regime, a reform Communist government led by Politburo member, former foreign minister, now President Petur Mladenov, sought to exploit the new possibilities that the passing of Zhivkov presented. First to go were the internationally despised measures of forced assimilation against the Turkish and Muslim minorities, which were abolished on December 29, 1989. That this was not a cost-free step for any Bulgarian government, as shown by popular displeasure expressed in demonstrations by ethnic Bulgarians.⁴ Next, however, came a popular measure forced by public pressure and by the example of events then sweeping the rest of Eastern Europe. In January

the Grand National Assembly amended the constitution to delete reference to the Communist party's monopoly of power. Later, following the example of neighboring Rumania, the Bulgarian Communist Party sought to escape its past by renaming itself the Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP).

In moving to eliminate sources of friction with the United States and other Western countries, the new government also proceeded from broad security concerns. With the first murmuring of opposition to the Warsaw Pact attendant on the changes in Eastern Europe, Bulgarians began to wonder about the future basis of their security in the disorganized security environment that would be left with the demise of the Pact. After the initial decision at the Prague Political Consultative Committee in August 1990 to preserve the Pact, well-known Bulgarian political commentator Vasil Asparukhov asked in his column in the national daily *Otchestven Front* whether the Pact would come to Bulgaria's assistance should it fall victim to aggression. Asparukhov also wondered how long the Pact might last, despite the decision at Prague, and foresaw that the process of change in Eastern Europe would bring fierce ethnic conflicts of the type to which Bulgaria, with a large, injured Turkish minority and a long border with Turkey, would be especially vulnerable.⁵

Bulgarians saw in the United States, as the only remaining superpower, the strength, prestige, and patronage that could restrain neighbors from any aggressive designs. They also saw the United States as the one country that could and would organize international defense of small countries victimized by aggressors. This lesson was driven forcefully home by the prompt and firm US response to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in August. And finally the new government continued to view the United States as the likeliest source of relief from Bulgaria's long economic decline, which became precipitous with the collapse of the Soviet economy and the loss of the CEMA linkage.

Bulgaria's basic goals remained as they had been historically defined and pursued through a number of regimes in modern Bulgarian history, including the Communist

government. Even during the time of subservience to Soviet policy, these goals always gave a particularist, regionalist character to Bulgaria's policy. Bulgaria was indeed most enthusiastic about those Moscow-sponsored projects, such as the Balkans Nuclear Weapons Free Zone, in which its "internationalist duty" to Moscow coincided with Bulgarian national interests.⁶

The first such goal was legitimacy, as much a concern of Tsar Ferdinand as it was later to be of Zhivkov. Freed from Turkish rule in 1878 by Russian arms and ruled by foreign princes, Bulgaria has traditionally suffered from a weak sense of national identity. In more recent times sensitivity to its dependence on Moscow's patronage served as a basic motive for Bulgaria's foreign policy behavior. Much of Bulgaria's outreach during the Communist years was motivated by a desire for international acceptance and respectability. A primary goal of the post-coup government, which after two popular elections would appear to have less concern over legitimacy, was to improve Bulgaria's image in the United States and the West. President Zhelyu Zhelev aptly summarized Bulgarian anxieties on the subject when he told visiting Congressman Dan Rostenkowsky in June 1991 that Bulgaria did not want to be treated as just one of the other Eastern European countries.⁷ The United States' policy of differentiation had bridled.

Regional cooperation, to lessen the threat of regional conflict, has also ranked high among Bulgaria's goals. In addition to the Balkan Nuclear Weapons Free Zone, the Balkan Process—meetings of foreign ministers and heads of state and government—was a favorite occupation of the Bulgarian government. In the interests of such cooperation, Bulgaria always expressed willingness, if it did not always show the ability, to avoid quarrels with Yugoslavia over Macedonia. The new government repeatedly gave assurances that it would not exploit troubles in Yugoslavia.

The "Balkan process," which was an offshoot of Bulgarian and Rumanian efforts to obtain agreement to a Balkans Nuclear Weapons Free Zone dating back to the

Balkans Foreign Ministers meeting in Belgrade in 1987, had aimed at a Balkans Summit. Participants presented the process as a regional adjunct of the all-European CSCE process. It failed over differences among the Balkan states: principally between Bulgaria and Turkey over Bulgaria's treatment of its Turkish minority, Albania and Yugoslavia over Kosovo, and Bulgaria and Rumania over industrial pollution issues. Efforts to revive the meetings languished with the outbreak of the Turkish riots in Bulgaria and the overturn of the old regimes in Bulgaria and Rumania in 1989. Bulgaria has, however, renewed bilateral efforts to stabilize relations with its neighbors, especially with Greece where the ties developed under Zhivkov-Papandreou leadership survived under Zhelev-Mitsotakis direction.

Of principal interest to the United States, which has taken a marked interest in Bulgaria's revised Balkan policies, the new government moved to follow up the abolition of restrictions on the Turkish minority by cultivating better ties with that country. Measures taken by these former Warsaw Pact-NATO adversaries included even military exchanges. That step toward regional stability was one of the most positive developments in Eastern Europe's post-cold war interstate relations.

The new government also followed the general outlines set out under the Zhivkov regime by also looking beyond the Balkans for assistance from the wider European community, and it relied heavily on US support in this pursuit. Unlike the old regime which primarily sought capital, markets, and recognition in the West, however, the new government expanded its purpose. It sought integration into European economic and security structures, and membership in international financial and economic organizations as well.⁸

This turn toward the United States and the West assumed more urgency with the abolition of the Warsaw Pact and CEMA and with Bulgaria's declaration of intent not to renew the 1967 Bulgarian-Soviet treaty. Various spokesmen for the government made it plain that their real desire was admission to NATO, an aim which they acknowledged was impracticable

in view of NATO's reluctance to expand its membership. As an alternate, and longer term goal, Bulgaria sought to participate in the establishment of an all-European collective security organization, most likely under CSCE, which it saw as guaranteeing the independence of small states. Bulgaria has similarly sought membership in IMF and GATT.⁹

The Bulgarian government viewed US assistance as vital to the attainment of these goals of regional security, and sought as a first priority US treatment of Bulgaria on a par with Poland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia. Specifically in relations with the United States, the new government sought, and obtained Most Favored Nation status, a goal which had long eluded its predecessor regime, and economic assistance. Its goals with the United States were, however, much broader, focusing on the security guarantee (which could no longer be provided by the Soviet Union), US support for the democracy movement within Bulgaria, and fundamental economic assistance for its transition to a market economy. The United States was one of the stops on a tour made by a UDF delegation shortly after the formation of that group for the June 1990 elections. Chairman Zhelyu Zhelev, later to become president, led the delegation to Poland, Czechoslovakia, France, the United Kingdom, and the United States. The first ambassador appointed to the United States after the establishment of the new government, Ognyan Pishev, described his task on November 13, 1990, as to "... work diligently for a fundamental change in the notions about our country which exist across the ocean, ... to establish contacts with the US public, administration, and business circles, to improve prospects for developing relations between Bulgaria and the United States, and to obtain greater support for the processes that are taking place in our country."¹⁰

In July 1991, following Vice President Quayle's visit to Sofia, Foreign Minister Viktor Vulkov emphasized the importance of good US relations for Bulgaria when a reporter inquired whether excessive reliance on US friendship might not cause Bulgaria to lose its way on the road to a United Europe. Vulkov argued that the pursuit of relations with the United

States was an extension of Bulgaria's multilateral policy of relations with Europe—there was no contradiction.

The important role of the United States as a worldwide political and economic factor is well known. Unfortunately, as a result of ideological considerations, our relations with the United States were extremely restricted in the recent past. Thanks to mutual efforts Bulgarian-US relations not only were rescued from the deadlock of the totalitarian regime, but were even considerably intensified and further developed.¹¹

On the first anniversary of his presidency on August 9, 1991, Zhelev judged the policy of opening toward the United States a success. He told a press conference that in the realm of foreign relations most progress had been made in relations with the United States.¹² There could be no doubt that the main thrust of this policy had shifted from economic assistance and recognition to an overall relationship based on central security concerns. As news reports commented on June 7, 1991, on the then upcoming Quayle visit, "Security problems are also on the bilateral agenda, focussing on guarantees for Bulgaria's national security."¹³

The US Stake

The rapid developments of Bulgarian politics following the fall of Zhivkov provided American diplomacy with a rare opportunity. The government's early receptiveness to improved relations, signalled by its repeal of the anti-Turkish measures, its abolition of the party's dominant role, and the setting of free elections raised the prospect for real cooperation on issues of regional stability. Moreover, professed readiness by the new government, and the democratic opposition for further reform opened the possibility for US policy to play a role in pressing democratization and free market reform in the Balkans, just as it was able to do in the more developed political setting of the north. Stagnation in the Rumanian political situation and

national disintegration in Yugoslavia enhanced the value of this Balkan opportunity. In Bulgaria, US policy had an opening that spared it the risks of disengagement in the volatile Balkans at a time of heightened risk of regional conflict attendant on the Yugoslav crisis. American diplomacy also had for the first time a foothold on the farther side of the sensitive border between NATO Greece and Turkey and their erstwhile Warsaw Pact adversary Bulgaria. Properly utilized, the position offered the United States by circumstances in Bulgaria after 1990 was that of a strategic fulcrum for exerting stabilizing influence in Southeastern Europe.

The US government quickly perceived and moved to exploit that opening. On February 10-11, 1990, Secretary Baker paid the first-ever visit to Bulgaria by a secretary of state. The Zhivkov government had informally invited such visits but had not dared dream that its relations with the United States could ever reach that point. According to Baker's testimony about the trip to the House Ways and Means Committee on April 18, he had used the visit not to confirm achievement of better relations, but to assess the Bulgarians' intentions and to spur them to further reform.¹⁴

The Bulgarians took maximum advantage of the visit. Foreign Minister Boyko Dimitrov told reporters the talks had covered all issues of interest to Bulgaria and included agreement on consultations about MFN status, discussion of the US position on GATT membership for Bulgaria, and consideration of steps to be taken by Bulgaria in order to obtain membership in the IMF and World Bank. The Bulgarian media disclosed, however, that improvement in relations in all respects had been made dependent on free and fair elections.

In his testimony, Baker emphasized precisely that point. He noted the progress that had been made in Bulgaria since his February trip, including the setting of elections for June 10 and the formation of new parties to compete in those elections. He credited implementation of the repeal of the anti-Turkish measures, including the resumption of Turkish names, the reopening of mosques, and the public use of the Turkish language. He maintained US reserve toward the new regime,

however, expressing determination to see how effectively these measures would continue to be carried out. He voiced special disquiet over the prospects for fair elections, noting reports of problems of equal media access for all newly formed parties, dismissal of opposition activists from state employment, and misbehavior by state security personnel. He reported that Bulgaria had given assurances over the right of free emigration, required for MFN status by the Jackson-Vanik amendment. But he affirmed that was not enough. He linked improvement in trade relations to free and fair elections and to the overall human rights situation. In response to a question, Baker provided a comparative measure of the administration's continuing suspicions over the depth of Bulgaria's political conversion stressing that "We're not going to do anything beyond humanitarian assistance with Bulgaria and Romania until they follow through on their commitments to hold free and fair elections."¹⁵

American prompting over the elections continued almost up to election day. During an April visit to Sofia Assistant Secretary of State for Humanitarian Affairs, Ambassador Richard Schifter urged the parties to agree on a program for implementing the human rights provisions of the Helsinki Final Act. Schifter thought such an agreement should be put into effect before the election in order to avoid "post-election excesses."¹⁶ On May 14, Secretary Baker confirmed to a visiting UDF delegation that the US government would send an official team of observers to the June 10 elections.¹⁷ On June 1 a statement by the Department of State urged the government of Bulgaria to remedy election abuses during the ten days remaining until the elections. According to the statement, international observers had pointed to an "overwhelming imbalance of resources" between the BSP and other parties and urged specific measures to reinforce prospects for free and fair elections.¹⁸ Following the elections, State Department spokesman Margaret Tutweiler said that demonstrations in Bulgaria indicated many Bulgarians did not think the government had done everything it could to ensure fair elections. She said official US comment would await the June

17 runoff, but reaffirmed that reports of improper behavior by Bulgarian authorities, and widespread voter intimidation raised serious questions.¹⁹ The official State Department statement of June 21 expressed concern about "significant inequities and irregularities which marred the [Bulgarian election] campaign and the election process" and "the overwhelming imbalance of resources and widespread intimidation, particularly by local officials, a situation for which the ruling BSP and the government must bear responsibility."²⁰

A New Government, New Relations

Even with all the advantages of incumbency in a police state, however, the BSP managed to obtain a majority of only eleven seats. As discussed earlier, its power continued to erode as, first, President Petur Mladenov and, then, Prime Minister Andrey Lukanov were forced from office. By 1991 the government had been reorganized on a national basis with the election by Parliament of opposition leader Zhelyu Zhelev as president, initial drafting of a new constitution, and the establishment of a "non-party" government. Dimitur Popov became prime minister in a cabinet with several ministers from the newly formed opposition bloc, the Union of Democratic Forces. With the adoption of the constitution in July 1991, new elections were set for October. Those elections were won by the UDF, which formed a government with the support of the ethnic Turkish-based Movement for Rights and Freedom (MRF). On January 19, 1992, Zhelev was reelected president, this time on a popular vote.

The upswing of US-Bulgarian relations closely followed this trend toward democratic rule which was also accompanied by as radical a set of economic reforms as any in Eastern Europe. In addition to meeting US demands for political and economic reforms, and human rights performance, however, the relationship faced other hurdles as well. Most of those problems were survivors of the cold war.

SS-23 Missiles and INF

The major leftover issue was the retention of Soviet-built intermediate-range and nuclear-capable SS-23 missiles, purchased by Bulgaria just before the conclusion of the INF treaty. These missiles were of a class of weapons which the Soviets agreed to remove from the Eastern European theater and destroy under the Intermediate- and Short-Range Missile Agreement of December 1987. Public reports of the numbers of missiles said to remain in Bulgaria ranged from seven to eighty missiles and launchers. Bulgaria came under US pressure to disclose data on the missiles and to permit inspection of missile sites with a view to dismantling them under terms of the INF treaty. Bulgarian authorities gave several responses to US inquiries since early 1990. The responses sought to minimize the threat posed by the missiles and to refute claims that they were subject to destruction under the bilateral US-Soviet INF treaty. News coverage aired this problem publicly on March 30, 1990, when it disclosed responses by the Soviet and Bulgarian Ministries of Foreign Affairs to US demarches. The Soviets reportedly admitted on March 27 that OTR-23 (SS-23) missiles had been delivered, in fulfillment of obligations to allies, to East Germany, Czechoslovakia, and Bulgaria before the signing of the INF treaty. In response to a US Embassy inquiry, the Bulgarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs had disclosed that according to data available as of January 31, 1989, Bulgaria had eighty "operational-tactical" SS-23 missiles, with a maximum range of 500 kilometers, which had been purchased and received in 1986. The Ministry assured that the missiles were Bulgaria's property and under complete Bulgarian control, and that there were no missiles in Bulgaria subject to destruction under the INF treaty of 1987. The report also disavowed possession, and intent to possess nuclear weapons, and recalled that Bulgaria supported the inclusion of such "dual function" missiles in disarmament negotiations.²¹

The official Ministry of Defense response was given in an interview with spokesman of the Ministry, later chief of the

General Staff, Lieutenant General Radnyu Minchev that was published April 11. Minchev denied Western and Turkish media claims that Bulgaria had seventy-two missiles, acknowledging only eight launchers. The missiles were purchased in 1986 under an earlier agreement and had a range of less than 500 kilometers, which did not fall under INF restrictions. He characterized the missiles as non-nuclear, and as little more than conventional "artillery," and hence no threat to any neighboring state. In any event, Bulgaria was not a party to the INF treaty. Minchev also defended the missiles as necessary to Bulgaria's security, in view of the "unfavorable balance of forces" on its southern flank posed by nuclear weapons and planes in Turkey and Greece and in the Sixth Fleet. Under questioning, however, Minchev admitted that progress in the CFE (Conventional Forces in Europe) talks had begun to reduce the threat to Bulgaria. He allowed that the missiles would eventually be removed, perhaps even before new negotiations, and that there were no plans to acquire additional missiles.²²

The Ministry of National Defense went further, with a denial on August 31 that Bulgaria possessed nuclear warheads. This denial was apparently prompted by alleged comments from US politicians that the presence of Soviet SS-23 missiles in Bulgaria were a problem in US-Bulgarian relations.²³ A report of the Bulgarian National Defense Ministry statement in *Pravda* on September 4 lent support to the Bulgarian position.²⁴

Bulgarian military authorities stalled a promise made by President Zhelev during his September, 1990 visit to Washington to permit access to the missile sites by US inspectors. They published instead further information on the missiles on November 30. The Ministry of Defense press release recounted the basic story that the missiles had been acquired by purchase before the signing of the INF agreement. It sought to strengthen its case that the missiles did not, therefore, fall under the provisions of INF by alleging that the range of the missiles was only 400 kilometers. The release repeated assurances that the missiles were not equipped with

nuclear warheads. But it insisted firmly that this complex of "operational tactical" missiles could not be destroyed at the present time because of "present realities" and Bulgaria's position on the southern flank of the "still existing" Warsaw Pact. The statement acknowledged that the missiles could be destroyed in the future, but asserted that Bulgaria had specialists with experience in dismantling such complexes.²⁵

Notwithstanding the resolution of similar problems in East Germany where the missiles fell into West German hands, and in Czechoslovakia where authorities permitted inspection, the SS-23 issue continued to trouble US-Bulgarian relations. On July 25 spokesman Lieutenant General Ivan Stefanov again made the Ministry of Defense case in refutation of Western media reports that Bulgaria had acquired the missiles in mid-1987. Stefanov said that the missiles, purchased in 1986, had arrived in Bulgaria in February 1987. He added the information that no more missiles had been purchased after December 8, 1987. Stefanov reiterated that the missiles were defensive, did not possess nuclear warheads, and did not contravene the INF treaty.²⁶ By January 1992 mention of the SS-23 problem ceased to appear in the press, apparently resolved.

In any event, following the June 1990 elections, US policy focused increasingly on the prospects rather than the problems in the relationship. In September a Peace Corps program was established for twenty volunteers to teach English in Bulgaria.²⁷ In December, during a visit to Bulgaria, Attorney General Richard Thornburgh discussed consultations with Bulgarian drafters of the new constitution.²⁸ Also in December talks with IMF over the estimated \$2 billion needed to ease the transition to a market economy concluded.²⁹ In March 1991 IMF announced a loan of \$503 million dollars, in part to help Bulgaria meet increases in the price of oil and natural gas attendant upon the Gulf War.³⁰

President Bush announced on January 22, 1991, that trade restrictions with Bulgaria were canceled, one of Bulgaria's longest sought goals in relations with the US, thus opening the way to most favored nation status. A bill providing MFN to

Bulgaria was introduced into Congress on January 29 on the basis that sufficient progress toward democratization and free emigration had been made. It was passed in June, and a US commercial office was opened in Sofia that same month.³¹

A visit by a US interagency delegation to Sofia in April to discuss a trade agreement, a bilateral investment treaty, and a civil aviation security agreement gave further impetus to the rapidly developing economic and technical relationship. Bulgarian and US authorities had already concluded an agricultural agreement in October 1990.³² The Bulgarian Minister for Agriculture Boris Spisov followed up that agreement with a visit to Washington in June 1991 to seek help from US specialists in organizing private agriculture in Bulgaria.³³ In July the US government announced during the visit of a delegation led by Deputy Prime Minister Dimitur Ludzhev the establishment of a \$5 million fund to assist growth of private business in Bulgaria, particularly in the field of agriculture.³⁴

The relationship expanded even more rapidly in the area of public affairs. In June 1991 USIA sent a group of nine Bulgarian army officers on a visit to the United States.³⁵ In addition to vastly expanding its services, including the establishment of a Voice of America station in Sofia, USIA was even allowed to conduct a public affairs survey in May. Not even that bane of East European Communist governments, Radio Free Europe, was left out. It began broadcasts in Sofia, using Radio Sofia facilities, in August.³⁶ Also in that month the US Navy cruiser *Belknap* paid a port call at Varna, featuring a visit there and to Sofia, with calls on the minister of defense and President Zhelev by Sixth Fleet Commander William Owens.³⁷ Only two years earlier even an innocent passage exercise in that vicinity would have drawn sharp protest. In September a US Black Sea naval group led by the *Belknap* also visited Varna.

The most visible symbol, and potentially the most influential factor of US presence in Bulgaria, however, was the opening on September 29, 1991, of the American University at Blagoevgrad, the capital of Bulgaria's "Pirin Macedonia." USIA contributed \$150,000, including \$50,000 in books, and

USAID gave \$600,000 to the new university. With an initial class of two hundred, this was the first American educational institution in Bulgaria since American schools were shut down there by the Communist-dominated regime in 1947. The University of Maine, which paid administrative costs and provided a rector as well as several faculty members, specialists, and services, assisted the organization of the new university. The Bulgarian government provided housing for the university in the former headquarters of the regional Bulgarian Communist Party committee—thus, the best address in the city—and in two other buildings in Blagoevgrad.³⁸ In September 1992 the American College of Sofia reopened in the same building that had housed it before 1947, and had in the interim been used as a school for the state security agency.

These public efforts, especially the establishment of schools, tapped into a deep vein of pro-American sentiment in Bulgaria that in turn reinforced their effectiveness. Many of the older generation of the Bulgarian elite were nurtured in American schools. Founder of the Bulgarian Communist government Georgi Dimitrov had himself worked in the library of the American College of Sofia. In May 1991 Professor Andrey Pantev, chairman of the Bulgarian Association of American Studies, announced at a meeting of alumni of the two American colleges (there had also been one for girls in Lovech) the launching of a research project on American educational institutions in Bulgaria. He described his intention as the writing of a history of those institutions thanks to which many generations of Bulgarians had kept in touch with American culture.³⁹

Not surprisingly the rapid development of friendly relations drew suspicious reaction from the Communists. In May the newspaper *Duma*, the renamed Bulgarian Communist Party organ *Rabotnichesko Delo*, carried an open letter by Professor Dobrin Spasov to Ambassador Hill accusing the United States of interfering in Bulgaria's internal affairs. The letter quoted Misha Glenny, correspondent of the BBC, as saying the United States had played "an immoral role" in the June 1990 elections. Spasov also cited Judy Dempsey,

correspondent for the *Financial Times*, saying that US officials had again come to Bulgaria to pave the way for the next elections. He termed "disastrous for Bulgarians" and counterproductive an alleged US policy which he described as one of eliminating certain political forces and creating, reviving, or consolidating others. He charged specifically that US officials had gone so far as to determine the structure of the opposition and had included the Turkish minority party, MRF, within it. He explained this policy as resulting from US geopolitical interests. Turkey was a mainstay of US policy in the area, and was thus able to use the United States for its own purposes.⁴⁰

In fact, in an article earlier in May Dempsey did suggest that US aid masked US interference, including giving advice to the opposition on how to conduct its meetings and formulate its policy. She claimed that the opposition UDF had taken in the MRF at the behest of the United States. These stories were said to be based on US and other diplomatic sources.⁴¹

Demokratiya, the major daily associated with the UDF responded to the Spasov article with an attack on *Duma* and the BSP for tendentious efforts to discredit US-Bulgarian relations. It rejected charges that the United States was attempting to infiltrate and dominate Bulgaria, or to subordinate its economy to Turkey. The article charged that such allegations were aimed at easing acceptance of a new security treaty with Bulgaria's "former big brother," which was then under discussion.⁴²

The balance of public opinion on Bulgarian-US relations appeared heavily in favor the United States. In a poll taken before the Gulf War by the Institute of Sociology and the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences on the US and Americans

—82 percent of respondents manifested a positive attitude toward the United States,

—nine of ten rated the American style of life as an "un-attainable dream" for its riches, high standard of living, democracy, and human rights,

—42 percent rated America's international prestige as "exceedingly high," while another forty-eight percent rated it as high, and

—91 percent regarded Americans as “enterprising.”⁴³

Two rival USA friendship societies sprang up soon after the fall of the Zhivkov regime. One, “Bulgaria-USA 104” was linked to the BSP. Its membership comprised persons involved in bilateral relations with the United States and included an aide to President Mladenov and the then Foreign Minister Lyuben Gotsev. Georgi Pirinski, American-born former deputy minister for trade and deputy chairman of the BSP, was chairman of the new society. It derived its name “104” from November 10 (the date of Zhivkov’s resignation) and July 4. The “Society of Friends of the USA,” which claimed to be substantially different from the Pirinski group, initiated a publication designed to present the United States to the Bulgarian public in a realistic but friendly manner, and featured quotations from Thomas Jefferson.⁴⁴

Bulgarian authorities have traditionally stressed the value of high-level contacts and consultations in building relationships. In the latter years of the Zhivkov regime when the government was seeking better relations with the United States, two cardinal demands—in addition to MFN and US support for GATT membership—were better access for Bulgarian diplomats and officials in Washington and visits to Sofia by ranking Americans. Beginning with Secretary Baker’s February 1990 visit to Sofia, nudging the new government toward meeting US expectations of democratization, the new relationship has in fact revolved around high-level meetings which were skillfully exploited on both sides. If the Baker trip tested the waters and established an understanding of US expectations, visits by President Zhelev and Vice President Quayle provided progress checks.

By 1992 Zhelev had visited the United States twice in his capacity as president, September 1990 and September 1991. Zhelev’s first visit, soon after the start of the Gulf crisis, benefitted from Bulgaria’s support of UN resolutions condemning the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and support for sanctions that had been particularly costly for the Bulgarian economy and had resulted in the detention in Iraq of over five hundred Bulgarian workers. As a consequence, a meeting was arranged with

President Bush in New York for Zhelev who had come there to attend the UN General Assembly. In a move taken by Zhelev as "a benevolent gesture from the US side," that meeting was rescheduled to take place in Washington.⁴⁵ According to Bulgarian reports, Zhelev indeed considered this first ever visit between a Bulgarian and American head of state historic. He used the brief call to discuss Bulgaria's promising political and precarious economic situation, which he attributed in part to Bulgaria's "principled stand" on the Persian Gulf crisis. He asked Bush for humanitarian and economic assistance. Just as important for Zhelev as it had been for the previous regime, however, was the problem of image. Zhelev assured Bush that Bulgaria was no longer a Communist state. He later told reporters of Bush's receptivity to Bulgaria's case and added that

the most important thing for me was to have contributed to changing Bulgaria's image. You know, that over many years, as a result of the former regime's activities, our country had a very negative image abroad. Therefore all my meetings in Washington, and also my final meeting with the President were aimed at creating an entirely different image of Bulgaria.⁴⁶

Economic relations and assistance, support for democratic reforms, and image were also the major themes of several other meetings Zhelev had in Washington. He met Richard Leshner, president of the Chamber of Commerce, Richard Rahn, the Chamber's senior economist and vice president who was working out a plan of economic reform for Bulgaria, Chairman of the Council of Economic Advisors Michael Boskin, Secretary of Agriculture Clayton Yeutter, Attorney General Richard Thornburgh, Secretary of Health and Human Services Louis Sullivan, Senate Minority Leader Robert Dole, and former National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski. Zhelev discussed trade expansion, a bilateral trade treaty, and MFN status with US Trade Representative Carla Hills and other US trade officials.⁴⁷

Zhelev discussed political relations with Deputy Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger, who, according to Bulgarian

reports, gave Zhelev a letter stating the conditions on which relations could be expanded and on which the United States would give support and aid. As reported, these conditions went beyond the demand for free and fair elections and prescribed complete democratization and a radical transition to a market economy. Eagleburger also announced a grant of 100,000 tons of feed grain to meet Bulgarian shortfalls for the winter.⁴⁸

While the letter may not have been so starkly drawn as conditions for improved relations as this reporting suggested—and may likely have taken the form of outlining steps that could be taken in the relationship—it is doubtful that democratization, human rights, and liberalization would not have been discussed, nor the point missed. The visit did, in fact, mark a turning point in the relationship. It conferred US recognition of steps taken in Bulgaria and encouraged more. It paved the way for assistance, MFN, and progress on other issues. And it conferred recognition, following Bulgaria's support in the Gulf crisis, of the qualitative improvement that was underway in US-Bulgarian relations. Zhelev clearly indicated the degree of commitment Bulgaria was prepared to give the relationship. During that visit he promised cooperation for inspection and dismantling of the SS-23 missiles, an independent investigation of accusations of Bulgaria's role in the 1981 plot to assassinate the Pope, and cooperation with the CIA and other US agencies against terrorism and narcotics.⁴⁹

Vice President Quayle's visit of June 6-7, 1991, gave further impetus to the relationship, and served the immediate purpose of encouraging the Bulgarian government not to renew the then pending security treaty with the Soviet Union or to conclude a new treaty, like the recent one between Rumania and the USSR, containing clauses restricting Bulgarian sovereignty. Visits within the same month by NATO Secretary General Manfred Woerner and US NATO Ambassador Taft reinforced that message, and the Bulgarians announced their intention not to renew the old treaty in August.

The visit posted yet another milestone in the blossoming Bulgarian-American relationship. Quayle was the highest ranking US official ever to visit that country. While there he

signed an OPIC investments protection agreement and announced new assistance in the form of an additional 200,000 tons of grain under the Food for Peace program as well as a program for management training assistance. Quayle told a press conference that the visit marked improved relations and friendship between the two countries. The visit indeed proved a well-timed and coordinated effort from the Bulgarians' point of view since Quayle's other stops were Poland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia—the more advanced northern tier grouping of states with which Bulgaria explicitly sought association in the United States' approach to Eastern Europe.⁵⁰

The high point of the visit was Quayle's address to an enthusiastic rally in Aleksandur Nevski Square estimated to have been attended by 20,000 persons. Quayle reportedly told the American-flag-waving crowd that "We are for your territorial integrity, we are for the safety of your frontiers, and we support your resolution to be free." Zhelev thanked Quayle for past and present US support and noted that decades of Communist effort had failed to promote hostility and mistrust toward the United States.⁵¹ *Duma* sourly dismissed the rally—which Western sources reported turned into an anti-Communist rally—as a "UDF election rally," replete with red baiting. *Duma* judiciously credited Quayle with "neutrality," however.⁵²

The meetings of Zhelev and Foreign Minister Vulkov with Secretary Baker during Zhelev's second visit in September 1991 appeared to culminate development of the relationship. The United States was able, as Baker did, to recognize the achievements of the relationship which Zhelev had set in train in February 1990, and at the same time exercise the new leverage gained by those developments to caution Bulgaria on the need for a peaceful settlement of the crisis in Yugoslavia.⁵³

The Zhelev-Vulkov visit heralded further progress. Predicting victory for the UDF in the upcoming elections, a confident Zhelev told the National Press Club that the post-election government was likely to adopt even a more radical approach to economic reform.⁵⁴ New assistance programs were announced during the visit, including US undertakings to train

Bulgarian police and intelligence agencies, and cooperation on terrorism, long an issue pursued by the US, moved a step forward with an exchange of information.⁵⁵

Toward the end of 1991 ties with the United States were thus, at least from the Bulgarian perspective, well advanced toward replacing the security and assistance linkage lost with the fall of CEMA, the Warsaw Pact, and the Soviet Union. It was indicative that the Soviet response to the Zhelev visit was a request to postpone a visit to Moscow by a Bulgarian delegation set for September 25, "due to the worsening political situation."⁵⁶

The United States wisely decided to exert influence on Bulgaria to move in positive directions rather than await developments in that country. Similarly, US policymakers chose to engage Bulgaria in resolution of such problems as free elections, human rights, and SS-23 missiles rather than regard them as obstacles to improved relations. As a consequence the United States gained the opportunity not only to contribute to the solution but also to bring influence successfully to bear on Bulgarian policy with regard to such substantial regional security problems as Bulgarian-Turkish relations and the war in Yugoslavia.

III. BULGARIA TURNS TOWARD EUROPE



BULGARIA'S SEARCH for alternatives to those security ties lost with the dissolution of Soviet hegemony led naturally to Europe. Bulgarian nationalists claim thirteen centuries' seniority in the European family, and the Communist government had long sought legitimacy and economic advantage in ties with the West. After 1989, the appeal of a safe mooring to Europe became ever stronger, as new Bulgarian leaders strove to build a modern economy and democratic society and to secure Bulgaria's place in the world.

At the same time Western Europeans were compelled to reach out toward the east. They too saw peril succeeding the accustomed bipolar order that had permitted the existence of two Europes side by side in isolation for more than four decades. Firm borders no longer confined the unresolved national, religious, economic, and social problems left over in Eastern Europe from the turbulent twentieth century. Some Eastern countries held out greater hope of stability and progress, however, and Bulgaria strove to rank among them in Western Europeans' estimation.

Bulgaria's new government expanded the agenda with Europe beyond traditional aims and sought, in addition, security guarantees, financial and technical assistance for establishing market economies, and support for its fledgling democratic institutions. Bulgaria also sought the West's assistance in dealing with age-old Balkan conflicts which, unleashed, threatened once again to overwhelm it.

The Europe Option

Europe fit the bill. With the European Community, the Council of Europe, the Organization of Economically

Developed Countries, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, and many other specialized regional organizations, Europe constituted a community with a set of institutions that had passed the test of time. Arising from post-war reconstruction, these institutions comprised an integrated framework that permitted its resurgent societies to compose their conflicts in a way Eastern Europe, under the retarding influence of Soviet domination, had not been able to do. There was a clear and recognizable order of Western Europe that contrasted sharply with the chaos of the East. The West, and its institutions, had clearly won the great competition.

With the walls gone, there appeared also a new community of interests. The West's long-standing challenge to the East—that freedom would bring prosperity and order—had been answered. The new Eastern Europe now needed moral support, credits, technology, and security assistance to make good on its response. The West needed peace and stability established in the East to avert turmoil that could directly affect its own security, as foreshadowed by the recurrent refugee crises from 1989 onward.

Cooperation aiming at a larger, still undefined concept of a more unified Europe was needed. The new Eastern governments had to pursue programs of democratization to institutionalize their new freedom, and to overcome the obstacles to effective cooperation with the West created by decades of administrative rule and command economies. In turn, the Western countries found it expedient to assist those internal processes to facilitate interchange, and to forestall the disorder that had in the past accompanied the collapse of empires. As the Eastern economies lapsed into deep recession, the West was generous with humanitarian aid, but also did not lag with longer term economic and political assistance.

This logic of relations between emergent Eastern Europe, generally, and the West applied nowhere with greater force than in the development of relations between Western Europe and the new Bulgarian government. In addition to the overall problems of transition it shared with other former Warsaw Pact countries, the new government in Bulgaria found that country

in the midst of a severe internal ethnic minority crisis as well as facing major crises in relations with neighboring countries.

Bulgaria offered Europeans an opportunity to work with groups who sincerely wished to dismantle the structure of communism that had for so long separated Europe, threatened the West, and occasioned billions of dollars' expenditure on defense and to replace the ruins of that system with democracy. After decades of empty rhetoric about economic cooperation, Bulgaria, like the other Eastern European countries, offered new markets for capital and technical services and new partnerships in political and economic cooperation. Finally, Bulgaria challenged Europe to play a role in easing regional problems that if left untended could have great impact on security continent-wide. Those problems ranged from averting disaster at backward nuclear plants, to reconciliation between Slavs and Muslims, to containing the disintegration of Yugoslavia.

First Steps

Zhivkov's legacy survived his fall on November 10, 1989. His men were still in charge, and his party still ruled. Under their new identity as the "Bulgarian Socialist Party" (BSP), the Communists continued to rule at least nominally until the second free elections brought a Union of Democratic Forces (UDF) government to power in October 1991. This did not inhibit the regime from reaching out early to establish new ties with Europe. But it did, as in the case of Bulgaria's relations with the United States, elicit a wait-and-see period that lasted through the first half of 1991 while the Europeans assessed the sincerity of the Bulgarians' desire for real change. During that time contacts from the European side were hesitant and tentative. From the Bulgarian side overtures became bolder and more credible as a steady erosion of BSP power permitted the UDF to put its impress more firmly on policy. A succession of events during that period dramatized the fundamental changes in Bulgarian society that permitted rapprochement with Europe.

The collapse of the Soviet Union at year's end gave new possibilities and exigencies to both sides' striving for a new security order in Europe. The Yugoslav crisis gave it urgency.

By February 1990 the new regime, now led by Andrey Lukanov, successor to Georgi Atanasov as prime minister in the BSP's effort at a new look, had sent a number of signals of its intention to open the country to contacts and to establish closer ties with Western Europe.¹ The first steps showing earnest intention—including abolition of liabilities against the Turkish minority, the BSP's renunciation of monopoly of power, and its promise of free elections—were followed by several others over the course of winter and spring of 1990. The infamous system of "exit visas" by which the Communist regimes had restricted travel by their citizens to the West was abolished.² Bulgaria stepped up cooperation with Western law enforcement authorities, in a noted instance leading to the break-up of a Bulgarian-led narcotics ring in Italy.³ Bulgaria realigned its foreign relations and policy apparatus, with an initial purge of Zhikovite holdovers in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the closing of several embassies in the Third World that had contributed little to Bulgaria's national interests.⁴ In addition, Bulgaria established diplomatic relations with Israel, South Korea, and, in measure of how far it had come with internal liberalization, also with the Vatican.⁵

Newly elected UDF President Zhelyu Zhelev marked his first meeting with the Sofia diplomatic corps on August 9, 1990, by enunciating the basic principles of the break with the past in foreign policy. Bulgaria was to be open to the West, it would establish closer relations with Western Europe, and it would seek international guarantees for its territorial integrity, while it would maintain friendly relations with the USSR and its Balkan neighbors.⁶

Lukanov's draft foreign policy program presented to Parliament on October 10 defined the task of foreign policy as seeking to secure the most favorable conditions for the construction of a civil society. This would entail a wide opening to the world with the removal of all political and economic obstacles to Bulgaria's development as a modern

democratic state. Bulgaria would strive for extended cooperation with advanced industrial countries. It would activate efforts to integrate with the existing international structures of Europe and with international financial and trade organizations. It would establish good neighborly and friendly relations with all Balkan states on the basis of international law, inviolability of borders, territorial integrity, and nonintervention. And with an eye to the past—which in 1990 still existed with the Warsaw Pact—Bulgaria would seek to preserve all “valuable and necessary elements of relations” with its allies and traditional partners.⁷ Time and events would be required before Bulgaria could deemphasize these links to the East and move further and faster toward the West, but time and events moved swiftly.

The chief impulsions in this direction for Bulgaria, as for others, were the quest for security and its economic and political counterparts, respectively, stabilization against the catastrophic free fall of the East European economies, and stabilization of the weak political system. The quest for legitimacy, inherited from the old regime but now validated by genuine democratic reform, emerged ever more strongly as a policy drive, especially as BSP authority declined and that of the democratic opposition grew.

Those traditionally in charge of Bulgaria's security were well aware of the needs of their changed circumstances from the earliest months of the new regime. In an April 1990 interview with the news weekly *Anteni*, Major General Kamen Petrov, later to become chief of the General Staff under the UDF government, and Major General Stoyan Andreev, who was to be appointed Zhelev's advisor for national security affairs, spelled out the risks and needs of security policy under the new conditions. They had seen tensions between Bulgaria and Turkey rise to dangerous levels in 1989 with the mass expulsion of ethnic Turks. They agreed on the danger faced by Bulgaria and on the need for seeking security in alliances. They were not yet prepared to give up on the Warsaw Pact, but its obvious decline, the assertion within the Pact of diverging security interests, and the specter of German

reunification were factors that already forced them to look beyond the pact. Andreev argued, and Petrov agreed, on the need for providing for the security of states such as Bulgaria within a general system of European guarantees. This was the line of thought that conservative but nationalist military circles would contribute to the formation of UDF foreign policy.⁸

Economic crisis also figured strongly into Bulgaria's, and Western Europeans' calculations. The new regime's real turn toward glasnost confirmed that the poor performance of the Communist economy in its later years had greatly increased the country's hard currency debt. With the disorder in economic affairs and disruption of trade relations accompanying the political changes throughout the East European economy, Bulgaria's slide accelerated in late 1989, with the consequence that by spring of 1990 its already huge foreign debt had increased to nearly eleven billion dollars, owed mostly to Western European and Japanese banks.

On March 31 the Foreign Trade Bank suspended payments on the national debt, followed the next day by the Finance Minister Belcho Belchev's announcement that the government would conduct debt talks with the West.⁹ Bulgaria wished to freeze principal payments for two years.¹⁰

The twin impulses of security and economic concerns thus prompted fast movement by the government after Zhivkov's ouster. After signalling its desire to establish a market economy, the new Lukanov government filed for membership in the International Monetary Fund and World Bank on February 8, and renewed the old regime's quest for GATT membership.¹¹

The earliest Western response came from the European Economic Community (EC). By February 1990 the EC Commission was debating its relationship with the new Eastern European governments, and weighing the idea of associate membership for them. By May 8, the EC had negotiated a ten-year trade agreement with Bulgaria, as it had done by that time with all other CEMA countries except Rumania.¹² A series of high-level visits between Sofia and Brussels signalled Bulgaria's intention to seek EC membership, and confirmed EC

estimation that Bulgaria was progressing toward a market economy. By July Bulgaria had obtained guest status in the European Parliament.¹³ The Bulgarian government used the EC connection in late 1990 also to seek relief for losses it suffered by supporting the embargo against Iraq.¹⁴

Access to the EC opened other doors, and events moved rapidly. The French government and private banks extended the new government early credits despite the debt rescheduling talks.¹⁵ The EC's March report to the G-24 on progress toward a market economy quickly led to the inclusion of Bulgaria and others in the PHARE and other G-24 aid programs for Hungary and Poland.¹⁶

By June 1990 negotiations for IMF membership were well advanced, and Bulgaria was encouraged to hope for balance of payments relief.¹⁷ In August the World Bank sent a delegation to Sofia to discuss membership and early development projects, and in October it assessed Bulgaria's economy as having abolished the command system, making it eligible for support for further, radical reforms.¹⁸ The new European Bank for Reconstruction and Development also became a frequent caller, and Bulgaria made its first approaches, with US blessing, to the Organization of Economically Developed Countries.¹⁹

Bulgaria similarly welcomed other opportunities for economic cooperation, including, in December 1990, Turkey's Black Sea Initiative, which was designed to develop eventually as an organization to replace in the Black Sea countries the advantages of cooperation lost with the abolition of Council of Economic Mutual Assistance.²⁰

Spurred by its growing economic and social problems reflected in the advancing erosion of BSP authority, the Lukanov government appeared to have concluded that it had little choice but to push its opening to the West vigorously despite its narrow electoral success in the first free elections in June.²¹

By November Bulgaria was being considered for observer status at the Council of Europe (COE), which Poland and Czechoslovakia had already joined.²²

As with COE, Bulgarian efforts were not driven solely by economic and security considerations. International prestige,

long denied the Zhivkov regime as it sought legitimacy through Western contacts, played a great role. The new regime desired recognition of its democratic reform aspirations as well as technical advice and assistance available for reforms through such organizations as the COE's Committee for Democracy through Law. The Bulgarian government's measure of recognition was its treatment by European states and international organizations on the basis of equality with Hungary, Poland, and Czechoslovakia, the most advanced of the East European countries.

This desire for recognition of its democratic reforms was a primary motive in Bulgaria's efforts to establish relations with the Vatican, which required the regime's lifting of the liabilities which the Zhivkov regime had maintained against the Catholic church in Bulgaria. In April then-President Mladenov renewed the regime's early invitation to the pope to visit Bulgaria, by suggesting he come for the May 24 Feast Day of the Apostles to the Slavs, Saints Kiril and Methodius.²³ This was a particularly striking and symbolic gesture with many dimensions of irony, but it worked. While the pope did not come, the Vatican early marked the lifting of restrictions on Catholics in Bulgaria and determined to reestablish relations.²⁴ In September, President Zhelev pressed the matter by promising an independent investigation of the assassination plot against the pope.²⁵ On November 5 Foreign Minister Lyuben Gotsev, a notable holdover from the old regime, was received in private audience by the pope.²⁶ On December 6, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced the restoration of ties with the Vatican, which had been severed in 1948, and a resident nuncio was assigned to Sofia.²⁷

The new government also proclaimed its message in the UN. On his first visit abroad, to attend the UN General Assembly, Zhelev told interviewers that his mission was "to introduce Bulgaria as a new democratic country" and to present its foreign policy as one of "striving for good relations with the UN family of nations."²⁸ Bulgaria had already established a track record. During the spring meeting of the UN Human Rights Commission Bulgaria had joined Poland,

Czechoslovakia, and Hungary (but not the USSR) in voting for the first time with the West on resolutions criticizing the human rights records of Cuba and China.²⁹

The onset of the Gulf crisis gave Bulgaria the opportunity to demonstrate this commitment in meaningful ways since the old regime had enjoyed close and profitable relations with Saddam Hussein's Iraq. Bulgaria supported UN resolutions condemning Iraq's invasion of Kuwait and imposing sanctions on Iraq. During his visit to the UN General Assembly Zhelev offered to send a team of military specialists to the Gulf.³⁰ He subsequently overrode BSP resistance to this proposal, which the Bulgarian government regularly renewed right up to the outbreak of conflict.³¹

Bulgaria's commitment to cooperation with the West on the Gulf crisis paid off. In response to reports of losses from the sanctions, the UN Security Council Committee on Sanctions passed a resolution on December 12 calling on all members and international financial institutions to give urgent aid to Bulgaria to ease its difficulties stemming from the embargo against Iraq.³²

Overtures to CSCE and NATO

Bulgaria's primary efforts during 1990, however, were directed at CSCE (Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe) and NATO, in which it saw substitutes for its lost Warsaw Pact security guarantees. Bulgaria's crisis with Turkey in 1989 gave those overtures purpose, and the gathering clouds over the Balkans gave them urgency. The Bulgarian delegate told a CSCE meeting on 19 June that Bulgaria was on "the other side of the barrier now" on human rights and other issues, and sought to cooperate with other countries in promoting respect for human rights that are "inherent to a common civilization." Bulgaria was also on board for strengthening CSCE's security function. The delegate described CSCE as "a pillar of confidence and security," which had an essential security role in a Europe where the importance of

military-political blocs was diminishing and local conflicts were coming to the fore.³³ Bulgaria's offer in October to freeze its forces even before conclusion of the CFE Treaty, betrayed its eagerness.³⁴ At the November CSCE Summit in Paris, Zhelev spelled out his reasons. His government was increasingly concerned over "disturbing trends in nationalistic hegemony" in the Balkans, and supported measures to ensure respect for territorial rights and integrity and to avert conflict.³⁵

None of Bulgaria's approaches to the West was less coy than its approaches to NATO, however, and the military were in the forefront. Soon after the coup against Zhivkov, coup maker and Defense Minister General Dobri Dzhurov himself raised the distant possibility of seeking membership in NATO.³⁶ Dzhurov's successor, General Yordan Mutaftchiev, raised the thought again in March 1991 when the Warsaw Pact was abolished. This was a stunning display of agility. Chief of Staff General Khristo Dobrev had told the visiting Warsaw Pact commander in February 1990 that the pact was "the chief factor for safeguarding peace and stability in Europe," and dismissed "delusions of a premature, one-sided disbanding" of the Pact. But slippage was already apparent. Blocs could not go on forever, added Dobrev.³⁷

Journalists did not lag behind the generals. In a June article in the news weekly *Pogled* entitled "The Warsaw Pact Is 35 Years Old and Seriously Ill," Encho Gospodinov made explicit what Bulgarians had wanted from the Pact and feared they could no longer get. Finding the Pact ill, but not on the verge of death, Gospodinov credited it—along with such debits as overarmament and the suppression of the Prague Spring—with such "successes" as preserving Bulgaria's security on the Turkish border, especially during the time of the occupation of Cyprus. He also credited the Pact with restraining the mutual hatred of some members.³⁸

With NATO's London Declaration of July offering a new relationship to the Warsaw Pact countries, official Bulgaria cast remaining inhibitions aside. An MFA statement endorsed the declaration.³⁹ Diplomatic relations were established, and in November, on the eve of the Paris CSCE Summit, Foreign

Minister Gotsev—fresh from his audience with the pope—visited Secretary General Manfred Woerner at NATO headquarters. Journalist Georgi Patokochev described the “previously unthinkable” visit as restructured, constructive diplomacy, and opined that Gotsev would use his NATO meetings to try to get guarantees for security and stability in the Balkan region. But he allowed that NATO would want proof of goodwill and predictability of Bulgarian foreign policy, “which has distanced itself from the accumulation of the past and shortsighted bloc solidarity.”⁴⁰

Gotsev was less reserved. He noted that

at a time when the Warsaw Treaty and above all its military structures are going into history, Bulgaria is looking for new friends, opportunities and ways to defend its national security.... The contacts will go on, as will the search for new forms of cooperation between Bulgaria and NATO.

Woerner's words, too, were barely less restrained, and gave scant support to NATO's official position that it could not extend membership to the former Warsaw Pact states. He spoke of a new era in relations, and of a framework from the impending CSCE Summit due to open in a few days, within which Bulgaria and the other Warsaw Treaty countries would be building a new, free, and united Europe together with the West. NATO, the only still operative organization for collective security in Europe, would continue to play a useful role, affirmed Woerner, and would seek to build a network to contribute to security in Europe.⁴¹ Within the month a Bulgarian parliamentary delegation presented NATO a resolution requesting membership. Balkan instability was one of their key arguments.⁴²

By the end of 1990 the real “new thinking” in foreign policy had advanced very far. In a review of progress during 1990 in the BSP paper *Duma* Deputy Foreign Minister Enyo Savov saw the beginning of the shaping and implementation of a foreign policy that was modern in character and content, the aim of which was to secure the most favorable external conditions for the formation of a civil society. It was based on

new principles—the national interests of the Bulgarian people, rather than ideological or short-term considerations. And in practice it sought to consolidate Bulgarian national security by orienting the country toward the emerging Europe-wide security structures.⁴³

The Great Change

Merely listing the events, from Soviet acquiescence in the attack on Iraq to the collapse of the Soviet Union, makes the point. The year 1991 saw one of the greatest upheavals of modern European history. The raising of the Russian flag over the Kremlin on Christmas Day brought the two halves of Europe face to face. The East confronted the need to create entirely new political and economic systems. The West was compelled vastly to accelerate its efforts to improvise arrangements to replace the shattered order of the East. For both sides the prospect of calamity heightened the urgency. For Bulgaria, the only Warsaw Pact member explicitly to cut its treaty ties with the Soviets, the events of 1991 gave special impetus to rapprochement with the West.

The first event, the collapse of the Warsaw Pact, came as no surprise. Faith in the Warsaw Pact had waned since the first overturns of 1989, with Hungary explicitly wanting out, and Poland and Czechoslovakia wavering only over the prospect of German reunification. Bulgarian conservatives, who wished to retain security ties with the Soviet Union were undercut, and the liberals were emboldened, by the rapidity in the consequent shift of European attention from confrontation in Central Europe to crisis in the Balkans. The conservatives' position became untenable with the total collapse of the Pact, but the pragmatic openness of many conservatives to a Western solution to Bulgaria's Balkan security dilemma lent support to the reformers who wished to realign Bulgaria in politics and ideology as well as in security ties, with the West.

That conservative reform position was, as noted above, first introduced by General Andreev. It was subsequently

adopted and developed by the reformers of the UDF whom General Andreev came to serve as military advisor. For them there was a vital link between internal reforms to break up the old system and a turn to the West for security. This group wished to break with the East on all counts and to reorient their entire national life toward the West. Both aspirations found their lode star in the West. In a candid interview with *Demokratiya* in October 1990, newly elected President Zhelev defended Bulgaria's offer of sending a volunteer contingent to the Gulf as a means of guaranteeing Bulgaria's security and territorial integrity. With the Warsaw Pact "a political corpse" and the Soviet Union disintegrating to the point that Bulgaria's treaty with it could not be relied on, the state must turn to international law, the European structures, and the UN.⁴⁴

Thus, by January 1991 no one, even among the conservatives, expected the Warsaw Pact to survive, although none among them was as advanced in thinking as Gotsev had been during his November visit to NATO. The last high ranking Communist in the government, Vice President and former Chief of the General Staff Atanas Semerdzhiev, admitted that a new policy was needed—not a policy of "begging," however, but one in keeping with the dignity of the nation, in order to make Bulgaria a worthy partner of Europe. But, while he was prepared to advocate seeking security ties with the West, Semerdzhiev was not willing to give up on the Soviet tie. Thus Bulgaria's new policy should be based not only on an all-European defense system, but also on "a bilateral foundation."⁴⁵

There ensued a debate over whether Bulgaria, after the lapse of the Pact, should cling to its bilateral treaty ties with the Soviets, or move definitively toward the West, with Prime Minister Popov and Defense Minister Mutafchiev—but not everyone in the Ministry of Defense—supporting Semerdzhiev's pro-Soviet stance.⁴⁶

The UDF view won out. President Zhelev told Czechoslovak News Service on February 1, eleven days before Gorbachev's letter to Pact leaders summoning a meeting to abolish it, that the Pact had outlived its time and Bulgaria

would leave it, along with Czechoslovakia, Poland, and Hungary. In the future, Bulgarian policy would seek integration in European political and economic structures, ensuring Bulgaria's security in new conditions.⁴⁷

Gorbachev's invitation, announced on February 12, 1991, to a meeting to dissolve the military apparatus of the Pact by April 1 underscored the growing division of opinion over how best to redress Bulgaria's security vulnerabilities. Zhelev's advisor, Ognyan Avramov, looked to an independent policy in cooperation with the emerging security structures of Europe, which he hoped would be reinforced by NATO.⁴⁸ Atanas Nastev, head of the MFA General Political Affairs Department pointed up the real dilemma for Bulgarian policy makers when he voiced concern that establishment of European-wide security structures lagged behind the elimination of the bloc structures.⁴⁹

The March 31 abolition of the Pact and the August 4 deadline for the renewal of Bulgaria's 1967 treaty with the Soviet Union forced the issue.⁵⁰ Contacts with NATO, including Foreign Minister Vulkov's meeting at the NATO Seminar in Prague with Secretary General Woerner, a visit to NATO Headquarters late in April by Prime Minister Popov, and a Woerner visit to Sofia in June lent support to those arguing for a European substitute for Eastern security links. Only the press of events—the Soviet treaty debate itself, adoption of a new constitution, and the September elections—delayed until the fall the trip to NATO which National Security Advisor General Andreev was urging on Zhelev, as a way of advancing work for integration into European security, including military organizations.⁵¹

Meanwhile actual Bulgarian-NATO ties were formed. The MFA welcomed the Baker-Genscher statement, following the June meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Copenhagen, announcing NATO's intention to set up liaison relations with the former pact countries, a decision that led to the establishment of the North Atlantic Consultative Council (NACC), comprising NATO members and former members of the Warsaw Pact.⁵² The Bulgarian government suggesting

co-sponsoring a European Security Seminar on sub-regional (i.e., Balkan) issues, and asked to have Bulgarian officers accepted at NATO schools. NATO obliged, and Bulgarian officers were nominated to attend the NATO Academy in Rome.

Prior to Woerner's visit to Sofia in the middle of the debate over whether to renew the Bulgarian-Soviet defense treaty, Dr. Solomon Paissy, chairman of the Atlantic Club of Bulgaria, which had been established just after a visit to Brussels by Bulgarian parliamentarians in November 1990, wrote the secretary-general, listing goals he wished to discuss during the visit.⁵³ Paissy requested NATO exchanges, cooperation in all fields, establishment of a NATO information center, and distribution of NATO documents in Bulgaria, and affiliation of the Bulgarian Atlantic Club with the Atlantic Treaty Association.

All of these goals were achieved by the end of 1991. The Bulgarian government declared on August 1 its intention not to renew its treaty with the Soviet Union but to negotiate a new, nonrestrictive one, a decision eased by these increasing contacts with NATO. The reformers who had wished to break their restrictive ties with the East had won. The Moscow coup within the month, and the collapse of the Soviet Union by year end, vindicated their judgments.

Political and Economic Integration

The growth of Bulgaria's political and economic ties with Western Europe in early 1991 paralleled and reinforced this rapid drift from East to West. Zhelev used his first New Year's address to reaffirm Bulgaria's new goal of integration with European and world economic and political structures.⁵⁴ Throughout the following months he and his colleagues pushed this priority forward on a broad front. In mid-January talks with the IMF, which had already produced agreement on Bulgarian-IMF relations, resumed, and quickly resulted in a \$503 million loan and a partial convertibility regime.⁵⁵ Bulgaria also formally applied for membership in the Council

of Europe, exchanged high-level visits with Strasbourg, and obtained a further, substantial COE loan.⁵⁶

While Zhelev's group was vigorously pushing integration forward in early 1991, the debate over Bulgaria's overall policy direction, East or West, continued. Prime Minister Popov maintained a conservative stance consistent with his reserve on security relations with the West. He warned against metaphors that suggested Bulgaria was something more than a country on the border of Europe and Asia only just returning to democracy. He called for emphasis on attention to internal needs and national interests over international undertakings, and insisted that foreign capital should be compelled to serve Bulgarian interests.⁵⁷

Reflecting the intensity of the debate, Foreign Minister Vulkov condemned the old policy for its isolation and disruption.⁵⁸ He carried the argument to the opponents when he told readers of the BSP daily *Duma* on February 20 that Bulgarian policy was directed toward Europe, and its goal was integration with the existing and emerging structures of a Europe, which was itself undergoing a process of unification. Policy would not be dependent on another state, or on unions or organizations. Rather, Bulgaria should count on its own economic and military potential for safeguarding its national interests. He believed that the dogmatism, narrow-mindedness, and phony nationalism of the past were giving way to policy based on the interests of the Bulgarian people. He emphasized the new character of Bulgarian relations with the USSR and the United States, and the progress that had been made in contacts with NATO and the WEU (the Western European Union), and predicted an early end of the Warsaw Pact and a revision of relations with the USSR.⁵⁹

Bulgarian diplomacy lost no opportunity to celebrate and widen its new international acceptance. Zhelev made a tour of Western capitals. In London he touted his call on Queen Elizabeth as evidence of Bulgaria's new acceptance by the West.⁶⁰ He won from Prime Minister Major support for Bulgaria's membership in COE and associate membership in the EC.⁶¹ He underscored Bulgaria's new Western alignment

by congratulating the Emir of Kuwait on the restoration of his government as a victory over lawlessness, noting that the invasion had brought the first serious test of Bulgaria's ability to make independent decisions in foreign policy.⁶²

Throughout the first half of 1991 the Bulgarian reformers continued aggressively to pursue this policy of gaining acceptance through cooperation. Bulgaria offered to host the headquarters of the new Black Sea Pact, reportedly shut down its European espionage network, and sought a seat on the International Law Commission and the UN Human Rights Commission.⁶³

Bulgaria's primary nonsecurity goal during 1991, however, was associate membership in the EC, and contacts with Brussels increased significantly.⁶⁴ In April Prime Minister Popov visited EC Headquarters to review the state of relations with Commission Chairman Jacques Delors. Popov reportedly received assurances that Bulgaria would not be treated in a discriminatory fashion relative to other advanced Eastern European countries such as Hungary and Czechoslovakia, that an agreement on association was feasible, and that "affiliate membership," albeit of a kind that would not strain its economy, could apply to Bulgaria.⁶⁵ Thus while by all reports Bulgaria was still being dealt with in a separate category from the triad, negotiations on association were to open soon, and would be concluded soon, depending upon the success of Bulgaria's reforms.⁶⁶

With the EC tap thus opened still more, benefits flowed. In June Bulgaria received \$150 million dollars as the first tranche of a G-24 stabilization loan.⁶⁷ There followed in July EC loans for improving Bulgaria's obsolescent nuclear plant and for balance of payments assistance and reserve stabilization.⁶⁸ On July 31, BTA reported an EC announcement that talks on Bulgaria's integration into the EC were scheduled for the latter half of 1991.⁶⁹

Thus, when Bulgaria renounced its bilateral treaty with the Soviet Union it did so with the confidence inspired by the imprimatur both of NATO and the EC.

The Moscow Coup

More than the collapse of the Warsaw Pact and the Bulgarians' renunciation of their special bilateral ties with the Soviet Union, or economic integration with Western Europe, however, the real watershed in Bulgaria's turn toward the West, as for the rest of Eastern Europe, was the Moscow coup of August 19. The coup shocked Bulgarians and Europeans, forcing awareness of the fragility of stability and peace in the East, and accelerated improvisation of institutions to fill the void. While Bulgaria had already declined on August 1 to renew its old defense treaty with the Soviet Union, such proponents of Soviet ties as Prime Minister Popov still spoke out about the importance of renewing such ties.⁷⁰ After the coup that possibility was gone. Subsequently in his statement of defense priorities on August 27, then Minister Mutafovichiev acknowledged that Bulgaria must resolve the problem of its security or its own "defense sufficiency" until international guarantees from European institutions, including NATO, could be provided.

Bulgarian reaction to the Moscow coup of August 19 reflected the division of the old and new politics in Bulgaria, and culminated the victory of the new. The BSP temporized to see what would come out of Moscow. The UDF, sensing grave danger to the democratic movement, reacted sharply. They used the reticence of the BSP against that party, immediately and during the subsequent election campaign that saw the BSP majority fade to 33 percent of the vote.⁷¹ Bulgaria symbolically threw its fate in with that of those seeking freedom in the USSR, extending recognition to the Baltic Republics on August 27.⁷²

As the coup galvanized the domestic program of the democrats, undoubtedly giving final impetus to the passage of the constitution and enabling the democrats to inflict electoral defeat on the BSP, so it also gave fire to the UDF's foreign policy of radically switching Bulgaria's security alignment from East to West. On August 21 *Bulgarska Armiya* carried an interview by chairman of the UDF National Coordinating Council, Filip Dimitrov, who was soon to become prime

minister, entitled "Sofia Must Never Wake Up to the Same Situation As Moscow Did on 19 August." Dimitrov attacked those who still thought in terms of a security arrangement with Moscow, citing the coup as proof of lack of solidarity and stability in the Moscow hierarchy and an indicator of its readiness to commit all sorts of adventures, even murderous ones.

To seek guarantees of security in a crumbling empire is fatal for Bulgaria. Our guarantees first and foremost lie in the European Structure[:] ... we comprehend Europe ... as a philosophical and cultural community, incompatible with oriental despotism and totalitarian subjugation.⁷³

The Balkan Crisis

The treaty renunciation, the coup, and rapid subsequent dissolution of the Soviet Union set Bulgaria, and other Eastern European countries, irretrievably on an independent, West-bound course. But the way was perilous. The outbreak of war in Yugoslavia compelled Bulgaria to steer ever harder toward Western Europe to escape engulfment in a Balkan storm, and forced Western Europe to examine seriously Bulgaria's claim to be an island of stability in the Balkans. For its part, Bulgaria recognized that Balkan problems were unsolvable within the limited means of the Balkan states, and strongly urged Europe onward in its turnaround. All Bulgaria's European initiatives consequently began to have rapid and definite results. As that summer's portentous events again made the Balkans the center of security concern in Europe for the first time since 1914, Bulgaria bode to become the hub of Balkan diplomacy.

As the war clouds spread over Yugoslavia, diplomatic initiatives between Bulgaria and Western Europe quickened. Germany was first to move. Bulgaria announced on 5 September that Foreign Minister Genscher would come to Sofia in October to sign a ten-year cooperation agreement. That agreement was designed to open access for Bulgaria to Europe and its markets—Germany pledged to help Bulgaria with the EC, IMF, G-24, COE, and other international

organizations—and to signal unanimity of views on Yugoslavia and cooperation on Yugoslav developments.⁷⁴ The agreement was signed just before the parliamentary elections to support the UDF against their BSP rivals.⁷⁵

The reason for this quickening of action was not elusive. On 19 September Sofia radio announced the cancellation of a Balkan Summit to be held in Athens on the Yugoslav problem, deferring to the European powers meeting in the Hague.⁷⁶ The next day Zhelev shared with the Washington Press Club his serious concerns over Yugoslavia and his fears that it might become a "European Lebanon." He called upon the EC and the UN to exert stronger pressure on the Serbian government.⁷⁷ The collapse of the Bulgarian-Rumanian-Greek effort to call a Balkan-wide conference to deal with the Yugoslav crisis convinced Zhelev that only Western Europe, "free of Balkan complexes," could hope to moderate the stormy issues involved there.

With the German opening, Bulgaria's Western European policy began rapidly to fall into place. In October the EC Council decided to undertake talks with Bulgaria, but not Rumania, on associate membership, and Bulgaria pressed its case with renewed vigor at NATO, the UN, IMF, and the G-24.⁷⁸ On October 29 Bulgaria's new ambassador to the EC presented her credentials to Commission Chairman Jacques Delors and arranged for a November 14 visit by Zhelev to discuss the association agreement.⁷⁹ The tide flowed in the opposite direction on October 31 when Sofia hosted a visit by Willem Van Eekelen, secretary general of the Western European Union, to carry forward earlier contacts on affiliation with that group.⁸⁰

Zhelev told Van Eekelen that Bulgaria saw guarantees for its national security in the framework of Europe's collective security and was therefore interested in all European structures and in seeking affiliation with them. Bulgaria's growing contacts with such organizations followed that pattern throughout the remainder of 1991 and continued into 1992. In November an IMF delegation visited Sofia.⁸¹ In December Bulgaria began seriously to push for membership in the "Partners in

Transition'' program of OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development).⁸² Similarly, Bulgaria concluded a cooperation agreement with the European Free Trade Area in December.⁸³ Also in December a delegation of the European Democratic Union, led by Klaus Franke, member of the Bundestag and a leader of the Christian Democratic Union (CDU), visited Bulgaria to discuss membership of the Bulgarian Democratic Party and United Democratic Center Party in the EDU, and cooperation between those parties and the CDU.⁸⁴ In January and March of 1992 a series of COE delegations concluded Bulgaria's earlier negotiations with that organization, resulting in membership for Bulgaria in May 1992.⁸⁵

NATO and the Balkans

All of these ties taken together, however, did not alleviate the deep anxiety felt by Bulgaria over its security situation in the Balkans. In his speech to the North Atlantic Council on November 14, 1991, Zhelev began to spell out concretely his hopes for relations with NATO and NATO's continuing role in European security. Zhelev welcomed the Declaration of the November Rome Summit, seeing in it the basis for close security cooperation between Eastern Europe and NATO within the context of a continuing United States commitment to Europe. He seized upon the idea of a security community from Vancouver to Vladivostok with NATO playing the role of security guarantor of a Europe organized politically and economically along the lines of a strengthened CSCE and a revamped EC. This development was important for the new democracies of Eastern Europe, especially Bulgaria, which relied on the assurances of its NATO partners that

their own security is inseparably bound up with the security of the other countries of Europe. The clear signal from NATO on August 21 that it would not permit infringement on the security and sovereignty of the Eastern European countries, we take as a new expression of solidarity and political engagement by NATO to our independence and sovereignty.⁸⁶

Zhelev was particularly pleased with the establishment of the new North Atlantic Cooperative Council designed to bring all the former Warsaw Pact countries into a consultative body coordinated with the North Atlantic Council. He ventured some parallel initiatives of his own. He suggested regular political consultations between Bulgaria, Greece, and Turkey, as suggested earlier by Greek Prime Minister Mitsotakis, and proposed the holding of a European Summit on Regional Security in Sofia in mid-1992.⁸⁷

With the unsuccessful efforts by the EC and the CSCE to resolve the Yugoslav crisis in late 1991, Zhelev and other Bulgarian policy makers had moved very far in their thinking that a continued NATO presence was vital to the working of any new European security system that might emerge. Agence France Press quoted him as saying that only NATO was capable of armed intervention in Yugoslavia.⁸⁸

NATO did little publicly to discourage that line of thought. In a press conference with Zhelev, Woerner cautioned that *guarantees* was too strong a word to apply to what NATO might do in the Yugoslav crisis. But he affirmed that any attempt to attack a neighboring state would be foiled. He accepted that Bulgaria, together with other countries, would be a factor for stability in the Balkans, and observed that Bulgarian-NATO relations were entering a new stage, with Bulgaria getting closer to the major force that ensures European stability.⁸⁹ During a visit to Sofia by a NATO delegation to study Bulgaria's, and other Eastern European countries' economic reforms, delegation leader Gerard Gaud was asked what security guarantees Bulgaria might have after the Warsaw Pact. Gaud's response was, "trust NATO, an alliance which did not permit an armed conflict in Europe for 45 years."⁹⁰

Beginning with this delegation, which approved Bulgaria's economic progress, there ensued a steady stream of visits between Sofia and Brussels, underscoring the growing NATO tie. After economic reform and political cooperation, the topics moved to relations among the separate armies, technology, training, and research and development of military equipment. The strained situation in the Balkans was never off the agenda.

Visitors to Brussels included Defense Minister Ludzhev, Defense Advisor General Andreev, Chief of Staff, General Petrov, and parliamentarians and members of the Bulgarian Atlantic Club. NATO's deputy commander General Dieter Klaus, in turn, visited Sofia.

The traffic required the establishment of a NATO Desk in the MFA, and in December Bulgaria began adapting its military structure to conform to that of NATO forces.⁹¹ Foreign Minister Ganev summed up Bulgaria's approach to even a limited NATO security role in the new European order at the first meeting of the North Atlantic Cooperative Council on December 20, 1991. While Bulgaria continued to hope for eventual full membership in NATO, Ganev said, it was pleased with the degree of security cooperation that had been achieved.

Bulgaria strongly supports the crucial role of the North Atlantic alliance as a guarantor of security and a source of stability, but also of change in Europe ... [whose] ... enduring value lies in the indispensable trans-Atlantic link.⁹²

Message to the EC

Zhelev carried a parallel message to the EC. Bulgaria wanted in but would be happy to cooperate in interim arrangements. Its new democratic government made it a worthy partner of EC as well as of NATO. Bulgaria wanted, moreover, an active role in the existing and emerging structures of Europe, Zhelev told Belgian Prime Minister Wilfried Martens, who lined up with Germany by promising to support Bulgaria's application to EC.⁹³

Thus, like its NATO policy, Bulgaria's EC policy also spurted forward from November 1991. While still in Brussels for the NATO meeting, Zhelev obtained from EC Commission Chairman Jacques Delors agreement on starting association talks on December 15, and additional economic assistance. Delors estimated the talks could be successfully concluded by the end of 1992.⁹⁴ Zhelev told *Figaro* that full EC membership was a priority. The Bulgarian economy did not yet meet the

requirements, but he estimated membership could be achieved in two to five years.⁹⁵

In December Foreign Minister Ganev and Daniel Gougainville, Deputy Director for Foreign Relations at the EC Commission for the talks exchanged visits. Gougainville expressed respect for Bulgaria's efforts to turn the disturbed Balkan region into a stable area.⁹⁶ With a January 1992 visit to Sofia by Commission Deputy Chairman Frans Andriessen, exploratory negotiations for a draft treaty were completed. Andriessen anticipated negotiating problems over free access for Bulgarian goods, especially wine, but expected negotiations on the agreement might go forward in April and be concluded by year's end.⁹⁷ On March 9, 1992, Bulgaria and the EC signed an agreement establishing an EC office in Sofia.⁹⁸

By spring 1992 Bulgaria had reason to be pleased with its reach toward Western Europe. It found itself in a vague security network at least implicitly guaranteed by NATO. It was the beneficiary of financial and technical assistance from a number of Western European sources. And it had at least affiliate status with all the major transnational organizations of Europe. It was actively engaged in CSCE, soon to be a member of COE, and well on the way to associate membership in the EC. The only shadow on the horizon with international organizations was the delay in the last tranche of the IMF stabilization loan over a slowdown in Bulgaria's privatization process.⁹⁹ In March, however, Prime Minister Dimitrov assured an American audience that legislation to remedy that situation was well underway in Parliament. By late summer, these developments were boosted by appearances of an economic upturn in Bulgaria as that country resumed payments on its foreign debt.

Thus as Bulgaria had arranged its policy to facilitate rapprochement with Europe, so Europe also adapted its institutions to make room for Bulgaria, and others set adrift by the disintegration of the Warsaw Pact and CEMA world. On both sides the motivation was necessity. Both had high stakes in peace, stability, and economic and political renewal in Eastern Europe. A key remaining question was whether this accommodation could proceed rapidly enough to avert catastrophe in Eastern Europe, beginning in the Balkans.

IV. BALKAN NEIGHBORS



he likelihood of general war in the Balkans remained high in late 1992. That such a war was not inevitable reflected much credit on the new policy of Bulgaria, now the region's central player. Bulgaria's rapid progress toward democracy, and translation of its new democratic values into a peaceful security policy had gained it the role of the major factor for stability in the Balkans. This development was one of the most pleasant, if not the greatest, surprises of the still continuing Eastern European Revolution of 1989. Presidential spokesman Valentin Stoyanov summarized that policy on March 29, 1991, when he told reporters that in accordance with its new security doctrine of "minimum defense sufficiency," Bulgaria would seek guarantees for its national security through a new kind of relations with its Balkan neighbors.¹

End of the Cold War

The collapse of Soviet hegemony permitted all the old, contentious Balkan issues fully to reemerge and left Bulgaria to face a hostile environment alone, a predicament which Bulgaria's own cold war policy had done much to create. But nature, too, in the form of geopolitics, played a role in Bulgaria's vulnerability. As the Balkan Wars of 1912 and 1913 forcefully demonstrated, Bulgaria faces too many enemies on too many fronts, with too few resources, to stand alone. Its policy had therefore traditionally relied on the patronage of a great outside power. The not insubstantial gain from that policy has been the preservation of Bulgaria in somewhat better shape than when it emerged from the annexation of Eastern Rumelia in 1885. The cost was retardation of Bulgaria's ability to deal creatively with regional problems and to achieve accommodation with its neighbors.

A Better Option

Stoyanov's initial statement of Bulgaria's new security policy indicated the post-Communist government had decided to come to terms with that historical problem. His government took up the better option of accommodation with its neighbors, seeking to mitigate old sources of conflict. This was a rational security policy, but it too had risks. Regional accommodation complemented Bulgaria's new long-term goal of seeking security through integration with a united Europe, under an Atlantic shield. And it was not unknown to the Communist regime, which paid it occasional deference, but its real historical exemplar was Aleksandur Stamboliyskii and his Treaty of Nish. That effort to effect reconciliation with Yugoslavia over Macedonia and to curb the terrorist Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization (IMRO) cost Stamboliyskii's life. One wishes better for his successors.

Sources of Conflict

Of all potential antagonists, the least threatening for Bulgaria was Greece, barring explosive developments in Macedonia. Yet, historical Greek cultural chauvinism, popular irredentist sentiments over Thrace and Macedonia, Bulgaria's occupation of northern Greece during World War II, and subsequent support for Greek Communist insurgents left bitter memories. Thus despite the Zhivkov-Papandreou rapprochement with their 1987 Declaration of Friendship, Good Neighborliness, and Cooperation, and the smooth transition to Zhelev and Mitsotakis as cold war verities gave way to the uncertainties of the new order, fragilities remained perceptible. The main fault line reopened with Greece's protests of Bulgarian recognition of Macedonia. Surprisingly, though, relations have been good. Bulgaria developed good CSCE military relations with Greece and managed to avoid alarming Greece with its rapprochement with Turkey.

Impact of Ecology

Of the three serious cases of potential conflict for Bulgaria, each of which represented a different set of issues, Rumania's was the least threatening. Delicate but not immediately dangerous, it illustrated the pitfalls of latent irredentism in Eastern Europe and, above all, the newer but potentially not less virulent issue of transnational industrial pollution. As a public issue, the latter dates to February 1988 when citizens of the Danubian city of Ruse demonstrated in front of party headquarters over their frustration at the government's failure to protect them from dangerous chlorine gas emitted by Rumanian industrial plants across the river. The Rumanians reacted with countercharges of pollution from Bulgaria's nuclear power plant at Kozloduy some 150 kilometers upstream from Ruse.²

Rumanian industrial pollution in Ruse remained as much a problem for the new government as it had been for the old regime and, subsequently, with Bulgarian complaints of pollution downstream at Silistra, threatened to embroil the entire Danubian border. Another mass demonstration in Ruse set a negative tone for an October 1990 visit by Rumanian Foreign Minister Adrian Nastase that aimed at establishing new relations between the new governments. Instead, ecology dominated the talks.³

And Dobrudja, Too

On June 26, 1991, the Bulgarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs protested a speech in the Rumanian Parliament by Foreign Minister Nastase on June 24 in which the Minister referred to the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact of 1939 as resulting in Rumania's "losing Southern Dobrudja" which was "occupied by Bulgaria in 1940." Despite Nastase's prompt clarification of his statement, Bulgarian press reaction—an unaccustomed new force in Bulgaria—was sharp toward the Rumanians, and toward the Bulgarian government. The trade union daily *Trud* and the Agrarian paper *Zemlya* ridiculed both Rumanian

irredentist pretensions and the Bulgarian Foreign Ministry's timid response.⁴

Bulgarian diplomats nevertheless felt they had gained their end of obtaining a new basis of relations with Rumania in September 1991 when visiting Rumanian Prime Minister Petre Roman and Prime Minister Popov signed a Declaration of Friendship. The Declaration outlined new features of relations, such as easing the transborder movement of persons and goods, ecological cooperation, and initiatives to create structures of security.⁵

The continuing fragility of the relationship was betrayed within days, however, by another flare-up of the ecological crisis in Ruse. On September 24 the Bulgarian government made an urgent request to Prime Minister Roman to stop renewed pollution in Ruse, reflecting popular exasperation by threatening to internationalize the issue by raising it at a Balkan prime ministers' meeting set for September 19 in Athens, and also with the EC.⁶

Dobrudja, too, continued to rankle. Reference by President Iliescu in December to Rumania's "historical, ethnic, and natural borders" including parts of Bulgaria, drew renewed Bulgarian criticism.⁷ Thus the twenty-year Friendship Treaty signed during Iliescu's visit to Sofia on January 27, 1992, brought neither trust nor friendship. Complaints of Rumanian territorial pretensions continued to occur in the press, particularly in regard to the Silistra area, and many Bulgarian citizens continued to regard Rumania as an enemy.⁸

The Bulgarian Turkish Minority

A more dangerous source of regional conflict threatening the new Bulgaria was the existence of a substantial, repressed Turkish minority on its territory. The Bulgarian Turks comprise some 15 percent of the population and are concentrated in the east, near Turkey. Associated with the five centuries of Ottoman rule, they are a despised group. Fearing their numbers and their birthrate, and the possibility they might be used by

Turkey as an medium for subversion, the Communist government undertook a campaign of forced assimilation against them, featuring compulsory change of their names from Turkish to Bulgarian names in 1984. In addition to further tarnishing Bulgaria's international reputation, the assimilation campaign destroyed Bulgaria's earlier business-like relations with Turkey and replaced them with dangerous tensions.

The rehabilitation of the Turkish minority by the new government cleared the way not only for restoration of good relations with Turkey and the West, but also for considerable progress in internal democratization. The Turkish minority accepted their restored rights with a responsible attitude. Their organization, Movement for Rights and Freedoms (MRF), dating back to the emergence of dissent in Bulgaria in 1988, early established a good record of cooperation with ethnic Bulgarian dissident groups which formed the now governing Union of Democratic Forces (UDF). After the election of September 1991, MRF support in Parliament permitted the UDF to set up Bulgaria's first completely non-Communist government since 1944.

New Relations with Turkey

The emancipation of the Turkish minority had a major positive impact on relations with Turkey as well as on public life.⁹ The action gained the support of the Turkish minority for democratization. It removed one of the chief causes for Bulgaria's pariah status in the international community. It also took a long step toward addressing what Bulgarians have traditionally thought of as the major threat to their security—aggression from Turkey, supported by a disaffected minority. The United States encouraged this reform, and subsequent Bulgarian-Turkish contacts.¹⁰

However they came about, Bulgaria's contacts with Turkey paid off early. A November 1990 visit to Sofia by a Turkish economic delegation led by Minister of Finance and Customs Adnan Kahveci resulted in a loan of 400,000 tons of

fuel oil and an unspecified quantity of electrical power to Bulgaria. Observers noted that was the first assistance extended by any country to compensate Bulgaria for its losses in supporting the Iraq embargo. Soon after the Kahveci visit, Turkey also granted Bulgaria \$175 million in credits.¹¹

In February 1991 General Mehmet Onder, deputy commander of the Turkish General Staff, made the first high-level Turkish military visit to Bulgaria since 1923. That visit was a success both in substance and atmospherics. Onder and his hosts agreed to begin talks, exchange delegations, and to conduct inspections under the Paris CFE Agreement. Onder gave a vague endorsement to Bulgaria's proposal for a Balkan security system. He praised the warmth and hospitality of his Bulgarian hosts, who had added the adroit touch of taking Onder to visit his mother's birthplace in the Bulgarian Black Sea town of Michurin.¹²

In July Deputy Defense Minister and Chief of the Bulgarian General Staff Radnyu Minchev returned the Onder visit. The Minchev visit constituted a careful effort to normalize relations with Turkey while maintaining balance between them and relations with Greece. He betrayed serious lingering doubts about Turkey's intentions, however, expressing concern over large Turkish forces, and the alleged existence of a nuclear weapons depot in Turkey's Eastern Thrace provinces. Gures held out the possibility of further effort at normalization, including reductions in the First Army in Thrace, and tentatively agreed to Bulgaria's suggestion of joint military talks with Greece.¹³

During a December 1991 visit to Sofia, Gures concluded an agreement with the Bulgarians on confidence- and security-building measures under the Paris accord, which became known as the Sofia Document. In a press conference on the visit Gures confirmed that there would be cuts in the Turkish First Army in Thrace. Those cuts began in 1992 with the implementation of the border security zones agreed in the Sofia Document and troop withdrawals.

There was also significant progress on the political side of the relationship during 1991. On his return from a visit to

Turkey in late May, Foreign Minister Viktor Vulkov reported progress on a number of issues, including a regional cooperation agreement involving Turkey, Bulgaria, Rumania, and the USSR.¹⁴ The Black Sea Economic Pact was signed in June 1992. Vulkov announced that the Bulgarian and Turkish sides had also agreed to prepare a declaration on good neighborly relations, friendship, and cooperation, as well as to update and liberalize treaty-legal relations generally. That agreement, also, was signed in early 1992.

Bulgaria's relations with Turkey continued to improve in 1992, although they were marred early in the year by serious maritime boundary incidents resulting, in one instance, in the death of a Bulgarian sailor. Visits to Ankara by Defense Minister Ludzhev and Prime Minister Dimitrov, as well as President Zhelev's visit to sign the Black Sea Pact in Istanbul, and an impending visit to Sofia by President Ozal marked a new stage in Bulgarian-Turkish relations. Both sides could justly characterize as exemplary a bilateral relationship which had once been the worst in the Balkans.

Yugoslavia and Macedonia

For all Bulgaria's historic fear of Turkey, Yugoslavia supplanted that country in 1992 as the primary threat to Bulgarian security. The key factor was the old issue of Macedonia—given new urgency by the outbreak of war between Serbia and the breakaway republics. The collapse of the beleaguered Yugoslav federation raised again the specter of Serbian hegemony, and threatened to revive the same nationalist and irredentist passions that came near to destroying Bulgaria in the Balkan Wars. In 1992 the spread of the "War of Yugoslav Devolution" southward through Croatia to Bosnia gave immediacy to that threat.

As with Turkey, the issues involved with Yugoslavia are complex and deeply emotional. While the Bulgarian government feared war with Serbia over the Yugoslav crisis of 1991-92, Bulgarians at the popular level experienced mixed

emotions—malicious joy over the misfortune of an old enemy and sympathy for the Slovenes, Croats, and other non-Serbs seeking independence. Most of all, Bulgarians feared that Serbia, which had won the earlier struggles over Macedonia—and then succeeded in retaining that land in an “artificial” federation—might now consummate its victory by absorbing that land, along with other remnants of Yugoslavia into a Serbianized conglomerate ruled from Belgrade. Such an outcome would destroy forever the myth of a medieval Bulgarian Kingdom on three seas, and dreams of a Bulgarian identity in the Okrid Territory that for Bulgarians constitutes the cultural heartland of Orthodox Bulgarian civilization.

That threat compelled a radical redefinition of Macedonia in Bulgarian thinking and a reorientation of policy toward Yugoslavia that in turn heightened the risk of conflict in the short term. Whereas in past decades Bulgaria maintained a policy of nonrecognition of Yugoslav Macedonia as a *national entity*, the post-Zhivkov government moved toward increased contacts with the republic, recognition of its existence as a political (if still not as a separate national) entity, and insistence on its independence. The difference between the old and new concepts of Macedonia was that now Bulgaria was more confidently willing to accept the risks inherent in the idea of Macedonian independence in order to ensure the survival of its Bulgarian-Macedonian identity—to sacrifice quixotic nationalist and political sentiments for the sake of more enduring cultural values. Those risks included irredentist claims to Bulgaria’s Pirin Macedonian region by the new Macedonian state, possible foreclosure of any eventual union of Macedonia with Bulgaria, and a nationalist backlash in Bulgaria. The long-term benefit might ideally be the reduction of Macedonia as an issue dividing the Balkans and the removal of an obstacle to the old dream of a Balkan Federation. More immediately, however, loomed the heightened risk of involvement in the Yugoslav conflict, if not war with Serbia.

Macedonia and Nationalism

Pressed onward by traditional nationalist sentiment toward Macedonia, Bulgaria moved early to establish ties with that emerging state. In November 1990, Lyuben Gotsev paid the first ever visit to Macedonia by a Bulgarian foreign minister, holding talks in Skopje on economic and cultural cooperation between Yugoslav and Pirin Macedonia. Following Macedonia's referendum for independence in September 1991, Bulgaria quickly affirmed its intention to extend recognition, although actual recognition was delayed until January 1992.¹⁵

Even so, the government was still lagging behind popular opinion and events. Mikhail Ognyanov spoke for many Bulgarians when he wrote in *Demokratiya*, the newspaper of the soon-to-be-governing UDF, an article entitled "Our Brothers Must Feel Our Shoulder." Ognyanov argued the moderate nationalist point of view that Bulgaria's aim must not be to change the border with Macedonia, but to change its meaning. Yet he insisted that lack of territorial interest did not signify lack of national or spiritual interest in a country that was an historic part of Bulgaria. He criticized those who did not understand the "original sin of Versailles" that created modern Yugoslavia, incorporating Macedonia, and who wanted to maintain the status quo of Tito's "second Yugoslavia," which he viewed as thinly disguised Serbian domination. He feared that Macedonia would now be swallowed up in "Serboslavia." Ognyanov saw the solution in a separate Macedonian state with the right to associate with whatever state it wished—an association of Bulgarians and "Bulgarians with another name."¹⁶

The legal "Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization—Union of Macedonian Societies" (IMRO-UMS), which had survived in Sofia since its heyday of terrorism in the interwar years, and the illegal Ilinden Organization, named for the Macedonian revolt of 1903, spoke for the extremists, advocating Bulgarian intervention in the Yugoslav conflict on behalf of Macedonia. Thus the "Macedonian Question" had come once again to disturb the peace of the Balkans, if not all of Europe.

At the outset of the Yugoslav conflict IMRO-UMS and the Bulgarian National Democratic Party set up a committee in Sofia to recruit volunteers to defend Slovenia and Croatia. The committee sought to form groups of medical personnel, sappers, and other specialists who, depending on how events developed, could also assist the "peaceful restoration and organization of the new sovereign states." The government stood at arms length. The president's National Security Council and the General Staff declined to support the formation of a volunteer battalion for Slovenia and Croatia to avoid complicating already tense relations with Yugoslavia.¹⁷

On July 8 IMRO-UMS, the National Democratic Party, and the Bulgarian Constitutional Forum organized a rally in Sofia on behalf of Slovenia and Croatia under the slogan "For Democracy, Against Violence, and in Support of the Sovereignty of Slovenia and Croatia." Thousands attended the rally, according to reports, chanting "down with Serboslavia" and "independence for Macedonia." One speaker described Yugoslav army actions as a brutal violation of human rights and a serious blow against the CSCE process.

The declaration adopted at the rally branded "the aggression of the so-called Yugoslav Peoples Army against the independent states of Slovenia and Croatia as the last desperate attempt of Pan-Serbian chauvinism to perpetuate the Balkan prison of nations." The declaration also voiced IMRO's opposition to alleged Serbian attempts to eliminate the statehood of the Republic of Macedonia, and pledged, in the event of Serbian aggression against Macedonia, to be ready to give support to their compatriots.¹⁸

At the height of the crisis President Zhelev and other ranking officials attended an August 2 anniversary memorial service for the fallen in Macedonia's unsuccessful revolt against the Turks in 1903. The leadership of IMRO, representatives of the political parties, and leaders of the nationalist Rakovski Bulgarian Officers' Legion were also in attendance at Sofia's Aleksandur Nevski Cathedral.¹⁹

All during the early days of the Yugoslav crisis the Bulgarian government was thus under heavy public pressure to

take advantage of the situation. The press more than played its role, as duly reported by the Yugoslav news agency, giving the Yugoslavs ample grounds to doubt Bulgarian intentions. On the outbreak of the civil war, the BSP newspaper *Duma* congratulated Bulgaria's secessionist Slovene and Croatian brothers and criticized Zhelev for favoring preservation of "the artificial conglomerate called Yugoslavia." *Narodna Armija* also supported the secessionist republics, despite Ministry of Defense efforts to dampen down the crisis. *Demokratiya*, the major government newspaper, blamed the civil war on the "irresponsible and criminal policy" of Belgrade.²⁰

Fear of Conflict

Into such tinder the Yugoslav conflict needed only to throw a spark for war to engulf the Balkans. Bulgaria and Yugoslavia, in fact, approached the brink following the outbreak of hostilities in Slovenia in June 1991. On June 25 the Bulgarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs urgently denied press reports that Bulgaria had recognized the sovereignty and independence of Croatia. The next day the Ministry reaffirmed that denial, but sought to keep its options open, declaring itself in favor of preserving Yugoslavia's integrity but also favoring relations both with Yugoslavia and with the Yugoslav republics.²¹

A supportive statement by the BSP, which was otherwise inclined to exploit nationalist issues, underscored official concern over the gravity of the situation. The BSP approved the official position, calling for a peaceful settlement of the Yugoslav crisis.²²

On August 3 Foreign Minister Vulkov repeated those assurances but again registered a strong note of ambiguity. He acknowledged that Bulgaria had its own interests in Macedonia, deriving from "well-known historic and ethnic realities," but asserted this did not mean Bulgaria had any territorial claims. The Serbs could take little comfort, however, from his added comment that "Bulgaria will continue to

change its position, as do all the other countries, according to developments in Yugoslavia.''²³

In early July, reports of troop movements along the common border aroused serious concern. On July 1 the Yugoslav Embassy in Sofia denied a BTA statement about military activities on the border, and Tanjug dismissed it as an unobjective effort by Bulgarian media to pressure their government to change its stance favoring preservation of Yugoslav unity.²⁴ Yet rumors persisted, requiring direct military-to-military reassurances. On July 5 Minister of Defense Colonel General Yordan Mutafovich telephoned his Yugoslav counterpart, Colonel General Veljko Kadijevic, that the Bulgarian army would take no actions that might threaten Yugoslavia. In return, Kadijevic promised that the Yugoslav army would not take any action that might endanger Bulgaria's security.²⁵ On the same day a Ministry of Defense spokesman stated "categorically" that the Ministry's leadership stood firmly behind the policy of noninterference in Yugoslavia's internal affairs and the understanding with that country, conducted by the president of the Republic, the Grand National Assembly, and the Council of Ministers.²⁶ Such reports, and denials, persisted throughout August.²⁷

Genuine fear of a situation that might draw Bulgaria into war compelled a number of measures by the government to forestall that risk. On 22 July the government banned the export, re-export, and transit through Bulgarian territory of military equipment to the republics. During the September 12 visit by Rumanian Prime Minister Roman, Prime Minister Popov raised the possibility of discussing the Yugoslav situation at a meeting of Balkan countries to be held in Athens on September 19. But that effort failed over mutual fears and suspicions.²⁸

The Yugoslav crisis and its dangers preoccupied the Bulgarian government through 1992. The government continued to issue assurances it had no claims against, nor threatened any of the republics. It worked diligently to draw the attention of CSCE, NATO, and other international organizations to the need for intervention, making frequent

appeals for international observers to be placed on Bulgaria's border with Serbia, and especially with Macedonia. Those appeals were only partly met by UN and EC sanctions against Serbia, the UN's July resolutions on armed humanitarian assistance to Bosnia, and by the CSCE's August decision to send observers to such possible "spillover" areas as Voevodina, Kosovo, Sanjak, and Macedonia. The Bulgarians could also draw little comfort from the inconclusive results of the London Conference of August 26.

Nevertheless, action by the EC and US, pressed by German initiative, to recognize Slovenia, Croatia, and later Bosnia-Herzegovina afforded valuable cover for Bulgaria's own early recognition of those republics, as well as of Macedonia. But Bulgaria—joined only by Turkey, and later Russia—remained isolated on the Macedonian issue, as Greece's opposition thwarted general recognition of that republic. That standoff raised ever higher, from Bulgaria's perspective as well as from that of many foreign observers, the likelihood of a wider Balkan war.

The fear remained constant. Even newspaper diatribes against Serbia subsided. At a meeting at the Washington Press Club in September 1991, President Zhelev expressed fear that the war would transform Yugoslavia into a "European Lebanon," and appealed to the EC and the United States to exert greater pressure on Serbia for a peaceful solution that exceeded the means of the Balkan states alone. The tragic events of 1992 served only to worsen that fear.

Zhelev was right in his appeal to the West for help in containing the Yugoslav crisis. The carnage in Bosnia clearly demonstrated, if the savagery in Croatia had not, the fearful consequences of leaving the people of the Balkans on their own to resolve bitter historical problems which were not totally of their making. In late 1992 the prospects were ominous as the war threatened to spread to Kosovo and Macedonia, but conflict was not inevitable. The option of the world powers to bring concerted, overwhelming pressure on the Serbs to pull back from their war of conquest and "ethnic cleansing" without sacrificing thousands more lives was still open. The

success of that option, though, depended upon finding other partners in the Balkans that, like Bulgaria, would be prepared to give peaceful, democratic development priority over bitter memories and ultra-nationalist dreams in order to work with the international community for a better new world order.

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"Woerner Interviewed," FBIS EEU-91-114, AU12-6113491, 13 July 1991, Sofia BTA English Service, 0929 GMT 12 June 91.

"Woerner Addresses National Assembly," FBIS-EEU-91-115, AU1306162291, 14 June 1991, Sofia BTA English Service, 1502 GMT 13 June 1991.

"Woerner Meets Defense Minister," FBIS-EEU-19-115, AU1306185991, 14 June 1991, Sofia BTA English Service, 1832 GMT 13 June 1991.

"Woerner Sends Message to Moscow," FBIS-EEU-19-115, AU1406085091, 14 June 1991, Sofia BTA English Service, 2209 GMT 13 June 1991.

53. "Woerner, Zhelev Address Sofia University," FBIS-EEU-91-115 AU1306152191, 14 June 1991, Sofia BTA English Service, 1443 GMT 13 June 1991.

54. "New USSR-Bulgarian Treaty to be Signed by End of Year," FBIS 1007081991, R 100819Z JUL 91, Sofia *Duma*, 6 July 1991, p.1.

55. "President Zhelev on Treaty with USSR," FBIS AU1807173391, R 181733Z JUL 91; Senior Lieutenant Krasimir Uzunov, "Reciprocity is the Best Guarantee for the Future," *Bulgarska Armiya*, 15 July 91, pp. 1-4.

56. "Zhelev, Minchev Differ on Soviet Treaty Military Clauses," FBIS AU2607092691, R 260926Z JUL 91, Sofia *Duma*, 22 July 91, p. 2.

57. "Vulkov Interviewed on Treaty with the USSR," FBIS AU3107131591, 311315Z JUL 91, Sofia BTA English Service, 1003 GMT 31 July 91.

58. "Joint Declaration Issued on Bulgarian-Soviet Treaty," FBIS AU0108202191, R 012021Z AUG 91, Sofia BTA English Service, 1935 GMT 1 August 1991.

59. *Ibid.*

60. The issues of transfer of SS-23 missiles from the Soviet to Bulgarian forces as a possible evasion of INF will be discussed under US-Bulgarian bilateral relations (FBIS AU0312135790, R031357Z December 1990).

61. While the BCP was at first favored to win the elections over splits in the UDF, the consequences of the attempted coup in Moscow made the outcome problematical. There were calls, for example, for actions in Bulgaria similar to those taken in Moscow, viz., confiscation of BSP property and dissolution of the party itself.

II. THE UNITED STATES' ROLE

1. Traicho Kostov was a leader of the Bulgarian Communist Party who was tried for treason and executed in 1949, for allegedly conspiring with American and British intelligence. His trial was Bulgaria's main contribution to the wave of purges inspired by Stalin in the late 1940s against leading communist officials in Eastern Europe who might be considered in any way to be potential opponents of Stalinist rule.

2. Bulgaria's tenure of a seat on the UN Security Council in 1986-87, as well as its avid courtship of high level visits, including by members of the US Congress increased the effectiveness of these measures.

3. Kjell Engelbrekt, "Redefining National Security in the New Political Environment," RFE Report on Eastern Europe, Vol. 2, No. 30, July 26, 1991.

4. The rehabilitation of the Turks resulted not only from considerations of foreign policy. Massive demonstrations in urban areas of Eastern Bulgaria where the Turkish population is concentrated had threatened civil control during May 1989. Those demonstrations, resulting in bloodshed, were followed by a massive flow of refugees from Bulgaria to Turkey, amounting to half a million persons that threatened the economic viability of a country already facing demographic crisis. During the latter half of 1989 the Turkish minority situation threatened to undo all the gains that had been made in

Bulgarian-US relations, resulting in August in the temporary recall of the American Ambassador.

5. FBIS AU1508154490, "Warsaw Pact's Role in Ethnic Conflicts Analyzed," Vasil Asparukhov, "The Hour of Change," *Otechestven Front*, Sofia, August 10, 1990, page 2.

6. Or at least those which coincided with Bulgarian nationalist proclivities. Observers have noted that the treatment of the "Macedonian Question" in the press, and Bulgarian relations with Yugoslavia in general, was an accurate gauge of Soviet-Yugoslav relations. That is, when the Soviets wished to express displeasure with Yugoslavia, they unleashed the Bulgarians.

7. FBIS AU0806193191, Sofia BTA English Service, 1753GMT, 8 June 1991.

8. The Zhivkov regime had actively sought membership in GATT during its last two years. This quest among others had failed over the Turkish minority crisis of 1989. See Kjell Engelbrekt, "Bulgaria's Foreign Relations," *RFE Report on Eastern Europe*, Volume 1, Number 20, July 20, 1990, page 9.

9. Ibid.

10. Georgi Miloshev, "Interview with Ambassador Ognyan Pishev," *Otechestven Vestnik*, 13 November 1990, page 2.

11. Vikhra Rizova, "Bulgaria has renounced Satellite Syndrome—Interview with Foreign Minister Viktor Vulkov," *Sofia Anteni*, No. 26, 26 June 1991, page 9. FBIS AU0207132391.

12. RFE, *Report on Eastern Europe*, Volume 2, No. 34, 23 August 1991, page 34.

13. "Relations with US on Eve of Quayle Visit Show Promise," Sofia BTA English Service, 0740 GMT, 7 June 1991. FBIS AU0706090691.

14. Baker's Testimony to House Ways and Means Committee, April 18, 1991. From an unclassified State Department Document.

15. Baker's Testimony, April 18, 1990,

16. Radio Free Europe, Report on Eastern Europe, Volume 1, Number 19, May 11, 1990.

17. RFE-REE, Vol. 1, No. 21, May 25, 1990. Check other sources. Did the team go for the elections or just to check out the preparations before the elections?

18. RFE-REE, Vol. 1, No. 24, June 15, 1990.

19. RFE-REE, Vol. 1, No. 25, June 22, 1990, June 14, page. 39.

20. RFE-REE, Vol. 1, No. 26, June 29, 1990, June 21, page 53.

21. FBIS AU3003193390, Sofia BTA English Service, 1816 GMT, 30 March 1990, "No Nuclear Weapons in Bulgaria."

22. FBIS, AU1204154090, Sofia *Narodna Armiya*, April 11, 1990, page 4. Interview with Lieutenant General Radnyu Minchev, Spokesman of the Ministry of National Defense, "SS-23 Missiles: The Sensation Does Not Exist," by Senior Lieutenant Krasimir Uzunov (date and time of interview not given).

23. FBIS AU 3108192490, Sofia BTA English Service, 1749 GMT, August 31, 1990.

24. FBIS PM 0509134190 Bulgaria Denies Presence of Nuclear Warheads, Moscow, *Pravda*, September 4, 1990, Second edition, page 5 from TASS.

25. FBIS AU 0312135790, Data on SS-23 Missiles Revealed, Sofia, *Mladezh* (Dialogue supplement), November 30, 1990, page 2. Report by Dimitur Dzhenev, "For the First Time—Information About Bulgarian SS-23 Missiles."

26. FBIS-EEU-91-143, AU 2507084691, Ministry Defends Purchase of SS-23 Missiles, Sofia BTA English Service, 0814 GMT, July 25, 1991.

27. *US Peace Corps News*, September 27, 1990.

28. FBIS AU0412215990, R042159Z December 1990, Sofia BTA English, GMT 2048, December 4, 1990.

29. RFE, REE Vol. 2, No. 2, January 11, 1991, p. 40.

30. RFE, REE, Vol. 2, No. 13, March 29, 1991, page 47.

31. FBIS AU2401091391, R240913Z January 1991, Sofia BTA English Service, 0039 GMT, January 24, 1991. RFE, REE, Vol. 2, No. 5, February 1, 1991, page 42. RFE, REE, Vol. 2, No. 24, June 14, 1991, page 39.

32. FBIS AU2210203090, Sofia BTA English 1930 GMT, October 22, 1990.

33. RFE, REE, Vol. 2, No. 26, June 28, 1991, page 50.

34. RFE, REE, Vol. 2, No. 30, August 2, 1991, page 47.

35. RFE, REE, Vol. 2, No. 24, June 14, 1991, page 39.

36. RFE, REE Vol. 2, No. 33, August 18, 1991, page 37. BBC also negotiated the use of FM frequencies in Bulgaria at that time.

37. RFE, REE, Vol. 2, No. 35, August 30, 1991, page 41.

38. Unclassified USIA reports of August 6 and 8, 1991.

39. FBILS, AU2305100791, R231007Z May 1991, Sofia BTA English Service, 0856 GMT, May 23, 1991.

40. FBIS AU2305160891 P231608Z May 1991, Sofia BTA English Service, 1523 GMT, May 23, 1991.

41. Judy Dempsey, "Bulgaria Tunes in to the Voice of America," *Financial Times*, May 3, 1991, page .

42. FBIS AU1705165591 R171655 May 1991, Sofia, *Demokratiya*, Commentary by Petko Bocharov: "The Perfidy Is Infinite," May 11, 1991, page 1.

43. FBIS AU0806181090, Sofia BTA English Service, June 9, 1990.

44. FBIS AU0203225990, Sofia BTA English Service, 1918 GMT, March 2, 1990, "Friends of USA in Bulgaria Distance Themselves from Bulgaria-USA 104." FBIS AU0306141591 R031415Z June 1991, Sofia, *Demokratiya*, "First Edition Out of *Priyateli na Sasht*," May 28, 1991, page 5.

45. FBIS AU 2809204990, Zhelev Calls Meeting with Bush "Historic," Sofia BTA Domestic Service, 2000 GMT, September 28, 1990.

46. Ibid. and FBIS AU2809174090, Foreign Minister's Absence Noted (during Zhelev's call on Bush), Sofia Domestic Service, 1630 GMT, September 28, 1990.

47. FBIS AU2509210190, Sofia BTA English Service, 1748 GMT, September 25, 1990. FBIS AU2709074090, Sofia BTA English Service, 2036 GMT 26 September 1990.

48. FBIS AU2709074090 R270740Z September 1990. Sofia BTA English Service, 2036 GMT 26 September 1990.

49. FBIS AU2809122490 Sofia BTA English Service, 1040 GMT, September 28, 1990.

50. Press Conference, Unclassified Embassy Report, Sofia, June 8, 1991.

51. RFE, REE, Vol. 2, No. 25, June 21, 1991. Kjell Engelbrekt, "Redefining National Security in the New Political Environment," RFE, REE, Vol. 2, No. 30, July 26, 1991, page 8.

52. Reuter 17:00:38, June 7, 1991. FBIS AU1206165391 R 121653Z June 1991, Sofia *Duma*, June 8, 1991, page 1.

53. FBIS Vienna AU2909193891 dtg 291938Z September 1991, Baker Praises Nation's Constructive Foreign Policy, Sofia BTA English Service, 1629 GMT, 29 September 1991.

54. RFE, REE, Vol 2, No. 39, September 27, 1991.

55. RFE, REE, Vol. 2, No. 40, October 4, 1991.

56. Ibid., page 39.

III. BULGARIA TURNS TOWARD EUROPE

1. FBIS-SOV-90-040, 28 February 1990, *Pravda* Views Bulgaria's Anti-crisis Measures, PM1402113590 Moscow *Pravda*, 12 February 1990, 2nd. edition. p. 6.

2. RFE-REE, Vol. 1, No. 14, April 6, 1990, p. 50.

3. RFE-REE, Vol. 1, No. 15, April 13, 1990, p. 49. Bulgaria even sponsored a counter-narcotics seminar with the participation of Interpol which had previously been anathema to Bulgarian security services.

4. Kjell Engelbrekt, "Bulgaria's Foreign Relations," RFE-REE, Vol. 1, No. 29, p. 10.

5. Ibid., p. 9.

6. RFE-REE, Vol. 1, No. 33, August 17, 1990, p. 31.

7. Specifically, the program undertook to negotiate membership in GATT and the EEC, with which Bulgaria already had a trade agreement, it would seek assistance from PHARE, G-24, and other sources, it would continue to work for an IMF standby restructuring loan, it would ratify its MFA agreement with the United States, and it would cooperate with UN efforts to establish peace and preserve human rights. As to its links to the East, Bulgaria would revise its contacts with the USSR, but would renew the

1967 Bulgarian-Soviet Mutual Assistance Treaty. It would seek to establish a balance of relations with the USSR, the USA, Western Europe, the Balkan and East European states, the WTO and NATO. The program promised that Bulgaria would base these policies only on national interests. FBIS-EEU-90-197, 11 October 1990, Foreign Policy's Economic Aspects Viewed, AU 1010201290, Sofia BTA English Service, 1945 GMT, October 10, 1990.

8. It is significant that a switch toward the West would occur early on to Dzhurov who was always considered one of the stalwarts of Soviet influence in Bulgaria. But with the continued decline of the Pact, figures such as himself and his successor as Minister of Defense Yordan Mutafchiev were pushed aside by those such as Petrov, and especially Andreev, who were less enthralled by residual emotional ties to the Soviet Union and who were prepared to cooperate with the new democratic government in establishing a stable regime with external security. This coincidence of patriotic interest was a piece of great good fortune for the new Bulgarian democracy. In the *Anteni* interview, Andreev fully vented the frustration of the military circles he represented and their readiness to entertain new ideas. "I do not intend to make any forecasts. However, we could sign a multilateral agreement among the Balkan states, or we could also sign bilateral agreements between Bulgaria and Turkey and Bulgaria and Greece, or we could also sign a bilateral agreement with Albania only—a possibility that has recently emerged—and this would be very useful. The situation as it exists today can no longer continue because it is really unstable and hopeless. We lived through such an experience as the crisis [ed., of 1989] with Turkey, and realized what it means to be a frontline nation and to have no guarantees to rely upon that could be implemented within days, or weeks!" FBIS-EEU-90-080, 25 April 1990, *Generals Discuss Alliances, Role of Army*, AU2304115090, Sofia, *Anteni*, No. 16, April 18, 1990, pp. 8-9.

9. FBIS-EEU-90-063, 2 April 1990, AU3003142090 Sofia BTA English Service, 1351 GMT, 30 March 1990, and AU3103184790 Sofia BTA English Service, 1709 GMT, 31 March 1990. According to the RFE report, the Foreign Trade Bank which handled nearly all Bulgaria's debt portfolio announced it had temporarily stopped principal payments, but would continue to pay the interest. Bulgarian officials in London and Sofia were reported to have said that Bulgaria had asked for talks with creditor banks and governments. RFE-REE, Volume 1, No. 15, April 13, 1990.

10. RFE-REE, Volume 1, No. 17, April 27, 1990, p. 42.

11. Engelbrekt, pp. 8-9.

12. *Ibid.*

13. Unclassified Embassy Brussels Cable 01665 0020626Z February 1990, INRISS, May 8, 1990 (UPI), RFE-REE, Volume 1, No. 28, July 13, 1990.

14. RFE-REE, Volume 1, No. 34, August 24, 1990, and FBIS Vienna Cable AU0610145690 R061456Z October 1990.

15. *Ibid.*, RFE-REE, Volume 1, No. 23, June 8, 1990, p. 57.

16. Unclassified Embassy Brussels Cable (USEC) 04844 R271719Z March 1990, G-24 Coordination Meeting, March 26: Commission's Statement.

17. FBIS-EEU-90-118, 19 June 1990, Lukanov Receives IMF Official in Sofia, AU1406174890, Sofia BTA English 1441 GMT, 14 June 1990, BTA Headline: Bulgaria Will Probably Join IMF in September.

18. RFE-REE, Volume 1, No. 35, August 31, 1990, p. 46, and FBIS-EEU-90-208, 26 October 1990, World Bank Envoy Supports rapid economic reform, AU2510192890, Sofia BTA English Service, 1855 GMT, 25 October 1990.

19. Bulgaria, the USSR, and Romania were not included on the "illustrative list" at that point, but it opened the way early the following year for Bulgaria's inclusion into the OECD's Partners in Transition program. Unclassified Embassy Paris Cable (OECD) 27620 P 181637Z September 1990.

20. FBIS-EEU-90-249, 27 December 1990, Official Position on Turkey's Black Sea Initiative, AU2612195090, Sofia BTA English Service, 1852 GMT, December 26, 1990.

21. Engelbrekt, p. 8.

22. Rome, AP Newsticker, November 6, 1990, time 19:34:24, and FBIS-EEU-90-225, 21 November 1990, AU2011184490, Sofia BTA English Service, 1737 GMT, November 20, 1990.

23. RFE-REE, Volume 1, No. 18, May 4, 1990.

24. Unclassified Embassy Rome Cable 377/90, P 101004Z April 1990.

25. RFE-REE, Volume 1, No. 40, October 5, 1990.

26. RFE-REE, Volume 1, No. 46, November 16, 1990.

27. FBIS Vienna Cable AU0612143490 P 061434Z December 1990, Diplomatic Links Established with Vatican, Sofia BTA English Service, 1338 GMT, December 6, 1990.

28. RFE-REE, Volume 1, No. 40, October 5, 1990, p. 45.

29. INRISS, AP, 900306191222, March 6, 1990.

30. RFE-REE, Volume 1, No. 40, October 5, 1990.

31. RFE-REE, Volume 2, No. 4, January 25, 1991, p. 46, and No. 6, February 8, 1991, p. 39.

32. RFE-REE, Volume 1, No. 48, November 30, 1990, p. 33, and No. 51, December 21, 1990, p. 40. Like the Western countries Bulgaria incurred the problem of hostages in Iraq, requiring negotiation to obtain their release. These numbered over 300 persons. In an apparent effort to divide support for the UN sanctions Saddam Hussein freed the bulk of the Bulgarian hostages early, but insisted that Bulgarians would not be permitted to leave until their contracts had been fulfilled.

33. FBIS-EEU-90-118, June 19, 1990, Staykov on Bulgaria's Position at CSCE Talks, AU0906195090, Sofia BTA English Service, 1702 GMT, June 9, 1990.

34. FBIS-EEU-90-192, October 3, 1990, Bulgaria Tells CSCE It Will Freeze Armed Forces, AU0210220490, Sofia BTA BTA English Service, 2125 GMT, October 2, 1990.

35. Unclassified Embassy Paris Cable 34729, P211528Z November 1990, CSCE Paris Summit: Fourth Plenary Session.

36. Indeed, it is this paradox that explains, from the national security point of view, why Bulgaria had so slavishly toed the Soviet line while all the other satellites had indulged at least occasional demurrals. In turn this slavish emulation of Soviet aims had concealed from outsiders that there had been a nationalist content in communist era politics, as whispered by such anomalies as the 1965 coup attempt and by Lyudmila Zhivkova's cultural policy. This is not to apologize for the regime's overdoing the option of dependency on a large outside power. The leadership and nomenklatura had their motivation in terms of power and perquisites. The most charitable way to describe this behavior is as the stern pragmatism ingrained by centuries of foreign aggression and domination. Yet the yearning to assert national identity and interests, carried forward by the new regime, had to emerge from somewhere, as did the eager receptivity to glasnost and perestroika all over Eastern Europe. There had obviously been those in communist Bulgaria who had chafed, but they had appeared to Western observers to have done so with the same patience that had borne the five-centuries long "Turkish yoke." These impulses had lain dormant under communist domination, except in Bulgaria they had been more dormant than elsewhere.

37. FBIS-EEU-90-099, 22 May 1990, AU2105160190, Sofia *Narodna Armiya*, 15 May 1990, pp. 1,4.

38. FBIS-EEU-90-121, 22 June 1990, Warsaw Pact's Current Status, Future Role Viewed, AU2106174090, Sofia *Pogled*, No. 25, 18 June 1990, p. 6.

39. Unclassified Embassy Sofia Cable 04482, R191423Z July 1990.

40. FBIS-EEU-90-221, 15 November 1990, Planned Meeting with NATO's Woerner Viewed, AU1511114190, Sofia Radio Domestic Service, 1000 GMT, 15 November 1990.

41. FBIS-EEU-90-222, 16 November 1990, AU1611080690, Sofia BTA English Service, 2345 GMT, 15 November 1990.

42. Unclassified US Mission NATO Cable 06489, R291428Z November 1990.

43. Savov proudly ticked off the events validating this radical shift of policy: a visit by the Bulgarian Head of State to the White House, a visit by the Secretary of State, the Foreign Minister's visit to Macedonia, and his meeting with his Saudi Arabian counterpart, active relations with COE, admission to the IMF and WB, establishment of relations with South Korea, Oman, and the Vatican, and restoration of relations with Israel and Chile. Savov cited these events as evidence for the changing dynamics and scope of Bulgarian policy. By any measure it was an impressive list of achievements, even though it was still qualified by Bulgaria's effort to keep old allies and

partners and to promote relations with the USSR. FBIS Unclassified Cable, Vienna AU2712133590 R271335Z December 1990, Deputy Foreign Minister Reviews Progress in 1990, Sofia BTA English Service, 1123 GMT, December 27, 1990. BTA Headline: Bulgarian Foreign Policy: Ambitious Progress in 1990.

44. FBIS-EEU-90-195, October 1990, Zhelev on the Warsaw Pact and Relations with the USSR, AU0810131490, Sofia BTA English Service, 1140 GMT, 8 October 1990. Zhelev added that Zhivkov would have made Bulgaria the "sixteenth republic" of the USSR, but for the more sober thinking of Khrushchev, and that Zhivkov had clung to the USSR to avoid responsibility for the collapse. For the record, Zhivkov has been cited in the press from time to time as an advocate of a western orientation, even saying that ties with the US are Bulgaria's best hope, and blaming the failure of his own efforts at a western oriented diplomacy on Gorbachev. See FBIS-EEU-91-033, 19 February 1991, Zhivkov: Gorbachev Blocked Overture to the West, AU1502145491, Paris AFP English Service, 1433 GMT, 15 February 1991. There is some truth in Zhivkov's assertion. When Gorbachev visited Sofia in September 1984, he was widely thought to have come to deliver the Politburo's order to Zhivkov to cancel his impending trip to Germany over soured Soviet-German relations. Ensuing bad relations between the two men over reform policy may also have led Zhivkov to imagine himself, in retrospect, a frustrated westerner. In fact, Zhivkov did not have even the possibility for such a reorientation of policy (the collapse of Soviet power), and it is arguable that as architect of the system would he have had the will. His reach for legitimacy would have been satisfied with the flourishes. It required a new regime to seek the substance of radically new relations with the West.

45. FBIS-EEU-91-019, 29 January 1991, Semerdzhiev Interviewed; Views Regional Issues, AU2901104591, Sofia *Otechestven Vestnik*, 19 January 1991, pp. 1,5. Semerdzhiev was quoted as saying "We must decisively open to the leading Western countries not only because we would like to utilize their technological potential or because we rely on their investments, but because we need new guarantees for our national security, which will not only be based on an extra-bloc all-European defense system, but also on a bilateral foundation. The Warsaw Pact practically does not exist as a military organization. Eastern Europe and the USSR, regardless of its future politics, are a fact, which, if ignored, could have fatal consequences. Nations with great histories have lived, live, and [will] continue to live on the USSR territory. We are historically connected with those nations. Only the imprudent one can ignore the fact that we have always relied on their benevolence and readiness to help us. I shall repeat words that already have been said: It is stupid to relinquish your old friends, when you seek new ones." Semerdzhiev went on to call for peace with neighbors and the creation of a new climate in the Balkans. The extent of his slippage, however, was evident in his condemnation of the use of force, specifically mentioning Lithuania.

46. FBIS-EEU-91-020, 30 January 1991, Army Spokesman Reacts to NATO proposal, AU2901115991, Sofia *Narodna Armiya*, 23 January 1991, p. 4; FBIS-EEU-91-026, 7 February 1991, Defense Minister on Gulf, Warsaw Pact, NATO, AU0502163091, Sofia, *Vecherni Novini*, 30 January 1991, p. 1,3; FBIS-EEU-91-035, 21 February 91, Popov on NATO, Disintegrating Warsaw Pact, AU2002230191, Sofia BTA English Service, 2123 GMT, 20 February 1991.

47. FBIS-EEU-91-022, 1 February 1991, LD0102, Prague, CTK English Service, 0812 GMT, 1 February 1991. Interestingly one party influential in the UDF, the Nikola Petkov Agrarian Union, called for leaving the Pact and declaring neutrality. RFE-REE Volume 2, No. 5, February 1, 1991, p. 43.

48. FBIS-EEU-91-034, 20 February 1991, Zhelev Advisor Avramov on Warsaw Pact Future, AU1902155391, Sofia *Otechestven Vestnik*, 13 February 1991, p. 1,3.

49. FBIS-EEU-91-038, 26 February 1991, Vulkov on Warsaw Pact Military Disbandment, AU2502220091, Sofia BTA English 2120 GMT, 25 February 1991.

* 50. That story has been told in Chapter One, "Relations with the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact."

51. FBIS-EEU-91-083, 30 April 91, President's National Security Advisor Interviewed, AU 2604205391, Sofia *Narodna Armiya*, 18 April 1991, pp. 1,2.

52. Unclassified US Embassy Sofia Cable 3597, P070623Z June 1991.

53. Unclassified U.S. Embassy Sofia Cable 3761, R131403Z June 1991.

54. FBIS-EEU-91-001, 2 January 1991, President Zhelev Delivers New Years Message, AU3112194490, Sofia BTA English Service, 1714 GMT, 31 December 1990.

55. RFE-REE, Volume 2, No. 2, January 11, 1991, p. 40; RFE-REE, Volume 2, No. 9, March 1, 1991, p. 41, and No. 13, March 29, 1991, p. 47.

56. FBIS-EEU-91-022, Vulkov Presents COE Application, AU2601194491, Sofia BTA English Service, 1806 GMT, 26 January 1991; FBIS-EEU-91-022, 1 February 1991, Zhelev Holds Talks at COE, AU3101211891, Sofia BTA English Service, 2040 GMT, 31 January 1991, and FBIS-EEU-91-026, 7 February 1991, Zhelev Receives European Council Delegation, AU0602210091, Sofia Demestic Service, 2000 GMT, 6 February 1991; FBIS-EEU-91-027, 8 February 91, Council of Europe Delegation Leaves Sofia, AU0702131491, Sofia BTA English Service, 1235 GMT, 7 February 1991.

57. FBIS-EEU-91-033, 19 February 1991, Popov on Economic Relations; Foreign Investment, AU1802181191 Sofia *Vecherni Novini*, 8 February 1991, p. 1. Interview by Simeon Danevski: "We Will not Permit Dollarization to Prevail." Popov had been asked whether, and acknowledged that he had felt like the Prime Minister of a European Country at the Davos Economic Conference.

58. FBIS-EEU-91-030, 13 February 1991, Vulkov Interview on Foreign Policy; Changes, AU1302101791, Sofia *Demokratiya*, 6 February 1991, pp. 1,4.

59. FBIS-EEU-91-035, 21 February 1991, Vulkov Clarifies Foreign Policy Priorities, AU2002164591, Sofia BTA English Service, 1431 GMT, 20 February 1991.

60. FBIS-EEU-91-033, 19 February 1991, Zhelev Hoping for Expanded British Cooperation, AU1502220191, Sofia BTA English Service, 1856 GMT, 15 February 1991.

61. FBIS-EEU-91-033, 19 February 1991, Zhelev Meets PM Major, AU1802220091, Sofia BTA English Service, 2031 GMT, 18 February 1991.

62. RFE-REE, Volume 2, No. 10, March 8, 1991, p. 48.

63. FBIS-EEU-91-051, 15 March 1991, Proposed Black Sea Convention Discussed, AU1303192991, Sofia BTA English Service, 1821 GMT, 13 March 1991; RFE-REE, Volume 2, No. 15, April 12, 1991, p. 33; Unclassified Embassy Sofia Cable 3628, R101036Z June 1991.

64. Unclassified Embassy Brussels Cable 3367, R131826Z March 1991, and RFE-REE Volume 2, No. 17, April 26, 1991, p. 27.

65. Unclassified Embassy Brussels Cable 5681, P301407 April 91, EC Assures Bulgaria on Future Links.

66. FBIS-EEU-91-084, 1 May 1991, Popov Meets EC Officials in Brussels, AU3004094591, Sofia BTA English 2226 GMT, 29 April 1991.

67. FBIS-EEU-91-194, 27 June 1991, Agreement on G-24 150 million ECU Loan, AU2606170091, Sofia BTA English 1553, 26 June 1991.

68. FBIS Cable Vienna AU3107183291, R311832Z July 1991, and FBIS -EEU-91-148, 1 August 1991, AU3107174691, Sofia BTA English Service, 1649 GMT, 31 July 1991, EC Grants Financial Aid for Kozloduy Safety; FBIS Cable Vienna AU3107164091, R311640Z July 1991, European Community Loan for Balance of Payments, Sofia BTA English Service. 1609 GMT, 31 July 1991.

69. FBIS Vienna Cable AU3701131891, R311318 July 1991, Integration Talks Scheduled with EC, Sofia BTA English Service, 1002 GMT, 31 July 1991.

70. FBIS-EEU-91-162, 21 August 1991, Army Daily Interviews Popov on Army Day, AU1808141391, Sofia *Bulgarska Armiya*, 12 August 1991, p. 1.

71. FBIS-EEU-91-162, 21 August 1991, UDF Criticizes BSP Position, AU2008195391, Sofia Khorizont Radio Network, 1500 GMT, 20 August 91. "The reason for this (the delay by the BSP in making a statement condemning the coup on the pretext of awaiting further information) is, of course, that despite all their declarations they do not want to dissociate themselves from the reactionary Stalinist forces in Moscow, in Belgrade, and anywhere else, and that they are preserving for themselves just in case, in the event of a radical reversal, the possibility of returning to the bosom of orthodox communism."

72. FBIS-EEU-91-166, 27 August 1991, Government Recognized Baltic Independence, AU2608151891, Sofia BTA English Service, 1512 GMT, 26 August 1926.

73. FBIS-EEU-91-167, SDS (UDF) Dimitrov Interviewed on Role of Army, AU2608185091, Sofia *Bulgarska Armiya*, 21 August 91, pp. 1,3.

74. FBIS Cable Vienna, AU0509094991, R050949Z September 1991.

75. Unclassified Embassy Sofia Cable 7039, P111322Z October 1991.

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Oscar W. Clyatt, Jr., a career State Department officer, wrote *Bulgaria's Quest for Security after the Cold War* while he was a Research Fellow and National War College student. Mr. Clyatt has held State Department positions in the USSR, Turkey, Bulgaria, and Papua New Guinea.

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