

ACCIDENTS AND DISASTERS. Chronicle of Communist Industrialization.

Summary

The monograph deals with a completely unexplored topic in Bulgarian historiography – the problem of industrial accidents and disasters during the communist rule in the country. The study is based on a rich and varied archival material, mainly documents from the funds of the Politburo and the Secretariat of the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party, the Central Council of the Bulgarian Trade Unions, the Committee for Disclosing the Documents and Announcing Affiliation of Bulgarian Citizens to the State Security and Intelligence Services of the Bulgarian National Army. A significant number of interviews and recollections of people who survived or witnessed severe industrial disasters are also used. Researching the topic allows the author to present the general picture of working conditions in Bulgaria during the entire period of communist rule, organization of production, economic and social policy of the state. At the same time, he considers and analyzes various examples of accidents in more detail, as well as some catastrophes that have become emblematic for this period. Based on the specific cases, he makes conclusions about the state of the industry, about the social and labor relations, about the mechanisms through which decisions were made and the planned measures were implemented. In addition, all these events are placed in the broad context of the economic and political situation in the country in each period of its development. The text follows the historical-chronological approach, which also determines the structure of the book. It gives the opportunity to see in full the problem, as well as the social causes and phenomena that gave rise to it. The problem of accidents, appearing more or less as a function of the economic and social policy of the regime, is examined during the main stages of establishment and development of communist rule in the country: the Fatherland Front coming to power and laying the foundations of the communist political and economic system; the era of pure Stalinism; the time of limited de-Stalinization and the "great leap forward"; the decade of reforms of the 1960s; the developed socialist society and the collapse of communism in the second half of the 1980s.

The study of industrial accidents and disasters during the communist era, in fact, clearly shows that they became a lasting and fundamental feature of the socialist economy. The policy pursued by the state and the ruling party towards industrial cataclysms showed a complete inability to create conditions and mechanisms for the effective overcoming of this essential problem. Very soon after the Communist Party seized power through the Fatherland Front, in the second year of its rule, the accidents at work exceeded three times those before

the war. With the onset of accelerated industrialization, accidents and incidents reached extremely high levels, and despite the numerous decisions taken by party and state governing bodies, these levels were maintained until the end of communist rule. The 1970s and 1980s witnessed the firm tendency of fatal accidents in Bulgarian industry ranging per year between 500 and 550. Approximately the same was the annual number of disabled people for life. This did not include people who got serious illnesses every year due to poor working conditions. Although the regime kept them a complete public secret, it is obvious that accidents and their consequences on the economy and the lives of those employed in material production were a major problem for society and the state during the communist era.

Industrial accidents and the “fight against the class enemy” during the years of classical Stalinism in Bulgaria

(abstract)

In the late 1940s, the Communist regime in Bulgaria undertook a policy of accelerated industrial development. In following the Soviet model, the construction of many heavy industry enterprises began. The harsh working conditions and the effort to meet the production plan deadlines resulted in a drastic rise in the number of industrial breakdowns and fatal workplace accidents. Contributing to this was the sharp increase in the number of workers and engineers lacking the necessary professional qualification and experience. But in the context of widespread persecution and purges taking place in Bulgarian society during in the time of Stalinism, the authorities looked upon industrial accidents as entirely due to sabotage on the “class enemy”. Following the Soviet model again, trials were held, in which the accused “confessed” their hostile activity. Hundred of people were repressed in connection with industrial accidents. The fight against wrecking activities would largely to contribute to the establishment of full Party control over the economy.

The Positions of Bulgaria and Poland on Pricing within the COMECON

(abstract)

The article examines and analyzes the different positions of Bulgaria and Poland on the extremely important problem of pricing in foreign trade relations between the countries of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (COMECON). Ever since the mid-1950s, when it became possible to establish more normal trade contacts between the countries of the Eastern Bloc, Poland demanded that stricter pricing should be applied as a basis for price formation within the COMECON. As an industrialized country, Poland wished to benefit from the higher prices of manufactured goods on world markets. Just the opposite was Bulgaria's position according to which intra-COMECON prices should take into account the various specifics of productions in the socialist countries, i.e. that as a whole, they should not be determined by world prices. In most cases, Bulgaria received the support of Moscow on this issue, which was advantageous for Bulgarian exports, but in this way, it further distanced COMECON from the possibility of applying any market mechanisms in its activity.

Historical Sciences in Bulgaria and Institute for Historical Studies at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences

(abstract)

The article examines the scientific work of the Institute for Historical Studies at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences since its establishment in 1947 to the present day in the context of the general development of historical science in the second half of the 20th century. The era of communist totalitarianism had a heavy impact on the research of historians. They had, willingly or unwillingly, to study historical processes following the ideological formulations set by the Communist Party. In the 1960s, a slight liberalization of public life began, allowing for a more adequate examination of a number of issues from Bulgarian and world history, mainly from the point of view of the facts. Since the fall of the communist regime in 1989, the ideological constraints on historical science and the work of the scientists at the Institute for Historical Studies fell away too. Research freedom, as well as the wide opening of archives, allowed historians to start exploring many new themes and to seriously reconsider others. However, the new conditions in which historical science has been evolving give rise to a number of challenges. In short, the task of historians in the new conditions is to create

historical texts that are freed the myths that have accumulated over time; to give the most accurate picture of the past and thus to offer to society appropriate solutions to the currents problems in its development.

The Bulgarian Organization for the League of Nations and its Ideas for European Unification

(abstract)

Just before the end of World War I, on November 3 1918 in Sofia, the Bulgarian organization for League of Nations was established. It drew its members from within the ranks of prominent Bulgarian jurists, diplomats, financiers, journalists and public figures. Stefan Kirov, a professor of law, became its chairman. Starting 1919, the Organization began publishing its own periodic paper in French and Bulgarian, the “Pax per foederationem”. The Organization’s members made their views on post-war European establishment known on the pages of the paper, and through their public lectures. They believed that enduring peace was should include all European countries. According to their beliefs, the unification should happen in stages. Regional federations should be established first, which would merge into one union at a later stage. The process of European unification is also expected to solve the problems of post-war economic recovery on the continent. Gradually, customs barriers have to be eliminated and established between European Free Trade Areas. In addition, it is hoped that the federation will create the political conditions for the development of social and cultural progress in Europe. After the signing of the Parisian treaties, it became clear that Europe was not on the track towards unity, but was rather divided between victors and the defeated. Not seeing any perspectives for realizing its ideas, the Bulgarian organization terminated its paper and its public appearances.

The Changeover in Bulgaria in 1947 as a form of financial repression

(abstract)

The paper will examine the development of the financial crisis in Bulgaria during the period 1944-1947, caused by the enormous state expenditure, connected with the participation of Bulgaria in the final stage of World War II and the costs of the Soviet army in the country. In order to cope with the huge increase of money put in circulation and increasing inflation, the

Fatherland Front Government launches exchange of money. It is done in an extremely brutal way and the result is liquidation of great amount of the saving of the population. The money exchange has severe consequences both for the financial status of the Bulgarian citizens and for the entire development of the political and economic situation in the country.

Economy during the World War I. Projections in the Economic Policies of the Bulgarian Governments in the Early Post-war Years (1919-1925)

(abstract)

The first part of the article examines the preparation and organization of the Bulgarian economy for conducting a large-scale war. The aim is to be traced the establishment and operation of the state institutions that regulate and control the resupplying, trade and production in the country. The second part presents the efforts of the Bulgarian governments in the first years after the war to overcome the economic and financial crisis by continuing active state intervention in the economy. In conclusion the implications of these policies for the economic development of Bulgaria are analyzed.

Nikola Stoyanov (1875-1967) – the Financial Expert of Bulgaria

(abstract)

A Bulgarian from the town of Doyran and President of the Macedonian Scientific Institute in the period 1938 – 1945, Prof. Nikola Stoyanov remains in history as one of the most significant financial specialists of the Bulgarian state in the years between the two World Wars. In the course of nearly 20 years, from 1919 until 1939, with a short break from May 1934 – April 1935. He held the key office of Head of the State Debt Directorate. As such, he was a major figure in the negotiations led by the Bulgarian state, first regarding a delay and decrease of the reparations, and later in the contraction of the two foreign loans under the patronage of the League of Nations, in 1926 for settlement of refugees in Bulgaria, and in 1928 for the stabilization of the state finances and the bank system. In the years during and after the World Economic Crisis, N. Stoyanov periodically negotiated agreements with the Committees of the Bulgarian Bond Holders for the decrease of Bulgaria's payment of external debt. With his entire professional and public career, N. Stoyanov skillfully defended the interests of Bulgaria and Bulgarian people.

The “Monstrosity” in Bulgarian Political Life: Orange Guard in Action (1920-1923)

(abstract)

Bulgarian Agrarian National Union (BZNS) became a ruling party in Bulgaria in the context of severe economic, political, social and moral crisis caused by the failure Bulgaria's participation in the World War I. In its quest to make deep state and social transformations the Agrarian Party tried to establish complete control over the power and gradually destroy any form of opposition. The Orange Guard, established as a party militia played an important role in achieving this goal. Though violence and repression the Orange Guard subjected to the constant pressure the society in order to impose political ideas of the BZNS. Several acts brought the Orange Guard particularly gloomy glory: the suppression of the transport strike (1920); the crushing the opposition during so-called Tarnovo events (1922), the referendum to judge those responsible for the national catastrophes (1922) and the behavior of the Orange Guard during the parliamentary and local elections.

The actions of the Orange Guard have increased the confrontation and opposition in Bulgarian political life and contributed to the development of the bloody events of the period 1923 – 1925.

The Outcomes of the First World War on the Bulgarian Finances and Economy

(abstract)

The paper presents the growth of the military budget made by the Bulgarian state the years of the First World War and, as a consequence, the increase of the internal I external debt. It analysis the financial conditions influencing the development of the inflation and the devaluation of the Bulgarian currency. At the same time, the paper examines the changes on the economic structure and the crisis caused by the fall of the production and trade.

The way the war economy had been organized created the basis for developing, during the second and the third decades of the 20th century, the ideas of the state-controlled economy.

Bulgarian Finances in the Years of the Balkan Wars

(abstract)

The Balkan Wars of 1912 – 1913 challenged not only the military capabilities, but also the overall economic and financial potential of the Bulgarian state. Maintaining a significant army (numbering over 600 thousand) and participation in extensive and exhausting military campaigns cost the treasury enormous expenses (over 650 million gold francs). The financial situation was further complicated in the months following the end of the conflict when its direct consequences had to be met: mainly, the settlement of the huge of refugees who found rescues in Bulgaria. But despite the colossal costs, due to the adequate policy of financial institutions on the whole and to the comparatively well-functioning economy the government finances remained stable.

Banking Crisis in Bulgaria and the Emergence of Bank “Bulgarian Credit” (1934)

(abstract)

The global economic crisis of 1929-1933 affects severely the banking system in Bulgaria. Consisting of many private and popular banks with limited capital, it proved unable to meet the destructive effects of the decline in production and trade. The vast majority of Bulgarian banks are forced to bankrupt or shrink their activity to the minimum. The sharp limitation of lending to the Bulgarian economy and the loss of confidence among depositors necessitate urgent changes in the banking sector. In October 1934, through the merger of 12 Bulgarian and provincial banks Bank “Bulgarian Credit” (BBC) is launched. Bank National of Bulgaria (BNB) participates in the formation of the share capital and the governing bodies of the Bank, which defines the semi-state status of the new banking institution. Only for a year of its existence, BBC has established itself as one of the largest and stable Bulgarian banks and contributes to the strengthening of the banking system in Bulgaria in the years following the Great Depression.

The Financial Costs of Bulgaria's Participation in the First World War

(abstract)

Among the important topics discussed in the negotiation on the inclusion of Bulgaria in active fighting, the government of V. Radoslavov also raised the question of the financial security of the Bulgarian participation in the war. The agreement between Bulgaria and the Central Powers that was signed later envisaged the Bulgaria state to receive 50 million golden francs monthly until the end of the military operations. In fact, it soon became clear that this amount was insufficient to cover the great financial costs the war inflicted on the state budget. Until the end of the military actions, as well as in the months that immediately followed, the Bulgarian state spent over 5,5 billion levs in the form of extra-budgetary credits. The accumulated military debt to Germany and its allies in 1918 amounted to 1.350 billion francs. All these figures give grounds to make the overall assessment that only the direct military expenses of Bulgarian state during the First World War reached the amount of nearly 7 billion levs.

The Prague Spring and the End of Economic Reforms in Bulgaria

(abstract)

The events of 1968 had significant consequences for the economic development of Bulgaria over the following twenty years. The crisis would cement T. Zhivkov's conviction that the economic difficulties would have to be dealt with by an increasingly closer economic and political union with the USSR rather than through effective, but painful reforms. From that moment on, it was firmly believed that the unconditional loyalty towards the big brother would be rewarded with generous financial and in-kind injections. These expectations were fully vindicated during Bulgaria's debt crisis of the mid-1970, but failed to materialise during Gorbachov's perestroika from the second half of the 1980s.