

May 7, 1953
**Report on Disturbances at the Tobacco Depot in
Plovdiv, Bulgaria**

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Summary:

Report on the disturbances at the Plovdiv Tobacco depot on 4 May 1953 following job cuts at the plant.

Original Language:

Bulgarian

Contents:

Translation - English

Information From Stephan Kiradzhiev Depot at BDT Monopol--Plovdiv branch
The question of the distribution of workers upset everyone--men and women. The situation with the men was already decided--all the *istifchias* were going to be kept at work. Comrade Komna from the Main Headquarters of the Party was assigned to our enterprise to help us. A few days before the end of the tobacco processing we received an order to select comrades for the other two enterprises that were starting tobacco processing in May. Right after that there was a Party meeting and comrade Komna was there. During the meeting, a detailed explanation was given about the selection of the workers who would continue to work. The comrade explained that the decision had to be taken at group meetings of the labor union and the members of the labor union themselves had to decide whom, among the comrades, was to be chosen. After the Party meeting, hall meetings were arranged and the same clarifications were presented there. Labor union meetings were set for the next day. Every labor union group had assigned to it a comrade from the Party, a technical leadership group and the leaders from the halls. After the group of [female] comrades was determined, we raised a question in front of the labor union members asking them to confirm that they have chosen the people in greatest need. Everyone agreed to the chosen list of comrades but everyone shared the opinion that the other workers should be given work too--even if it is not at the depot. The nursing mothers and the medal-holders protested. We explained that we can legally provide work for the nursing mothers, until their children reach eight months. As to the medal-holders, we explained to the [female] comrades that it was we who appointed them in the first place, so there should be no special attitude taken towards them. The meetings at all three halls ended with common agreement. The names of the comrades who were going to start work at the depot were announced. A list was prepared and sent to the different locations. Between 10 and 15 April, few [female] comrades (pregnant women, nursing mothers, and heads of families) came back; during the final days of the tobacco processing they had taken their days off and the labor union groups did not count them. We wrote down the names of these comrades. During one of the meetings of the leadership those comrades were mentioned and there was an agreement that their names should be presented on a separate list. From 20 April, other [female] comrades started coming in, insisting that they be included in the list. One of them was Cde. Vera Dimitrova who has a family of three; her husband works as an *istifchia* in one of the enterprises. The other one was Comrade Boriana Doumbalakova who has a family of four and her husband works as an *istifchia* at Ivan Karadzhov Depot. We told them that there were no openings and that they should be glad to have one piece of bread in their families because those who were on the list did not even have money for bread. The two women started protesting, saying that, no matter what, they would go to work. There were also other [female] comrades who came to the depot, but after we explained the situation to them, they left--some of them right away, others after long, angry tirades. I asked some of those women why they were not protesting against the chosen comrades earlier (at the meetings), but only now. One of them told me: "we are not protesting against them, we want to be put on the list too." Another woman started crying, and said: "Come and see, my child is very sick and there is no food; my husband is working but there is not even enough for bread." Others were saying that everyone should process the tobacco. Many [female] comrades went to the secretariat of Monopol to see the factory labor union, but they were sent back to us. So, people were left with the impression that we, or even I personally, did not want to put them on the list, even though they knew what the procedure was. I even told the comrades from the factory labor union, as well as Comrade Kaltzov, not to send those who had no chance to be included in the lists to us. I wanted to mention all those problems at the conference held at the Secretariat of Monopol; Cde. Shaitanov, Cde. Ribarov and Cde. P. Anguelova were present. The comment of Cde. Ribarov that we would not and should not let any confusion settle in, accomplishing this through further explanations, made me rethink my desire to make a speech, and I completely abandoned my intention after Cde. Penka Anguelova told Cde. Vaska Alexandrova that she was exaggerating when she said that many workers had come and threatened to break her neck, etc. And after all, we had to state why there had been such threats in all the enterprises. The greatest confusion came when we had to distribute permits. On 29 and 30 April, women workers who were not on the lists started coming and asking to be added to the list. We explained to them that it was impossible to give permits to everyone and that only workers on the lists could

receive such permits. In such cases they would approach the Secretariat of the factory labor union, where they would be sent back to us, and then we would face all the angry comments. There were five women workers who dropped from the list and we replaced them right away, as Cde. Zarev had told us to do. There was only one comrade from the list who started protesting--Comrade Fanka Dizova. [She] came to us after the list had been completed and asked us to put her on it because she was in a very difficult situation. I told her that we could not do that because people would protest. We talked to her for a while and she did not say anything. After a couple of days, she went to Cde. Kaltzov, told him everything, and he sent her back to us. Before she came back to us though, she went to the District Committee of the Party where she obtained a note and then came back here. At that moment I was at the Secretariat of Monopol where Cde. Durev and I were printing some lists. When she came to us, someone from the Municipal Committee of the Party called for her and it was only then that we included her on the list. Two days later, Cde. K. Danchev called (he was very furious) and asked why we had put Comrade Fanka Dizova in. I explained to him how she got to be on the list. He told me to cross her name off on his authority. We removed her name from the list and that was the end of the question. We did not even send a note to that same comrade, but then she did not show up on the day of the opening of the depot. On 4 May, 6:00 in the morning, I was at Ivan Karadzhov Depot, where our workers were assigned to go. The entrance door was closed and there were around 40-50 people on the street. I went in and found Cde. Pronchev. Cde. Kosta Danchev was also there, and I told them that they should open the door and let the worker in because that was the decision. Comrade Pronchev ordered the door to be opened and the workers came in to the yard. Until 6:30 a.m., everything was relatively calm. People were gathering but they stood in groups, away from the doors, so that workers with permits could come in. Comrades Pronchev, Danchev and Bonchev were going from group to group telling them that they should not gather and that they should go home; people did not want to hear that. Around 6:50 a.m. the situation became threatening. There were 400 or 500 people who started pushing at the doors, wanting to come in. Two of the [female] comrades who were making the most noise were from Ivan Karadzhov Depot. Comrade Tzonka knows who those two comrades were. The two women from our enterprise who were behaving very badly were Comrades Vera Dimitrova and Boriana Doumbalakova. Ignoring our instructions, they started pushing at the first door, because Cde. Danchev had locked it, and everyone started booing. After a while they went to the second and the third door. Comrade Ounarev managed to close the second door, but around 150 people entered through the third door. We succeeded in making some of the people leave, but there were others who entered the building and started working. There were two [female] comrades from our enterprise, who were party members--Comrade Velichka Georgieva and Cde. Ganka Eftimova. The two of them do not have any bad [marks on their] records with the party organization, but they are absolutely passive--they do not take part in any of the activities. On the day of the opening they were not among those who were making the most noise in front of the doors and they were not pushing to come in, but the fact [is] that they were outside, when they were not on the lists, and instead of persuading the other comrades to go home, they went by Georgii Ivanov Depot and, along with all the others, went to the Secretariat of Monopol, [and] spoke extremely badly of them. At around 8:00, everyone came out of the yard, went by Georgii Ivanov Depot and went to the Secretariat of Monopol. We started work, but the atmosphere was very tense. Around 11:00, an order was received to continue work until noon and to stop after that. Around 11:45 a.m., I announced this in the hall. Now, the workers inside started protesting. Some of them started crying, asking what they were supposed to do. Others started asking why they had come if they had to stop work now. There was a lot of noise in the hall until 12:00; when the bell rang at noon, everyone left. As to whether the day was appropriate or not for the opening of the depot--I don't think that the choice of the day had anything to do with the scandal. Everyone is unemployed--people gather at the cooperatives waiting in lines for bread [and] milk, and the propaganda is carried out in this way. Whether it was May 4, 10, or 20, it does not matter and what happened on the 4th could not be avoided. I even think that people could have prepared better--right now they were distracted by the holidays. The greatest weakness that we allowed and which led to everything that

happened was the fact that the labor unions did not want to take part in the arrangement. The biggest mistake of the Party was that it did not allow permits to be distributed in order to work out the settlement of our workers, and it did not hold to its first decision requiring all the enterprises that needed people to give priority to the tobacco workers. Only a small number of our workers was accommodated at the beginning, while the Party required that directors of enterprises take tobacco workers. When the directors found out that no one could make them take only tobacco workers, they started taking people from the outside, not our people. Our workers were finding work, but they could not get hired without permits--the permits could not be issued. That discouraged the people completely, because earlier, while the labor union was taking care of them, everyone was calm. Now, after looking for work at different places and not finding anything, people became absolutely desperate and that was what led to their fury on the day of the opening. Plovdiv, 7 May 1953 Ljubka Ivanova Bouzdreva