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Bulgaria: Prime Minister, Cabinet Resignation

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Summary:

An analysis of the resignations of the Prime Minister and the Council of Ministers and their effects on the Bulgarian political climate.

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3529

~~Top Secret~~

6.2(d)

BULGARIA:

Prime Minister, Cabinet Resign

The resignation of Bulgaria's Prime Minister and Council of Ministers yesterday and the failure of the party congress to make substantial reforms signal a political crisis that may lead to a coalition government as early as next week. [redacted]

6.2(d)

Prime Minister Georgi Atanasov and his cabinet resigned yesterday under intense criticism at the party congress. [redacted] more reassignments and purges will be announced today. [redacted]

3.3(b)(1)

6.2(d)

The congress passed new party statutes yesterday to replace the Central Committee and Politburo, separate party and government positions, eliminate the concept of democratic centralism, and limit the number of terms party leaders may serve. More radical reforms, such as changing the party's name and eliminating party organizations in workplaces, however, were not approved, leading a reformist faction to announce it will create a separate Bulgarian Socialist Party next week. [redacted]

6.2(d)

Comment: The dissolution of the cabinet and failure of the party congress to adopt significant reforms show the inability of the Communist leadership to respond to party and public discontent, particularly over economic woes. Atanasov's growing unpopularity and association with the Zhivkov regime made his resignation unavoidable. The resignation of the Council of Ministers, however, stemmed from its failure to address Bulgaria's growing economic difficulties. [redacted]

6.2(d)

Petar Mladenov probably will resign as party General Secretary but remain head of state. Some key hardline party leaders are likely to fall as the Central Committee is replaced by a smaller Supreme Council. Reformist Politburo members Aleksander Lilov and Andrey Lukanov will probably become party leader and Prime Minister, respectively. [redacted]

6.2(d)

The regime hopes the changes will help it regain credibility, and it probably will seek to entice the opposition Union of Democratic Forces into a coalition government within a few weeks, implicating the UDF in the economic crisis and undercutting its popularity before elections set for May. The UDF rejected such calls earlier this week and probably will press for a caretaker government of civil servants, but the public sense of a deepening crisis may force it to join a coalition as early as next week. [redacted]

6.2(d)

~~Top Secret~~
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