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INDUSTRIALIZATION, URBAN DEVELOPMENT AND
DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGES DURING THE SOCIALIST
PERIOD (ON THE EXAMPLE OF THE CITY OF VIDIN)

KRISTINA BOBEVA, PHD

Faculty of History, Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”

15 “Tzar Osvooboditel” Blvd. Sofia 1504, Bulgaria

<https://orcid.org/0009-0009-8693-1781>

kbobeva@clio.uni-sofia.bg

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Kristina Bobeva (ORCID [0009-0009-8693-1781](https://orcid.org/0009-0009-8693-1781); kbobeva@clio.uni-sofia.bg);

Writing – Original Draft; Methodology; Conceptualisation.

Mira Markova (ORCID [0000-0002-2891-0917](https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2891-0917); miram@uni-sofia.bg); Conceptualisation.

Sashka Bizeranova, Petya Ivanova (museumvd@mail.bg); Resources.

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Abstract. The article examines the transformation of Vidin during the socialist period, focusing on industrial and urban development, demographic changes and everyday life. After World War II, the Bulgarian Communist Party began nationalization, collectivization, and rapid industrialization, leading to a significant migration from rural

areas to cities. The processes common to the country also took place in northwestern Bulgaria and the Danube-side town of Vidin. The industrial growth in the town of Vidin and the region of Vidin is also increasing. Vidin led to a significant increase in population in a short time leading to a housing crisis that was particularly acute from the early 1960s to the early 1980s. Despite the demographic crisis affecting the region since the early 1950s, Vidin remains a desirable place to live due to better urban planning, employment opportunities and educational prospects for children.

Keywords: Vidin, industrialization, urban and demographic development, socialist Bulgaria, everyday life.

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This paper is a result of two field expeditions to the city of Vidin; the expeditions were conducted in September 2023 and June 2025. In addition to the available scientific and journalistic literature on the city of Vidin and the district, the author uses archival units from inventories 3, 4, and 5 of fund 415 of the State Archives–Vidin protocols from the meetings of the Executive Committee of the City People's Council in the period 1961 – 1975. The inclusion of ethnographic material from formal and informal interviews with respondents includes the author's field observations of the city at present.

The main goal of the article is to trace the change in everyday life in the city of Vidin during the socialist period. As a large urban center, everyday life in the city of Vidin has a different rhythm and specific main problems compared to those of smaller settlements in the region. In this sense, it is necessary to emphasize from the outset that the trends for the district are not always valid for the city itself. The paper focuses on the development of the city itself through the three leading topics discussed in the meetings of the City People's Council of Vidin from the early 1960s to the mid-1970s – the construction and development of industrial production, urban development, and demographic changes in the city. The three issues are interconnected, and their separate consideration is only conditional, mainly to more clearly outline the chronological logic of events – the expansion of industrial production, which leads to major increase of the city's population, and the parallel urban development of both the old city part and the newly built neighbourhoods.

The city of Vidin and the Vidin region are extensively researched in the academic literature. The city holds significant importance in medieval Bulgarian history as the capital of the last remaining territories free from Ottoman rule. During the Ottoman period (1396 – 1878), Vidin was part of the border zone of the Ottoman Empire and was an important trade center. A garrison was stationed in the city, determined by its location on the banks of the Danube River and the border with Wallachia. The livelihood of the population, both in the city and the district, was

connected to maintaining the military infrastructure and the local garrison¹. In Vidin, a large part of the craftsmen practiced professions related to the military. The rural population of the district was engaged in supplying provisions to the urban population². After the Liberation in 1878, Vidin became the main city in the administrative unit of Vidin County, divided into three districts – Vidin, Belogradchik, and Kula³. In 1934, the Vidin and Vratsa counties were merged into the Vratsa region, but Vidin remained a primary city for Northwestern Bulgaria⁴.

After the establishment and stabilization of the Bulgarian Communist Party's rule in Bulgaria following World War II, Vidin became the main city of Vidin District. Like the rest of the country, the city and district embarked on the path of socialist development. The ruling communist party began to pursue a course of socialist transformation in all aspects of social and economic life. Processes of nationalization of private property and collectivization of agricultural land were carried out, while at the same time, forced industrialization was underway. The parallel occurrence of these three processes led to increased migration from villages to cities and urbanization of the country in an extremely short period. Vidin and the district followed the general processes for the country, with migration of the population from villages. The migration is not only from the villages to the urban areas but also from the inner part of the region and from the northwestern border with Yugoslavia to Southern Bulgaria and Sofia. The main reason for the migration to other regions in Bulgaria was that in the first years after the establishment of the governance of the Bulgarian Communist Party (BCP) the main production capacities were concentrated in the capital and Southern part of Bulgaria⁵.

The specifics of Vidin's and the region's development in the first years after the establishment of the Communist party in power are determined by several factors. On one hand, the process of collectivization "did not go smoothly everywhere", as

¹ *Изследвания и материали за Видин и региона*. Т. 2. 2. София: УИ „Св. Климент Охридски“, 2021. ISBN 978-954-07-5113-9; *Изследвания и материали за Видин и региона*. Т. 3. 2. София: УИ „Св. Климент Охридски“, 2021. ISBN 978-954-07-5113-9.

² ГЕОРГИЕВА, Гергана. Професионален профил на видинското население в средата на XIX век според теметухат дефтерите. В: *Изследвания и материали за Видин и региона*. Т. 2. София: УИ „Св. Климент Охридски“, 2021, с. 618. (55–84). ISBN 978-954-07-5113-9.

³ КОЛЕВ, Валери. Териториално-административна уредба на Видинския край от Освобождението до Втората световна война. В: *Изследвания и материали за Видин и региона*. Т. 3. 2. София: УИ „Св. Климент Охридски“, 2021, с. 451. ISBN 978-954-07-5113-9.

⁴ *Пак там*, с. 457.

⁵ ДИМИТРОВА, Валя. За демографските проблеми на Видинския регион след Втората световна война (средата на 40-те – средата на 80-те години). *Известия на музеите в Северозападна България*. Т. 25. Б. м.: Исторически музей–Враца (Известия на музеите в Северозападна България; № 249–261). ISBN 0204-4013.

noted by local author Lyudmila Cherneva⁶. The campaign for land collectivization and the mass establishment of TKZS (labour cooperatives for agriculture) in Vidin region took place in an atmosphere of constant tension between those unwilling to join the cooperative farms and the authorities⁷. This resulted in the decrease of the population in the villages of Vidin district decreased due to forced relocations to other parts of the country and illegal migration across the nearby Yugoslav border. Located right next to the Bulgarian-Yugoslav border, the region was under strict surveillance by the central authorities, aiming to limit border crossings with Yugoslavia. To strengthen the border and reduce the incessant flow of migrants, the Bulgarian state expropriated arable land to a depth of 600 meters and turned it into a “dead zone”. A border zone of 20 km was introduced, entry and exit from which was only possible with “open sheets” (a special document given by the local authorities to the ones that have permission to enter the border zone)⁸.

The turbulent process of land collectivization marked the beginning of a trend that would prove lasting for the area and today is even proverbial for Northwestern Bulgaria – a constant decrease of the population. The direction of labour force towards industrial construction areas was carried out both spontaneously – under the influence of economic coercion and organized – by the state. The Vidin district was included in the campaigns for recruiting labour for construction and industry both for the capital and other regions of the country⁹. The mechanical outflow of population, related both to land collectivization and the industrialization of the country and the concentration of industrial capacities in cities, led to a significant reduction in the rural population in the Vidin district. Between 1946 and 1966, it decreased by 13,566 people¹⁰. However, for the district center Vidin, this trend was reversed. For the same period, the city’s population doubled from 18,759 to 37,128 inhabitants¹¹. The main reason for this was the concentration of industrial production in the city, which

⁶ ЧЕРНЕВА, Людмила. *Щрихи от социалистическия период на Видин*. 2. Видин: Neofeed-back, 2019. ISBN 978-619-7329-40-7.

⁷ For the process of collectivization see in more details in: ГРУЕВ, Михаил. *Преорани слогове. Колективизация и социална промяна в Българския северозапад 40-те – 50-те години на XX век*. 1. София: Институт за изследване на близкото минало, 2009. (Минало несвършено). ISBN 978-954-28-0450-5.

⁸ ГРУЕВ, Михаил. Северозападната българска граница през 40-те и 50-те години на XX век. В: *Изследвания и материали за Видин и региона*. Т. 3. 2. София: УИ „Св. Климент Охридски“, 2021, с. 567–592. ISBN 978-954-07-5113-9.

⁹ ДИМИТРОВА, Валя. *Цит. съч.*, с. 250.

¹⁰ *Пак там*.

¹¹ Национален регистър на населените места. В: *Национален статистически институт* Онлайн. Б. д. Налично на: <https://www.nsi.bg/nrnm/reports/population/list/738>. [Достъпен на: 2025-07-05].

became the primary place of employment for landless peasants from surrounding settlements.

INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE CITY OF VIDIN

With the establishment of the Bulgarian Communist Party's rule following the end of World War II, Bulgaria began a process of fundamental change in the Bulgarian's economy structure. The Soviet example was followed, which meant nationalization of private enterprises, forced industrialization, central planning of production, and collectivization of agriculture¹². The city of Vidin and the region followed the general trends for the country, with industrial development concentrated in the city center. During the socialist period, the number of enterprises and workers far exceeded the values of the previous period. The culmination of the city's industrial development was the opening of the Chemical Plant in 1970. With approximately 8,000 workers and accompanying infrastructure such as a thermal power plant, freight railway station, canteen for workers, park spaces, and more, the plant was designated as a "giant factory" of the Fifth Five-Year Plan¹³. In 1972, the sewing factory DIP (State industrial enterprise) "Vida" moved to a new, larger building on the outskirts of the city, and in 1973, the Cutting Tools Factory opened its doors¹⁴. The State Machine-building plant "George Dimitrov" [DMZ "George Dimitrov"] (later called "Vipom") focused on the production of water pumps and also had more than 1500 workers¹⁵.

In addition to the aforementioned factories, in the city local divisions of major enterprises from the light and food industries were also constructed. Typical of urban centers during the socialist period, those included the Meat Processing Plant "Rodopa" [Mesokombinat Rodopa], Milk Centre "Serdica" [Mlekotsentrala Serdika], State-owned enterprise "Vinprom" [Darzhavno stopansko predpriatie Vinprom], a tobacco plant, and six labour-production cooperatives with various focuses. The total number of industrial enterprises operating factories in the city by 1975 was 30¹⁶.

The informant D. T. assessed the economy of Vidin as very well structured in that period, as those were unique productions for the country. Thanks to them, Vidin gained an image as an industrial city where unique, quality goods were produced – tires, shirts, polyamide fibres, porcelain. He remembers that in the 70's and 80's

¹² БРУНБАУЕР, Улф. *Социалистическият начин на живот. Идеология, общество, семейство и политика в България (1944–1989)*. 1. Русе: Елиас Канети, б. г. ISBN 978-954-92453-2-5.

¹³ ДА–Видин, ф. 415, оп. 3, а.е. 28, с. 34.

¹⁴ *Пак там*, с. 38.

¹⁵ ДА–Видин, ф. 415, оп. 5, а.е. 33, с. 47.

¹⁶ *Пак там*, с. 47.

Vidin was famous for the tires all around the state and the water pumps were treated “everywhere except Australia”¹⁷. The other very recognisable product made in Vidin were the man shirts from DIP “Vida”. And last but not least – the porcelain made in Vidin. These enterprises remain iconic and recognizable for the local industry and were mentioned in every formal or informal conversation I had in the city¹⁸.

Against the backdrop of constantly building new industrial enterprises and the increasing number of job positions for labours, the report on the work of the City People’s Council in 1972 shows a high turnover among workers – the given examples are the Chemical Plant, where 2,794 were hired, and 2,354 left, and the Tobacco Plant “Dunav”, where 2,732 were hired, and 2,619 left. The reasons for the turnover are cited as low average wages, rough treatment of workers by middle management, shift work – 2nd and 3rd shifts, undeveloped work habits, and a strong desire for easy and at the same time very well-paid work, the remoteness of the workplace from the place of residence¹⁹. By the local governor’s own assessment, the main reason for the turnover are the personal characteristics of the labours themselves. The members of the City People’s Council admit that many of the new workers in the Chemical plant started work only for the right to live in the city. Once they received the citizenship, they left the job and started a new, lighter one in the trade or supply sector. In the same report is discussed other major problem – the low qualification of the labours, mainly young people from the local villages. Due to their lack of professional experience, the quality of the productions is not sufficient, and the city main factories fail to meet the state production plans²⁰. The problem of securing workforce is characteristic not only for Vidin but for the country in general²¹. To positively influence the motivation of workers to stay in the factories and in the city, the local government took some measures which will be discussed in the next part of the article.

The lack of sufficient labourers became a chronic problem for the industry in the city from the mid-1970s. With the opening of the Chemical Plant, the number of job positions almost doubled in just five years – from 8,000 in 1965 to nearly 15,000 in 1970²². For the period 1970 – 1975, it was anticipated that the number of workers would increase by about 6,000 from 13,965 to 20,796. The largest increase was

¹⁷ Respondent D.T., higher education, engineer, now retired – interview taken on 18th of June 2025.

¹⁸ Recent exhibition about the city industry in the socialist period was opened in the Krastatata Kazarma, one of the buildings of the Regional History Museum in Vidin. A short video about the exhibition can be seen on the following link: <https://www.bta.bg/bg/news/bulgaria/745808-izlozha-pokazva-promishlenostta-v-perioda-na-sotsializma-vav-vidin-i-regiona>. [viewed 2025-07-05].

¹⁹ ДА–Видин, ф. 415, оп. 5, а.е. 47, с. 32–33.

²⁰ *Пак там*, а.е. 41, с. 48.

²¹ БРУНБАУЕР, Улф. *Цит. съч.*, с. 158–160.

²² ДА–Видин, ф. 415, оп. 5, а.е. 33, с. 11.

for the number of workers in the Chemical Plant – from 3,114 to 8,000 and in DIP “Vida” – from 2,105 to 3,039²³. The report for the Fifth Five-Year Plan in 1970 anticipated that “during the period 1971 – 1975, with the introduction of more mechanization in the APK [Agrarian Industrial Complex], workforce in the industry will be freed from the agriculture”²⁴. However, the report of the City People’s Council for 1973 acknowledged that “in 1974, agriculture is not anticipated as the main source for providing labour for the other sectors of material production, as it became evident that in recent years, the agriculture of the district exhausted its possibilities of free labour force for the industry”²⁵. The archival data is supported by accounts from respondents who were engaged for 10 – 15 days per year in agricultural work for 10 – 15 days per year during the 1970s and 1980s, as there were no longer enough people in the villages to work in the APK. Respondents also recall how the brigades engaged students to assist in agricultural work and light industry (mostly the canning industry)²⁶.

From the mid-80s, restructuring of the local economy and redistribution of production capacities in the district began with the aim of demographic stabilization of the area. Due to the over-concentration of industrial enterprises in the main city, in 1983, 82,3% of industrial production was manufactured in Vidin. This led to the deformation of the population structure in the district and forced the state governance to relocate industrial activities and to open factories in smaller settlements. Some of the production units were moved from the city of Vidin to surrounding settlements to improve the severe demographic situation in the region²⁷.

In conversations with informants, they positively evaluate the development of industry in the city of Vidin during the socialist period. However, they also mention that there were some “dirty” productions where work was hard, these productions experienced a chronic shortage of labourers due to poor labour conditions. The “dirty” productions were mainly in the tires factory and the Chemical Plant, especially the factory for polyamide fibres, where the production process demand high temperature. Respondent D. T. remembered that when the workers from the tires factory finished their work shift, they were “so black that one could see only their eyes”²⁸. The hard labour conditions and the constant shortage of workpower led to the

²³ *Пак там*, с. 47.

²⁴ *Пак там*, с. 42.

²⁵ *Пак там*, а.е. 64, с. 9.

²⁶ The brigades were mentioned during the interview with D. T. that took place in the Regional History Museum. When they heard about the brigades, all the staff of the museum confirmed that they also participated (as students or as a workers send to help the agricultural sector).

²⁷ ДИМИТРОВА, Валя. *Цит. съч.*, с. 257.

²⁸ Respondent D.T., higher education, engineer, now retired – interview taken on 18th of June 2025.

high turnover among workers. Respondent D. recalls that in the 80s, when he finished school and started working, the turnover of labour was so high, and he, as a young worker, could choose where to work even though he had no work experience. In the period until the early 90s, he worked in all major enterprises, often working in two places, as his children were small and he needed funds²⁹.

The development of industry in the city of Vidin during the socialist period followed the general trends for the country. In the first years after World War II, all enterprises were nationalized. A period of building new industrial enterprises followed, culminating in the opening of the Chemical Plant in 1970. In the mid-70s, industrial enterprises provided jobs for over 20,000 workers³⁰. According to informants, compared to the then country's economic structure, the presence of unique productions elevated the prestige of the city, and ensured its industrial development, and prosperity³¹. The industrialization of the city during the socialist period resulted into more than 20 000 new workplaces and mechanic growth of the population. New labours were mainly peasants from the local villages thus the industrialization and the urban development of the city were parallel processes.

URBAN DEVELOPMENT OF THE CITY OF VIDIN

After the initial period of comprehensive restructuring of the country's economy with a focus on building heavy industry, in the late 1950s – early 1960s, the authorities began a course towards improving the standard of living of the population³². In line with the national course, the urban development of the city and the constant improvement of the residents' material conditions became a main topic in the meetings of the Vidin City People's Council from the early 1960s. In the presentation of proposals, in the discussion of planned policies, and, especially, in the various comments, – and even disputes among Council members, – the attitude of the councillors towards the city shows a readiness to work for positive urban development of the city. All statements emphasize the fact that Vidin is a district city and that, as such, it should be representative of the district, and its planning should be done carefully so that the city becomes a desirable place to live.

The first major step in the restructuring of the city was the preparation and the acceptance of the urban development plan. The latter was discussed and accepted at a meeting of the City People's Council on March 31, 1961. According to this plan, it

²⁹ Respondent D. born in 1959, high school education, now retired – interview taken on 19th of June 2025.

³⁰ ДА–Видин, ф. 415, оп. 5, а.е. 33, с. 47.

³¹ Respondent D.T., higher education, engineer, now retired – interview taken on 18th of June 2025.

³² БРУНБАУЕР, Улф. *Цит. съч.*, с. 223–224.

was calculated that the city would grow to 48,000 inhabitants. An expansion of the school buildings was planned, while the current number and location of schools would be maintained. The construction of 13 kindergartens and 9 nurseries was also planned. The urban plan includes the expansion of green areas and the transformation of former swamps into part of the city's green system. Industrial buildings and warehouses were to be separated from residential areas³³. Discussions on this plan span over 100 pages. Ultimately, the approved plan is the one on which the city is built today. It determined the current location of the central square and the buildings around it, the railway and bus station, the Pannonia ring boulevard, and the "green belt" around the city center, which is practically the filled moat around the former fortress wall.

However, in the next two years, the urban plan approved by the City People's Council remained unapproved by the central authorities. Without an urban plan, construction was hindered, leading to widespread illegal construction of residential buildings. In a statement at a City People's Council meeting on September 28, 1961, the Council Chairman emphasized that "the housing crisis is severe. New people are constantly coming to the city. Give me an apartment, they say, and only then demolish what I have built illegally"³⁴. Municipal councillors criticize the leadership and point out that the city is lagging due to the lack of a master plan. Besides the inability to meet the housing needs of people coming to the city, the city remained "unattractive" and could not become a desirable tourist destination³⁵.

The local government's own analyses show the problems that the city faced in the early 1960s. The report on the implementation of the national economic plan for 1961 regarding the urban development of the city states that "the rapid population growth of Vidin as a result of the development of industry, construction, and transport is directly related to the increase in administrative services provided by the City People's Council. The most severe and pressing issue for Vidin is the housing crisis. There are more than 1500 families in the city without an apartment or living in lodges or unsuitable premises, which necessitates their immediate relocation. ... The key to solving the housing problem remains intensive new housing construction"³⁶. The topic of housing construction remains a leading issue of the Executive Committee of the City People's Council meetings in the following years. During the meetings, the main problems are repeatedly discussed – lack of sufficient residential buildings, delays in the construction of public facilities, shortage of materials, and poor

³³ ДА–Видин, ф. 415, оп. 3, а.е. 11, с. 70–180.

³⁴ *Пак там*, а.е. 12, с. 52.

³⁵ *Пак там*, а.е. 13, с. 13–14.

³⁶ *Пак там*, а.е. 11, с. 72.

performance by builders. After the adoption of the city urban development plan in 1963, some successes in the implementation of the construction program and the finishing of residential blocks and public buildings are reported³⁷.

Urban development became a primary topic once again after the opening of the Chemical Plant in 1970. For 1972, a “significant increase” in the budget for urban development was planned due to the increase in staff numbers in “Gardens and Parks”, “Roads and Pavements”, “Cadaster and Regulation”, “Elementary and High Schools”, “Kindergartens and Nurseries”³⁸. The increase in planned expenses was necessary due to the “rapid growth of the city in population and territory”³⁹. A report on “The Work of the City People’s Council – Vidin on Urban Development, Sanitation, Architectural Construction of the City, and Illegal Construction” from 1973 acknowledged the poor planning of urban development activities implementation. Due to the active laying of water and sewerage systems, main streets that were recently repaired were being dug up. “In recent years, several new residential complexes have been built in our city. However, urban development is lagging. To reach their homes, residents must pass through mud, without roads, and in summer through clouds of dust”⁴⁰.

Criticism is also directed at the city’s residents, who do not maintain their yards, leave construction materials in front of and around the blocks. In many yards, especially in the city’s outskirts, livestock was still being raised. Such animals were also raised in inter-block spaces. Another major problem was illegal construction. Most often, there were “storage areas” near newly built blocks – shacks, woodsheds, pigsties, etc⁴¹. The overall architectural appearance of the city was also disrupted by the glazing of balconies and the construction of unauthorised garages in prohibited areas and with poor-quality makeshift materials⁴².

To overcome the challenges to the city’s urban development, local leaders engaged newly opened large industrial factories in the construction program for public and residential buildings. Due to the lack of planned capital expenditures in the Sixth Five-Year Plan, the enterprises themselves were expected to build kindergartens for the children of their employees. DIP “Vida” was to build a kindergarten for 6 groups, 180 children by 1973, the Chemical Plant – a kindergarten with 6 groups and 2 overnight groups for 240 children by 1973, DMZ “George Dimitrov”, State

³⁷ *Пак там*, а.е. 17, с. 43.

³⁸ *Пак там*, оп. 5, а.е. 31, с. 11.

³⁹ *Пак там*, с. 13.

⁴⁰ *Пак там*, а.е. 51, с. 19–23.

⁴¹ *Пак там*, с. 24–25.

⁴² *Пак там*, с. 30.

cannery “17 Partizani” [Darzhaven konserven kombinat “17 Partizani”] and Vinprom – a kindergarten with 3 groups and one overnight group for a total of 120 children and nurseries for 40 children by 1973, State Ceramic Plant and Factory “Vazhod” – a kindergarten with 4 groups for 120 children by 1973; Meat Plant “Rodopa”, DDZ “Bdin” and Milk Center “Serdika” – a kindergarten with three groups for 90 children by 1973⁴³. Delegating the construction of public buildings to the local industry was not just a matter of finances. It was a way to integrate the industry onto the everyday life of its workers. Other social benefits also had an impact over the individual life strategies of the labourers in the socialist period⁴⁴. The industry had a profound impact on the urban development and the formation of local labour communities. Residence in the factory block of flats, place for the kids in the kindergarten and relatively good salary were the social benefits that stimulated the ongoing population growth in Vidin in the socialist period.

The continuously growing population of the city was indeed the main reason for the challenges in urban development. Between 1965 and 1975, there was hardly a meeting of the City People’s Council where new residents of the city were not accepted. Archival data indicates that these individuals are mainly people from the villages in the district who work in one of the industrial enterprises in the city. In the same period, there is evidence of the approval of literally thousands of applications for the right to build or the right to use departmental housing for workers who want to be accommodated in the city. According to the urban plan, the population of the city would reach 48,000⁴⁵ residents, and by 1985 it was already 62,484⁴⁶.

DEMOGRAPHIC DEVELOPMENT OF THE CITY OF VIDIN

Against the backdrop of the generally negative demographic indicators for the Vidin region, the population of the district center increases throughout the socialist period. The natural source for this growth is the peasants left without livelihood after collectivization. The city grows mainly mechanically, as only in the period 1957 – 1964 the population increased by 10,904 people⁴⁷. Archival data from the mid-60s to the early 70s also shows an increase in the number of city residents. From 1966 to 1970, the population of Vidin grows from 41,928 to 52,705 people, and the number of children born in the city per year is almost double at the end of the five-year

⁴³ *Пак там*, а.е. 33, с. 35–36.

⁴⁴ БРУНБАУЕР, Улф. *Цит. съч.*, с. 161.

⁴⁵ ДА–Видин, ф. 415, оп. 3, а.е. 11, с. 97.

⁴⁶ Национален регистър на населените места. В: *Национален статистически институт*. Онлайн. Б. д. Налично на: <https://www.nsi.bg/nrm/reports/population/list/738>. [Достъпен на: 2025-07-05].

⁴⁷ ДИМИТРОВА, Валя. *Цит. съч.*, с. 251.

period⁴⁸. Archival data proves a trend of migration of young families of fertile age from the villages to the district center. Mechanical population growth with mostly young people from surrounding villages affects both the demographic and the urban development of the city. As it was pointed out in the previous part of the article, the number of kindergartens and schools in the city increased significantly with the industrialization of the city. The mass building of kindergartens from the major factories for the children of their employers and especially the night and week groups, show the need of care for the small children because their parents have to work and their grandparents live in the villages, not in the city.

Industrial development of the city led to professionalization of the high school education. From 1965 to 1970 there were established three technical high schools – Technical High School of Clothing and Catering, Technical High School of Mechanical and Electrical Engineering and Technical High School of Industrial Chemistry⁴⁹. The specializations in the professional high schools are related to the industrial production in the city. The relocation of the inhabitants of the villages in the region started after primary education. In the begging of the 1970s 1/3 of the students in the professional high schools weren't from the city of Vidin. With total number of high school students around 3500 and 556 places in the school dormitories⁵⁰ another 500 had to rent accommodation or to travel every day to go to school.

In an interview with D. T., who began his work experience at the Cutting Tools Factory in the early 70s, the respondent shares that this is the period of the most intensive relocation of residents from the surrounding villages, as the large factories – the Chemical Plant and DIP “Vida” – were already operating in the city⁵¹. Again, in his account, confirmed by other respondents and archival materials, around 50 transported workers daily for the large factories from the surrounding villages. A significant number of these people, however, sought a way to buy a home in the city to avoid daily commuting. An additional incentive is the opportunity for children to receive better education in the newly opened technical schools. Informant D. recounts that education was specifically aimed at the industries developing in the city. Completing the relevant profile in the technical school provided security for finding a job in the industrial enterprises in the city. Parents from the surrounding villages sought a way to move to and the city to ensure education and security for their children⁵². The respondents' account is confirmed by archival data, which shows that in the

⁴⁸ ДА–Видин, ф. 415, оп. 5, а.е. 33, с. 40.

⁴⁹ *Пак там*, с. 12.

⁵⁰ *Пак там*, а.е. 60, с. 46.

⁵¹ Respondent D.T., higher education, engineer, now retired – interview taken on 18th of June 2025.

⁵² Respondent D. born in 1959, high school education, now retired – interview taken on 19th of June 2025.

period 1970 – 1975, the city grew by about 1100 – 1300 people annually⁵³. In the socialist period and especially in 1970s and 1980s, the opportunity to start working immediately after completing the required professional education in the city itself makes Vidin an attractive centre for young people from the region.

The rapid mechanical expansion of the city is the main reason for the problems in urban planning mentioned in the previous part of the text. At the same time, during formal and informal conversations, there is a sense of nostalgia precisely for this “fullness of the city”. In the socialist period the city of Vidin constantly grew both in population and by territory. The respondents remembered the city with all the working factories and with the secure perspective for the future of the young people. The sense of “full city” is also linked with the constant movement of people – from and to work, in the city centre for a walk in the free time. The latter expression is used in contrast to the “empty city” of the present. Negative trends are explained by the mass collapse of the local industry, mass impoverishment of people, migration and emigration, aging of the population, low birth rate, high mortality, small relative share of the population of fertile age, and the imposition of a one-child family model⁵⁴. In the interview with D. T., he was so pessimistic about the future development of the city that he claimed that no new factory can be established in the city because there is nobody left to work there. The author’s personal observations confirm the feeling of a city built for more residents. Only around 1/3 of the apartments of the block of flats were with lights on in the evenings. The main street is relatively empty even in the rush hour. The drastic reduction in population is also evidenced by data from the National Statistical Institute. The highest number of city residents was in 1994 – 64,428 people, and by December 31, 2024, their number had almost halved – to 33,448 people⁵⁵.

CONCLUSION

During the socialist period, the city of Vidin developed as an economic and cultural center of the region. The industrialization of the city followed the general trend for the country. The mass collectivization forced mass migration from the villages to the cities. For the Vidin region mass migration is focused to other parts of the country and to the main city. Because of the industrial development of Vidin the demographic crisis, characteristic of the region since the early 1950s, did not have

⁵³ ДА–Видин, ф. 415, оп. 5, а.е. 64, с. 9.

⁵⁴ БИЗЕРАНОВА, Сашка. Видин вчера, днес и утре. В: *Демографски проблеми през вековете – измерения и перспективи*. Видин Compact print Ltd., с. 304–324. ISBN 978-954-25-0406-1.

⁵⁵ Национален регистър на население места. В: *Национален статистически институт* Онлайн. Б. д. Налично на: <https://www.nsi.bg/nrnm/reports/population/list/738>. [Достъпен на: 2025-07-05].

such large-scale dimensions within the city itself. In the city were opened several major industrial plants. The biggest one is the Chemical Plant which opened in 1970 and employed about 8000 workers. Industrial production became the main source of employment both for the residents of the city and the region in general. The opportunities for work, overall better urban planning, and the possibility of education for children made Vidin a desirable place to live. Because of the new factories and their employers in the socialist period the city of Vidin constantly grew both in population and by territory.

The rapid pace of resettlement led to many urban development issues. The biggest one is the housing crisis, which was a constant challenge to the city's urban planning from the early 1960s to the early 1980s. In the period the main problems for the proper urban development are the lack of sufficient residential buildings, delays in the construction of public facilities, shortage of materials, and poor performance by builders. However, urban development is focused not only onto the housing crisis. In the same period more than 10 kindergartens and three new technical high schools were built. The new major factories also had an impact on the urban development and the formation of local labour communities. They provided for their workers residence in the factory block of flats, a place for the kids in kindergarten and relatively prestigious career opportunities.

Against the backdrop of the generally negative demographic indicators for the Vidin region, the population of the district center increases throughout the socialist period. The city grows mainly mechanically predominantly with the peasants left without livelihood after collectivization and needed in the constantly enlarging industrial factories. The demographic dynamics in the city during the socialist period shows a constant growth of the population and in the end of the period the city had about three times more population than in the first year after the World War II⁵⁶.

The years from the beginning of the 60th to the end of the socialist period are very dynamic for the city of Vidin. In this period the city established itself as an industrial centre of the region and nearly doubled its population. For the citizens of Vidin, industry gradually became an integral part of the city's image. The city's industries, that were unique on the country's scale, are a source of pride for the inhabitants. They believe that during the socialist period the city had an image of an industrial centre with high-quality production. The almost complete destruction of industry had a disastrous effect not only on the demographic statistics of the city and the region. It creates a feeling among the locals that the region has been deliberately left behind.

⁵⁶ *Пак мам.*

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ИНДУСТРИАЛИЗАЦИЯ, ГРАДСКО РАЗВИТИЕ
И ДЕМОГРАФСКИ ПРОМЕНИ В ПЕРИОДА
НА СОЦИАЛИЗМА (ПО ПРИМЕРА НА ГРАД ВИДИН)

Д-Р КРИСТИНА БОБЕВА

Исторически факултет, Софийски университет „Св. Климент Охридски“

Бул. „Цар Освободител“ № 15, София 1504, България

<https://orcid.org/0009-0009-8693-1781>

kbobeva@clio.uni-sofia.bg

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Кристина Бобева (ORCID [0009-0009-8693-1781](https://orcid.org/0009-0009-8693-1781); kbobeva@clio.uni-sofia.bg);

Ръкопис; Методология; Концептуализация.

Мира Маркова (ORCID [0000-0002-2891-0917](https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2891-0917); miram@uni-sofia.bg);

Концептуализация.

Сашка Бизеранова, Петя Иванова (<https://rimvidin.bg/>; museumvd@mail.bg);
Ресурси.

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Резюме. Статията разглежда трансформацията на Видин през социалистическия период, съсредоточавайки се върху индустриалното и градското развитие, демог-

рафските промени и ежедневиия живот. След Втората световна война Българската комунистическа партия започва национализация, колективизация и бърза индустриализация, водещи до значителна миграция от селските райони към градовете. Общите за страната процеси протичат и в Северозападна България, и в крайдунавския град Видин. Индустриалният растеж във Видин води до значително увеличение на населението в кратки срокове, от което следва и жилищна криза, особено остра от началото на 60-те до началото на 80-те години. Въпреки демографската криза, засягаща региона от началото на 50-те години, Видин остава желано място за живеене поради по-добро градско планиране, възможности за заетост и образователни перспективи за децата.

Ключови думи: Видин, индустриализация, благоустройство, демографско развитие, всекидневен живот, България в периода на социализма.