

Abstract

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| БЪЛГАРСКА АКАДЕМИЯ НА НАУКИТЕ ИНСТИТУТ ЗА ИСТОРИЧЕСКИ ИЗСЛЕДВАНИЯ | | |
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The scientific studies presented by Assoc. Prof. Daniel Vachkov for the competition, contain a number of contributions to the economic and social history of Bulgaria in the 20th century and establish him as one of the leading specialists in this field. The monograph "**Breakdowns and catastrophes. Chronicle of the socialist industrialization**" and three articles on this topic for the first time in our historiography, on the basis of versatile sources, study the circumstances around the huge number of serious incidents in the industry, construction and transport, which have turned into some of the most painful problems in the people's lives. With a unique approach the author presents the direct connection between the metamorphoses in the political and economic trends of the communist leadership and the breakdowns and catastrophes. They reflect the fundamental defects, the ideological hypocrisy and inhuman nature of one system seemingly functioning "for the benefit and in the name of the people".

It all starts with the chaos and disorder in the production and railway transport, caused by the "revolutionary" activities of the communist organizations and Fatherland Front committees. The number of occupational incidents, industrial breakdowns and railway accidents rapidly increases. They are not due to the owners' sabotage and enemy activity, or to "the enemy with a party membership card", as the official version is, but to irresponsibility, bad organization and incompetent management, neglect of the industrial standards, miserable living conditions. The radical change in the government destructs the social tissue, hierarchy and value system of the bourgeois society.

D. Vachkov skillfully interweaves in the presentation regarding the increasing number of breakdowns and catastrophes in the period of establishment of the totalitarian system the main political, economic and social changes caused by the implementation of "the Soviet socialism". The accelerated industrialization is accompanied by deterioration of the occupational condition and exploitation of the workers, systematic violation of the social laws and the occupational safety rules, neglectful attitude of the management.

One of the achievements of Assoc. Prof. Vachkov is the convincing commitment of the topic related to breakdowns and catastrophes with the ideological mutations and changes in the leadership and the economic policy of the Bulgarian Communist Party. They resound to the transitory views and instructions of the Soviet leadership which follow the course of the struggles for power after Stalin's death. In the "shy de-Stalinization", a more pragmatic approach to the occupational

safety has been adopted. The documents of the trade unions and reports of the labor inspectors contain information about unguarded equipment and facilities, extra labor, low occupational discipline, violation of the occupational safety measures, etc.

Things significantly deteriorated with the return to the policy of accelerated industrialization in the years of “the big jump”. With the construction of multiple new large-scale industrial units in 1960s, with the shortage of qualified work force, the number of breakdowns, catastrophes, occupational accidents and diseases increase and the death cases have doubled. Subjected to a permanent pressure to fulfill and exceed the plans by all means, the state, party and trade union organs continue to treat with neglect occupational safety. But in congresses, public events and in the mass media, the party policy and the care for the working people is glorified. There is a change, however – keeping silence and secrecy replace the unsatisfactory explanations of catastrophes and breakdowns caused by enemy activities.

In the period of the so called “Developed socialist society”, a transition from extensive to intensive development is made under the sign of the new party ideologeme – “high-tech economy, based on the scientific and technical revolution”. The synthesized review and evaluation of the socialist industrialization and modernization through the prism of breakdowns and catastrophes is an achievement of Daniel Vachkov. Due to the short-sighted investment policy, the Bulgarian industry remains ineffective, technologically undeveloped, low-productive, non-competitive. This is the main reason for the occurrence of the “economy of deficit”, the increasing foreign debt and the low quality of labor and life. The number of accidents and breakdowns continues to be extremely high, over 70 000 per year. The reasons are non-compliance with the occupational safety rules, the technical out datedness of the mechanical equipment and facilities; the extra labor. Assoc. Prof. Vachkov concludes that the socialist planned administrative system cannot be improved with cosmetic changes and market imitations which do not affect its foundation, that a change in the system is necessary.

His study “**Economy of the communist country 1944-1962**” and other studies make a precise overview of the financial and material expenses of Bulgaria in the course of participation in the World War II, the performance of the obligations under the truce and the peace contract. The scale of the economic and financial crisis within the period 1944-1948 has been measured; as well as the negative effect of the commercial contract with the USSR in 1945, the restrictive measures towards the private sector and the monetary exchange in 1947. The questions related to the changes in the management and structure of the Bulgarian economy until 1948, its

sovietization and the imposition of the Soviet model of accelerated industrialization, the imbalances in the communist economy, its main defects and deficits as a precondition for an economic and financial crisis have been developed. A contribution is also the substantiation in the “Road of the communist party to the power (1939-1944)” of the thesis that until the mid 1940s the prospects of radical change in the political and economic system in Bulgaria and more specifically the establishment of a regimen of communist type are practically equal to zero...”

A contribution to the studies of Daniel Vachkov of the **financial and economic problems in the period of capitalist development of Bulgaria** is the systematic analysis of: the financial and material expenses during the Balkan war and World War I, the reparations after the military catastrophe and the consequences for the Bulgarian economy; the main problems in the period of post-war recovery and the Big depression – inflation and devaluation of the Bulgarian lev, reduced credit, service of the foreign debt, a colossal internal debt, condition of the foreign trade, budget balancing, strengthening of the Bulgarian National Bank and the Bulgarian lev, provision of the two loans under the UN – Refugee and Stabilization loans. Their successful resolution and the state policy for promotion of the industry, reformation of the bank system, modernization of agriculture leads to economic development. The publications regarding the **financial and economic aspects of the problem with the Bulgarian refugees** after the wars and the biographic studies of Ivan Evs. Geshov and Nikola Stoyanov contribute to the clarification of some aspects of its development.

The study “The Bulgarian economy at the beginning and in the heat of World War II (1939-1944)” offers us an objective analysis of the economic development of Bulgaria in the course of World War II. The competent governmental policy sustains economic stability and the process of modernization in the difficult military conditions mostly using the tools of the state regulation. Preconditions for the financial and economic crises appear from the end of 1943 but it rages out in the last quarter of 1944. In fact Daniel Vachkov completes a cycle of studies of the economic development during and between the two world wars, which is a significant contribution to the economic and social history of Bulgaria.

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