

July 29, 1949

**Record of I. V. Stalin's Conversation with V.
Chervenkov, P. Damyanov, and A. Yugov on the
Issues of Bulgaria's Internal Political Life**

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Summary:

Stalin and delegation of Bulgarian officials discuss ongoing political and economic situations in Bulgaria. In addition, Bulgaria's relationship with Yugoslavia is discussed.

Original Language:

Russian

Contents:

Translation - English

Record of I. V. Stalin's Conversation with V. Chervenkov,
P. Damyanov, and A. Yugov on the Issues
of Bulgaria's Internal Political Life^[1]

Moscow□□□□□□□□

July 29, 1949

SECRET

Present: Comrades Malenkov, Bulganin, Vyshinsky.

Comrade Stalin asks about the situation in Bulgaria, and if their trip was difficult. Chervenkov responds that it was somewhat bumpy. He asks for permission to present some questions, mainly from the party and state leadership. He informs Comrade Stalin that so far they elected the Chairman of the Council of Ministers and three Deputy Chairmen, all of them - members of the Politburo. They did not make any other changes, because they believed that it was inexpedient at this moment, and that it would be better to make necessary changes after the elections in November^[2]. He asks for advice, whether they did the right thing, or if it would be better to make changes now. At the same time, he says that Chervenkov, Yugov and Terpeshev were appointed Deputies Chairmen of the Council of Ministers. They appointed three Deputies, mainly because of the large volume of work in the Council of Ministers, and because of Kolarov's illness, as a result of which he will not be able to begin his work in the next two months. Generally, he will not be able to work full time; so he will need a lot of assistance. He adds that Kolarov believes it expedient to make necessary changes after the elections. Kolarov also believes that he should keep the position of Foreign Minister for himself.

Comrade Stalin explains that such combination of two positions is incorrect, and that Kolarov is wrong in this case. Under such a combination of positions, a number of inconveniences emerge for the government, because the Prime Minister takes upon himself the responsibility for all current work of the Foreign Ministry, whereas the Prime Minister should be the super arbiter. He should have an opportunity to correct the Ministers. When you combine the positions, you cannot do that. Therefore, it would be better to separate the positions of the Prime Minister and the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

As far as the question raised by Chervenkov, whether they should wait for the elections or not, in order to make the necessary changes in the composition of the government, it is better not to wait for them. It is better to relieve Deputy Chairmen of the Council of Ministers from their other positions right now. In their capacity as Deputy Chairman they will monitor Ministries, but will not be Ministers themselves.

Chervenkov asks whether it would be expedient to divide the Ministry of the Interior into two Ministries - the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of State Security.

Comrade Stalin asks what are the functions of the Ministry of the Interior in Bulgaria.

Chervenkov gives an explanation, from which it follows that the Ministry of the Interior in Bulgaria is in charge of militia, defense of the borders, and fire emergency measures.

Comrade Stalin asks who is in charge of registration of marriages, births, and deaths. Yugov explains that the Bulgarian Ministry of the Interior does not deal with those issues.

Comrade Stalin points to the fact that Bulgaria is a small state, and it is not necessary to divide the Ministry of the Interior into the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of State Security. You should not copy the USSR, --says Comrade Stalin, --there is no need to do that, especially because the USSR is a very big state.

Yugov draws attention to the fact that the militia in Bulgaria carries out combat tasks in its struggle against the gangsterism.

He asks whether it would be convenient in these conditions to subdivide the Ministry of the Interior into two Ministries.

Comrade Stalin reaffirms that it is inconvenient and there is no need to do that.

Yugov, returning to the issue of combining the positions of Prime Minister with the position of Minister of Foreign Affairs, says that Kolarov and some other comrades are concerned that it would be difficult to find an appropriate candidate for the position of the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Comrade Stalin says that they can find people, they only need to search. There are many growing young people, they should be promoted, and they should be more assertive in promoting them.

Chervenkov says that it was decided to promote new people, especially for the leadership positions in connection with Kostov's affair.

Comrade Stalin. This is correct. We need to promote them. We should not rely on old specialists, especially in the trade area; they are people of the old cast. We should promote new people, not the old specialists, who are spoiled by the bad habits of the old society.

Comrade Stalin draws attention to the fact that Kostov surrounded himself exactly with such people, who should be replaced with new young cadres.

Chervenkov says that some of the ministers were shown to be involved in the Kostov case, and that they see the need to replace a number of ministers.

Comrade Stalin reminds them that this is the way it was in the Soviet Union. Lenin was a great man, but even in his time we overlooked similar facts. We always praised the Main Political Department (GPU), but only Dzerzhinsky was an impeccable honest person in it. There were a lot of foreign agents, who were sent from the abroad, who quite possible did not want to harm us, but had to, because they were recruited by the foreign intelligence services.

Comrade Stalin points to Yugoslavia, where there are many American and British agents, from whom it is constantly required that they supply information and services. Whether they want to do harm or not does not matter, there are certain requirements, and they should fulfill those requirements. It is the law. There is nothing exceptional in it. There is nothing surprising in what is done in this respect in Bulgaria.

Comrade Stalin names some of the most vicious trotskists, German and British agents in the USSR - Sheinman, Yagoda, Kolmanovich and others, and adds that it is not by accident that the old wolves are sitting there in Britain and the United States. Nothing exceptional happened in Bulgaria in this respect. It was the same in our country. Kostov's case will help to clean your country from these agents, and in general-from hostile elements.

Chervenkov says that Kostov admitted his plans to tear Bulgaria away from the friendship with the USSR.

Comrade Stalin, addressing the Bulgarians, says that Kostov is a foreign agent, he turned your own people in to the enemy. He is afraid to tell all the truth now, but if you force him to talk, he will tell you many things.

Chervenkov returns to the issue of the reconstruction of the government, and says that Kolarov desires to postpone it until the elections.

Comrade Stalin asks whether the Bulgarians know that Kolarov in the past was in the right wing, he was considered an opportunist. In his time, he created a lot of problems for Lenin. He gravitates to the right and he calls it "carefulness."

Subsequently, Kolarov improved. Undoubtedly, he is a Marxist and a reasonable person; Kolarov undoubtedly is our man, but recurrences may happen.

As far as the changes in the government are concerned, we should not delay them.

Comrade Malenkov asks whether there are any obstacles to the appointment of new ministers before the elections.

Chervenkov and Yugov explain that there are no such obstacles.

Comrade Stalin says that we should not wait, it is not the right way.

Chervenkov asks whether we have to have the General Secretary of the party.

Comrade Stalin responds that they do not have to have the General Secretary.

Chervenkov informs Comrade Stalin that the Politburo of the Bulgarian Communist

Party recently consisted of nine members and three candidates. Now the Politburo has seven members and three candidates. The Central Committee believes that the Politburo should not be expanded.

Comrade Stalin recommends to expand the Politburo in order to involve more new people in the work. Let them learn. You could promote people to the Politburo not only from the Politburo candidates, but from other people, who have grown, and who deserve it.

Chervenkov informs Comrade Stalin that right now they have two Secretaries of the Central Committee and that they proposed to elect a third Secretary. They thought about Pilovsky's [\[3\]](#) candidacy, but then it turned out to be necessary to get some additional information about him, and the solution of this issue was temporary postponed. They believe that the third Secretary should be one of the Politburo members.

Comrade Stalin agrees that it is better to have three Secretaries, and who that would be, of course, they would know better.

Comrade Stalin responds to the repeated Chervenkov's comment that Kolarov wants to combine the positions of the Prime Minister and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, and says that they should recommend that he gives up the idea.

Chervenkov explains that Terpeshev and Yugov of the new Deputy Chairmen will work in the Council of Ministers and he, Chervenkov, will work simultaneously as a Secretary of the Central Committee, and Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers.

Chervenkov lists names of other members of the Politburo and explains what positions they have in the government.

Chervenkov says that they cannot find a place for an organizational bureau in the system of the party leadership.

Comrade Stalin explains that in our country the organizational bureau monitors the practical work of local party organizations and mass public organizations. When the organization bureau does its inspections, they hear reports of instructors of the Central Committee, after which they make an appropriate resolution. It works very well.

Chervenkov asks whether the Bulgarians can study the work of the apparatus of the Central Committee, and send a group of comrades of about seven people to Moscow.

Comrade Stalin says that of course, they can. Let them come and study our work.

Chervenkov points to difficulties with specialists in the area of internal trade and agriculture. They would like the USSR to help them with their advisers.

Comrade Stalin says that they can help.

Chervenkov, touching on their relations with Yugoslavia, emphasizes that trade between Yugoslavia and Bulgaria has almost disappeared.

Comrade Stalin asks, who does not want to trade--the Yugoslavs or both sides.

Chervenkov responds that both sides do not want to. He adds that the trade agreement is not working. The fact that the transit of all the goods goes through Yugoslavia and that the Yugoslavs create all kinds of obstacles to it negatively affects the development of Bulgarian foreign trade.

Comrade Stalin says that of course, the Yugoslavs will create problems.

Chervenkov touches on the question of building a bridge over the Danube. It would give them an opportunity to get rid of their dependence on Yugoslavia. They would like to build a bridge in the next two years .

Comrade Stalin asks if there is a ferry across the Danube.

Chervenkov responds that there is a ferry in Rushuk [\[4\]](#). But they would like to build a permanent bridge in the narrowest spot of the Danube. Soviet specialists recommend to build a bridge near Rushuk. The Bulgarians believe that because of the economic and strategic considerations, the bridge should be built in the narrowest place, and that the Romanians also agree with this, because that would involve Romania as well. Then Chervenkov gives detailed explanations, using the map, where exactly they plan to build the bridge.

Comrade Stalin says that we have built a bridge over Danube for the Yugoslavs, and

that we should also build such a bridge for the Bulgarians.

Chervenkov says that the Greek comrades asked them for assistance in food products and weapons.

Comrade Stalin asks, where do the weapons, appropriated for the Greeks, go? Do they lose them, or give them up to the enemy?

Yugov and Damyanov confirm that the Greeks are asking for weapons, and that they plan to build underground hangars in the mountains.

To Comrade Stalin's question, they respond that the monarch-fascists took up several places along the Bulgarian-Greek border.

Damyanov adds that the guerillas systematically violate the Bulgarian border.

Comrade Stalin says that the guerillas are isolated from the population, and that it is very difficult to wage a guerilla war without the support of the population. You cannot wage a guerilla war in isolation from the population. As far as the underground facilities are concerned, it is nonsense.

Comrade Stalin notes that the guerillas would like to increase their numbers from the immigration, but there are many spies among the immigration.

Yugov confirms that the guerillas do actually count on increasing their numbers from among the immigrants, and that there are approximately 900 Greek immigrants in Bulgaria, who, however, do not want to fight, and the Yugoslavs are not helping the guerillas either.

Comrade Stalin says that the Yugoslavs have never been helping the Greek people's movement.

Comrade Stalin reminds the Bulgarians that they organized a storage with food products and weapons for Greece in Yugoslavia. The Yugoslavs did not show it to anybody, even to Zahariadis. Later, when they were able to see that storage, it turned out that every good thing was taken away from that warehouse.

Comrade Stalin suggests that they should invite Zahariadis and one representative each from the Albanians and Bulgarians, and discuss this issue.

Chervenkov says that the Turks began to stir recently, and they demand permission to move to Turkey. This campaign is inspired from the abroad.

Chervenkov points to the fact that the overwhelming majority of the Turks are good tobacco growers, and that it is impossible to let them leave Bulgaria.

Comrade Stalin emphasizes that nonetheless, these Turks should be expelled, notwithstanding the tobacco. We expelled such public from our border areas.

Yugov points to the difficulties that would arise, because the places, where the Turks live now in Bulgaria, would be empty and they would have to be settled anew. They are thinking about expelling the Turks from Bulgaria in the fall [\[5\]](#).

Comrade Stalin asks whether Turkey would accept them.

Yugov responds that that is, of course, doubtful.

Comrade Stalin proposes that they should ask the Turkish government, how it would look at this issue, and meanwhile they should postpone the expulsion until the fall.

Yugov says that it would be expedient to begin expelling the Turks from the 25-kilometer border area.

Comrade Stalin confirms the correctness of this proposal--because you cannot keep spies along the border.

Comrade Stalin asks, if there is excess of population in Bulgaria.

Yugov confirms that there is excess of people, who do not have any land. And again, he emphasizes that the relocation of the Turks would weaken the tobacco growing.

Comrade Stalin points to the fact that there are tobacco growers in Bulgaria even without the Turks, and that they should get rid of the Turks. Comrade Stalin asks, how the Turks behaved in the Central areas of Bulgaria.

Yugov responds that they are not behaving too well, but they are not doing anything exceptional. He responds to Comrade Stalin's question that there are several Turks in the Bulgarian Great People's Congress. He also emphasizes that the Turkish youth, especially in the region of Shumen, is reforming itself in the democratic direction.

Comrade Stalin inquires whether the Turks received any land after the revolution. Yugov responds affirmatively.

Comrade Stalin says that the Turks should go to Turkey, they will get quite a lesson there, and they will feel the difference.

Comrade Stalin asks if there are marriages between the Turks and the locals in Bulgaria.

Yugov responds that there are very few of them. He says that pomaki still live in Bulgaria--there are 150 thousands of them, they also live in the border areas. They will have to be relocated to the central parts of Bulgaria.

Comrade Stalin asks, what is the direction of the development of the Bulgarian economy, and what should be the course of this development.

Yugov responds that Bulgaria has a five-year plan, which was drafted under comrade Dimitrov. The main direction is to develop the textile, leather, flour grinding, and metal production industries; the industry of small agricultural machine building (ploughs, pumps for irrigation, and other equipment). There are railroad repair shops, but they are not building railroad engines.

Comrade Stalin points to the need to expand the repair shops and that Bulgaria cannot do without railroad engines.

Yugov continues to speak about the plan of construction. It is suggested to build a plant to produce cast-iron, two chemical plants, and to expand the nitrogen fertilizer production.

Comrade Stalin asks whether our people have arrived, and how are they helping.

Yugov confirms that they are helping very well . He points to all kinds of deficiencies in planning. For example, they planned to build new plants, power stations, and it turned out that the existing plants are not fully utilized, and the existing power stations cannot work, because of the shortages of wire to transmit electricity.

To Comrade Stalin's question, Yugov says that there are many mountain rivers in Bulgaria. They are building six big dams and hydroelectric power stations, which will give a large amount of power to the country. They are expanding the production of tins, which is lagging behind, because of the shortages of white tin-plates--as a result, they have a lot of vegetables, but the people cannot use them. They are also expanding the woodcutting industry.

To Comrade Stalin's question, Yugov responds that they have coal in Bulgaria, but its exploration is not organized yet.

Comrade Stalin points to the fact that they can produce gasoline from the coal.

Yugov responds that they are building such plants in Burgas. It will be a large plant. It will have to satisfy the needs of the entire country. Yugov points to the fact that the Bulgarians need advisors-planners, and specialists in construction and exploitation of power stations.

Comrade Stalin says that they should send several people to the USSR to study electric power construction.

Yugov informs Stalin that they are sending 30 people to study in the USSR. Yugov also informs Comrade Stalin that presently they are building a railroad line Sophia-Burgas .

Comrade Stalin asks, whether the Bulgarians have received the motorboats from the USSR.

Yugov responds that the motorboats will arrive in Bulgaria by August 8 .

Comrade Stalin asks, if they have sufficient arsenals for repair of weaponry, in particular for the artillery. He points out that it would be necessary to station the arsenals in the North.

Yugov responds that they have the arsenals, but that they are somewhat weak.

Comrade Stalin asks, if the Turks bother them on the border.

Yugov responds negatively, and adds that the Turks are undertaking a press campaign against Yugoslavia.

Comrade Stalin notes that they are doing it specifically for the United States.

Comrade Stalin asks, if the Bulgarians have intelligence in Turkey.

Damyanov responds that the Bulgarians do not have a military attache in Turkey, after the Bulgarians expelled the Turkish attache. They do not have intelligence in Yugoslavia either, although the work along the lines of state security was done very well.

Comrade Stalin asks, if there are Turkish troops stationed to the North of Constantinople, and if they are any good.

Chervenkov responds that there are troops there, according to their information. He cannot say anything about the quality of those troops.

Comrade Stalin reminds him that during the war Churchill complained that the Turks did not use radio.

Comrade Stalin asks, why Kostov wanted to separate Bulgaria from the U SSR.

Chervenkov says that he cited his desire to ensure the Bulgarian independence .

Comrade Malenkov says that Kostov used this to cover up.

Chervenkov confirms this, and makes a suggestion that Kostov wanted to conceal his genuine intentions.

Chervenkov says that Bulgaria is in a difficult situation now, and addresses the Soviet interlocutors with a request to help the Central Committee.

Comrade Stalin responds that we will help, but the Bulgarians should act faster. They should remove the wrong people and to replace them with new appropriate people.

Comrade Stalin emphasizes that Kostov was connected with the representatives of the foreign capital. They should be removed in the first place, because you cannot keep such people in the government. Kolarov, who wants to postpone the replacement of those unsuitable people, wants to look more constitutional, more democratic, but nobody will believe him anyway.

Comrade Stalin promises to help by sending some people, who will be useful for Bulgaria.

Yugov informs Stalin that they are thinking of introducing a financial reform.

Comrade Stalin asks if the exchange rate of lev^[6] is weak.

Yugov responds that the exchange rate is not bad, but that there are some absurdities, which suggests the need to introduce a financial reform in Bulgaria.

Comrade Stalin says that we can help in this. He names comrade Zlobin, who helped the Yugoslavs and the Romanians, and the Hungarians. He will help the Bulgarians as well^[7].

Comrade Stalin asks, if the Bulgarians have the printing presses to print money .

Yugov says that they do not have the printing presses and that before September 9, 1944, Austria and Germany printed the money for Bulgaria.

Comrade Stalin says that they should acquire their own printing presses. It is not difficult, and we will help in this.

Comrade Stalin adds that this is where the struggle for independence should manifest itself, but not in criticizing the Soviet government. In this connection, he says that the Yugoslav clique of scoundrels dares to say that the Soviet Union exploited Yugoslavia. These bastards scream about independence. Let us see how far they will go with this independence. These are dishonest people; they do not have anything Slavic in them. In 1946 the USSR gave Yugoslavia 50 thousand tons of bread free of charge, and now they are slandering that the USSR exploited them. These are unscrupulous people.

Yugov informs Stalin that Bulgaria had a bad harvest this year. They are 200 thousand tons short on all grains. They would have to borrow 100 thousand tones of bread^[8]. He cites the bad soils in Dobrudja.

Comrade Stalin said that they could successfully grow corn and cotton in Dobrudja.

Damyanov responds that that is correct, but there is very little water there, and no rivers.

Comrade Stalin points out that they could put powerful pumps, and take the water from the Danube. Comrade Stalin asks, how much arable land is there in Dobrudja.

Damyanov and Yugov say that there is about 700 thousand hectares.

Comrade Stalin notes that precisely in this region of Dobrudja (he points to a region laying next to the Romanian border on the map), cotton should grow well.

Chervenkov, Yugov and Damyanov agree with this.

The conversation ends on this point. The conversation lasted approximately two hours.

Original

[1] The letter has an attachment-a cover note saying the following: "To Comrade A. N. Poskrebyshev. Here are two copies of I. V. Stalin's conversation with Chervenkov, Yugov, and Darnyanov recorded by myself. I am keeping one copy of the text. Record of the conversation was typed in three copies. A. Vyshinsky. August 3, 1949." There is also a handwritten note on the document: "Recorded by A. Vyshinsky. Typ[ed] i n three copies; 2 for Comrade Poscreb[yshev], 1 to the files."

[2] He refers to the elections to the First People's Congress, which took place on December 18, 1949.

[3] As in the original. Should be: Pelovsky.

[4] Modern name-Ruse.

[5] The Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party decided to relocate the Turks on August 18, 1949. The resolution emphasized that all Turks who desired it, had an opportunity to leave Bulgaria. In the case if Turkey does not accept them by the end of the year, they will be relocated to the northern part of the country. The migrants were allowed to take their property with them, with the exception of the agricultural equipment and livestock. A special commission was created at the Council of Ministers of the People's Republic of Bulgaria to carry out the relocation campaign.

[6] As in the original. Should be: leva.

[7] On February 21, 1952, it was decided to send the Zlobin Commission "to provide assistance to our Bulgarian friends on financial issues." The commission consisted of I. D. Zlobin (head), I. I. Makarov, V.I. Alexandrov, V.I. Moskvina, A. E. Grigoriev, N. Ya. Vorobiev (RTSHIDNI, Fond 82, Finding aid 2, File 1134, pp. 79-80).

[8] In August 1949, Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the People's Republic of Bulgaria V. Kolarov appealed to Comrade I. V. Stalin with a request to "release 200,000 tons of wheat on the basis of reciprocity for the needs of the population and the army, to be returned in kind from the harvests of the next four years. The Bulgarian side was hoping that if the issue was favorably resolved, deliveries of grain could start already in September. and that Bulgaria would have received the first 100,000 tons before the end of 1949. On August 18, 1949 USSR Ambassador to Sofia Bodrov sent Kolarov's letter to Moscow (AP RF, Fond 45, Finding aid 1, file 254, pp. 22-27). On September 2, 1949 they signed an agreement in Moscow, under which the Soviet government would provide wheat to the Bulgarian government on the loan basis. By the agreement, the Soviet side assumed responsibility for providing 160,000 tons of wheat altogether; 100,000 tons -from September to December 1949, and 60,000 tons from January to May 1950.

The Bulgarian side promised to return the loan in the next four years from the Harvest of 1950- 1953. (Soviet-Bulgarian Relations and Contacts. Documents and Materials. Volume II, September 1944-December 1958. Moscow, 1981, p. 318).