cated verbally that their union could sign on their behalf contracts with the management.

What was the role of the Party organization and the workers council? Although not everybody in the managerial group was also a Party member, the majority of them were. Generally, the higher one moved in the factory organization, the more likely one was to become a Party member. On the other hand, the workers council, especially after the significant changes of the early 1980s in Polish national life, gained importance. The majority of persons elected to workers councils in different years were not Party members. The real influence was reported to be in hands of the director who influenced not only the labor force but other organizations as well. For me it was interesting to read the director’s overall opinion of the workers council members. He would not expect too much innovation on their part and was pleased that the workers council accepted his suggestions.

How did Bafoil define the Marchlewski factory problem? The term used by the author was “negativity.” He meant by it “an empty space” that has been developed between the four major organizations. Moreover, in a five-year span of a labor force of over four thousand workers, two thousand left. As far as Bafoil heard, the labor union did not care for workers and did not help incapacitated workers. As far as the Party was concerned, Bafoil’s respondents felt that the Party did not help in any way. There was a negative relationship between the enterprise’s effort to increase output and the individual’s satisfaction that was provided mostly by his or her belonging to an informal group of co-workers.

Let me add one more observation. Social and political changes in recent years in Poland indicate, however, that the Poles are likely to search for some solutions that could also be helpful for all of us in the field of work.

Jiri Kolaja
West Virginia University


In 1981 Atanas Slavov published a very useful and informative book on literary politics and the social importance of literature in Bulgaria during the thaw period (The "Thaw" in Bulgarian Literature, review in C-ASS, 18, No. 1-2 [1984], 172-73). In his new book, With the Precision of Bats, he partly turns to the same period but now gives a personal rather than an academic account. The title is cryptic (a quotation from a poem by Konstantin Pavlov), the sub-title “The sweet and sour story of real Bulgaria during the last 50 years or so” (occurring only on the jacket) better indicating the subject of the book.
With the Precision of Bats is perhaps best described as an autobiographic novel with stress on autobiographic. Although apparently not based on any kind of diaries or other personal documents, the reliability of details appears to be considerable. The book begins in principle in the 1930s and is a vivid yet balanced narrative of the life of the Slavov family for two generations against the changing political and social scene of Bulgaria. Fate struck hard in Stalinist times: the author’s father spent nearly seven years in jail and his uncle Cyril, who had financially supported the Communist Party press for fifteen years, was arrested and killed without trial.

Half of Slavov’s book covers the period up to the thaw, the rest the thaw and what came after. The first part may be termed political-historical, the second literary-cultural, both however being decidedly personal. Equally striking in both parts is the political naiveté—one would even say unconsciousness—of the Bulgarian intellectuals. They not only dreamt of a communist one-party state instead of a pluralistic one, they also believed that Bulgaria would be allowed to follow its own independent path to socialism without serious interference from Stalin’s side. Yet Stalin’s purges in the 1930s of all potential or imaginary opponents had been there to see for anybody who kept his eyes open. For their not wishing to see the obvious, many Bulgarians were to lose their freedom or their lives.

The cultural thaw again saw the same intellectual self-deception; the thaw was given from above, for political reasons; none the less many people somehow believed it would be there for ever, not only for as long as it suited the aims of those in power. There was never any real fight on the part of the intellectuals either for achieving the thaw or for retaining it. When in his herostratic speech of April 15, 1963 Todor Zhivkov announced that from now on it was all over, that was simply that. Whether intentional by Slavov or not, his book strongly reinforces one’s former impression that with respect to political awareness and fighting spirit the Bulgarian intellectuals are lagging far behind their Polish, Czech and Hungarian colleagues.

With the Precision of Bats naturally invites comparison with The Truth That Killed, Georgi Markov’s memories of life in Bulgaria from 1947 to 1969. Such a comparison turns out to be much to the advantage of Slavov. Markov’s book has its good points but mainly it is furious, self-occupied, and many-worded. Slavov’s book, on the other hand is fair in its judgments, personal in the good sense of this word, and well-written throughout. Just take the chapter “Revolutionaries”; has everyday life of the old days in the Bulgarian capital ever been better rendered than there?

Slavov’s autobiography lacks an index of personal names. This is unfortunate since a great many interesting people—politicians, writers, and others—pass through its pages. But this is really a minor criticism of a book which otherwise makes both useful and enjoyable reading.

Roger Gyllin

Uppsala University