

OFFICIAL NAME: Republic of Bulgaria

CAPITAL: Sofia

SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT: Unitary Multiparty Republic

AREA: 110,912 Sq Km (42,823 Sq Mi)

ESTIMATED 2000 POPULATION 8,427,000



LOCATION & GEOGRAPHY: Bulgaria is located on the Balkan Peninsula of South East Europe. It is bound by Romania to the north, Macedonia and Serbia and Montenegro (Serbia Rep.) to the west, Turkey to the southeast, Greece to the south and the Black Sea to the east. The country is divided into three topographical zones all of which lie parallel east to west of each other. (1.) The Danubian Tablelands in the north, (2.) the Stara Planina or the Balkan Mountains in the center and (3.) the Thracian Plains as well as the Rhodope and Pirin Mountains in the south and southwest. The principal rivers are the Maritsa, Iskur, Yantra and Struma which flow either north or south. Major Cities (pop. est.); Sofia 1,114,000, Plovdiv 345,000, Varna 307,000, Burgas 198,000, Ruse 170,000 (1993). Land Use; forested 35%, pastures 17%, agricultural-cultivated 39%, other 9% (1993).

CLIMATE: Bulgaria has a continental climate with hot summers and cold winters. In the south the climate is Mediterranean with winters that are milder and moister. On the coastal fringes of the Black Sea winters are slightly warmer but the northeast winds from Russia blow cold air causing cold spells. Average annual precipitation is 630 mm (25 inches) and average temperature ranges in Sofia are from -4 to 2 degrees Celsius (25 to 36 degrees Fahrenheit) in January to 16 to 27 degrees Celsius (61 to 81 degrees Fahrenheit) in July.

PEOPLE: The principal ethnic majority are the Bulgarians who are of Slavic descent and account for approximately 85% of the population. The principal ethnic minority are the Turks who account for 8.5% of the population, followed by Gypsies and Macedonians who account for 2.6% and 2.5% of the population respectively.

DEMOGRAPHIC/VITAL STATISTICS: Density; 81 persons per sq km (210 persons per sq mi) (1991). Urban-Rural; 67.6% urban, 32.4% rural (1990). Sex Distribution; 49.4% male, 50.6% female (1990). Life Expectancy at Birth; 68.2 years male, 74.4 years female (1986). Age Breakdown; 20% under 15, 21% 15 to 29, 21% 30 to 44, 18% 45 to 59, 15% 60 to 74, 5% 75 and over (1991). Birth Rate; 10.5 per 1,000 (1992). Death Rate; 12.7 per 1,000 (1992). Increase Rate; -2.2 per 1,000 (1992). Infant Mortality Rate; 15.9 per 1,000 live births (1992).

RELIGIONS: Mostly Christians with 85% of the population Eastern Orthodox while 1% are Roman Catholic and 13% are Muslims.

LANGUAGES: The official language is Bulgarian which is also the national language, although Turkish is also spoken by the ethnic minorities.

EDUCATION: Aged 25 or over and having attained: N/A. Literacy; literate population aged 15 or over 95.5% (1980).

MODERN HISTORY - WWII TO 1993: After World War II the communists did not completely control Bulgaria's new government, so they immediately took steps to strengthen their power. They removed noncommunists from the government who were then executed or sent to labor camps. In 1946 the monarchy was abolished and by the end of 1947 nationalization of private enterprise was complete. In Nov. 1946 Georgi Dimitrov, communist leader, became head of government and Bulgaria adopted a constitution modeled on that of the Soviet Union. In 1949 Dimitrov died and in 1950 Vulko Cherenkov came to power, industrialization rose while the country's living standards decreased. In 1954 Todor Zhivkov became the party head and in 1962 Zhivkov became head of state and based his rule on sharing power between the national and local governments in a de-Stalinization program. During the 1960's the country suffered and some members of government began to restore the Soviet influence in Bulgaria. In 1965 Zhivkov survived an attempted military coup. During the 1970's and 1980's Bulgaria worked to improve relations with other Balkan countries, it established limited trade and cultural ties with Western nations and continued to support the Soviet Union. In Jan. 1988 a party conference approved multi-candidacy for elections, although they placed emphasis on the need for a socialist form of self government. In 1989 massive demonstrations took place in the Turkish districts and the government opened the borders with Turkey. On Dec. 7, 1989 encouraged by a chain reaction of collapsing communist regimes throughout Europe, the opposition united in an umbrella organization called the Union of Democratic Forces (UDF). On April 3, 1990 the National Assembly approved free multiparty elections and deleted references to socialism as well as communism from the constitution. After student strikes in November, Andrei Lukanov resigned as Prime Minister and a neutral judge was appointed. On Jan. 8, 1991 the two leading trade unions and government officials sign an six-month agreement to maintain social peace. In Feb. 1991 the National Assembly passed a law that decollectivized agriculture and allowed to privatization of small business. In June 1991, the banking system was reformed and the Bulgarian National Bank was made independent from the government. In July 1991 a new constitution was adopted and in Oct. 1991 parliamentary elections were won by Filip Dimitrov of the UDF. Also during 1991 there were tensions of Turkish minorities over education in their own language. In Jan. 1992 Zhelyu Zhelev backed by the UDF defeated the socialist-sponsored Velko Valkanov in presidential elections. On April 9, 1992 the Restitution Act was enacted and restored property to the former owners or

their descendants that was nationalized by the Communists between 1947 and 1962. In July 1992, the former premier Andrei Lukanov was arrested on charges of peculation while later in the year Todor Zhivkov and Georgy Atanasov were sentenced for 7 and 10 years respectively for similar offenses. In 1992 an economic reforms program that included price liberalization, pay restraints and a bill to privatized state enterprises caused concern amongst the tow main trade unions and ultimately resulted in strikes by oil refinery, medical and transport workers for wage increases. Also during 1992, the Turkish areas were also economically hit hard with ramifications throughout the Turkish party, Movement for Rights and Freedoms (MRF), causing a vote of no-confidence to be passed by the Bulgarian Socialist Party and the resignation of Dimitriov. A MRF nominated non-Turk, Lyuben Berov, was named as Dimitrov's successor. In 1993 the UDF consistently accused Prime Minister Berov's government of backtracking reforms and wishing to restore socialism, and demanded fresh elections. In June 1993, the UDF deputy Edvin Sugarev went on a hunger strike in an effort to force Pres. Zhelev's resignation while by the end of the month the Vice President Blaga Dimitrova resigned claiming that some form of dictatorship was imminent. On Sept. 17, 1993 the National Assembly annulled the controversial 1992 census results for two southwest areas that allegedly had exaggerated numbers of Turkish residents, with opposition from the MRF. In Dec. 1993, some 20,000 miners staged a prolonged strike to protest more anticipated layoffs due to mine closures. After 26 days the government agreed to back pay and to reinstate the laid off workers.

CURRENCY: The official currency is the Lev (plural; Leva) divided into 100 Stotinki.

ECONOMY: Gross National Product; USD \$9,812,000,000 (1993). Public Debt; USD \$11,923,000,000 (1991). Imports; Leva 234,120,000,000 (1994). Exports; Leva 225,468,000,000 (1994). Tourism Receipts; USD \$307,000,000 (1993). Balance of Trade; Leva -8,652,000,000 (1994). Economically Active Population; 3,646,342 or 43.2% of total population (1994). Unemployed; 13.4% (1994).

MAIN TRADING PARTNERS: Its traditional trade has been with the former USSR, although its main western trade partners include Germany, the UK, Switzerland, Austria, France and Italy.

MAIN PRIMARY PRODUCTS: Apples, Barley, Cattle, Coal, Copper, Grapes, Lead, Lignite, Limestone, Maize, Manganese, Oil and Natural Gas, Pigs, Poultry, Sheep, Sunflower Seeds, Tobacco, Timber, Uranium, Wheat, Zinc.

MAJOR INDUSTRIES: Agriculture, Brewing and Distilling, Cement, Chemicals, Coke, Fertilizers, Forestry, Iron and Steel, Leather Goods, Machinery, Oil and Gas Refining, Textiles, Tobacco Processing, Wine.

MAIN EXPORTS: Chemicals, Cigarettes, Fruit, Machinery, Meat, Tobacco, Transport Equipment, Vegetables, Wines and Spirits.

TRANSPORT: Railroads; route length 4,300 km (2,672 mi) (1990), passenger-km 7,793,000,000 (4,842,000,000 passenger-mi) (1990), cargo ton-km 14,132,000,000 (9,679,000,000 short ton-mi) (1990). Roads; length 36,922 km (22,942 mi) (1990). Vehicles; cars 1,234,006 (1989), trucks and buses 163,965 (1989). Merchant Marine; vessels 200 (1990), deadweight tonnage 1,953,557 (1990). Air Transport; passenger-km 3,758,900,000 (2,335,671,000 passenger-mi) (1990), cargo ton-km 45,101,100,000 (30,889,743,000 short ton-mi) (1990).

COMMUNICATIONS: Daily Newspapers; total of 46 with a total circulation of 1,464,000 (1992). Radio; receivers 3,920,000 (1994). Television; receivers 3,127,000 (1994). Telephones; units 2,300,100 (1993).

MILITARY: 101,900 (1995) total active duty personnel with 75.9% army, 2.9% navy and 21.2% air force while military expenditure accounts for 6.0% (1993) of the Gross National Product (GNP).