

Austrian-Bulgarian Economic and Trade Relations 1947 to 1969

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Abstract: During the Cold War the Soviet Union and other CMEA countries dominated Bulgaria's foreign trade. However, trade with Austria had an important role for Bulgaria as a supplier of industrially manufactured products. Austria imported mainly agricultural goods from Bulgaria.

The Bulgars were complaining about the disproportion in the mutual balance of trade with Austria. Between 1960 and 1970 Austria's trade balance surplus with Bulgaria increased from 13 million to 405 million Austrian shillings.

During the time of the Austrian occupation from 1945–1955 trade between Austria and Bulgaria was mainly issued between the Soviet controlled USIA enterprises and Bulgarian state-owned enterprises in direct compensation. The USIA shops in Austria sold Bulgarian products like cigarettes and food. In 1955, Austria was still the second most important foreign market for cigarettes for the Bulgarian Bulgartabac. Even before the USIA enterprises went into the property of Austria in August 1955, business transactions were arranged by the Central Commercial Office (KZB) of USIA which lasted with Bulgaria till April 1956.

The first official trade agreement between Austria and Bulgaria after the Second World War was made in 1947, it was a compensation agreement. There was also established a "Mixed Commission" with representatives from both countries. One year later, in 1948, the "Agreement on the mutual exchange of goods" was issued. It contained lists of goods with quotas in form of a maximum amount in clearing dollars or tons. With this trade agreement a payment agreement also came into force with clearing accounts in U.S. dollars at the Austrian and the Bulgarian National Bank. So the compensation took place at the state level.

Also in 1948, Bulgaria enlarged its commercial representation in Vienna, which had then 20 employees. In 1953, Austria opened its foreign trade office in Sofia. The trade agreement of 1960 between Austria and Bulgaria was a long-term one, also operated on a clearing basis and with lists of goods and quotas.

Key words: Economic History, Trade, Austria, Bulgaria, CMEA

"[...] the good relations between Bulgaria and Austria are traditional. [The economies of Austria and Bulgaria] - an industrial and an agricultural country - complement each other well. [...] [Bulgaria's] trade with Austria occupies the first place within trade relations with the Western states."¹

¹ ÖStA, AdR, BKA/AA, II-pol, Sofia 1954, GZ. Bulgaria 2, GZl. 143.998-Pol 54. On Austrian-Bulgarian relations. Report of the Austrian legation in Sofia, Zl. 148.250-3-Pol/54, 19.5.1954.

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This was stated in a 1954 report from the Austrian legation in Sofia to Foreign Minister Leopold Figl. The good economic relations between the two countries remained more or less intact throughout the Cold War. Although Austria was overtaken by the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) as the largest Western European trading partner from the second half of the 1950s, it still had a share of 14 percent of all Western European imports in 1965, putting it in second place with Italy.² Austria was seen by the Bulgarian side as the gateway to the West, where technology could be sought and acquired first. On the other hand, Bulgaria exported mainly agricultural products and tobacco to Austria.³

“The mutual relations [between Bulgaria and Austria] have been frictionless and correct for many years. [...] Apart from the complaints about the disproportion in the mutual balance of trade that have been made again and again over the years.”⁴

The Bulgarian side urged Austria to purchase more industrial products, especially machinery.⁵ In 1958, Austria still had a trade deficit with Bulgaria of two million Austrian shillings (ATS). Twelve years later in 1970, Austria had a trade surplus with Bulgaria of 405 million shillings. Contrary to the Bulgarians' wishes, this trade surplus increased to about two billion ATS by 1988.⁶

Before World War II in 1937, the share of Bulgaria's foreign trade with the other Eastern European countries, Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Romania and Albania was only twelve percent. By 1951, trade with these countries had increased to 92 percent, with the Soviet share being the largest.⁷

On the economic development of Bulgaria from the end of the Second World War until the 1960s.

The socialist centrally planned economy had its heyday in the second half of the 20th century. Unlike capitalist economies, there was a unity of politics and economics. State planning encompassed the entire economy, and decisions made

² ÖStA, AdR, BMfAA, 01/Foreign Affairs, Austrian Embassy Sofia, Pol 75, Kt. 5. Supplement 1972–1974. Part III Relations between Austria and Bulgaria, Zl. 23.16.01/3-II3/75, 10.3.1975; see also: the table “Bulgaria's Imports”.

³ Hagspiel 2007.

⁴ ÖStA, AdR, BMfAA, 01/Foreign Affairs, Austrian Embassy Sofia, Pol 75, Kt. 5. Supplement 1972–1974. Part III Relations between Austria and Bulgaria, Zl. 23.16.01/3-II3/75, 10.3.1975, p. 14.

⁵ Ibid., p. 5.

⁶ Butschek 1996, tables 15.3 and 15.4; see also: table “Austria's trade balance”.

⁷ ÖStA, AdR, BKA/AA, II-pol, Sofia 1955, GZ. Bulgaria 6, GZl. 320.558-Pol 55, Bulgarian Press Review from 1 to 15.3.1955, 16.3.1955.

in ministries, in the party and in commissions were passed down hierarchically from top to bottom. These plans were based on quantities and not on prices. The fulfillment of the goals of these plans was the main task of the entrepreneurs. If these were not fulfilled, they were held personally responsible, which is why innovation was associated with a high risk.⁸ After the Second World War, Bulgaria was forced to follow the example of the Soviet Union. As early as March 1945, a Bulgarian-Soviet trade treaty was signed, and this laid the foundation for the transformation of the economy along Soviet lines.⁹ In rebuilding the country, the communists wanted to change the economy by pushing for industrialization, central planning and collectivization of agriculture. However, by the end of 1949, only 11.5 percent of the cultivated land was part of a cooperative. In contrast to Austria, the war damage in Bulgaria was limited. In 1945, the production level of 1939 was already exceeded.¹⁰

Bulgaria did not have to pay reparations to the Soviet Union because it had not participated in the German attack on the Soviet Union during the Second World War¹¹. Bulgaria received loans from the USSR in the amount of 2.2 billion rubles from 1947 for the development of heavy industry. This money went, for example, to a shipyard in Varna, an agricultural machinery factory in Ruse, and a metallurgical industrial complex near Sofia.¹² Soviet specialists and Soviet technology helped with industrialization. This industrialization led to even greater dependence of Bulgaria on the Soviet Union.¹³

Bulgaria was a founding member of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA), the creation was published on 25 January 1949. Moscow's goal was to have the Eastern European "people's democracies" coordinate their economic plans and trade relations with those of the Soviet Union and to secure raw materials, energy resources, foodstuffs and a wide variety of aid.¹⁴ With four

⁸ Stiefel 2009, pp. 103–105.

⁹ Iber & Ruggenthaler 2011b, pp. 366–367.

¹⁰ Brunnbauer 2007, pp. 221–128.

¹¹ Note: With the beginning of the Second World War Bulgaria declared itself neutral. On 1 March 1941 Bulgaria became an ally of the German Reich by joining the Three-Power Pact. After the capitulation of Romania on 23 August 1944, Bulgaria declared itself neutral again three days later, which was not recognized by the Soviet Union. On 5 September 1944 the USSR declared war on Bulgaria on the grounds that it would still fight alongside Germany. Although the Bulgarian declaration of war against Germany was still in force on 8 September 1944, the country was occupied by Soviet troops a day later. Baeva & Kalinova 2009, pp. 7–10.

¹² Lampe 1986, p. 184.

¹³ Baeva 2011, pp. 157–158.

¹⁴ Gibianskij 2011, pp. 21–40.

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percent, Bulgaria took one of the last places in the total trade of all countries of the CMEA in 1960. It modestly increased this share to six percent by 1982. The Soviet Union dominated the foreign trade of the CMEA countries (40 percent in 1960 and 45 percent in 1982).¹⁵ In the CMEA states, trade in goods was dominated by state trade institutions, such as the foreign trade ministries and the foreign trade companies, which were responsible for execution. In the centrally administered economy, foreign trade was to contribute to the fulfillment of the five-year plans. Long-term trade and payment agreements were intended to regulate the volume and payment terms of the exchange of goods.¹⁶

After Stalin's death in 1953, economic reforms were implemented in Bulgaria in line with Moscow. These included improving supplies to the population, lowering food and consumer goods prices, and reducing investment in industry. Beginning in the mid-1950s, Khrushchev-backed Todor Zhivkov asserted himself in the leadership of the Bulgarian Communist Party (BKP). The latter was able to hold on to power until his resignation in 1989.¹⁷ His time in power was characterized by "economic reformism and political conservatism".¹⁸

Bulgaria had to supply food to the other "people's democracies" because it was supposed to specialize in food production in CMEA. As a result, it had less grain and corn for export to the countries of the capitalist West.¹⁹ Between 1956 and 1958, collectivization of agriculture was completed in Bulgaria. On average, the collectivized farms were 1,000 hectares in size, which was the same as the average size in the other Eastern European countries. Only the Soviet ones were five times larger on average. In May 1956, at the 7th session of CMEA, Bulgaria was allowed to resume more industrialization. Overall, the share of industry in Bulgaria's value-added rose from 23 percent to 48 percent between 1948 and 1960. The share of agriculture fell from 59 percent to 27 percent during the same period.²⁰

The third Five-Year Plan (1958–1962) was marked by the optimism of the Khrushchev era and the "Great Leap Forward" in the People's Republic of China. The Bulgarian leadership under Zhivkov wanted to accomplish this five-year plan in three years. Scientific and technical institutes were founded and attempts

¹⁵ The data were calculated and taken from: Ott & Schäfer 1984, 398. See also: the diagrams "Share in total foreign trade of all CMEA countries (1960)."

¹⁶ Breuss 1983, p. 125.

¹⁷ Baeva & Kalinova 2009, pp. 40f; Baeva 2011, pp. 158–159.

¹⁸ Baeva & Kalinova 2009, p. 47.

¹⁹ ÖStA, AdR, BKA/AA, II-pol, Sofia 1955, Pol.-Berichte, GZ. 043, GZl. 157635. Change in Bulgarian Economic Policy, Zl. 115-Pol/55, Dr. Hobel to Leopold Figl, 21.11.1955.

²⁰ Lampe 1986, 148-pp. 153; Baeva & Kalinova 2009, p. 44.

were made to obtain technical innovations from abroad. At the 8th Party Congress of the BKP in November 1962, it was decided that by 1980 the country would be technically and materially advanced enough to be able to proclaim the completion of the construction of communism. The model was a similar decision by the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU). The very next year it became clear that it would not be possible to achieve these goals, and so by the end of 1964 a new system had been established in 43 percent of Bulgarian factories. The enterprises were now allowed to decide independently on the purchase and sale of goods or on the leasing of means of production. In these enterprises, production increased by 16 percent. By the end of the 1960s, however, these reforms were reversed for political reasons, because there were fears of too much democratization and a development similar to that during the “Prague Spring” in Czechoslovakia in 1968.²¹



Ill. 1 “20 years of the People’s Republic of Bulgaria,” Soviet stamp from 1964
Trade between Austria and Bulgaria
USIA’s trade with Bulgaria

In Austria, from 1946 to 1955, half of the industrial enterprises in the Soviet occupation zone, as well as agricultural enterprises and real estate, were part of the Administration of Soviet Property in Austria (USIA); or the Soviet Mineral Oil Administration (SMV),²² which had already been established in 1945. They formed a planned economic enclave, exempt from the Austrian administration.

²¹ Baeva & Kalinova 2009, pp. 52–54.

²² For basic information, see: Iber 2011; Iber 2009, pp. 571–605.

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Since they were mainly small and medium-sized enterprises equipped with out-dated technology, the USIA plants accounted for only about five to eight percent of Austria's total industrial production.²³ However, they accounted for 30 percent of the industrial output of Vienna and Lower Austria.²⁴

During the occupation, trade between Austria and Bulgaria was carried out mainly between Bulgarian state-owned enterprises and the USIA enterprises. 38 percent²⁵ of the trade of the USIA enterprises was made with Eastern Europe. One reason was that raw materials, which were inadequately allocated by the Austrian authorities, were obtained through compensation transactions. For example, railroad cars, turbines, tools and machines from USIA plants were exchanged for Bulgarian goods in direct compensation. The more than 200 USIA stores²⁶ set up in the Soviet occupation zone from 1949 onwards sold food, wine, schnapps and cigarettes from Bulgaria.²⁷ Since neither Austrian customs policy²⁸ nor the U.S. embargo policy were applied to this trade, a "hole in the Austrian eastern border" was created.²⁹

Austria was not a member of the Coordinating Committee on Multilateral Export Controls (COCOM), which was founded in 1949 and prohibited or restricted the export of certain goods to communist countries.³⁰ Austria, however, received aid from the USA to a considerable extent (European Recovery Program / Marshall Plan) and had to comply with the Battle Act³¹ of 1951, which also provided for embargo lists.³² After the end of the European Recovery Program, Austria had to apply the "Import Certificate/Delivery Verification System" from 1954, with which the Ministry of Trade issued a certificate that ensured that the imported goods actually went to Austria. The application of

²³ Iber & Ruggenthaler 2011a, pp. 194–195; Iber 2010, pp. 564–565.

²⁴ Stiefel 2009, p. 110.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 110–111.

²⁶ Klambauer 1978, p. 403.

²⁷ Bachmaier 2007, pp. 263–264; Klambauer 1978, p. 394; Feigl & Kusternig 1983, p. 319.

²⁸ Note: Since the Second Control Agreement "the occupying powers as such and the goods intended for them as well as the members of the occupying forces" were exempt from customs controls, but not the USIA operations. The imports and exports of these companies were illegal, according to Klambauer 1978, p. 405.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 378–383.

³⁰ On COCOM, see: Spaulding 2016, pp. 405–409; Einwitschläger 1986, pp. 76–84.

³¹ Note: The Mutual Defense Assistance Control Act of 1951 was named for U.S. Representative Laurie C. Battle. Klambauer 1978, p. 381.

³² *Ibid.*, pp. 378–383.

this system then resulted in the issuance of an export license to the USA.³³

As late as 1955, Austria was still the second most important foreign market for cigarettes for the state-owned Bulgartabac, after the German Democratic Republic (GDR). USIA stores sold Bulgarian cigarette brands such as Arda and Monopol, which were in particular demand in Austria. After the State Treaty, official³⁴ cigarette deliveries from Bulgaria failed due to resistance from the Austrian Tabakregie, which saw its monopoly in danger. Bulgartabac continued to supply the Austrian Tabakregie with raw tobacco later on.³⁵ However, in a 1956 report, the U.S. Embassy in Vienna put the value of what it considered illegal cigarette imports from Bulgaria to Austria at \$200,000 as part of the so called “KZB deals”.³⁶

Even before the USIA enterprises became the property of the Republic of Austria on 13 August 1955, business transactions were arranged by the Central Commercial Office (KZB) of USIA with the countries of CMEA-6 (Bulgaria, ČSSR, GDR, Poland, Romania and Hungary), beyond the end of the Soviet administration. These deals continued until at least January 1957. With Bulgaria, these “KZB deals” began on 22 August 1955, and ended on 7 April 1956.³⁷ The Bulgarians gave the size of these deals as \$2.5 million³⁸ (ATS 65 million at the time)³⁹. This would correspond to about ten percent⁴⁰ of all official imports from Bulgaria during the occupation.⁴¹ In the course of these transactions, Austria imported about one million eggs from Bulgaria worth about 32,000 clearing dollars, and the former USIA companies Siemens Schuckert, Gebr.

³³ Resch 2010, pp. 508–509.

³⁴ Note: There were no cigarettes as part of the “Austrian Imports from Bulgaria” as a result of the negotiations of the Austrian-Bulgarian Joint Commission for 1956. ÖStA, AdR, BKA, Sek. V, Central Office for ERP Affairs, 01/Foreign Affairs, GZ. 161125-11/56. Negotiations of the Austrian-Bulgarian Joint Commission, 30.1.1956.

³⁵ Hagspiel 2007, pp. 216–220.

³⁶ NARA (National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D. C., USA), RG 59, EN A1 205-N, 463.6641/6-1 56, B 2014. Austro-Bulgarian Trade Protocol of 1956, 1.6.1956.

³⁷ NARA, RG 59, EN A1 205-N, 461.639/10.456, B 1994. Transmittal of Lists showing approved Austrian Reparations Shipments and KZB shipments to USSR, 4.10.1956.; NARA, RG 59, EN A1 205-N, 461.639/2-557, B 1994. Transmittal of Lists showing approved Austrian Reparations Shipments and KZB shipments to USSR, 5.2.1957.

³⁸ Note: The Bulgarians wanted to achieve the highest possible export quotas with this information during the negotiations of the Austrian-Bulgarian Joint Commission for 1956.

³⁹ Note: 1 USD was equivalent to 26 ATS; Butschek 1996, table 1.10.2.

⁴⁰ Calculated according to: Ibid., table 15.4.

⁴¹ NARA, RG 59, EN A1 205-N, 463.6641/6-1 56, B 2014. Austro-Bulgarian Trade Protocol of 1956, 1.6.1956.

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Böhler & Co, Mannesmann-Traulz, St. Egydyer Eisen- und Stahlindustrie-gesellschaft exported engines and other semi-finished and finished goods worth about 235,000 clearing dollars.⁴² In total, imports from Bulgaria covered only about 14 percent of exports.⁴³

In 1953, a “Plan Fulfillment Report” was delivered to the Bulgarian Minister of Foreign Trade, which put the turnover of Austrian trade with Bulgaria at 69 million rubles. Thus, Austria was Bulgaria’s largest trading partner among the free-market countries of Europe, as Great Britain had 29 million rubles of trade turnover and the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) 27 million. From 1955, the FRG overtook Austria in the volume of exports to Bulgaria.⁴⁴ These figures must be seen in the context of the aforementioned trade practices of the USIA, because the official Austrian statistics recorded a trade balance deficit of Austria of ATS 54 million for 1954.⁴⁵

Austrian-Bulgarian trade as of 1947

The first official trade agreement between Austria and Bulgaria after the Second World War was valid for one and a half years from 26 July 1947.⁴⁶ This was a compensation agreement, which meant that goods were exchanged for goods. For this purpose, two lists were attached to the trade agreement, one on “Austrian export to Bulgaria” and another one on “Bulgarian export to Austria”. These lists did not contain any quota restrictions. A “Mixed Commission” was established with representatives from both countries. Its task was to control the implementation of the agreement and to expand the lists of goods. The commission met only when convened by Austria or Bulgaria. Expenditures,⁴⁷ that were part of bilateral trade, were integrated into compensation.⁴⁸

This was followed by the “Agreement on the mutual exchange of goods between Austria and Bulgaria”, which was concluded on 16 October 1948⁴⁹.

⁴² Note: Mannesmann-Traulz exported spare parts for a drilling rig worth 4205.76 clearing dollars to Bulgaria with the note: “free is considered a discount”.

⁴³ NARA, RG 59, EN A1 205-N, 461.639/10.456, B 1994. Transmittal of Lists showing approved Austrian Reparations Shipments and KZB shipments to USSR, 4.10.1956.; NARA, RG 59, EN A1 205-N, 461.639/2-557, B 1994. Transmittal of Lists showing approved Austrian Reparations Shipments and KZB shipments to USSR, 5.2.1957.

⁴⁴ Hagspiel 2007, p. 18; Bachmaier 2007, p. 260.

⁴⁵ Butschek 1996, tables 15.3 and 15.4.

⁴⁶ Matzner 1970, p. 63.

⁴⁷ E.G.: Insurance, transportation expenses, commissions.

⁴⁸ Boller & Zwerina 1948, p. 19.

⁴⁹ Note: This entered into force on 17 December 1948, and was valid until May 1960. Matzner 1970, p. 63.

Within the framework of this agreement, the “Mixed Commission” met annually⁵⁰ to draw up the lists of goods. These lists of goods contained quotas, i.e. a maximum amount in clearing dollars or tons, up to which one was allowed to export these certain goods to the other country.⁵¹

At the same time as the second trade agreement of 1948, a payment agreement also came into force. The agreement was tacitly extended for one year if it was not terminated by 31 December⁵². In this connection, clearing accounts were opened in both the Bulgarian and the Austrian National Banks.⁵³ The clearing system was applied in East-West trade and represented a special form of compensation transactions. In this case, the compensation took place at the state level. The individual transactions of the companies took place within a framework agreement and were settled via clearing accounts maintained in U.S. dollars. Austrian exporters received their revenues in Austrian shillings (ATS) from the Austrian National Bank. This happened vice versa in Bulgaria as well. The clearing accounts were booked in settlement dollars. The countries in the Eastern bloc benefited from this system because it allowed them to conduct extensive foreign trade even with low foreign exchange reserves. The clearing accounts would have had to be suspended if the swing credits were exceeded, which would have required a balance between imports and exports. In reality, trade between Austria and Bulgaria was far from being balanced.⁵⁴ In 1948, for example, Bulgaria had a plus in its trade balance of ten million ATS. Two years later, there was a trade surplus on Austria’s side of five million ATS.⁵⁵

In 1948, Bulgaria enlarged its commercial representation in Vienna; it now had more than 20 employees. The aim of the trade representation was to achieve the most advantageous purchase and sale of goods in the interest of the Bulgarian state. Therefore, the prices of Austrian producers were compared with those of other producers like the FRG or Switzerland. For the export of agricultural products from Bulgaria, the prices of which, from Austria’s point of view, were usually higher than the market prices, they tried to reach an agreement with the other socialist Eastern states, which was not always successful, as evidenced, for example, by a 1953 letter from the Bulgarian trade representative in Vienna, Ni-

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ ÖStA, AdR, BKA, Sek. V, Central Office for ERP Affairs, 01/Foreign Affairs, GZ. 161125-11/56. Negotiations of the Austrian-Bulgarian Joint Commission, 30.1.1956.

⁵² Note: The notice period was 30 days in advance. Matzner 1970, p. 66.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Langkau 1991, pp. 19–20; Wirtschaftslexikon 2022; Breuss 1983, p. 130; Matzner 1970, p. 65.

⁵⁵ Butschek 1996, tables 15.3 and 15.4.

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kushev to his minister, in which he complained that Romania was undercutting all prices on its grain shipments, to keep their clearing liquid.⁵⁶

Austrian companies could contact the Bulgarian trade representative directly. Foreign trade companies were established in CMEA countries for the practical conduct of foreign business. The Bulgarian foreign trade companies were urged to do business with Austria exclusively through the Bulgarian trade representation in Vienna's Schwindgasse. However, foreign trade companies such as Bulgarplodexport, Industrialimport, Hranexport⁵⁷ and others did not comply and continued to maintain their own relations with Austrian companies.⁵⁸

At Bulgaria's oldest industrial and agricultural fair in Plovdiv,⁵⁹ held in 1952 from 29 August to 13 September, about 140 companies from the capitalist countries of Western Europe participated, among them Austrian ones. The interest of Western European companies increased compared to the 1950 fair, as reported by the Bulgarian newspaper *Rabotnichesko Delo*.⁶⁰

Austria joined the General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs (GATT) on 19 October 1951.⁶¹ The member countries of this agreement reduced tariffs and other trade barriers in several rounds of negotiations. This reduction of tariffs meant a deterioration of the competitive position on the Austrian market for Bulgaria, which did not join the GATT. Bulgaria, like GATT member Italy, supplied agricultural products to Austria. Rome was Sofia's biggest competitor in supplying fruits and vegetables. One goal of Bulgarian trade policy and the Bulgarian Trade Mission in Vienna was to reduce tariffs on these products.⁶²

In 1953, the Austrian foreign trade office opened in Sofia. The first Austrian trade delegate was Ernst Bittner, who was responsible for trade with Bulgaria between 1949 and 1953 at the Foreign Trade Commission⁶³ (from 1952 "Cen-

⁵⁶ Hagspiel 2007, p. 42.

⁵⁷ Note: Bulgarplodexport was a state enterprise for the trade of fruits, vegetables and spirits. Hranexport traded agricultural products and Industrialimport exported textile products from Bulgaria and imported rubber products, petroleum products and textiles. *Österreichisches Büro für den Ost-West-Handel* 1962, pp. 277–284.

⁵⁸ Hagspiel 2007, pp. 38–42; Bachmaier 2007, pp. 260–262; Viditz 2001, p. 101.

⁵⁹ International fair- Plovdiv 2023.

⁶⁰ ÖStA, AdR, BKA/AA, II-pol, Sofia 1952, GZ. Bulgaria 6, GZl. 146.112 Pol 52. Bulgarian Press Review 8-14.8.1952, 14.8.1952; cf. ÖStA, AdR, BKA/AA, II-pol, Sofia 1952, GZ. Bulgaria 6, GZl. 146.112 Pol 52. Bulgarian press review from 25.7 to 31.7.1952, 31.7.1952.

⁶¹ Federal Law Gazette 254/1951.

⁶² Hagspiel 2007, p. 124.

⁶³ Österreichische Staatsdruckerei 1951, p. 38.

tral Office for Export and Import”)⁶⁴ in Metternichgasse, Vienna. This office of the Ministry of Trade was responsible for handling Austrian trade. In this function, Bittner also took part in the talks of the Austrian-Bulgarian “Mixed Commission.”⁶⁵ At this commission, Franz Herbatschek chaired the Austrian delegation and Vice Minister Emil Raslogoff the Bulgarian delegation in 1955. Herbatschek was employed in the Federal Chancellery/Foreign Affairs in the Economic policy unit. This department was responsible for Austrian economic relations with foreign countries.⁶⁶ The increase in importance that trade with Bulgaria acquired can be seen from the fact that in the 1970s the respective ministers were the chairmen of this commission. In 1976 Trade Minister Josef Staribacher chaired the commission for Austria and his ministerial colleague Ivan Nedev chaired it for Bulgaria. For many other countries, this commission was chaired by the vice ministers during this period.⁶⁷

The negotiations of the Austro-Bulgarian “Mixed Commission” took place in Vienna from 6 to 22 December 1955 and were valid for the following year 1956.⁶⁸ The main Bulgarian exports were foodstuffs and raw tobacco. In return, Austria supplied mainly machinery and means of transport, various metal goods, finished and semi-finished products. The Bulgarian expectations from the Austrian trade partners, were described in a report of the Austrian legation in Sofia from 1954 as follows:

“Bulgaria intends to import ever-increasing quantities of Austrian goods to fulfill the tasks envisaged in the five-year plan and expects Austria also to import agricultural products from Bulgaria in ever-increasing quantities to enable imports and exports to be balanced.”⁶⁹

⁶⁴ Österreichische Staatsdruckerei 1952, p. 40.

⁶⁵ Hagspiel 2007, p. 60; Bachmaier 2007, p. 260.

⁶⁶ ÖStA, AdR, BKA, Sek. V, Central Office for ERP Affairs, 01/Foreign Affairs, GZ. 161125-11/56. Negotiations of the Austrian-Bulgarian Joint Commission. 30.1.1956; Österreichische Staatsdruckerei 1956, 15.

⁶⁷ ÖStA, AdR, BMfAA, 01/Foreign Affairs, Austrian Embassy Sofia, Pol 75, Kt. 5. Basic Report. Supplement 1972–1974. Part III Relations between Austria and Bulgaria, Zl. 23.16.01/3-II3/75, 10.3.1975; Minutes of the VII meeting of the Joint Austrian-Bulgarian Commission for Economic, Industrial and Technical Cooperation, 17.5.1976, in: Hellmuth Boller - Leopold Zwerina, *Die Handels- und Zahlungsabkommen Österreichs. Eine systematische Darstellung der Verträge mit Warenindex und 2 tabellarischen Zusammenstellungen*, vol. 2, Vienna s.a., 3.

⁶⁸ ÖStA, AdR, BKA, Sek. V, Central Office for ERP Affairs, 01/ Foreign Affairs, GZ. 161125-11/56. Negotiations of the Austrian-Bulgarian Joint Commission, 30.1.1956.

⁶⁹ ÖStA, AdR, BKA/AA, II-pol, Sofia 1954, GZ. Bulgaria 2, GZl. 143.998-Pol 54. On Austrian-Bulgarian relations. Report of the Austrian legation in Sofia, Zl. 148.250-3-Pol/54, 19.5.1954.

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These expectations were not quite fulfilled in the negotiations of 1955. For the result was that goods worth up to \$7.3 million, equivalent to around ATS 190 million, could be delivered to the other country. Compared to the previous protocol,⁷⁰ this value was reduced by \$1.2 million. In the negotiations for 1956, the Bulgarians would have been in favor of maintaining or expanding the quotas. They wanted to increase their export quotas in fruits, vegetables, and canned meats. However, since real exports in 1955 were only half of the previously negotiated quotas, the Austrian negotiators saw no reason to do so. Only in tobacco the Bulgarians could achieve an increase from 450 to 700 tons. They mentioned these products during the negotiations because they wanted to substitute them for business they had done with the formerly Soviet-administered USIA plants (KZB business). The Austrian point of criticism was that it was no longer possible to sell canned foods in their country because of the import duties that were not payable during the occupation.⁷¹ From Austria's point of view, the quality of exported Bulgarian goods was also not appreciated, as an excerpt from the political report from the Austrian legation in Sofia to Foreign Minister Leopold Figl from February 1955 shows:

"There have been repeated difficulties in the Austro-Bulgarian trade because the Bulgarians wanted to deliver inferior goods or could not meet the delivery deadlines. It should be borne in mind that the best goods are destined for export, while the most unacceptable qualities are usually destined for the domestic market. This is true not only for industrial products, but also for agricultural products typical for the country, such as fruits, vegetables, meat, canned fruits and vegetables, which in reality are available in the capital only in mediocre or worse quality."⁷²

The Bulgarians, in turn, rejected various Austrian finished goods during the 1955 negotiations. They would have preferred the Austrians to supply more rolled steel and cellulose instead.⁷³ The negotiated export quotas provided, among other goods, that in 1956 Austria could export up to 950,000 clearing dollars worth of rolled material, 60,000 clearing dollars worth of scythes and sickles, 160,000 clearing dollars worth of trucks and omnibuses, and 1,500 tons of cellulose. Some of these goods were not subject to quotas, which was abbre-

⁷⁰ Note: Valid from 1 November 1954 to 31 December 1955; cf: NARA, RG 59, EN A1 205-N, 463.6641/6-1 56, B 2014. Austro-Bulgarian Trade Protocol of 1956, 1.6.1956.

⁷¹ Ibid.; Klambauer 1978, pp. 391–393.

⁷² ÖStA, AdR, BKA/AA, II-pol, 01/Foreign Affairs, Sofia, Pol.-Berichte 1955, GZ. 043, GZL. 157635. On the economic situation, Zl. 8-Pol/55, Dr. Hobel to Leopold Figl, 2.2.1955.

⁷³ NARA, RG 59, EN A1 205-N, 463.6641/6-1 56, B 2014. Austro-Bulgarian Trade Protocol of 1956, 1.6.1956.

viated p.m. (pour mémoire or pro memoria)⁷⁴. In the section “Austrian exports to Bulgaria”, this applied, for example, to musical instruments and fertilizers. There was no quota restriction for Bulgarian exporters on poultry, grape honey and chrome ore. Bulgaria was able to export up to 2,000 tons of sunflower seeds, fresh eggs worth 300,000 clearing dollars and rose oil worth 10,000 clearing dollars to Austria in 1956.⁷⁵ Austria finally achieved a surplus of 28 million ATS in trade with Bulgaria in 1956, although the outcome of the “Mixed Commission” negotiations provided for balanced export quotas.⁷⁶

The focus of the Bulgarians on the export of agricultural goods and the import of industrial goods should be understood in the context of the Second Five-Year Plan (1953 to 1957). The new guidelines provided for a slowdown in the development of heavy industry and, instead, greater financial support for agriculture through higher purchase prices and an expansion of light industry. This was intended to raise people’s standard of living.⁷⁷ Trade with Austria clearly demonstrates the “two-pronged nature of economic policy, which on the one hand was driven by concern for the standard of living and agriculture and, on the other hand, pursued the goal of industrialization”. It “remained a constant dilemma of Bulgaria’s economic policy throughout the postwar period.”⁷⁸

In 1954, food in Bulgaria cost on average four times as much as in Austria, and technical equipment, such as radios or cameras, cost ten times as much. Factory workers earned 500 to 800 Bulgarian leva⁷⁹ per month and 250 grams of butter cost 6.25 leva, milk 2.60 leva, a kilogram of coffee 150 leva and a bottle of wine only eight leva. However, rents were low (between 30 and 80 leva).⁸⁰

Negotiations for a new Austro-Bulgarian trade protocol for 1957 took place in Sofia, in which export quotas were negotiated. A new feature of this agreement was that the quotas were automatically renewed at the end of the year

⁷⁴ Boller-Zwerina 1948, p. 20.

⁷⁵ ÖStA, AdR, BKA, Sek. V, Central Office for ERP Affairs, 01/Foreign Affairs, GZ. 161125-11/56. Negotiations of the Austrian-Bulgarian Joint Commission, 30.1.1956.

⁷⁶ Butschek 1996, tables 15.3 and 15.4; see: table „Austria’s trade balance“.

⁷⁷ Baeva & Kalinova 2009, pp. 40–44.

⁷⁸ Ibid, p. 44.

⁷⁹ Note: The conversion rate on 1 May 1955 was as follows: 100 Bulgarian leva were equivalent to 382 Austrian shillings. NARA, RG 59, EN A1 205-N, 463.006/6-655, B 2012. Conversion Rates for Determining Customs Clearance Value, 6.6.1955.

⁸⁰ ÖStA, AdR, BKA/AA, II-pol, Sofia 1954, GZ. Bulgaria 3, GZl. 143.997 Pol 54. On the standard of living of the Bulgarian population, Zl. 2-Pol/54, Dr. Hobel to Leopold Figl, 31.5.1954.

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unless one of the contracting parties gave two months' notice of its intention to renegotiate. In total, Austrian export quotas amounted to \$8.2 million (about ATS 213 million) and import quotas from Bulgarians amounted to USD 7.8 million (about ATS 203 million). The expected difference was to be covered by transit business. Austrian export quotas remained almost unchanged. The Bulgarians cancelled their wheat exports completely. Bulgaria received a quota for the export of 25,000 tons of fuel oil to Austria, deliveries of which had already been established in the last quarter of 1956. Austria was already importing 6,000 tons of fuel oil, although there was no quota for it at that time. According to a report by the U.S. Embassy in Vienna, this heating oil was intended to compensate for reduced heating oil imports as a result of the Hungarian national uprising.⁸¹

Finally, in 1957, official imports from Bulgaria to Austria amounted to ATS 134 million and exports to Bulgaria to ATS 182 million.⁸² Of these, 53 percent of imports from Bulgaria were agricultural products from the food sector, nine percent were raw materials, 20 percent were fuels, 18 percent were semi-finished and finished goods, and only 0.5 percent were machinery. 65 percent of Austrian exports to Bulgaria were semi-finished and finished goods, 32 percent were machinery and transport equipment, and three percent were raw materials.⁸³

The trade agreement of 1 April 1960⁸⁴ between Austria and Bulgaria was a long-term one, also operated on a clearing basis and with lists of goods and quotas. These lists had a validity of one year. The annual trade volume according to the trade agreement was ten million USD, but additional deliveries were possible if they were balanced on both sides.⁸⁵ As a result, however, trade between Austria and Bulgaria at that time was anything but balanced. In 1960, Austria had a plus in its trade balance of 13 million ATS. This plus increased to 157 million ATS two years later.⁸⁶ In these years, Austria continued to export mainly semi-finished and finished goods and to import tobacco and foodstuffs, with the share of tobacco and foodstuffs developing in opposite directions. Thus, the share of foodstuffs in imports from Bulgaria rose from ATS 120 million in 1959 to ATS 160 million and fell again to be-

⁸¹ NARA, RG 59, EN A1 205-N, 463.6941/2-1257, B 2014. Austro-Bulgarian Trade Agreement, 12.2.1957.

⁸² Butschek 1996, tables 15.3 and 15.4.

⁸³ WIFO 1958, pp. 9–10.

⁸⁴ Note: This agreement was valid from 27.7.1960–31.3.1963. Matzner 1970, p. 63.

⁸⁵ Ibid; NARA, RG 59, EN 1611, 663.0041/2-861, B 1372. Trade agreements. 8.2.1961.

⁸⁶ Butschek 1996, tables 15.3 and 15.4.

low ATS 120 million in 1961. Tobacco imports were over ATS 20 million in 1957 and halved by 1960, returning to 1957 levels in 1961.⁸⁷ The 1960 trade agreement also already applied the GATT tariff to a number of goods.⁸⁸ Overall, Bulgaria's share in the foreign trade of all CMEA countries was only four percent in 1960.⁸⁹ In May 1965, a new payment agreement with Bulgaria came into force. Now the clearing account ran through the Bulgarian Foreign Trade Bank.⁹⁰ Three years later, on 27 May 1968 the "Long-Term Trade Agreement between the Austrian Federal Government and the Government of the People's Republic of Bulgaria" was signed and entered into force on the same day.⁹¹ In December of the same year, the agreement on the granting of preferential tariffs between Austria and Bulgaria entered into force.⁹² Since Bulgaria was not a member of GATT, tariff benefits were negotiated in this agreement.⁹³ In the exchange of letters attached to the agreement, it is stated: "The Bulgarian side further explained that by the 'lowest tariff rates' it understood the so-called most-favored-nation treatment [...]"⁹⁴ This is understood to mean granting trade policy benefits, such as tariff advantages, to all states with which most-favored-nation treatment has been agreed.⁹⁵

The other CMEA countries, and especially the Soviet Union, dominated Bulgaria's foreign trade during the Cold War. However, trade with Austria played an important role for Bulgaria as a supplier of industrially manufactured products. Compared to economic heavyweights of Western Europe, such as France, Austria was disproportionately important for Bulgaria. This also had to do with Austria's role as a neutral country and economic bridge builder between East and West.

⁸⁷ Viditz 2001, pp. 86–135.

⁸⁸ Matzner 1970, p. 63.

⁸⁹ Ott & Schäfer 1984, p. 398.

⁹⁰ Matzner 1970, p. 64.

⁹¹ Austrian Embassy Sofia.

⁹² Federal Law Gazette 404/1968.

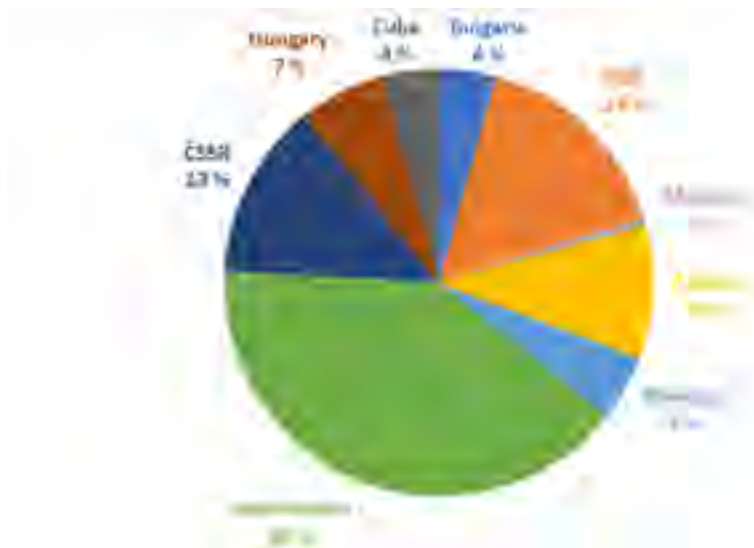
⁹³ Breuss 1983, pp. 131–132.

⁹⁴ Federal Law Gazette 404/1968.

⁹⁵ Klein.

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Share of total foreign trade of all CMEA countries (1960)⁹⁶



Bulgaria's Imports⁹⁷

	1956	1965
Soviet Union	52%	69%
Czechoslovakia	18%	9%
GDR	17%	10%
Romania	5%	1%
Hungary	4%	2%
Poland	3%	5%
Yugoslavia	1%	2%
Albania	0%	0%
	100%	100%

⁹⁶ The data were calculated and taken from: Ott & Schäfer 1984, 398. Note: For the GDR, intra-German trade is included.

⁹⁷ The data were calculated and taken from: ÖStA, AdR, BMfAA, 01/Foreign Affairs, Austrian Embassy Sofia, Pol 75, Kt. 5. Basic Report: Supplement 1972-1974. Part III Relations between Austria and Bulgaria, Zl. 23.16.01/3-II3/75. 10.3.1975. Note: In percent of European socialist or capitalist countries.

	1956	1965
FRG	22%	30%
Great Britain	20%	8%
Austria	19%	14%
France	12%	11%
Switzerland	6%	7%
Italy	5%	14%
Belgium	4%	2%
Greece	4%	4%
Netherlands	4%	4%
Sweden	2%	3%
Finland	2%	1%
Spain	-	2%
Denmark	-	-
	100%	100%

Bulgaria's Exports⁹⁸

	1956	1965
Soviet Union	57%	67%
GDR	15%	12%
Czechoslovakia	13%	10%
Hungary	5%	2%
Poland	4%	4%
Romania	4%	2%
Yugoslavia	1%	2%
Albania	0%	0%
	100%	100%

⁹⁸ The data were calculated and taken from: ÖStA, AdR, BMfAA, 01/Foreign Affairs, Austrian Embassy Sofia, Pol 75, B 5. Basic Report: Supplement 1972-1974, part III Relations between Austria and Bulgaria, Zl. 23.16.01/3-II3/75. 10.3.1975.; Note: In percent of European socialist or capitalist countries.

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	1956	1965
FRG	26%	25%
Austria	18%	8%
France	12%	4%
Great Britain	10%	11%
Greece	6%	10%
Switzerland	5%	9%
Italy	5%	23%
Netherlands	5%	3%
Belgium	4%	1%
Sweden	4%	1%
Finland	3%	1%
Spain	-	5%
Denmark	-	-
	100%	100%

Austrian Exports⁹⁹

Year	Bulgaria (in mill. ATS)	Percentage Change compared to two years ago ¹⁰⁰	Eastern Bloc (in mill. ATS) ¹⁰¹	Bulgaria's share of exports to Eastern Bloc
1948	24	-	293	8%
1950	41	71%	995	4%
1952	98	139%	1.369	7%
1954	81	-17%	1.494	5%
1956	158	95%	2.861	6%
1958	112	-29%	2.962	4%
1960	209	87%	3.996	5%
1962	345	65%	4.875	7%
1964	467	35%	5.578	8%
1966	648	39%	6.752	10%
1968	654	1%	7.642	9%

⁹⁹ The data were calculated and taken from: Butschek 1996, table 15.3. Note: Figures are in millions of Austrian shillings for Austria's exports to Bulgaria and the Eastern bloc and have been rounded.

¹⁰⁰ Note: Percentage change in Austrian exports to Bulgaria compared to two years ago.

¹⁰¹ Eastern Bloc: Soviet Union, Romania, Hungary, Poland, GDR, ČSSR, Bulgaria.

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Austrian Imports ¹⁰²					Austria's trade balance ¹⁰³	
Year	Bulgaria (in mill. ATS)	Percentage Change compared to two years ago ¹⁰⁴	Eastern Bloc ¹⁰⁵ (in mill. ATS)	Bulgaria's share of Eastern Bloc imports	Year	with Bulgaria (in mill. ATS)
1946	1	-	58	1%	1946	-
1948	34	3300%	564	6%	1948	-10
1950	36	6%	1.152	3%	1950	5
1952	90	150%	1.571	6%	1952	8
1954	134	49%	1.548	9%	1954	-53
1956	130	-3%	2.415	5%	1956	28
1958	114	-12%	3.006	4%	1958	-2
1960	196	72%	4.115	5%	1960	13
1962	188	-4%	4.453	4%	1962	157
1964	211	12%	5.148	4%	1964	256
1966	432	105%	5.784	7%	1966	216
1968	310	-28%	6.319	5%	1968	344

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¹⁰² The data were calculated and taken from: Butschek 1996, table 15.4. Note: Figures are in millions of Austrian shillings for Austria's imports from Bulgaria and the Eastern bloc and have been rounded.

¹⁰³ Data calculated and taken from: ibid, tables 15.3 and 15.4.

¹⁰⁴ Note: Percentage change in Austrian imports from Bulgaria compared to two years ago.

¹⁰⁵ Eastern Bloc: Soviet Union, Romania, Hungary, Poland, GDR, ČSSR, Bulgaria.

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