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Research and Development Policy in Bulgarian Restructuring (Preustoystvo) *

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INTRODUCTION

Since the end of World War II Western observers have applied over-simplified and contradictory clichés to Bulgaria, which has never been thought of as one of the stars of the CMEA.

For decades described as a backwards agricultural country indissolubly linked to its Soviet cousin, Bulgaria could in fact give an example of regular progress in modernizing national life.

The optimism of the official figures on the national income growth rate (5.1% in 1987 as against 3.7% from 1981–1985) does not stand up well to sectorial analysis, and it was the reduction in imports from Western countries which played the biggest part in reducing the trade gap by more than 350 million dollars in 1987. Nevertheless, the industrial countries recognize that Bulgaria has now become a generally worthy partner.

Exports previously consisted almost entirely of agricultural products and tobacco, but now more than half of them are in machinery and capital goods. In the wake of Soviet perestroyka, and sometimes in advance of the Soviet Union in the application of new principles dear to Mikhail Gorbachev, the Bulgaria of Todor Zhivkov has launched out into economic, social and scientific reforms of a particular type.

In fact, decentralization and self-management seem to have been applied

* Editor’s note: This paper was circulated, though not discussed, at the meeting and is published for its value in giving an analysis and forecast of the application of the new approaches in one CMEA country. The Bulgarian approach is ambitious. One leading government member is reported as saying the aim of the Government is to make Bulgaria “the South Korea” of the Balkans. This paper, as an individual and perhaps rather optimistic view of the national scene there, stands in contrast with the parallel but more pessimistic treatment of Poland as presented by Professor Loferski.

** The opinions and views expressed by the author do not necessarily reflect the policies or opinions of the institution with which he is affiliated.
there to such an extent that one might ask whether the difficulties and confusion following the January 1986 administrative reorganization can really be overcome by the central authorities.

The aim of this paper is to investigate the changes which have been made in the organization of research and development in Bulgaria and project the possible future development of science and technology in that country.

PART I: IDEOLOGY AND SCIENTIFIC STRUCTURES

1. The principles of the "July Concept"

1.1. Political principles

According to the IXth five-year plan (1986–90) of 24th December 1986, the Bulgarian restructuring is to be carried out in close co-operation and in the context of integration with the USSR.

The principles outlined in what the Bulgarians call the "July Concept" (plenum of 7th July 1987) specify the restructuring of scientific activity, on the grounds that the Bulgarian People's Republic is entering a qualitatively new stage of growth based on the scientific and technological revolution.

Two slogans sum up this introductory declaration. They call for total intellectualization in all fields of life and the opening up of science to production and education.

1.2. Management principles

There are two of these, which are applicable in all fields of activity including research and development: organization according to a fixed programme and self-management.

- "Scientific units" are financed by various bodies in order to resolve a given scientific problem in accordance with a fixed programme.
- Self-management has been introduced at all levels. The activity of scientific research units responsible for specified programmes is governed by a contract.

Self-management should also allow regional Councils to give the R&D bodies under their jurisdiction the means to carry out scientific and technical research to meet the economic development requirements of their local areas. These programmes will be financed in the context of contracts linking the research bodies to production enterprises.

Later we will see what part the central government has reserved for itself in the guidance of research programmes.