

Bread, the measuring staff of life under any political system, is cheap, however. The government sees to it that its citizens can obtain a pound of bread for working about fifteen minutes. This is the commonly used black variety called "people's bread." In the U. S. on an average wage it would take half the working time to buy the bread. For a pound of white bread in Sofia one must work twice as long as for the black bread. Fruits and vegetables, the quality for which Bulgaria is well known, are plentiful in season and not expensive. When a Sofia housewife returns from the state-run Gastronom market with her plastic net shopping bag of groceries, it usually contains more produce than anything else.

In the face of all the shortcomings, everything Soviet Russian is publicly praised and officially emulated. As a natural consequence one would expect grumbling in private to be more rampant. But the characteristic stolidity and natural reserve of the Bulgars, underbraced by a dutiful respect for the Internal Security Police, keeps criticism of the regime down to minimal comments inside the four walls and closed windows of the home. In neon, newsprint, and neologisms, slogans everywhere exhort the populace in the name of Soviet-Bulgar Friendship to work for Peace, Friendship With All Peoples, Cosmos, and Work! Occasionally a non-political appeal glimmers through, like the illuminated sign outside the state bank which advises "Save Your Money!" Not only the local folk are propagandized, but catchword aphorisms for the benefit of foreigners have been painted all along the route which the international trains take as they pass through the country.

In 1945 an estimated 8000 zealous Communists, led by Georgi Dimitrov and backed up by the presence of the Soviet Army, forged the links which affixed Bulgaria to the Red bloc. Today the nearly eight million Bulgars remain tightly enveloped in the bear hug of their Slavic brothers from the opposite shores of the Black Sea.

The glorification of Georgi Mikhailov Dimitrov is at once apparent to the most casual observer in Sofia. Thirteen years after his death, his immortalization continues in a Stalinesque demonstration of the personality cult. The ubiquitous image of the father of Bulgarian

communism, a paternal-looking man with thick brows and a thicker mustache, confronts you in the shops, hotels, restaurants, public buildings, mastheads of newspapers, and even on the fronts of locomotives. Factories, streets, schools, culture houses, and barber shops have been named after him.

Born the son of a milliner in a little village outside Sofia, Dimitrov never finished the sixth grade in school. In 1921 he went to Moscow as a Comintern delegate, meeting Lenin and Stalin for the first time. After that, his particular red star climbed rapidly. He became a member of the executive committee of the Comintern. When a revolutionary bomb killed more than a hundred persons in the Sofia Cathedral in 1925, Dimitrov was sentenced to death in absentia. The Nazis arrested him in Berlin in 1933, accusing him of participation in the Reichstag Fire. At the trial his spectacular self-defense in which he engaged in dramatic verbal duels with Goering and Goebbels won him a surprising acquittal. He was deported to Russia, where he became Secretary General of the Comintern, and in 1945 when the Red Army entered Bulgaria he returned to his homeland to become the first Prime Minister of the Communist regime.

Dimitrov died in Moscow in 1949 and was laid to rest in the center of Sofia in a square, white marble mausoleum erected in seven days. Goose-stepping honor guards in brilliant uniforms maintain a twenty-four-hour vigil at the tomb, and fresh flowers in urns appear daily. At night the white sepulchre gleams eerily under pale-green floodlights. Except for the choice of colors, the preserving of Dimitrov's body and its public display have been patterned faithfully after that accorded to Lenin (and once to Stalin) in the red fortress-like shrine in Moscow's Red Square. Across the way from Dimitrov's tomb stands another edificial emulation of the Soviets. The former royal palace has been converted into an art museum, just as the Russians did in Leningrad with the one-time palace of the Czars.

The immaculate streets of Sofia have little motorized traffic, which gives the children ample play areas. But let a late model Western car—a Buick, Simca, or MG—pull up, and the children abandon their play to marvel at the



Approved socialist realism in art is this sculptural work on Ruski Boulevard; it depicts Russian "liberators" being welcomed by a grateful populace in 1944