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Intelligence Report

Office of Leadership Analysis

8 July 1994

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Leaders in Bulgaria—The Return of the Former Communists. [redacted]

1. Since 1992, **President Zhelyu Zhelev** has presided over a non-partisan government of technocrats headed by **Prime Minister Lyuben Berov**, a former economic adviser to Zhelev. The Berov government, however, has a weak mandate because of its non-elected status and increasingly has come under attack from the anti-communist Union of Democratic Forces (UDF) for its lack of progress on reform; Berov has survived seven no-confidence votes by progressively narrower margins. As Berov's situation becomes more precarious, the government's main parliamentary supporter, the former Communist Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP) led by **Chairman Zhan Videnov**, has exerted increasing influence in the legislature and over Berov's policymaking.

- Berov has yielded to BSP pressure to slow or halt economic reforms and to implement a more "Slavic-oriented" foreign policy, according to press [redacted] reports.
- The BSP's increasing influence prompted Zhelev—a respected Communist-era dissident who advocates Bulgarian membership in NATO and other Western institutions and rapid political and economic reform—to publicly withdraw his support from Berov's government in April. [redacted] since then, Zhelev has tried to persuade Bulgaria's centrist parties—including the ethnic Turkish Movement for Rights and Freedoms (MRF) and the Civic Alliance for the Republic—to unite, bring down the Berov government, and force early elections in the fall. [redacted]

2. Berov remains in power in spite of increasing criticism within parliament, in large part because of divisions within the leadership of the BSP and UDF over when and how to bring his government down, [redacted]

- Videnov appears to have strengthened his position relative to **Aleksandur Lilov**, the hardline former BSP chairman, in a struggle for influence at the June BSP congress. Videnov and Lilov have been involved in debates over whether the BSP should precipitate early elections. Videnov has stated that he favors holding early elections in the fall of 1994, but press [redacted] sources have speculated that other BSP leaders want to delay elections until at least spring to expand BSP control in parliament before facing the voters.
- Similarly, right-wing UDF **Chairman Filip Dimitrov** and moderate UDF **parliamentary floor leader, Stefan Savov**, have divided the party with their public feud over whether the UDF should boycott parliament in order to force Berov to resign. Dimitrov believes early elections would benefit the UDF and favors

This memorandum was prepared by the Office of Leadership Analysis, Directorate of Intelligence. Questions and comments can be directed to [redacted]

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the boycott, while Savov believes the UDF would lose seats to the BSP in early elections, according to the Bulgarian press. [redacted]

Political Leadership Divided over Yugoslav Crisis

3. Although Bulgaria's top political figures all agree that Bulgaria should avoid involvement in the conflict—including support for UN operations—and that the West owes Bulgaria additional aid to offset losses suffered through sanctions enforcement, they differ significantly over the culpability of the participants in the Bosnian conflict and the appropriate role of the West in mediating the crisis.

- Zhelev has stated publicly that he considers Serbia to be the main aggressor in the Bosnian conflict, strongly supports sanctions against Serbia and, at one point, publicly advocated NATO air strikes to curb Serb aggression. Zhelev also supports the US presence in Macedonia as a means to prevent the widening of the conflict, [redacted] **Foreign Minister Stanislav Daskalov** shares Zhelev's views on the crisis.
- In contrast, Berov and BSP leaders argue that Bulgaria should expand its ties to Serbia as part of a policy to improve relations with its Slavic and Eastern Orthodox neighbors, including Greece and Russia, [redacted] Berov and his BSP backers question the usefulness of sanctions and turn a blind eye to sanctions violations, according to press [redacted] sources. BSP leaders are suspicious of US intentions in Macedonia and claim that the United States is attempting to gain a foothold in the Balkans. [redacted]

Conflicts in Civil-Military Relations

4. The Bulgarian military establishment is torn by conflict between the civilian and military leaderships over issues of reform, control of the military budget, and the influence of the BSP, according to press [redacted] reports. There is mounting evidence that the military leadership—probably in part due to the BSP's growing oversight responsibility in parliament—[redacted] have begun to scale back military-to-military relations.

- **Defense Minister Valentin Alexandrov** has vainly attempted to improve relations with the West, adapt to drastic budget cuts by cutting the size of the military forces, and reduce the influence of the BSP within the defense establishment, according to press [redacted] sources.
- Top military officers, including **Chief of the General Staff Lyuben Petrov**, have resisted many of Alexandrov's efforts, [redacted] Petrov does not oppose contacts with the West—he has publicly stated that Bulgaria should join NATO—but he has been active in renewing ties to former allies, including Russia.
- **Dimitur Pavlov**, [redacted] replaced [redacted] **Boyko Noev** as Deputy Defense Minister in May [redacted] Alexandrov, [redacted] recently complained [redacted] about the BSP's growing influence in his ministry, BSP loyalists' efforts to block his orders, and the party's attempts to replace him. [redacted]