

notebooks, and toilet tissue. (At an average of four books printed per person per year, Poland fell to last place in Europe.) On top of all this, Poland was treated to three years of extraordinarily unfavorable weather conditions that reached catastrophe level in the past year. Today's Warsawian must rise early to stand in line for the children's milk, often stands in line to buy bread—or even an official newspaper that pushes Party propaganda.

These are not the results of the wave of strikes during the summer of 1980 or of the creation of independent labor unions; they are the very causes of those strikes. In fact, if this process of economic decline had not been checked by the spontaneous and widespread workers strike movement, not only Poland and Europe but East-West relations would be threatened. The creation of "Solidarity"—the first independent trade union movement in a socialist bloc country—averted a terrible, bloody explosion of 35 million Poles living on the fringes of malnutrition in the center of Europe, at its most sensitive spot. This was clear to those in the party leadership and government who signed the historic agreement with the strikers.

Unfortunately, this is rarely understood by foreign observers, many of them seekers after sensationalism and superficial in their evaluation of the events in Poland. They see only danger and difficulties in an event that is a fortunate one for us all—in the East and in the West. Sometimes they even accuse the Poles of lacking a sense of reality or responsibility—a charge more accurately turned back on themselves—and trot out some shaky historical analogies. They ought to be aware, for example, that in contrast to Hungary and Czechoslovakia, Poland does not share a single border with any Western country, not even neutral Austria! Some foreign media make the absurd assumption that Poland's political allies might be interested in the complete collapse of so important a partner as Poland. No one in his right mind would undertake to solve the dramatic problems of 35 million Poles when the Poles themselves have already taken important steps to ease their situation.

Fundamental reconstruction of the Polish economy will enable the country to return to normal life and to fulfill both its obligations to its partners and allies and the political role that falls to it because of its geographical and strategic position in Europe. These difficult tasks will take a long time, and Poland will continue to bristle with anxieties and tensions, extending to its relations with its closest allies. One may expect local disagreements as well, for "Solidarity" already has eight to ten million members who represent all possible occupations. But the main conflict in Poland is not between the strikers movement and the ruling party; it lies within the Party—with bureaucrats who have feathered their own nests in spite of the general economic decline and have undermined the very principles of the economic system, becoming a rich élite precisely because of the weakness and inefficiency of the system. These individuals—and they are a significant number—will have to step down slowly, one by one.

Poland, of course, needs help and expects it. One cannot view Poland as a minor element of a "major world issue"; for it may well be that the solution to broader European problems and the way to easing tensions between East and West lies in a more rational attitude toward the Polish crisis. Open-mindedness is the first requirement.

Poland is neither poor nor underdeveloped. It must simply survive the next three years, which will be the most difficult because we are unable to produce or buy enough to feed ourselves. The potential is there for a modern and powerful economy, but this probably will be impossible

unless we take a breather from our balance of payments for a few years. Deferring payment of at least some of the credits and loans accorded the Gierek government seems the bare minimum. We have no desire, however, to become bogeyman to the world.

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EXCURSUS 2

Elisabeth L. Rosenthal on THE VIEW FROM SOFIA

If imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, then Soviet officials must glow with pride when they look south toward Bulgaria. The Bulgarian Communist party is modeled directly on its Soviet counterpart, and Bulgaria's five-year plans are coordinated with the Kremlin's. At the July, 1973, Plenary Session of the BCP Central Committee, Bulgarian President Todor Zhivkov pronounced that the two countries should be "as one organism with the same lungs and fed by one circulatory system." Today Bulgaria encourages all its citizens to develop similarly deep commitments to communism and to "mother Russia."

Indoctrination begins early. Three Party organizations, the *Chavdarche*, the *Septemvriiche*, and the *Komsomol* provide extracurricular education for schoolchildren that begins at age seven. On Sundays huge groups of youngsters file by the embalmed body of Georgi Dimitrov, first president of the People's Republic of Bulgaria. (Dimitrov had spent twenty-five years of exile in Moscow). Political tutelage continues at the university, where entrance procedures favor the offspring of Party members, and all students—biologists and linguists alike—must complete courses on scientific socialism, the history of the Bulgarian Communist party, and dialectic materialism. "Which is the most important: the material or the ideal?" one political exam question asks. Apparently there is only one correct response: "I answered 'the material,'" one student remarked; "otherwise I wouldn't still be here." When political education is not specifically pro-socialist or pro-Soviet, it is generally anti-Western. The USA is a particular *bête noir*. Display cases on Ruski Boulevard, Sofia's main thoroughfare, bear the inscription "dollars and blood" and feature photographs of American soldiers. Radio Sofia reports assiduously on strikes in New York.

But recently any political interests among the masses are eclipsed by more immediate economic difficulties. A year ago November, Bulgaria instituted huge "price adjustments." Some prices have jumped 200 per cent during the past two years, and the cost of basic staples—products that Communist governments subsidize heavily—has also increased markedly. Bottles of fruit juice with labels printed "29 *stotinki*" are restamped "40 *stots*."

And of course there are always shortages. Shortages of housing—which make extended families a necessity in the capital city; shortages of food—which Bulgarians claim are worse now than in past years. Sugar, for example, was virtually unavailable at the summer's end. Some informed residents of Sofia suspect that the sugar from a docile Bulgaria went to appease an angry Poland. But most Bulgarians know virtually nothing of the events to the north; they simply accept the scarcity and supplement their normal purchases with supplies from the well-stocked foreign currency stores. At these establishments

sugar is almost always available, though it may cost \$5 per kilo. Here Bulgarians buy their Marlboros and Jack Daniels with crisp \$50 bills—money earned through government contract work abroad (mostly in Iraq or Libya) or, more commonly, through black marketeering. This year, however, Bulgarians with dollars will find themselves in a quandary: As of January 1, the so-called "Corecom" shops are officially off limits to Bulgarian nationals.

In the heat of new hardships, bureaucratic inefficiencies in the country are particularly glaring. Government factories are supposed to produce "luxury items," yet few quality goods make it to the department store shelves. While many Sophiotes can't find apartments, the government is spending millions of dollars on a monolithic showpiece called the Palace of Culture. Finally, although centralized planning theoretically matches supply and demand in the job market, Bulgaria's education system has inadvertently produced too many chemists. Chemistry graduates must often accept an unrelated job for several years before the government can place them in an appropriate position; reportedly and worse yet, some chemists simply sit out the delay. In a country where unemployment, and hence unemployment compensation, is a theoretical anathema, such idleness is costly.

Bulgarians seem particularly irritated by the fact that in the midst of widespread economic difficulties there are those with an excess of goods and opportunities. Some people can easily pay the 2 *leva* cover charge at a swank café (about a third of a day's salary for the average Bulgarian worker). With gasoline hovering around \$4.50 per gallon, most Bulgarians can't afford to own even a Lada. Yet every weekend Party officials drive luggage-laden black Mercedes along cobbled "pedestrian only" streets. The significance of these cars, readily identified by their lack of license plates, is not missed by the people.

Bulgarians observe also that the roads to privilege are often opened by kinship as much as by talent. At thirty-eight, President Zhivkov's Oxford-educated daughter, Lyudmila, heads a Party committee on science, culture, and education, and is a Politburo member as well. Speculation is rife that Lyudmila will eventually assume her father's post. The Bulgarian people seem to view as undeserved her lightning promotions within the Party. She is certainly both intelligent and experienced in paying tributes to "Marxist-Leninist methodology." But Ms. Zhivkova is also twenty years younger than the average Politburo member, and a bit more eccentric than the typical Party woman. A reported believer in astrology and practitioner of yoga, Ms. Zhivkova peppers "Marxist" speeches with talk of the "Eternal" and the "seven-stage harmony of the universe"—not the normal Marxist fodder.

But Bulgarian orthodoxy does not preclude a few isolated contradictions of dogma. After all, despite the Bulgarian Government's professed belief in the "leading role of the Party," Bulgaria—for complex historical reasons—is nominally a two-party state. And despite Marxism's antipathy to religion, Bulgaria traditionally has been fairly lenient with its Orthodox Church. Bulgarian leaders are simply too self-confident to worry much about minor doctrinal contradictions, and the country's political structure is too well entrenched to be moved by popular grumblings. It seems that no matter how scarce sugar becomes, there will always be plenty of young cadres who will report that "Bulgaria and the Soviet Union are sincere socialist friends."

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EXCURSUS 3

Arthur Dobrin on KENYA: THE SORCERERS' CONNECTION

Japheth is the father of seven and his wife is pregnant again. "All my children won't live until adulthood," he explains. But it is not childhood diseases he dreads. By and large, these have been controlled by modern medicine. "There are people who are jealous of my success. I know that one of my neighbors is a witch. She will cast a spell and some of my children will die."

Japheth is a Kenyan university professor who holds a doctoral degree from an Ivy League college. His fear of witchcraft is not personal, idiosyncratic, or an isolated belief. A recent story in a Kenyan newspaper reported a court case in which one politician accused another of employing witches during his campaign. Claims of bewitchment have become so numerous that it is now a criminal offense to accuse another of being a witch.

Recognition of this belief in sorcery is fundamental to understanding the deadly problem that now confronts Kenya. United Nations estimates indicate that within the next year there may be more than two million starving people in this country of less than sixteen million.

At first glance Kenya seems an unlikely country to experience widespread hunger. Fertile and productive farmland dominates the center of the nation; and under nearly twenty years of stable, democratic rule the standard of living has risen considerably for the majority of the people. But food production cannot keep pace with Kenya's 3.5 per cent annual population growth; and the problem is compounded by cash cropping—where, for example, good land is devoted to growing pineapples for export rather than peanuts for domestic consumption. Since Kenya needs investment capital, it cannot switch dramatically to food production without disrupting foreign trade. Furthermore, the country is burdened by mounting debt repayments from foreign assistance loans.

A belief in witchcraft helps in part to explain why couples continue to have large families in the face of such poverty. A witch is believed to be someone motivated primarily by revenge and jealousy, often a neighbor who casts fatal spells upon those who have become successful. There is no protection against witchcraft, since it is surreptitious and preternatural. It is viewed as a weapon of the weak and the poor. The most one can do to protect against this evil is to have many children, thereby ensuring support in one's old age.

Anthropologists say that the belief in witchcraft appears to be related to stress and anxiety. In a stable social situation accusations of witchcraft are only occasional. But when traditions and customs begin to erode, as today in Kenya, when the world seems a hostile and uncontrollable place, and when individual striving and achieved status replace social cohesion and ascribed position, the belief in witchcraft is intensified. The modern, competitive society that characterizes Kenya has weakened family ties. People feel more alone than ever before and more fearful of the future.

Clearly, Kenya's future is not bright, but it is a mistake to think that ineptitude, corruption, and drought are the only causes of the impending crisis.

Arthur Dobrin, who has lived in Kenya, is author of "The Role of Cooperatives in the Development of Kenya," and the forthcoming Convictions (Orbis).