

NEWS REEL 2002

dialogue

The greatest New Year's gift for the working people from the Party and the Government is the salary rise decree for workers, engineering cadres and employees. This decree shows one more time that for our Communist party there is no gap between word and deed; that the incessant and all-embracing enhancement of the people's material and cultural level of life is a law of socialist economy. As comrade Todor Zhivkov said in his speech before the National Assembly, the salary rise sum is only 380 million leva but in 1961 we will be able to raise the salaries with about 2 billion leva. Which capitalist country, which bourgeois government can afford such an achievement...

Cheerful greetings from the metal-workers of Pernik

Sofia City Art Gallery (SCAG) presents: pictures from the "Socialist realism" collection January-February 2002

Galina Kyuleva, SCAG art expert

- Here in the Gallery we work on various exhibitions for years now. The last one we made together with the gallery staff is called "Socialist realism". There are a lot of emotions going on about this exhibition because most of the direct participants in the period are still among us. In the realm of art only several genres remained: the official portrait mainly of leaders and heads of the Communist party, the portraits of awarded workers, shock-workers and co-operative farmers. Stalin and also Maxim Gorki first talked about socialist realism before a congress of writers. That was in fact the decision made at the congress and the direction in which all had to create. That was a crude interference, a regulation to each artist what to represent in his art and how to represent it.
- As to the artistic layout the paintings are much more exquisite compared with those of the new artists, the up-to-date ones.
- So you're well acquainted with art and you like these more.
- I like their expression, their elaboration.
- Do you have something to do with painting?
- No, but I can distinguish beautiful from vulgar. I don't like modernistic art.
- We deal with a time that inflicted Bulgarian art very much because of the tough choice to be made. If the artist didn't fit in the requirements and the common artistic life, if he decided to work more freely and to emphasize his own style, things became very hard for him. He could be sued, sent to concentration camp and even lose his life. So an artistic choice could become a choice between life and death.
- Reality was just as it is represented here. There were collective teamwork, creativity, and studies... That time didn't inflict us, we were ordinary citizens. Well now the political fights for liberty are OK with their beautiful slogans and ideals. But the fulfillment is something else with other factors to bear in mind if you want it to be perfect.
- No need to argue these are all great artists at a very high level. You know, the mountain peaks are all high. One is higher than another but they're all high. These are the peaks in our artistic painting and in our art. They're very good as portraitists as well as masters of composition...
- By the way in that time all our great artists with their own style such as Ivan Milev and Vladimir Dimitrov-Maistora were rejected. More romantically or lyrically inclined artists and those who had a taste for nature or the other type of portrait, which of women and children,

couldn't participate anywhere. Special commissions were formed who estimated and permitted the works to common exhibitions of art.

- Beg you pardon? I can't hear well...
- How did you like the paintings and the exhibition?
- I liked them very much. I grew up in the times when the first great plants were built. Those stuff on the paintings with the first metallurgy – I've lived through all of this. I'd like to say to the youth that the Bulgarian people are the most gifted. We can build cars better than Mercedes and planes better than the American ones. I hope we'll change the things so that our talented youth could again produce the best metal and the best cars and the best planes...
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- When everyone worries that somebody will give information about him somewhere; that because of one's freedom of expression one can see the end not only of his career but also of his life – then things become distorted and, so to say, sexless.

*The town of Pravets, birthplace of Todor Zhivkov
Todor Zhivkov (1911-1998)*

- When he was in power, there were a lot of jobs and now there aren't. We're strong tough men and we got nowhere to work. Time went back by 50 years. We remember joy, carts, and horses...What equipment we had here in Pravets! From '68 I worked as a driver at the co-operative farm. What equipment we had! They sold it all like that an' none understood where it went. So the equipment's gone and isn't coming back here in Pravets. So it is... When this man was...
- Well I approve, it's a good thing when what's built remains as a memory. See how much is built all across Europe and we alone crash and destroy.
- And what are your feelings when you look back to the times of Todor Zhivkov? What do you remember, how did you live then?
- We lived well. There was a job and money for everybody, there were no such bad things, murders, rapes... There was peace and quiet. Some may not approve it, but 'twas then when I built my house. Now I can't build a WC. It takes 2000 leva to build a WC outside one's house. Where to take it from?
- Do you approve this monument?
- Why not? That's history, I don' see why not to build it. We had so many guests for the inauguration, so I'm very agree with that. We can't go on without our future. I've great memories... Even my children, though they're 17 and 18, say: "'twas like this, like that, our memories are better". See how we are now!
- Ask what ye need to know.
- What do you think about the monument?
- 'Bout what?
- About Todor Zhivkov's monument.
- They did it very well!
- 'Tis not bad, 'tis very good, people come here to see it's good.
- And how do you remember Todor Zhivkov's times?
- He was very good. They gave people money.
- Yes, and jobs...
- Now there's no money! I can buy nothing, nothing!

Todor Zhivkov square

- My opinion for this monument is that they should've known long time ago. They should've known he's the... Bulgaria's first leading politician.
- So you approve the idea?
- Yes I do.
- Surely.
- And what are your feelings when you look back? Good or...
- Very good. Now...
- Then there were jobs for everybody, now there's for nobody. Back then one could live... d'ya hear me?
- Yes I can hear you.
- Nowadays one can't live properly