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Bulgaria: Prospects for Roundtable Talks□□□

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Summary:

An analysis of roundtable talks between the Communist Party, Agrarian Party, and opposition groups.

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~~Top Secret~~

6.2(d)

BULGARIA: Prospects for Roundtable Talks

Roundtable talks between the Communist Party, the Agrarian Party, and opposition groups open today in the wake of a large prodemocracy demonstration and the repeal of constitutional clauses guaranteeing the leading role of the party. [redacted]

6.2(d)

The Union of Democratic Forces, the umbrella opposition group, will demand that the government postpone general elections until November. [redacted] It also will demand new election laws, elimination of party organizations in enterprises, a government-provided headquarters building, and equal access to media. [redacted]

3.3(b)(1)

6.2(d)

The National Assembly closes its two-day session today. It already has granted amnesty to 60 political prisoners and backed the Mladenov regime's recent decision to reverse the assimilation campaign against the Muslim minority. The Assembly is also reviewing crimes of the ousted Zhivkov regime. A member of the legislative commission probing corruption under the former regime has announced that Todor Zhivkov will be brought to trial—possibly as early as next month—on charges of abusing power, diverting state funds, and violating human rights. [redacted]

6.2(d)

Comment: The new regime, under continuing pressure from the opposition and the public, is likely to bow to at least some of the opposition's demands during this first session of roundtable talks. It is likely to give way eventually on the key issue of delaying general elections: the opposition needs more time to organize and compete for control of the legislature. [redacted]

6.2(d)

The concessions are not likely to weaken the Communist Party's efforts to cling to power or to calm political tensions. It will maintain its efforts to obstruct opposition forces by such measures as limiting media access. Local conservative party leaders also probably will continue to try to exploit anti-Turkish feelings—the one issue on which they can appeal for popular support among some segments of the population—and anti-Turkish demonstrations are likely to break out sporadically in provincial areas populated by ethnic Turks and Muslims. The opposition, for its part, may be able to exploit a Zhivkov trial to incriminate members of the current leadership and appears to have momentum on its side. [redacted]

6.2(d)

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