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Abstract

On June 17th 2011 the Monument of the Soviet Army (MSA) in Sofia, Bulgaria underwent a peculiar transformation. People stared with dismay at the soldiers of the Red Army that had overnight taken the identities of icons of American consumer culture, such as Superman, Ronald McDonald and the Coca Cola prototype of Santa Claus. This provocation reignited the emotional debate about the future of the monument. Its destiny has been a bone of contention since the fall of the Berlin wall. The Monument of the Soviet Army serves as a bridge connecting past with present, and it poses questions about the future. It signifies the presence of history and politics in everyday life. This thesis is based on research and analysis that examine the relationship between discourses of history, politics and ideology on the one hand, and the art of provocation as a mobilizing factor that subverts meanings and opens up spaces of alternative readings on the other. The monument, prior to its transformation functions to evoke the memory of the ‘totalitarian state’ and the ‘horrors of Communism’ that engaged intellectuals for the last two decades. Such discourse rarely questions the process of transition that formed the structure of the current political-economic system. I view the transformation of the monument as an act of symbolic struggle over meanings of national identity in relation to Bulgaria's paths toward modernity. The thesis questions how we can read this monument and its transformation in relation to those narratives that persist and that form, shape and transform what a Bulgarian identity is.

Keywords: Ideological Discourses and Myths; Wars of Position; Balkanism; Carnivalesque; National Identity and Intellectual Elites; Hegemony and Resistance
To my mother and father for their love and support, to my cousin Dr. Galia Ilieva, who many years ago, during a discussion, said something profound that resonated with me to this very day and indirectly, inspired this study, to Hristina who never stopped believing in me and to all those who taught me that changing the world requires interpreting it first.
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1. Introduction

The Monument of the Soviet Army (MSA), situated in the Bulgarian capital Sofia, is one of the largest architectural and sculptural monument complexes in the country. It was founded on September 7th 1954 in commemoration of the 10th anniversary of September 9th 1944 – the date when the Fatherland Front took power and the Red Army entered Bulgaria. A wide alley bar, 80 meters long and 28 meters wide leads to the monument. In front stands the inscription “To the Soviet Army liberator by the grateful Bulgarian people.” In the beginning of the alley there are two groups of sculptures that depict Bulgarian people welcoming the Soviet Army. The monument itself is a high truncated pyramid on which stands an 8-foot sculpture of a Soviet soldier waving a Kalashnikov, on both of his sides there are a Bulgarian male worker, and a peasant mother with a child, both of them substantially lower in size.1 At the bottom of the monument sculptural compositions depict the establishment, consolidation and the victory of the Soviet Army. The east side entitled “October 1917” depicts the “volunteers that formed the Soviet Army with revolutionary enthusiasm.”2 The south side entitled “Everything for the front, everything for victory,” shows all the Soviet people in the rear pulling all their efforts to help their army. The sculptural component on the west side of the monument, entitled “The Patriotic War” “is meant to show the battle zeal and indomitable power of the Soviet Army.”3 On June 17th 2011 the West side of the MSA underwent a peculiar transformation.

2Ibid.
3Ibid.
People were staring with dismay at the commanding officer of the Red Army, still menacingly holding a pistol and urging his soldiers to attack, but now wearing the clothes and insignia of Superman. Behind him a soldier had turned into Ronald McDonald, waving a flag that instead of the hammer and sickle of the Soviet Union had the stripes and stars of the U.S.A. The rest of the platoon was made of Captain America holding a machine gun; Wonder Woman behind him; the Joker holding a weapon and advancing upfront; Robin maintaining a cannon; and Wolverine throwing a grenade. Santa Claus standing shoulder to shoulder with Superman, with a binocular in one hand and a Kalashnikov in the other, made the grotesque composition complete. Captioned underneath were the words: “In Pace with the Times.” The advancing soldiers of the Red Army had overnight become American superheroes and icons of consumer culture. The artwork survived for three days then disappeared in the same manner it had appeared – as an overnight subversive act.

This provocation reignited an emotional debate about the future of the monument. The destiny of MSA has been a bone of contention since the fall of the Berlin wall. In the meantime the issue has become strongly politicized and further polarized Bulgarian society. The Russian embassy sent a protest note and demanded punishment for the ‘vandals’, while numerous facebook groups formed in support of the artists, who in some instances were even depicted as brave heroes daring to stand against the ‘occupiers’. On the other side of the barricade were those for whom the monument elicited nostalgic feelings of the social safety of the old regime that the ‘liberators’ brought. The event even gained international significance with the likes of CNN and Toronto Star admiring the “Banksy” of Bulgaria – a country, rarely mentioned in Western media and usually in the discourse of Balkan corruption and crime.

The Monument of the Soviet Army serves as a bridge connecting the past with the present, posing questions about the future. It signifies the presence of history and politics in everyday life. In this thesis I use the monument and its transformation as entry points into a broader analysis of the ideological and symbolic discourses surrounding various paths connected to Bulgaria’s historical roads to modernity and the actors that traverse them. The monument before its transformation was a symbol of Bulgaria’s past path toward modernity and it dramatized discourses formed and articulated by those claiming to play the role of leaders both political and intellectual. The discourse of anti-Communism and the shaming of the past later challenged the discourses of the Party-
State. Both the Party-State discourse prior to the fall of the Berlin wall, and the anti-communist discourse after, function as dominant discourses in the process of invented traditions. I argue that the roads to modernity through Soviet Communism and US neoliberalism became top-down imposed civilizational choices. Yet, after the transformation of Soviet soldiers into US consumer mascots and superheroes, we witness the subversion, renegotiation and rereading of such discourses. In this thesis I am particularly interested in how Bulgarian people have interpreted those dominant discourses, and have coped with the mechanisms of power of top-down domination associated with them.

Soviet Communism and neoliberal capitalism are both characterized by specific types of power and by ideological dogmas through which the political elite and organic intellectuals have tried to exercise hegemony. Both systems consist of different type of rituals and practices with which the ideology materializes. Under Soviet Communism, the intellectual served the role of mouthpiece for Party propaganda. In such a climate

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5In his Prison Notebooks Gramsci developed the concept of the organic intellectuals that is in direct relation to his understanding of the leading role of the communist party. Gramsci’s concept of the organic intellectuals is influenced by Marx’s belief that the ideas of the ruling class – owners of the means of production – are the ruling ideas in society. In Gramsci’s work the intellectuals are not an ‘autonomous and independent group’, they are a social category that functions in connection to the specific needs of economic production, ‘not only in the economic but also in the social and political fields’ (5). Contrary to the notion of intellectuals as an independent social group, Gramsci emphasized their role as ‘functionaries’ that organize social life in accordance to the needs of the ruling class. For Gramsci ‘[t]he capitalist entrepreneur creates alongside himself the industrial technician, the specialist in political economy, the organizers of a new culture, or a new legal system, etc.’ (7). In order for the capitalist class to dominate over the rest of society it needs to develop its own organic intellectuals that have to ‘assimilate’ and ‘conquer ideologically’ the so called traditional intellectuals, or the social category that was assigned such role by the previous ruling classes (10). The traditional intellectuals associated with the pre-capitalist ruling classes (slave-owners and feudal aristocracy) conceived themselves as an autonomist class, even though, they were also linked to the ideology of the ruling class. Yet, if the previous ruling classes “did not tend to construct an organic passage from the other classes into their own, i.e. to enlarge their class sphere ‘technically’ and ideologically...[t]he bourgeois class poses itself as an organism in continuous movement, capable of absorbing the entire society, assimilating it to its own cultural and economic level (260). The organic intellectuals have strong connections to the class that they belong to and function as its ideologues. Antonio Gramsci, in Selections from the Prison Notebooks (New York: International Publishers, 1972).
independent intellectual thought was frowned upon. The disgruntled intellectual had to adapt the tactic of communication ‘between the lines’. In this way, in Eastern Europe the system produced its own dissatisfied organic intellectuals – the dissidents, those that saw the disconnection between the values of socialism and actually existing socialism. At the same time, the Soviet system created a peculiar paradox where the official language of the Party-State was negotiated and reinterpreted in the everyday life of the Soviet citizen in such a manner as to weaken the rigidity of ideological dogmas. It is questionable whether the forces of domination managed to establish cultural hegemony: they always met their counterparts in various forms of challenging of the official lines, either through the Aesopian language of intellectuals, or simply by being outside the systems, while inside, refusing its ideological symbolism and rituals. Today the attempts of the Bulgarian neoliberal intellectual elite concentrated in thinks tanks forming public opinion - faces new forms of social activism as they seek to articulate a new form of official discourse, a new kind of ‘party line,’ only now without the Communist Party. Examples of such activism include the recent active protests of social movements against Genetically Modified Organisms and fracking.

This thesis does not treat the Monument of the Soviet Army as a static cultural artefact of an old era. Rather, I argue that the monument is alive insofar as it dramatizes


A term coined by Rudolph Bahro, see Rudolf Bahro, The Alternative in Eastern Europe (London: NLB, 1978). In this thesis I extensively use the term Soviet model to refer to the type of system that existed in the Eastern Bloc. Although all of the countries under the Soviet model had their own Communist Parties the official ideology defined their systems as socialist on the road to Communism. In 1961 The First Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, Nikita Khrushchev announced that Communism will be built in 20 years. The zeal to build Communism was dropped in the years of late socialism from the 1970s on.


struggles about the past that are continuing now in the present. Around this monument there are discourses and various narratives that contradict each other, wrestle with each other and exist at the same time inside the social structures that make up Bulgarian experience. The thesis questions how we can read this monument and its transformation in relation to those narratives that persist and that form, shape and transform what a Bulgarian identity is.

Chapter 1, “Superman Meets Alyosha: Ambiguous Readings of a Changed Identity” will summarize reactions in the Bulgarian media, including online blogs, to the transformation of the monument and provide a chronology of its existence. Chapter 2, “Actors and Structures in the Formation of Dominant Discourses” will examine the dominant discourses of top-down civilizational models and the actors involved in the construction of such discourses. As part of this discussion I consider the role of Bulgarian intellectuals in projects on the road to modernity, both under the Party-State and the more recent neoliberal regime of governance. Chapter 3, “Truths” and the Way They Function” will trace the battles over the past and how they serve as political mechanisms to legitimize power. The question of the past is considered in relation to the inventing and re-inventing traditions of the nation-state or other actors that function as economic and cultural elites who are guided by neoliberalism. This also brings the problematic of nostalgia and its use in political struggles. Chapter 4, “Challenging the “Truths”: Utopian Potentials and Wars of Position” poses the question of alternatives to the dominant narratives that form perceptions of the past and present and affirm models to be followed. I propose a reading of the monument’s transformation in relation to Bakthin’s work on the carnival, as an activity charged with potential for opening up utopian spaces that could be reassessed by social movements and used in a counter-hegemonic war of position in the cultural front.
2. Superman Meets Alyosha\textsuperscript{10}: Ambiguous Readings of A Changed Identity

2.1. A Short Chronology of the MSA\textsuperscript{11}

On December 4\textsuperscript{th} 1949 the Council of Ministers of the Bulgarian Communist Party (BCP) decided to build a monument of the Soviet Army. On July 5\textsuperscript{th} was the groundbreaking ceremony of the monument designed by a team led by architect Ivan Funev, and project managers Danko Mitov, Ivan Vassiliiv, Luben Neykov and Boris Kitanov. Authors were sculptors Ivan Funev, Lubomir Dalchev Mara Georgieva, Vaska Emanouilova, Vasil Zidarov and Petar Doychinov. On September 7\textsuperscript{th}, 1954 was the official opening of the monument in the presence of Soviet Marshal Sergei Biryuzov. In the early 90’s the monument was repeatedly scratched with graffiti painted over the sculptures. On August 4\textsuperscript{th}, 1992 President Zhelev and Boris Yeltsin signed a treaty on friendly relations and cooperation between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Bulgaria, which required to keep and maintain the monuments related to their history and culture. On March 18\textsuperscript{th}, 1993 Sofia Municipal Council decided to dismantle the Monument of the Soviet Army till the period of May 1\textsuperscript{st}, 1993, this decision however never came into effect. At the end of the 90s, the space around the monument became inhabited by young people who regularly organized beer fests and concerts. Since 2000, young people engaged in urban extreme sports enlivened the place. In October 2010 a group of citizens resumed the debate around the monument, creating a nomination committee to dismantle the monument and implement the March 1993 decision. They

\textsuperscript{10} Alyosha, from the Russian name Aleksey, is a name given to a famous monument of a Soviet soldier in Plovdiv, Bulgaria.

\textsuperscript{11} The information in this section is taken from the website of architect Pavel Ianchev Pavel Ianchev, ‘Паметник На Българската Дискусия Обединителка’ online media, Abitare, accessed September 29, 2012, http://abitare.bg/story.
advocate that sculptures be moved to the newly built Museum of Totalitarian Art in Sofia. On June 17, 2011, on the eve of the festival Sofia Design Week, the northeast bas-relief memorial was transformed - the soldiers were "disguised" as comic characters. This created furor in the city, and generated many contradictory statements and actions by the media and politicians. On June 21, 2011 at dawn the monument was cleaned by the Forum "Bulgaria - Russia." On June 29th, 2011 the municipal council convened an unprecedented emergency meeting to decide the fate of the monument. A solution was not reached.

2.2. Mapping Reactions to the ‘Transformation’ of the Monument

In order to map reactions to the transformation of the Monument of the Soviet Army, I conducted an informal survey of online media sources, including online forums and blogs. Examples of sources that I examined include the online media: dnevnik.bg and its forum section; mediapool and its forum section; the online newspapers 24hours and standart; Bulgarian National Television (BNT); declarations of political parties and cultural and intellectual organizations; blog of journalist Ivo Indzhev, the online forum of young mothers, bg-mamma, etc.

The reactions to the monument re-ignited an old debate about its future. The debate around the monument has been characterized by polarization and once again represents a divided society on the question of assessing history. It is useful to take some time to explore these reactions in greater depth.
One of the earliest official governmental reactions¹² came from the minister of
culture Vezhdhi Rashidov who declared the transformation of the monument an act of
vandalism and a felony unacceptable for Europe.¹³ He also added that Bulgaria lived 50
years in socialism and no generation can erase the past with an eraser. Similarly, the
mayor of Sofia Yordanka Fandukova described both the transformation and subsequent
cleaning up of the monument as partisan operation that she disproved of.¹⁴ Martin
Zaimov, from the right opposition party founded by former Prime Minister Ivan
Kostov,¹⁵ Democrats for Strong Bulgaria (DSB) exclaimed that the artist should become a

¹²The current Bulgarian government of Citizens for European Development of Bulgaria (CEDB, or
GERB in Bulgarian) has a right-centrist platform. It had used the anti-communist discourse
various times. The Prime-Minister Borissov has stated many times that his grandfather a
policeman during the monarchist regime was killed by the communists. However, this story
has been contested by those who emphasize his connections with organized crime groups
and his alleged past of a major organized crime figure. See for example Roth, Stein, as well
as the alternative media Bivol that has documented extensively on this topic.‘Jeff Stein
Interview - Part I: Politicians and Media Friendly to Borisov or Scared of Him, Were Lying to
Support Him’, n.d., http://www.bivol.bg/stein-interview-part1-
english.html?pop=1&tmpl=component&print=1; Jurgen Roth, ‘Jurgen Roth: Bulgarians Must
Revolt Against Corruption’, December 29, 2011,
http://www.novinite.com/view_news.php?id=135238; Jurgen Roth and Elena Prodeva,
Новите български демоны (The new Bulgarian demons) (Слънце, 2008).

¹³In 1996 the future culture minister Razhidov was ‘awarded’ the title Multak for ‘special
contributions towards Multigroup corporation’ during founder of Multigroup Ilia Pavlov’s
birthday. Glasove.com (BNT 1, 2009),
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FTt1MyXCfzs&feature=youtube_gdata_player.
For Multigas as organized crime economic Empire see chapter 2, section 3.9. Multak has
ever since become a pejorative nickname for Razhidov used to point to his connections with
Bulgarian organized crime. The notion that the events of 1989 were an inside coup of the
Party elite to start a process of transferring of economic to political power is prevalent in
popular discourse but also has been the object of recent scholarly research. On the transition
as instituted by elite networks see Чалъков, Мрежите на прехода; Anguelova-Lavergnee,
EKspertite Na Prekhoda; Venelin I. Ganev, Preying on the State: The Transformation of
in the Balkans and Ilia Pavlov see Misha Glenny, McMafia: A Journey Through the Global

¹⁴Нощна Партизанска Акция Унищожи Творбата В Крак с Времето - Mediapool.bg’ online

¹⁵Former Prime Minister from 1997 till 2001 and leader of the United Democratic Forces (UDF) who
took a strict neoliberal course in accordance with IMF and World Bank instructions and whose
government implemented the mass privatization of Bulgaria, a process marked by high
levels of corruption. As a result UDF lost the massive support it had and dismantled into
marginal political parties.
noble citizen of Sofia, and that if he was about to be sent to jail he would join him.\textsuperscript{16} The journalist Ivo Indzhiev, the leader of the most vocal organization for the dismantlement of the monument, who was interviewed by the CNN read the act in support of his cause.\textsuperscript{17} He called the monument a symbol of the country’s invasion by a foreign force and the graffiti work “a dream of those desperate to see regaining of national self-respect.”\textsuperscript{18} Indzhiev also claimed that the event is a result of his organizations initiative to dismantle the monument, despite lack of any such evidence. On the other side of the political spectrum the candidate for Mayor Georgi Kadiiev from the Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP) organized a meeting with “young artists” which he later used for his political campaign culminating in a 3d show during which Superman lifts the monument on his head. It seems that this campaign falls in the category of both marketization of politics and making a consumer product out of history.\textsuperscript{19}

At the same time Sofia regional prosecutor’s office initiated pre-trial proceedings for the unknown artist and a hooliganism charge that could lead to two years in prison or a fine of 5000.\textsuperscript{20}

On June 21\textsuperscript{st} after the monument was cleaned, the program Referendum with moderator Dobrina Cheshmedjieva on Bulgarian public television (BNT) dedicated an


\textsuperscript{18}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{19}In that relation Svetlana Boym argues that the making of history available for consumption is an ideological process characteristic of the U.S.A. It indicates fear of historical antagonisms and cleans up historical contradictions. See Svetlana Boym, The Future of Nostalgia (Basic Books, 2002).

\textsuperscript{20}Lora Fileva, ‘И Прокуратурата Ще Се Занимава с Изрисувания Паметник’, WWW.dnevnik.bg, accessed September 28, 2012, http://www.dnevnik.bg/bulgaria/2011/06/20/1109514_i_prokuraturata_shte_se_zanimava_s_i_zrisuvania/ This article was supported by ironic comments in the forum section that after the prosecution was able to successfully overcome organized crime now it can concentrate its efforts on petty crime. At the same time links of facebook groups supporting the anonymous artists appeared in the forum as well.
hour to a debate about the monument.\textsuperscript{21} The program aimed to represent voices from all political spectrums. Governmental representatives were Malina Edreva from the ruling party and Yordanka Kandukova director of the National Institute of Cultural Heritage in the Ministry of Culture; On the left were Trendafil Velichkov – Chairman of the Young Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP) and Pavel Ivanov – Chairman of the extreme left Communist Movement Che Guevara; on the right were historian Plamen Tzvetkov, Stoyan Mihailev – musician, Valentina Marinova – Chairman of Citizen’s Initiative Committee for the Dismantlement of the The Monument of the Soviet Army. Guests were also art painter Prof. Ivailo Mirchev and photographer Nikola Mikhov. Edreva representing GERB in the municipal government, suggested that desecration is not the answer, but the monument “divides the nation...”[there is] “need for a dialogue” how to “develop” the public space and make it “attractive”, Kandulkova termed the graffiti work as desecration of the memory of soldiers and vandalism but also a new text, without providing interpretation of its meaning. For Velichkov this is nothing but “an expensive PR campaign” on the right, stolen from Coca Cola. Tzvetkov replied that the presence of the monument itself is a “desecration of all Bulgarian and human if it is left in this country.”\textsuperscript{22} Pointing, ironically, to the fact that the prosecution being “defenceless against organized crime [mobilized] to catch the dreadful terrorist that painted the

\textsuperscript{21}Паметника на Съветската армия, Referendum (Bulgarian National Television, 2011), http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NRMFqjS18mo&feature=youtube_gdata_player.

\textsuperscript{22}Plamen Tzvetkov is a Chair of the History Department at New Bulgarian University, a private university, one of the most influential higher education institutions in Bulgaria. Tzvetkov is known for his position about the detrimental role of Russia and the Soviet Union in Bulgarian history which he deems a colonial relationship, as well as for enlivening the pre-1944 debate about the non-Slavic ethnic background of Bulgarians. He is also known for arguing against the existence of fascism in Bulgaria, which he also stated in the program discussed. See for example: Пламен С. Цветков, България в Балканите от древността до наши дни (Zograf, 1998); Пламен Симеонов Цветков, Между руския комунизъм и германската националсоциализъм: средните и малките държави в европейската политика до втората световна война (Херон Прес, 1998); Пламен С. Цветков, Славяни ли са българите? (Тангръ Тантак ра, 1998). On the role of politics in the non-Slavic thesis prior to 1944 and the Slavic thesis after see: Mariia Nikolaeva Todorova, ‘Professionals’ and ‘Dilettantes’, in Bones of Contention: The Living Archive of Vasil Levski and the Making of Bulgaria’s National Hero (Central European University Press, 2009). Tzvetkov who enjoys regular media presence, in his role of a public intellectual, together with journalist Ivo Indzhev, is a prominent representative of the anti-communist discourse. Often adapting a nationalist pose, Tzvetkov is suspiciously unconcerned with the position of Bulgaria towards the US and EU.
Mihalev who wore a T-shirt with the new identities of the soldiers claimed companies’ refusal to print his T-shirt as an indicator of “some dependence in our traumatic post-totalitarian society” and added that “humour has always been a threat to dictatorships and totalitarian regimes.” Mihalev also advocated for the removal of the monument in a totalitarian museum modeled under the Hungarian example. He stated that “despite being a symbol of lies and national betrayal, lies also have a place in history.”

More pointedly, Ivanov called the act “powerful anti-capitalist slap...against those who under the American flag impose pseudo-heroes” he pointed to the lack of Russian military bases during the Soviet period and the presence of two US bases currently and continued that “after the Soviet Army came the Bulgarian republic”, to which Tzvetkov replied that despite the lack of Russian bases there was a substantial KGB apparatus inside Bulgaria. Marinova called the monument “our Berlin Wall” and the soviet soldiers “fake heroes.” Both Marinova and Tzvetkov refused to make parallels with other Soviet Army monuments in Central and Eastern Europe due to their different history. Tzvetkov called the monument in Austria “the price the Austrians paid for the withdrawal of the Soviet Army” and added that none of the monuments are central to “sacred national places.” Mirchev disproved of the monument’s transformation due to the “short historical memory of Bulgarian people” but called it “a cultural phenomenon” and “an interesting artistic act” that subverts Socialist realism with Western pop-culture. He also pointed to the fact that “if the artist was brave enough to declare his identity he could sell his work to the global market.”

Mikhov, who photographically documents monuments in Europe, pointed to the numerous acts of vandalism against monuments in the country that the state never paid attention to and to the lack of an institution responsible for the monuments. He was quite clear in his argument that the monument is at the center of Sofia as an indicator of the epoch and should remain there. Interestingly, contrary to the coverage of other mass media sources, such as dnevnik and mediapool that declared “thousands” in support of the act, documented with images of groups of people taking

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23 This seemed to be the first instance in the debate when the graffiti work was talked about directly as a commodity, outside of the polarizing historical and political discussion.
pictures and smiling, BNT's survey showed overwhelming disapproval of the transformation both in the capital and the rest of the country.

There were several declarations that either condemned or praised the transformation of the monument. Here I am providing a summary of the most prominent examples. On June 20th there was a declaration signed by 18 groups and organizations amongst them Union of Bulgarian Journalists and Union of Bulgarian Writers, as well as the Bulgarian Anti-Fascist Union, the War Veterans Union, Bulgarian-Russian Chamber of Commerce, etc. In the declaration they called the graffiti “desecration” and “sacrilige to the memory of millions of Soviet people who defended mankind from the fascist plague.” The monument is compared to the monuments existing in Hungary, Czech Republic, Poland, France and Germany that commemorate the fallen Soviet soldiers. The graffiti is interpreted as “an attempt “to upset our relations with the Russian people.” The declaration contains the warning that “any attempt to separate us from the Russian brothers has had fatal ending” and insists that the municipal government “take energetic measures against the vandals” and install surveillance cameras to monitor the monument. Then the declaration continues in an apologetic tone towards “the Russian people” and a plea toward the Russian mass media “not to assign this act done by a few people to the whole Bulgarian people.”

This declaration is an interesting response, not only because it assigns an intent to the artists - blaming them of aiming to disrupt good relations with the Russian people –but also because of the hostile tone toward any other interpretation of the existence of the monument, and the apologetic and even fearful tone when addressing the “Russian people” and “Russian media.” In this declaration there is a direct equation between the victory over fascism and the existence of the monument.

24 Съюз На Българските Журналисти - Декларация По Повод Оскверняването На Паметника На Съветската Армия в Центъра На София, Union of Bulgarian Journalists, Suiz Na Bulgarskite Journalisti, accessed September 29, 2012, http://sbj-bg.eu/index.php?t=11833. It is important to point out that most of those organizations and groups are either led by, or have as members, former agents and informers of State Security.
The official response about the event came from the Russian Foreign Ministry (RFM) on 22\textsuperscript{nd} a day after the graffiti were removed.\textsuperscript{25} There are direct parallels with the declaration of the 18 Bulgarian organizations when it comes to content and in some cases the tone and text are almost identical. The response expresses a belief that such events do not reflect the attitudes of the majority of the Bulgarian people and the “historical connections of friendship and cooperation and mutual assistance” are emphasized. The graffiti art is described as an act of vandalism and a “mockery with the memory of the soldiers who died for the liberation of Europe and Bulgaria from fascism.” This claim of the liberation of Bulgaria is not clearly stated in the Bulgarian declaration, but seems to be implied. RFM had the same pretentions toward the Bulgarian government - “protect the monument” and “punish the desecrators” --although the tone is more moderate. A more sharply-worded official note came from the Russian embassy. In addition to the narrative of the liberation from fascism, the note contained the claim that the “act of vandalism” to the monument “is characterized by cynicism unprecedented for other European countries where such monuments exist.” The embassy also expressed gratitude towards the declaration of the 18\textsuperscript{th} organizations and groups.

On the other side of the political spectrum the Young Democrats affiliated with the Union of Democratic Forces (UDF)\textsuperscript{26} came up with a declaration that condemned the attempts to “change history” and rehabilitate Todor Zhivkov’s regime and the BCP by “removing the memory of the atrocities of this regime.” According to them, the monument is part of the history of terror of Communism and testifies to 45 years of fabrication of history. Thus, the art intervention is a good example how to change the message of the monument and transform it form an “object for ideological purpose to a product of


\textsuperscript{26}МСДС - СОФИЯ: Декларация На МСДС Във Връзка с Оцветяването На Паметника На Съветската Армия’ Blog, Mladejki Suij Na Demokraticnhite Sili, accessed September 29, 2012, http://www.msds-sofia.org/2011/06/blog-post.html The current UDF is the weak ancestor f the UDF formed as a coalition of anti-communist forces on December 7th 1989. After a series of transformations related to losing popular support it is now one of the two marginal right wing parties.
modern art" which seems to hint that the Young Democrats approve of making the space around the monument and monument itself suitable for tourist consumption.

Some of the most interesting responses came from the blogs and forums of online users, rather than politicians or political groups. First, in the majority of commentaries, both in Bulgarian and Russian media, the monument's transformation triggered reactions from the two camps for and against the monument's existence that dealt with questions about the past and the emotional baggage of unresolved symbolic conflict. For some, there was anger and shame that all of this struggle is happening post-factum, pointing to Bulgaria's subservient role towards foreign powers throughout its history. Chiko calls the artists “cowards" and writes that “while Ian Palach set himself on fire, and young people in Hungary stood against the Russian tanks, those cowards can't even reveal themselves” and also that “our dissident movement was a parody.”

By eluding the shameful narratives of Bulgaria’s obedience to the Soviet Union chiko seems to view the artistic act as an expression of revenge, aiming at the significance of the monument as a symbol of the past rather than a comment of the present. Many also acknowledged the overwhelming presence of monuments commemorating Russian and Soviet statesmen, as well as armies, and the lack of monuments of the founder of the Bulgarian state or other medieval rulers. Another category was those that saw in this new image the possibility for economic gain, arguing that the monument turned into a tourist attraction only when it was transformed because otherwise no one paid attention to the greyness of totalitarianism.

If we juxtapose the tone and content of the official Russian governmental response to some of the opinions in a popular Russian social media there are several contrasts in the interpretations. Although, there are many comments supporting the


official liberation discourse, calling the Bulgarians" ungrateful" some of the comments view the monument as a symbol of Soviet power, rather than commemoration of the fallen soldiers. A person with the username adamlibrikov sates that the monument is “representative of the Soviet Empire” and its existence is “disrespectful to the fallen in war” because it is a “sign of the obedience of the Soviet regime.” An argument between apparently two Russians with close contacts in Bulgaria in a way summarizes the position of the two polar opinions that dominated Bulgarian media. Mantrix basing his claims on a “summary of what I heard and saw” states that “for the Bulgarians the Soviet soldier is an occupier that imposed his ways for 50 years” to which Nagmor replies that when the Soviet Union existed during his stay in Bulgaria he heard from “common folks” assurance in brotherhood forever and desire to become the 16th republic of the USSR. Those two opinions seem to summarize the two dominant narratives that assign meaning to the existence of this monument. On the one side there are those that still read history according the official Party-State historiography. On the other side are those who re-read the past in accordance to the historiography of historians exposed to the anti-communist discourse in which shame serves a seminal role. Both of those voices, however, are rooted in the past and arguably fail to see the significance of the monument for the present.

Thus, those who call the artists vandals and insist that they be punished perceive the transformation as a direct attack against the monument that aims to dismantle it, while those that praise the art see it as a mockery of the past and a good opportunity to voice their disproval of the monument's existence.

Based on this review, reactions to the transformation of the Monument of the Soviet Army in the media appeared to fall into three main categories that bear on the historical conditions of collective and political memory.

The first category is comprised of those who engaged in an anti-communist narrative. Those who fall in this category expressed approval of the monument's transformation because they associate the monument with the totalitarian past. The presence of the monument functions to signify the horrors of Communism and the shame of foreign domination. Such discourses are rarely critical of the present course of neoliberal capitalism and view the nomenklatura as solely responsible for the current socio-economic plight of Bulgarians. Journalist Ivo Indzhev and Prof. Tzvetkov are main
representatives of the anti-communist discourse. The center right political opposition in Bulgaria, that played an instrumental role during the neoliberal reforms, is another such representative. Evoking the memory of the totalitarian past, especially in the first decade after the fall of Zhivkov’s regime, has become a potent political instrument, aiming to delegitimize today’s socialists by renouncing them as former communist in their claims to power. Recently such narratives have been extended to the silenced past of the Bulgarian anti-communist resistance, which aims to revitalize the narrative of the totalitarian past, but also contests the traditional notion of Bulgaria as the most loyal Soviet satellite. Many online users in the media forums I examined espoused this narrative.

The second category draws on a nostalgia narrative that is closely linked to the myth of “double liberation” which will be discussed in the chapters that follow. It views the former regime as a time of social stability and protection under the wing of the Soviet Union. An example of such discourse is the declaration signed by members of organizations directly associated with the former nomenklatura that have fallen out of favour of the neoliberal state but still possess significant social capital. Contrary to the anti-communist narrative that questions the existence of fascism in Bulgaria, the nostalgic narrative views the monument as signifying Bulgaria’s, and Europe’s, liberation from fascism. Nostalgia narratives appear to appeal mostly to today’s ‘losers from the transition’ to capitalism – primarily the elderly who long for the social safety of the old times. But, if we consider other indicators, such as the popularity of Bulgarian movies from the socialist period, the nostalgia narrative also appears to have an even broader resonance.

The third category can be called the commodification narrative. This is the category of responses that tries to find meaning of the monument’s function in accordance with the demands of neoliberal tourism. After the process of de-industrialization of the Bulgarian economy, which Rossen Vassilev defines as de-
development, the main source of revenue became tourism, characterized by a tendency to turn public art into a commodity. Many opinions expressed in the online forums I reviewed pointed to the attractiveness of the transformed monument for tourist consumption. The views in this instance are consistent with a broader trend. Despite some exceptions the reading of the monument’s transformation was quite limited and fell under the polarized categories of for (meaning approval of the act to disapprove of the past; or as an easily digestible tourist product, oftentimes both views overlapping) or against (meaning treating the act as an attack on the past, while failing to read it in the context of the now). That is, all of the major narratives associated with the monument pertain to the question of the formation of dominant discourses about history and identity where the monument’s presence functions as a symbol that ignites such discourses.

2.3. “Destructive Creation”

I will conclude this chapter with some of the words of those who claimed authorship over the Soviet soldiers’ new identities. On September 14th 2011 Edno


31Elitza Ranova’s defines the stuff of Edno magazine as ‘elite in the making’ - a recently formed intellectual elite in the cultural sphere that aims to sever connections with the ‘nationalist’ intellectuals formed during the Soviet era and declare their cosmopolitan identity under EU influence. See: Elitza Ranova, ‘Mirroring Gazes: Europe, Nationalism and Change in the Field of Bulgarian Art and Culture’, in Bulgaria and Europe: Shifting Identities, ed. Stefanos Katsikas, Anthem Series on Russian, East European and Eurasian Studies (London: Anthem, 2010).
magazine published an anonymous interview with a collective of nine people between the ages of 17 and 21 that presented themselves to be the authors of the graffiti art and defined themselves as *Destructive Creation*. All of them were students, most studying in Western Europe media, communications, animation, design, photography and illustration. They stated that for them “this place has lost its value as a monument” and that they were provoked by those who wanted to demolish the monument whom they did not agree with. They also pointed to the lack of soldier’s graves underneath the monument and that they did not view it as a symbol of Communism and that it had become a place for young artists to exchange ideas. In this chapter I tried to summarize the majority of opinions about the meaning of the transformation from media sources but I want to give the last word to the authors themselves that seem to both confirm and yet differ from the overall categories:

What we depicted in painting the monument is Bulgarian politics, which changes directions depending on which way the wind is blowing, no matter what interests are at stake. Just as our parents grew up with the Red Army heroes, we grew up with American comic heroes. I want my kids to grow up inspired by heroes with Bulgarian names. Our main idea was to show that when the Soviet Union was in power, we were trying to be the best communists, yet ever since we started living in democracy we have been trying to be the best democrats/Americans.

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33 It seems that one of the objectives of the art work was to reclaim the public space around the monument as a place of counter culture.
3. **Actors and Structures in the Formation of Dominant Discourses**

Consideration of the discourses that surrounded the monument and its ‘desecration’ or ‘transformation’ takes us deep into the sphere of ideology in Bulgaria. This chapter doesn’t focus on the monument per se, but rather shifts attention to Bulgarian organic intellectuals and their role in relation to the position of Bulgaria as a semi-peripheral state in the European system. Gramsci understood the term ‘intellectual’ in very broad way and suggested that every person is an intellectual, but that not everyone plays a ‘function’ in society as an intellectual. In other words, some intellectuals count more than others in the struggle over hegemony. I am particularly interested in considering the factors that lead to the formation of “organic intellectuals” in Bulgaria—intellectuals whose ideas become organically integrated into the views of the world that are representative of major competing groups in Bulgarian society.

What are the major factors that play a role in the formation of organic intellectuals? I will assess this question in relation to the problem of imported civilizational models that Alexander Kiossev introduces and which will be discussed below. This chapter aims to demonstrate how Bulgarian intellectuals function to advance imported civilizational models and exercise social power through the formation of dominant ideological discourses *in relation to those models*.34 That social power is projected through the state where, in accordance with the geo-political climate, Bulgarian political

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34 Maria Todorova introduces John French and Bartram Raven differentiation of social power. According to them there are six bases of social power: coercive, reward, legitimate, reference, expert and informational. Expert power is based on the perception of the target that the agent possess superior power and ability, informational is based on the quality of the message, its persuasiveness and argumentation. In my opinion it is these two aspects of social power that situate the intellectual’s influential position in as formers and promoters of dominant discourses. Mariia Nikolaeva Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*, updated ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 188.
structure and socio-economic system, the recognized intellectual class either directly serves as organizational ideologues-- part of the nomenklatura under the Soviet model,-- or forms in think-tanks that exercise influence over the political elite under the neoliberal model. The discourses then form Bulgarians’ perceptions of themselves and their path of development. The ideological narratives advanced by intellectuals, be it the Russian/Soviet liberation myth, or the crude anti-communist discourses of the horrors of the recent past, and the unproblematic representation of pre-communist years, then play a role in the process of the invented traditions of both systems. How the monument under discussion is situated as a major figure in this process will be discussed in the next chapter. But, first, we need to consider dominant discourses among Bulgarian intellectuals in greater depth.

3.1. Characteristics of Eastern European Intellectuals

Since the chapter explores Bulgarian intellectuals and their part in the formation of dominant discourses I find it appropriate to start with the question of characteristics of the Eastern European intelligentsia. In their influential work Konrad and Szelenyi define intellectuals as monopolistic proprietors of specific kind of knowledge. Such knowledge is concerned with the values that society accepts as part of its culture, i.e. is in relationship with teleological questions, such as what is good, what is bad, how are we to act. The intellectual possesses cross-contextual knowledge and functions to orient and regulate social behaviour according to society’s values.

What distinguishes the intellectual from other social groups is his/her lack of other title to status except the monopoly over complex, cross-contextual knowledge. It is the monopoly over such knowledge with which the intellectual seeks rewards in the social hierarchy and justifies his/her aspirations to power. Katherine Verdery elaborates that “one is an intellectual according to the types of claims through which one justifies

Konrad and Szelenyi point to the schizoid character of the intellectuals – they are torn between, on the one hand, articulating the rules of the social order and on the other criticizing the existing order. This in my opinion clearly shows when we examine the role of dissident intellectuals in the Soviet system, which I will explore later.

From there the authors move into an analysis of the formation of intellectuals in Eastern in comparison to Western Europe. Because of developed market economies in the capitalist West, intellectuals have the social position of a strata between the two major classes – the bourgeoisie and the working class: “closer to the proletariat in respect of the position it occupies in the market, but closer to the bourgeoisie in terms of its income and style of living.” Konrad and Szelenyi analyze the socio-economic forces that play a role in the self-perception of intellectuals. Intellectuals in developed market systems form under competitive educational market that sells specialized knowledge of relative scarcity-value. This makes them more independent than the working class, which, “reinforced by the cult of creative individuality,” gives them a sense of being equal or superior to the bourgeoisie. However, the dependence on the market puts many intellectuals in precarious positions.

According to Konrad and Szelenyi the dependence on market forces is detrimental to the interests of the intelligentsia, especially the creative group. Thus, the discontent among intellectuals of their precarious position in a market system drove them to dismiss the idea that the market expresses society’s real needs. The ideology of rational redistribution gave the intellectuals justification for a new teleological mission to lead, educate and enlighten the masses toward the abolition of the regulatory principles of the market. In Marxism they found the answer to their teleological mission - “Marxism gave intellectuals justification to promote the interests of the working class.”

37 Konrád and Szelényi, The Intellectuals on the Road to Class Power, 22.
38 Ibid., 68.
39 Ibid., 69.
40 Ibid., 70.
This ideology of rational redistribution, that dismissed the market could transform into a revolutionary project in Eastern Europe due to the existing economic and political conditions. The weak market economy did not provide enough jobs for intellectuals. The majority of whom found employment as civil servants and state bureaucracy. The intellectuals had to take the position of the weak bourgeoisie as modernizers of society. However, because the market as regulator was detrimental to their interests, intellectuals turned rational redistribution, as a teleological mission, into the ideology of the whole society. Verdery defines rational redistribution as beginning from Marx’s slogan: “From each according to his abilities to each according to his need” that Lenin modified “to each according to his work”, “until sufficient abundance could be achieved to reward according to need.”

3.2. Conditions and Context of Formation of the Bulgarian Intelligentsia

In order to develop an analysis of the conditions and context of formation of the Bulgarian intelligentsia, it is useful to begin with the critical study of Balkanism introduced in the 1990s in the West by scholars of Balkan origin. Historian Maria Todorova defines Balkanism as a category that deals with the epistemological problematic of representation of the “other.” It refers to the way the perception of the Balkans is formed as a static, “frozen image” by the hegemonic gaze of the West. Although, derived from Said’s orientalism the category of Balkanism differs from it by the historical and geographic concreteness of the Balkans. Todorova points out the transitory status of the Balkans and their symbolic meaning as a bridge or crossroad, both as perception and self perception. Although the Balkans are geographically part of Europe with the rise of eurocentricism they have been relegated to the status of a

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41 Verdery et al., ‘Rereading The Intellectuals on the Road to Class Power’, 4.
42 According to Todorova there is a genre dealing with the problem and represenatation of otherness that bridges across disciplines from anthropology and literature to history and sociology. A new discipline imagology deals with the literary images of the other. Todorova, Imagining the Balkans, 7.
43 Ibid., 16.
periphery. Larry Wolff shows how the ideas of the Enlightenment after the 18th century shifted the meaning of the West – East division from geographical to temporal dimension. Western Europe’s economic development started to be associated with progress, as opposed to Eastern Europe’s lagging behind. Todorova emphasizes the shift in power gazes: for the Ancient Greeks the dichotomy civilized (cultured) vs. barbarous acquired South-North (Thracians) and East-West (Persians) dimension. In the medieval period Byzantium as the center of the civilization in Europe perceived the West as barbarous and crude. The shift to West-East division and the new dimensions of the dichotomy civilization vs. barbarism comes about with the shift of power relations and the economic advancement of Western Europe in 18th and 19th centuries.

Wolff notes how the idea of civilization, conceived as the opposite of barbarism, was an 18th century Western European creation. He provides ample examples of the perceptions of prominent thinkers of the Enlightenment of civilization and the changes that the meaning of the word undergoes. Gradually the word civilization shifted from a legal term to include reference to wealth and the refinement of manners. The French revolution further developed the idea of civilization to a model of development. Wolff writes that “Condorcet wondered whether all nations would achieve the state of civilization reached by the most enlightened, most free, most unprejudiced people, such as the French and the Anglo-Americans.” On the developmental scale, Eastern Europe measured the distance between civilization and barbarism. Balzac wrote that the Slavic people were a link between Europe and Asia, between civilization and barbarism. According to Todorova the Balkans are also thought of as a bridge between East and West, Europe and Asia.

Ibid., 17. Eurocentrism is a modern phenomenon, which roots can be traced to the Renaissance, that flourishes in the 19th century and as such constitutes one dimension of the culture and ideology of the modern capitalist world.


Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*, 11.


Ibid., 12.

Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*, 16.
The bridge metaphor also connotes stages of growth defined as *semi-developed*, *semicolonial*, *semicivilized*, *semioriental*. According to Todorova this transitory character constructs the Balkans not as an incomplete other, but as an incomplete self – “the shadow, the structurally despised ego.”\(^{50}\) In relation to Todorova’s thesis my focus is to look at how *eurocentric* perception internalizes and becomes *self-perception*. The concept of the despised ego could be jointed with Alexander Kiossev’s thesis of self-colonizing cultures. In short, Kiossev defines self-colonizing cultures as “cultures having succumbed to the cultural power of Europe and the west without having been invaded and turned into colonies in actual fact.”\(^{51}\) Historical circumstances transformed them into an extracolonial “periphery... [As a result] they had to recognize self-evidently foreign cultural supremacy and voluntarily absorb the basic values and categories of colonial Europe. Alexander Kiossev’s thesis of self-colonizing cultures defines such cultures, in terms where the intellectual elites have created the notion of absence of a whole civilizational model. This is due to the trauma experienced by a small educated elite...concrete intellectuals who in their practical relations to the “more civilized” have been humiliated many times because of their language, ethnic origins, “lack of great traditions.” This brings the need to catch up in development by adapting a foreign model.\(^{52}\)

Kiossev builds on Charles Taylor’s concept of the social imaginary, which is “the way people imagine their social existence, relations to others and interactions, social expectations and the normative component of how things ought to be.”\(^{53}\) The social imaginary is common understanding that makes possible common practices but the

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\(^{50}\)Ibid., 18.


relationship is reciprocal – it is also the practices that carry the understanding. Images, stories and legends play instrumental role in the way people imagine their social surroundings but theories formulated by a small intellectual elite infiltrate the social imaginary. Modernity brings about the shift from hierarchical mediated-access societies to horizontal direct-access societies. Crucial for this shift are two social formations – the rise of the market economy and the development of the public sphere – that due to their functional characteristics play a role in the imaginary perception of equal participation. But, parallel to this horizontal perception was also the hierarchical categorization of peoples and their cultures instituted by European powers. The categorizing of civilized and non-civilized peoples, and the various stages of their development or backwardness, was prompted by Western Europe’s eagerness for self-discovery through the other. This occurred after the conquests of non-European populations with different social organizations and it provided an ideological and moral justification for colonialism. Taylor writes: “[n]o human community is purely inwardly formed. The other always plays some role...The “savage”, the other of civilization provided a way for Europeans to define themselves...”

In the international system those two perceptions of horizontal equal footing, and of hierarchical categorization, shaped the actions of nation-states. According to Taylor “identities in the modern world are more and more formed in direct relation to others in space of recognition.” National identities are also formed in relation to others in the international systems. Taylor explains how the process takes place – at first “the members of the dominant societies” might refuse recognition of a newcomer nation, “but later there has developed a new public scene, on which people are rated and categorized. I would add that this scene is directly related to the international balance of power and those that categorize and evaluate happen to be the “the members of the

54Taylor, ‘Nationalism and Modernity’, 46.
55Ibid.
As a result, the peoples inhabiting non-Western states are caught up in the perpetual need to catch up with modernity in the international race that their elites participate in.

Kiossev takes up the concept of the ‘social imaginary’ to argue that the local elites of the nations that are rated play an instrumental role in forming these nations’ self-perception as nations that are lagging on the road to modernity and lack a civilizational model. For Kiossev, “it is precisely the colonial processes that form the collective imagination: the asymmetry between the European métropoles and the colonized rest of the world underlines the common oeuvre of shared knowledge, ideological representations and popular myths.” Colonialism “ranked peoples and geographic spaces as “superior” and “inferior,” delineated them not only geographically but in terms of value into “Western,” “Eastern,” and “Southern,” defined them as “big” and “small,” historic and nonhistoric.” One can look at the Balkans as a case study of self-colonization that takes place with the local elites’ formation of nation-states. The reforms in the Ottoman Empire that started during the 19th c. made possible a process of socio-economic advancement of the non-Muslim indigenous populations, which enabled the creation of small intellectual elites, educated abroad. The interaction of these future elites with the social imaginary of Europe had two major consequences – they were...
enchanted by the cultural, economic and political progress of European modernity, while at the same time experiencing themselves being subjected as the other, as non-legitimized, not “truly European” inhabitants of uncivilized and backward Empire. As the intellectual elite of their societies they reproduce the values and concepts of the West but also the self-perception formed by the perception of the Center. Kiossev explains, “[s]teered by cultural necessity, once up on “the world stage” the new peripheral imaginary communities thought of themselves within the inevitable cultural asymmetry vis-à-vis the Big Other, Europe’s colonial center.” This brings about the search for civilizational models that could serve as formulas for modernizing and rapid development in accordance with the centers perception of development. The experience of the elites makes Europe or the West a Master signifier both to be revered and despised but no matter which, such sentiments are always a reaction to the dominant narratives of the Center that are now forming the periphery’s social imaginary. And the different historical periods of Bulgarian history show both cases. In the political imaginary of Bulgaria’s state-building, Europe is either a signifier of civilization opposing the despotic and uncivilized Russian Tsarism, which later transform into a return to origin story as in the “back to Europe” discourse after 1989 to enforce the binary opposition of capitalist West (civilized) vs. soviet East (uncivilized); or as imperial forces of capitalist domination, when the roles are reversed and Russia/Soviet Union signifies progress and

58 I come back to the concept of the Master signifier in relation to its significance for the study of ideology.

59 Susan Buck-Morss introduces the concept of the political imaginary as formulated by the Russian philosopher Valerii Podoroga. As Buck-Morss points out in Podoroga’s work the concept acquires a different meaning than simply worldview, as characteristic in Western discussions. In Podoroga the political imaginary becomes a topographical concept, not as a political logic, but a political landscape. It has concreteness, as “iconographic, visual representation of the political terrain.” For the political imaginary of Bulgaria’s political elite the political terrain requires a strong power that assures well-being and protection. Yet, as Charles Tilly has pointed out protection can be understood both as a powerful friend sheltering the weak from danger and a bully extracting tribute in exchange for neutralizing threats to the system. Under such a system the role of the hegemonic power as either friend or bully becomes ambiguous. See Charles Tilly, ‘War Making and State Making as Organized Crime’, in Bringing the State Back In, ed. Peter B. Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer, and Theda Skocpol (Cambridge University Press, 1985).

60 Below I discuss the origins of this discourse, formed by Eastern European intellectuals in Czechoslovakia, Poland and Hungary.
modernity. The humiliating experience of peripheral elites as having a secondary status in the hierarchical categories of the Center, manifests in the contemptuous attitude towards the “inferior” human material of the masses.” Because of this inferiority of the masses the civilizational models that will bring rapid modernization have to be executed in a top-down manner by the elites. This notion permeates Bulgarian intellectual thought despite the political position that those intellectuals have.

In relation to the question of perception and self-perception Rastko Mocnik argues that the discourse of Balkanism “ideologically mediates and reproduces economic, social and political inequalities” that construct the Balkans as a semi-periphery both externally and internally. Externally the Balkan states are coded with their aberrant behavior – conflict ridden, hostile to each other - as opposed to the universal code of cooperation. Mocnik argues that this external code functions to sustain hierarchical power relations inside the Balkan states themselves. It becomes a mechanism of domination. Self-representation is one of the mechanisms by which economic relations of oppression and exploitation are introduced by political means.

To summarize, on the one hand the lack of developed market mechanisms where the intellectuals can make commodities of the ideologies they produce and the diminished role of the bourgeoisie as a class that drives economic progress, advanced East European intellectuals to the position of stewardship and gave them a sense of moral mission, or what Konrad and Szelenyi term teleological intellectuals. This enabled them to achieve a position of moral compasses of their societies, which according to Verdery explain why the intelligentsia played a major role in the formation of political organizations after 1989. Alternatively, if we look at Bulgaria as a specific

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61 For example, Communist Chairman’s Georgi Dimitrov and Todor Zhivkov speeches about Bulgaria’s historical need to follow the Soviet Union as the only guarantor for its modernization, contrasted to President Sotyanov speech about Bulgaria’s civilizational choice between modern Europe and backward Russia.


63 Mocnik, ‘The Balkans as an Element in Ideological Mechanisms’.

64 Konrád and Szelenyi, The Intellectuals on the Road to Class Power.

65 Verdery et al., ‘Rereading The Intellectuals on the Road to Class Power’, 5.
case, the intellectual elite that was instrumental in the creation of the nation-state gained education abroad, primarily Russia, and brought the ideas and narratives of modernity, through the lenses of Russian thought. Despite the indirect Russian influence progress and development was imagined around Europe as a Master-signifier.

3.3. Bulgarian Intelligentsia: Historical Formation

I now turn to the historical formation of Bulgarian intelligentsia and factors that formed the social physiognomy of those intellectuals. Bulgarian intellectuals formed in the conditions of Bulgarian social existence under the Ottoman Empire. Key factors included the lack of extreme socio-economic polarization and the albedence of aristocratic nobility, as well as of a clearly defined industrial bourgeoisie, as in Western Europe. The Ottoman city was subordinated to the state and failed to develop an autonomous role, nor a strong independent commercial and industrial class. The Christian population in the Balkans consisted primarily of peasantry, relatively freer in comparison to Eastern Europe’s system of serfdom and the role of intellectuals prior to 19th c. was played by the priesthood whose main role was to preserve the Christian faith of the population. The Tanzimat reforms (1839-1876) aimed to modernize the Empire and defuse the rise of discontent among the non-Muslim subjects of the Empire, importing the judicial system of France. This enabled a gradual process of Bulgarian socio-economic development which led to the rise of a new intellectual elite and, in a sense, produced the opposite results of the reforms’ objectives. The rise of struggles for national independence, ended with an unsuccessful uprising, and a Russian led war with the Ottomans, culminating in the formation of the nation-state under a monarch, known as the third Bulgarian kingdom.

The modern Bulgarian intelligentsia originated from the ranks of tradesmen, merchants and artisans that gained some economic prominence in the reforms period. Since its formation around the mid-19th century the Bulgarian intelligentsia performed two main tasks – it served as educator and as the force that awakened national consciousness that led to the push for independence. These tasks positioned the intellectuals as leaders of their people and gave them a sense of mission. Under the Ottomans, Bulgarians were incapable of forming a strong bourgeoisie and this put the intellectuals in leadership position, as in the rest of Eastern Europe. But in the context of Ottoman rule, the primary objective articulated by intellectuals was to gain cultural and political independence. The leaders of the Bulgarian revolution were primarily educated abroad and were very small intellectual elite of about 600 men, 500 of which gained education in Russia. We can argue that those members of the intellectual elite who gained higher education abroad became the driving force in the struggle for national liberation. They were directly influenced by the ideas of the political, economic and cultural developments of Western modernity and were most eager to create a national state. They aspired to usher the Bulgarian nation on the road to modernity and felt stifled in what they considered the backward Ottoman Empire.

The Bulgarian nation-state undertook projects of modernization that followed imported models. As Roumen Daskalov has shown “the grand historical narrative of the nation is unitary, coherent, teleological and emotionally tense.” Yet, from the beginning

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68 Dimou, Entangled Paths Towards Modernity, 22. Daskalov, ‘Transformations of the East European Intelligentsia’. The chief objective of Russian educational policies towards the Bulgarians was preparing future priests and teachers to spread the conservative influence of Tsarist Russia in Bulgaria. The other objective was to use Russian educated Bulgarians as agents that could influence Bulgarian national movement along the lines of Russian foreign policy. See Daskalov who uses Genchev work on Bulgarian-Russian cultural relations. Rumen Daskalov, The Making of a Nation in the Balkans: Historiography of the Bulgarian Revival (Central European University Press, 2004), 218. Yet, despite these objectives of the Russian government, the leaders of the Bulgarian uprising formed as such under the direct influence of Russian revolutionary thought. Here, Russia’s influence in the formation of Bulgaria’s intellectual revolutionary thought is crucial.
69 Daskalov, The Making of a Nation in the Balkans, 3.
of the national struggle, the Bulgarian intellectuals’ position as leaders in this struggle maintained a seemingly schizophrenic character. According to Maria Todorova in Bulgaria the period between the two wars, prompted an interest in *folk psychology*. 70 Bulgarian intelligentsia produced a “martyrological self-image – that of a victimized nation, isolated...[with a combination of] inert collectivism and archaic individualism...[as well as]... a social egalitarianism that fosters democratism, lack of civic discipline and responsibility.” 71 Having emerged from the peasantry, many Bulgarian intellectuals adopted the idea that they had a mission as future organizers of a nation-state. Yet, this appeared to combine with resentment towards their own origins that contained the residues of feudal social relations. 72 The question of national leadership of the nation-state has been at the core of these explorations of the *national psyche*. 73 Reoccurring themes are the disconnect between the intellectuals and the people after the formation of the Bulgarian state, the rise of individualism and careerism among the intelligentsia that formed the civil servants and bureaucracy of the state, distrust in authority, combined with the desire to gain a position of power for personal gain. In these discourses, the peasantry is either romanticized and idealized, or presented as an obstacle to national development and modernization, sometimes in the same text.

In these views, we can glimpse the two psychological characteristics that played a role in the formation of Bulgarian intellectuals as a stratum – the perception of leadership and a sense of mission common with the rest of Eastern Europe, combined

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70 Under Ferdinand I Bulgaria launched three wars for the realization of Greater Bulgaria – the First Balkan War (FBW) in 1912, with Serbia and Greece as allies, against the Ottoman Empire; the Second Balkan war (1913) against its former allies, Serbia and Greece and World War I (1915-1918) on the side of the Central Powers. The consequences of these wars are known as national catastrophes in official historiography.


72 Константин Петканов, ‘Интелигенцията като рожба и отрицание на селото’. in *Защо сме такива?: в търсене на българската културна идентичност* (Why are we what we are? *In search of Bulgarian cultural identity*), ed. Иван Еленков and Румен Дончев Даскалов (Просвета, 1994).

73 See the authors in, Иван Еленков и Румен Дончев Даскалов, *Защо сме такива?: в търсене на българската културна идентичност* (Why are we what we are? *In search of Bulgarian cultural identity*) (Просвета, 1994).
with the marginal and humiliating status of this group, both in the socio-political realities under Ottoman rule and in the socio-economic dependence on an older conservative elite – the village and town nobility. If we go back to Kiossev’s thesis of ‘self-colonizing’ cultures we can see how intellectuals’ feeling of inadequacy in their own social environment could have prompted the need to radically transform social relations and to seek foreign civilizational models rather than those rooted in local culture and social specificity.

This apparent schizophrenia seems most clear when one looks at the function of intellectuals in the realm of political culture. For example, the sense of deep disconnect between the mission of intellectuals and the resentment for the populations’ passivity permeates in Hristo Botev’s poetry and political brochures. 74 Botev was one of the leaders of the Bulgarian uprising, who together with Levski stands at the top of the national pantheon and collective memory that the state keeps alive through its rituals of commemoration. 75 The celebration of intellectuals such as Botev indicates how a schizophrenic position became deeply rooted in Bulgarian culture and continued after the creation of the modern Bulgarian nation-state. On the one hand, it transferred into a perceived need to preserve national culture, especially folklore which has peasant origins. But, on the other hand, the schizophrenic position of emerging “modern” Bulgarian intellectuals embraced Europeanization and European cultural trends. Daskalov gives a clear account of this tendency when he points out that the intelligentsia’s national stance was concerned with the promotion of national culture, while its modernist stance “made it an ardent partisan of European cultural and artistic trends.”76

Nation-state building required educated men that could form modern bureaucracy. After the liberation of Bulgaria the state becomes a domain for the creation

74 As most of the leaders of the uprising Botev formed as a revolutionary while gaining his education in the Odessa seminary in tsarist Russia, where he became influenced by the ideas of Chernishevsky and Herzen and established close connections with Russian revolutionaries.

75 I will examine the importance of Levski and Botev for the formation of national identity in Chapter 3.

76 Daskalov, ‘Transformations of the East European Intelligentsia’, 64.
of elites and the asset that guarantees access to the state institutions is education.\textsuperscript{77} In the modern nation-state period, Bulgarian intellectuals were divided between those who enhanced the national idea and those who embraced the ideas of socialism but all of them in the name of modernization. \textsuperscript{78} The weakening of the nationalist project after the devastating wars and the rise of social inequalities gave a chance to the socialists to exercise influence over society.

As Augusta Dimou points out the absence of objective conditions for the reception of socialism in the Balkans shows that its dissemination was the labour of sympathizing intellectuals. \textsuperscript{79} The socialists in Bulgaria led by Russian educated Dimitur Blagoev, did not aim to ameliorate the conditions of modernity, but on the contrary used socialism as a recipe for modernization. \textsuperscript{80} Post-Ottoman Bulgarians were experiencing capitalism that was rapidly destroying old social relations, but was only slowly creating new ones. The lack of state resources for rapid industrialization assigned intellectuals the role of civil servants and bureaucrats that aimed at political carriers. The rest of the population remained primarily peasant. Socialism was a response to the failed expectation of the “liberal” revolution, but contrary to the case of Serbian populists, Blagoev’s Bulgarian narrow socialists disregarded the existing conditions in Bulgaria. Dimou writes, “Blagoev insisted that tactics were independent of concrete conditions, and were general and applicable...everywhere.”\textsuperscript{81} In accordance with Marxist theory, Blagoev awaited the historical predicament of Bulgarian peasants that would form the proletarian masses, despite the fact that in early 20\textsuperscript{th} c. there were a few factories in Bulgaria and large scale industrialization was non-existent. Blagoev’s ideological dogmatism pushed many socialists toward the Agrarian Union that formed at the end of 19c. An account of one such figure exemplifies the dilemma between embracing modernization through imported theoretical models or taking the realities into account:

\textsuperscript{77} Daskalov, ‘Transformations of the East European Intelligentsia’; Dimou, \textit{Entangled Paths Towards Modernity}.
\textsuperscript{78} Daskalov, ‘Transformations of the East European Intelligentsia’; Dimou, \textit{Entangled Paths Towards Modernity}.
\textsuperscript{80} Ibid., 10.
\textsuperscript{81} Ibid., 210.
It was as if scientific socialism had exhausted everything…and there was no other conception of social change possible, apart from the one advocated by Marx…The issue was what to do with this temporal interval, in which backward countries could slowly evolve form a rudimentary agriculture to an industrial one, and then develop in independence form factory industry. This path to evolution…seemed very long to me, and to feel close to the Western proletariat only through books, while closing my eyes to my surroundings…I could not do.\textsuperscript{82}

We can see how Blagoev’s disregard for the local conditions of the peasants contains the seeds of a conflict between the peasantry and those that later became the ruling Communist Party. This conflict will be examined in the next chapter.

### 3.4. The Origins of Lenin’s Marxism

Here I go back to Konrad and Szelenyi’s analysis of the conditions of formation of the Russian intelligentsia. The Russian monarchy faced the challenges of competing with the economically advanced West by instituting top-down, centralized structural reforms launched by Peter the Great. These changes did not lead to major social transformations but the processes of modernization brought the ideas of Western modernity into Russia. Because of the lack of a bourgeoisie that could challenge the power of the centralized state and landed mobility, Russian intellectuals had only two options – to serve the absolutist state or form conspiratorial organizations aiming to acquire the power which their sense of teleological mission drove them to. Thus, both a highly sophisticated police apparatus and disciplined groups of revolutionary conspirators came from the ranks of the intelligentsia.\textsuperscript{83} The same model of sophisticated intelligence apparatus, that at its high evolutionary stage became the KGB based State Security, was transferred to the Bulgarian state.

Indeed, Lenin’s Bolshevik vanguard stems from the legacy of the socio-political and cultural environment in which the intelligentsia formed. The Russian Empire

\textsuperscript{82}TZanko Tzerkovski quoted in: Ibid., 217.

\textsuperscript{83}Konrád and Szelényi, \textit{The Intellectuals on the Road to Class Power}, 104–107.
assigned a marginal status to the intelligentsia as civil servants of the state, but the
tradition of totalism of philosophical thought, which I will explain below, prompted them to
revolutionary action. In their comparative analysis of state crisis in Africa and Eurasia,
Beissinger and Young find a common ground between the legacy theory and aftermath
theory. The legacy theory is based on the premise of continuity and reproduction of
social relationships, embedded by pre-independence political experiences. The
aftermath theory focuses on the “collapse of instruments of social control exercised by
pre-independence authority and the dysfunctional forms of authority that took their
place.”84 The authors examine the question of legacy in regards to the case of the Soviet
Union. They argue that if Russia is characterized by the authoritarian rule of the tsarist
dynasties that forms a duality between state and Empire, where the lines between
subject and citizen are blurred, the idea of citizenship comes as a result of the influence
of nationalism from Western Europe in the late-18th to mid-19th centuries. But, this was
understood as something with the potential to unite the nation and turn “rebellious
natives into loyal citizens.”85 Thus, the idea of citizenship that developed in Russia
differed from the notion of individual freedoms of the liberal tradition.

One can examine the legacy question from the position of the development of
Russian philosophical thought. Mikhail Epstein argues that the formation of modern
intellectual thought in Russia is permeated by Plato’s totalism. According to Michael
Epstein because all Russian philosophers were either metaphysical radicals who
proposed cataclysmic solutions for historical problems, like Fedorov and Berdyaev, or
existential sceptics, such as Shestov and Rozanov, who doubted bourgeois values of
rationality and productivity.86 None thought that existing conditions could be improved in
an evolitional manner. Epstein indicates that Russian philosophy was anti-Marxist
because it was anti-bourgeois and regarded Marxism and socialism as extension of

84 Mark Beissinger and M. Crawford Young, ‘Convergence to Crisis: Pre-independence State
Legacy and Post-independence State Breakdown in Africa and Eurasia’, in Beyond State
Crisis?: Post-Colonial Africa and Post-Soviet Eurasia in Comparative Perspective (Woodrow
85 Don Yaroshevski cited in ibid., 23.
86 Mikhail Epstein, ‘Ideas Against Ideocracy: The Platonic Drama of Russian Thought’, in In
Marx’s Shadow: Knowledge, Power, and Intellectuals inEastern Europe and Russia, ed.
capitalist ideals that only promised better material conditions instead of spiritual transformation of the earth that inevitably requires suffering on a massive scale. According to Epstein despite its modern form as a doctrine, Russian Marxism was in synthesis with the eschatological “Russian Idea” that “expressed even more ardent hatred for the existing world” and demanded total eradication of existing social relations, a cleansing of society.

3.5. The Soviet Model

The Soviet model was a project of modernity that aimed to transform society and remake it in a new industrial image. Yet, at the same time, the Soviet system “was not merely a political and legislative entity but was founded on a metaphysical even eschatological vision.” This required massive social engineering by state authority; “Marxist-Leninist ideology sought to transform social relations as opposed to Tsarist Russia that was content to rule over traditional social structures. Yet, due to the manner in which power after the Russian revolution was centralized and the Soviet system was constructed the line between subject and citizen was once again blurred. This process was greatly enhanced during the era of Joseph Stalin. Stalinism treated all of society as a single economic complex whose productive capacities were to be

87 Ibid., 19–20.
88 Zygmunt Bauman argues that the ideals of the Enlightenment married socialism and capitalism as creations of modernity. Cited in Todorova, ‘Balkanism and Postcolonialism, or, On the Beauty of the Airplane View’. 188.
90 Beissinger and Young, ‘Convergence to Crisis: Pre-independence State Legacy and Post-independence State Breakdown in Africa and Eurasia’, 23.
91 In that sense it is necessary to trace the formation of Lenin’s political thought. In his 1902 article ‘What is to be Done’ he introduces ‘Democratic centralism’ that becomes the organizing principle of the Bolsheviks. Democratic centralism postulated that decisions were made collectively and democratically but their implementation was ensured through strict discipline and centralized vertical mechanisms of party control. For Lenin, “this principle guaranteed the highest form of democracy, which promoted individual initiative, critical engagement, and collective discipline. In practice centralized control and vertical subordination cancelled out any criticism of already existing policies, eventually eliminating all democratic discussion.” Kenneth Jowitt cited in Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More*, 104.
harnessed and conditioned by bureaucratic fiat. The Soviet Union under Stalin became an imperial project of state modernization, or as Beissinger and Young point out - Soviet imperialism introduced the modern state.92

Susan Buck-Morss argues that the Soviet experiment, though containing the utopian hope for change, turned into emulation of capitalist industrialization. Lenin admired Taylorism as a model for disciplining of the work force. This model was adapted and later became known as *shock work* under Stalin. The working force in the Soviet Union underwent the same process of automation and conditioning as in the capitalist world.93 The revolutionary visionaries among the intellectuals and artists were either purged or marginalized. The story of Ginzburg’s Green City and Tatlin’s Letatlin are examples how a potential for real alternative to capitalism’s form and content was never realized, due to the Soviets emulation of capitalist practices.94

Raymond Williams’ concept of *structure of feeling* as cultural climate of a period that is the result of all elements of the general social organization, including institutional policies and ideological characteristics, can be useful in relation to Alxei Oushakine’s thesis of the *void Soviet subject* as a figure of modernity.95 Oushakine argues that the “erasure of the self” or the “void subject” was a product of the rapid changes that Russia experienced after World War I – the devastation of war, the revolution and civil war, the massive redistribution of land and property, the intensive industrial production. These changes brought about tremendous social and demographic transformations. By the 1930s the majority of big city inhabitants were young peasants, making up both the new industrial working force and the new elite. Oushakine points out that these

94Buck-Morss, *Dreamworld and Catastrophe*.
transformations that uprooted massive groups of people brought about the notion of loss of the order of things, abruptly dismantled by the political processes. The instability of social norms manifested in the lack of stable subjectivity. The outcome of this sense of loss of the order of things was the spread of ideas of the flexibility and pliability of nature, and most importantly human nature. The sense of loss of the order of things (byt) was substituted by the push to create a new human being and search for new laws of nature, denying heredity. Oushakine gives as prominent examples Gorky, Lysenko and Makarenko who all viewed nature as subjected to conditioning. Interestingly, if we make a parallel with the process of neoliberal transformation we can see the same type of mentality among the intellectual elite, to which I’ll come back later. This could be defined as the structure of feeling in the context of which Stalin’s industrialization occurred. In other words, Oushakine seems to imply that the *erasure of the self* which he situates closer to figures of modernity, with Marx’s “revolutionary”, Nietzsche’s “superman”, Benjamin’s “flaneuer”, Musil’s “man without qualities” was a primary factor for Stalinism to emerge.

In such a society the complexity of one’s identity is reduced to “bare life.” The human body serves only one purpose – to produce for the new society. Stalin, had declared a war on time itself. This was a process that requires total centralized control. Soviet art and culture dismissed the revolutionary promise of the avant-garde and substitutes it with “the fantasy of the mass body” of socialist realism which ultimately symbolises Stalin’s totalitarianism. One can say, despite the rapid industrialization,

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96 Buck-Morss, *Dreamworld and Catastrophe*, 22–31. Buck-Morss discusses the political imaginary of Bolshevism and the capitalist system, stating that the biggest difference in their political vision is the dimension that dominates their visual landscapes, as related to the political imaginary. Thus, for class warfare the dimension is time, while for nation-states the dimension is space. This difference is crucial in the forming of the two systems political logics. War for territory underlies the logic of nation-states, where geopolitics creates a spatial division between “enemies” and “friends.” The Bolsheviks took the position of a vanguard of history with the objective to wage class warfare, nations were perceived as a threat to class struggle that moved time backwards. Time was of essence because of the goal of world revolution when nation-states would become a thing of the past. As Buck-Morss points the present had to be sacrificed in the name of the future utopia that could be achieved only through class revolution. Class revolution is historical event understood as a time process in progress. As Buck-Morss pointed out class war turned into civil war that absorbed the whole of society. It was this climate of permanent war in which Stalin declared war on time to accelerate industrialization.
which comes at enormous human and social cost and despite some achievements of social safety – education and healthcare - that the Soviet Union remained a project of modernity that never escaped from the sense of civilizational inferiority and the need to catch up. Stalin’s modernization carried the ambition of changing nature, human and environmental, and engaged in a war with time, where everyone is replaceable. But, after all its colossal efforts and casualties Stalinism arguably achieved nothing but a pale copy of industrial capitalism. No wonder that after Stalin’s death, having exhausted the energy and potential of the Soviet people, a process of creeping stagnation in social and economic life occurred, especially during Brezhnev’s long years in power. Still, as Buck-Morss points out, the empowering potential of the revolution turned into reverence for the leader-modernizer. The Soviet Union was a self-conscious project of modernity and as such was modeled on the advances of Western humanist thought. Yet, despite its attempts to modernize the existing conditions of production it was a failure. The system’s root contained a paradox– it proclaimed the emancipation of the masses and the promise for material well-being, but only through a top-down, centralized dictatorial manner that denied political, cultural and economic independence. As Konrad and Szelenyi have argued, its intellectual vanguard that led to the revolution, formed in a cultural and political environment antithetical to the one existing in advanced bourgeoisie societies. Epstein searches in the eclectic ‘Platonistic Marxism’ of Russian intellectuals that combined the material Hegelianism of Marx, with eschatological millennialism, for explanation of the rise of Stalinism.

*Rational redistribution* was used as a mechanism for political control whose outcome was *dictatorship over needs*. The systems logic of *rational redistribution* was based not on the market mechanism but was exercised through bureaucratic technocrats from the new intellectual circles that the Soviet state formed, and through which the Party used to maintain total political control over the population. 97This led to a hierarchy that crudely can be categorized as a three layer pyramid structure – the Party *nomenklatura* was on top, with those responsible for ideological propaganda in

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prominent positions, followed by the technocratic bureaucracy, while the ordinary socialist citizen is at the bottom. Despite many years of semi-reforms that tried to introduce some market elements both in the USSR and Bulgaria, as well as the rest of the bloc the system was incapable of matching the seductive promises of capitalism – individual freedoms matched with consumerism. As Veredery argues, to have done so would have meant contradicting the very nature of the logic of rational redistribution, which at its core was an instrument to justify the Party’s totalizing of political power. In relation to the limits of the Soviet model, Chalukov et al. look at the elite fraction inside the Bulgarian Communist Party. If centralization and top-down economic development had rapid results in the first decades of Sovietization, later socialism brought about a conflict for power between the political and economic nomenklatura over control of resources. Every time the technocrats of the regime managed to secure a position closer to Zhivkov they were attacked by the political nomenklatura.

It is precisely the victory of the political elite that later led to the collapse of the Bulgarian economy after 1989. The catch 22 of the system was the goal of preserving the political monopoly over the economy, while allowing for economic innovation. The decades of late Bulgarian socialism from the 1960s on were characterized by semi-reforms with limited results. Instead of economic reforms the Soviet bloc started to rely heavily on borrowing from Western banks, which at the end brought the whole Soviet model to a collapse. Thus, Soviet Communism proved incapable and unwilling to deliver individual freedoms and consumer pleasures, which ultimately became the

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98 Although Hungary’s goulash Communism is much more successful in providing certain level of consumerism beyond meeting basic needs it was in exchange for obedience to the Party leadership. See for example Veredery et al., ‘Rereading The Intellectuals on the Road to Class Power’; Konrád and Szelényi, The Intellectuals on the Road to Class Power; Barbara J. Falk, The Dilemmas of Dissidence in East-Central Europe: Citizen Intellectuals and Philosopher Kings (Central European University Press, 2003).

99 Чалъков, Мрежите на прехода, 34.

100 Ibid., 48.

101 Gerald Creed argues that the reason for the semi-reforms, with a limited scope was deeply ideological. The very plausible outcome of unemployment threatened the symbolic role of the Party, formulated by Lenin, as a vanguard of history and abandon the utopian promise of full employment and equality. See Gerald W. Creed, ‘Between Economy and Ideology: Local-level Perspectives on Political and Economic Reform in Bulgaria’, Socialism and Democracy 7, no. 2 (1993): 45–65.
ideological weapons that led to mass discontent with the communist system. Notably, paternalism and repression deprived the Soviet society of agency. Incapable of taking initiative on their own, individuals were conditioned to rely on the state in all aspects of social life. The Soviet model in Bulgaria was in a sense a reversal to feudalistic social relations under modern economic forms of production, or a modern base and pre-modern superstructure. Within these relations, one could enjoy a modicum of social mobility based on hereditary characteristics, but in a new, somewhat inverted way. For example, ‘fighter against fascism’ – became a code signifying privileged position. The system created its own organic intellectuals, but coming from peasant-worker background gave you major advantage as opposed to those who had “bourgeois” or “kulak” relatives who until late socialism were even denied education. Most of all, however, without membership in the Party one could not hope for any social advancement.

Buck-Morss’ summarization of the outcome of the Soviet system underlines this notion:

Existing socialism did not give control to actual individuals over the means of production; that belonged instead to the imaginary masses…Soviet citizens were infantilized. That was the heavy price to be paid for the promised dream of social security. A situation that might have empowered people was transformed into a relationship of childlike dependence on state power…102

3.6. Bulgaria as a Soviet Satellite

The way in which Stalinism imposed its power on the Bulgarian people led to two substantial factors that pushed Bulgarian society back to pre-modern forms of social relations. First, under the guidance of the Soviet Union, the Bulgarian Stalinists attempted to reconstruct the whole of society in the same manner as had happened in Russia. First, this required the physical elimination of the previous political, economic and intellectual elite, those who functioned as organic intellectuals under the monarchy

102 Buck-Morss, Dreamworld and Catastrophe, 207.
and were committed to the nation-state project of the previous century. This was connected to a direct attack on the specific character of Bulgarian national identity – the symbolic connection of the peasant with the land, which was not only perceived as a means of subsistence, but a primary notion of self. The process of collectivization paralleled the process of total suppression of any resistance to the Soviet model. The climate of fear assured obedience and docility. Second, the Stalinization of Bulgaria required complete suppression of any striving for independence. This requirement ran parallel to the formation of paternalistic social relations based on the planned economy model – a system of hierarchy in which the political nomenklatura at the top controlled the process of economic production and distribution. The managerial bureaucracy depended on the party nomenklatura that relocated resources, while the working class formed from the rural areas depended on the managers. Layers of dependence for basic necessities to someone with a higher social position came to permeate the whole society. After the land collectivization, and in a similar manner to the enclosures in England two centuries earlier, the uprooted peasantry became the working class of the newly industrialized communist state. Yet, due to the rapidness of the process, and to a great extent due to the official ideology of the Party-State that claimed to rule in the name of the working class, the workers are incapable of forming class consciousness in the traditional sense that Marx observed in the British factories. At the same time, the regime made sure that some concessions and benefits were made to the peasants turned workers. The image of the Party was that of its leader. A group of intellectuals close to Zhivkov made sure to create an aura of benevolent and strong leadership around him: a modernizer who is “the man from the people.” Because Zhivkov and the

103 The question of the ‘peasant soul’ was of primary concern for the intellectual elite between the World Wars. See for example the works of Naiden Sheitanov, Konstantin Petkanov, Konstantin Gulubov on Bulgarian ‘people psychology’ in Еленков и Даскалов, Защо сме такива?.

104 Chalukov et al. examines the mixture of totalitarian and patriarchal characteristics of Zhivkov’s regime. There was a lack of reformer wing inside the BCP, rather political loyalty is mixed with family nepotism. In such a socio-political environment Zhivkov’s family was associated with the reforms – Zhivkov with the economic and his daughter with the cultural, which brought about a push towards nationalism. As Chalukov et al. had emphasized Bulgaria out of all of the Eastern bloc had the highest concentration of political power, similar to the Soviet Union, GDR and Romania. Todorova, ‘Course and Discourses of Bulgarian Nationalism’; Чалъков, Мрежите на прехода.
political *nomenklatura* around him did not permit independent economic reforms inside the Party, and because of his semi-reforms, the Party carefully cultivated an image of modernizers, which after 1989 was cleverly used to transform political to economic power.¹⁰⁵

### 3.7. Changing of the Ideological Narratives in the Soviet System

#### 3.7.1. Lenin, Stalin and the Master Signifier

In his discussion of the ideology of the Soviet system Alexei Yurchak introduces Lefort’s Paradox that could explain the contradictions of socialism. What Claude Lefort defined as the paradox of the ideology of modernity was the split between *ideological enunciation* (theoretical ideas of Enlightenment) and *ideological rule* (concerns of the state’s exercising of power). There is an inherent contradiction between the ideals of human emancipation as an end goal, and the aims with which to achieve those ends. In the case of the Soviet system this contradiction arose with Lenin’s vanguard project that aimed to educate and cultivate the new Soviet citizen through total Party control over art and culture. Yurchak argues that one such vanguard project had its legacy in the writings of Saint-Simon, an influence for Lenin, for whom liberation of the masses could only happen if a vanguard unites arts and politics. For Lenin, ultimate liberation could happen only if the party manages all spheres of cultural life. Cultural organizations had to become subsidiary to political organizations and function to educate the masses. The paradox manifested itself in the understanding of the party of the creative intellectual – the independence of creativity and the control of creative work must be pursued simultaneously.¹⁰⁶ The only way the paradox could be resolved was by the figure of the

¹⁰⁵ For the process of transformation see: Ganev, *Preying on the State*; For the process of transformation see Чалъков, *Мрежите на прехода*.

¹⁰⁶ Yurchak points how the initial thriving of avant-garde and experimental culture outside the ideological narrative of the Bolsheviks was suppressed once Stalin completed the subordination of culture to politics. In 1932 the Central Committee disbanded all artistic groups and put all ‘creative workers’ under control as member of state created cultural institutions. Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More*, 12.
“master” – someone staying outside of the ideological discourse, an arbiter that possess external knowledge of the objective truth. Stalin became the master, editor-expert that evaluated all forms of political, artistic and scientific expression based on the external canon of Marxist-Leninist dogma as he defined it. All other discourses were suppressed and the production of ideological narratives dependent on Stalin’s approval. Yurchak points out that in 1930s and 1940s Stalin personally took part in the production metadiscourse – linguistics, literature, historical texts, scientific theories and art were publicly evaluated as correct and incorrect based on Stalin’s expertise of scientific Marxism-Leninism. He personally intervened in the writing of the Soviet Constitution and Soviet anthem, as well as the multivolume *History of the Civil War* correcting what he deemed ideologically unacceptable.

3.7.2. Changing Ideological Paradigms in Late Stalinism and After

Yurchak points out a shift in the ideological paradigm that occurred at the end of Stalinism. If in the 30s and 40s Stalin was the ultimate arbiter that subjectively decided what is scientific truth based on external canon, by the 1950s he challenged his own position of an arbiter by attacking “excessive economic determinism” and decreeing the search for “objective scientific laws.” That is how Stalin eradicated the “master” who could decide what truth is. After Stalin’s denunciation the ideological dogma lost its external arbiter. From Khrushchev, till the fall of the system, Soviet citizens no longer had access to the external canon of the dogma. The ideological narratives were produced behind closed doors as identical in style and structure, looking as if coming from the same text. Such mechanization and standardization occurred also in the ideological rituals and practices – commemorations, celebrations, manifestations. Yurchak defines this standardization of narratives and visual rituals and practices as ‘hypernormalization’ of the authoritative discourse. The disappearance of an external arbiter of the ideology required the presentation of all knowledge as already existing knowledge – every new text functioned as a citation of a previous text “adding to the accumulated authority and immutability of the discourse as a whole.”

107Ibid., 150.
However, when the ideological narrative was deprived of authorship, it sounded trite and clichéd because there was no master that provided public evaluation. Party texts became identical because the “external” voice of the master and his metadiscourse disappeared. All new texts could become ideologically dangerous in the absence of a metadiscursive editor. Yurchak argues that this loss of arbiter - expert of ideological production- transformed into an overemphasis on the performative rather than constative dimension. Those who participated in the ideological production of either narratives or rituals and practices were concerned with the reproduction of existing forms rather than the meaning conveyed. It was not important whether the five year plan was achieved as long as the ideological ritual of showing its successive completion on TV was completed. Yurchak argues that because of this mechanical reproduction, and the mechanical manner of deliverance of the ideology, disregarding its constative meaning opened ideological discourse to autonomous interpretation. The production of new meanings, publics, temporalities, and spatialities of soviet life were increasingly centered around the principle of the performative shift. How the system signified was meticulously reproduced, but what it signified was “unanchored and open to new interpretations…[this] introduced into the system new meanings and possibilities…unpredictable, creative, multiple forms toward “normal life” that no one anticipated.”

We can say that this dimension allowed for a cultural atmosphere that permitted forms of expression sheltered from censorship either by the usage of the ideological clichés, or Aesopian language. The Soviet citizen of late socialism lived a paradoxical social existence where “many of the cultural phenomena…that were allowed, tolerated, or even promoted…were quite distinct from the ideological texts of the Party.” In that relation Todorova points to the use of Aesopian language among Bulgarian intellectuals to conceal the criticism of their texts. Historians also escaped from censorship by writing

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108 Yurchak uses John Austin’s model of constative and preformative language. Constative utterances convey meaning and can be true or false, while performative utterances deliver force, they ‘do’ something that changes things in social reality instead of prescribing it. Ibid., 24–29.
109 Ibid, 124
about earlier epochs, where one could have a full range of their methodological preferences as long as one relied on the standard clichés. For example, in the realm of cinema many films contained subtle criticism but were not directly attacking the Party.¹¹¹

Still, perhaps the most interesting phenomenon of late socialism that Yurchak examines was the existence simultaneously outside and inside the system. Those sentiments were prevalent among university educated students from 1960s till 1980s. He argues that this phenomenon was not an exception but a widespread principle of living. On the one hand, it was characterized by the formation of social relations, lifestyles and meanings that escaped the direct control of the Party, but were not directly political. On the other hand, it seems that the conscious desire to avoid the ideological rituals and performances of the authoritarian state already signified a form of political involvement. The logic of this phenomenon could be explained as actual existence in the system, making an effort to be invisible inside it. This, however, did not mean isolation from social life. On the contrary, Yurchak shows numerous examples how such identity formations had strong social links. Those who avoided the system’s crude ideological atmosphere, formed various groups and circles, places of meeting where alternative thought thrived. Often the participants took advantage of the existing state resources to forms those spaces of alternative culture – schools, palaces of culture, sport and music schools, amateur theaters, housing committee clubs.¹¹²

### 3.8. The Mission of the Dissidents and its Unintended Consequences

The dissidents became the disgruntled organic intellectuals formed and influenced by the values and ideas of the socialist state that had turned into grotesque reproduction of dogmas. In a way they were the voice of conscience within the system. Their mission was to expose the hypocrisy of the Party-States’ discrepancy between

¹¹¹Todorova, Bones of Contention, 62-74.
¹¹²Yurchak, Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More, 135.
ideological propaganda and failure to follow the ideals of socialism.\textsuperscript{113} The dissidents did not exist outside of the system. On the contrary, many of them had prominent positions in the communist party. Oushakine points out that the Soviet dissidents of 1960-1970 questioned not the principals of the existing order but their implementation.\textsuperscript{114} The discourse of the dissidents echoed the rhetoric of the regime, to comment on the wrong-doings of those in power. The ideological clichés were put in use to claim to a return to the ideals of Lenin as a master-signifier.\textsuperscript{115} For example, from this position the rehabilitation of Stalin was attacked.

Oushakine points out that this was a tactic that the dissidents used in order not to be accused of anti-soviet propaganda. He calls this “a strategy of mimetic reproduction of the existing rhetorical tools.”\textsuperscript{116} By using the dominant language of power the dissidents displaced it from its origin of power, the structure of the discourse was preserved but by the nature of their social position as outside of power the form was changed.\textsuperscript{117} The outcome of this mimicry permitted the dissidents to produce the dominant discourse with unintended outcome for the Party but put them in an ambiguous position as to their political stance and limited their scope of activism. It seems that by mimicking the party rhetoric they attempted to claim their share of social power. As Oushakine points out by demanding that the government respect their own constitution and laws the dissidents justified the existence of the Soviet regime.\textsuperscript{118}

Yurchak points out that in their confrontation with the Party the dissidents did not shift from the authoritative discourse. Rather, they took it at face value while there were...

\textsuperscript{113} For example Piotur Vail and Alexander Genis write, “the dissidents are doing what they were thought in the Soviet school: to be honest, to be principled, to be selfless and ready to help their fellowmen. Cited in Наталия Христова, Специфика на българското ‘дисидентство’: власт и интелигенция 1956-1989 г (Летера, 2005), 40–41.


\textsuperscript{116} Oushakine, ‘The Terrifying Mimicry of Samizdat’, 199.

\textsuperscript{117} Ibid., 204.

\textsuperscript{118} Ibid., 206.
those who refused to participate in the symbolic space of the Soviet system, to be outside, while being inside. Yet, the outright political confrontation in such a climate was unquestionable. All those who criticized the very logic of really existing socialism were imprisoned. However, after the suppression of the revolutions in Hungary and Prague, Eastern European dissidents adapted a tactic of passive resistance and a refusal to postulate ideological dogmas. For example, according to Zizek, the Neues Forum in East Germany, consisting of dissident intellectuals, took the fall of the wall as the opening up of a way to reach beyond capitalism. They espoused the ideals of Communism, and sought a utopian third way, between capitalism and actually existing socialism. They were viewed as utopian daydreamers whose position was based on illusion. Yet, as Zizek points out, Neues Forum was the only political movement aware of the social antagonism existing in late capitalism, while the rest of the Eastern German society was enchanted with the ideological slogans that equated free market and democracy and envisioned a future without class conflicts. Zizek writes that “the very logic of legitimizing the relation of domination must remain concealed if it is to be effective.”

In Bulgaria, the relationship between the Party and the intellectual class was particularly complex. It is arguable whether we can speak about a dissident movement in the same manner as in Central Europe or the Soviet Union. Zhivkov was a skilful tactician in his approach toward the intellectuals. He realized their prominence as social power and used the carrot and stick approach. Those who espoused the ideals of Communism, but were opposed to the existing political and economic order and the existing trends in society that showed the disconnect between ideals and reality, were censored and sanctioned, but not severely repressed. Zhivkov was especially careful during moments of crisis inside the bloc, such as the Hungarian and Prague events. Only those who questioned the legality of the regime itself were repressed. Such was the case with Edward Genov, Alexander Dimitrov and Valentin Radev, history students.

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120Ibid., 8.
at Sofia University, who handed out brochures against the participation of Bulgarian troops in Czechoslovakia in 1968, denouncing “Zhivkov’s puppet regime.”

Central European dissidents became the major intellectual force behind a growing “return to Europe discourse” in several of the state-socialist countries in the Soviet sphere of influence. This ‘return to Europe’ discourse later became an important part of the ideological language justifying neoliberal reforms throughout the region. How did this happen? One explanation is that CE intellectuals became over concerned with the discussion of civil society to demonstrate their closeness to European intellectual traditions and to disassociate themselves from the Soviet Union. Lenin as a master-signifier was much weaker in Central Europe than in the USSR. This had two major outcomes. Dissident CE intellectual’s concern with civil society was based initially only on the demand for human and political rights, the freedom of speech and expression. They tended to disregard the question of the market economy, to a great extent because in a state-owned economic system, economic justice was not an issue. It also, seems that their understanding of civil society assigned much greater importance to the collective than the individual. The dissidents insisted on genuine social solidarity. In a climate of surveillance and distrust that was understandable. But it was precisely the attempt to situate themselves inside a European symbolic space that brought them to embrace the market economy of capitalism. As Falk points out “the European market of the of the golden postwar age was the focus of attention. The market was a European invention…having a market was a precondition for belonging to Europe.”

Europe became the signifier of the story of origin that drove the dissidents to strive towards its ideals. We can recall Konrad and Szelenyi’s analysis of Eastern Europe to decipher this myth.

This zeal to return to the story of origin explains how Vaclav Havel, who had warned of the dangerous uniformity of consumer society, approved the neoliberal course of Vaclav Klaus. Once again the intellectuals justified their social power with the calling

122Falk, The Dilemmas of Dissidence in East-Central Europe, 330.
of a teleological mission. Their need to disconnect with the umbilical cord of Soviet Communism prompted the search for another umbilical cord – Europe--which they formed as the story of origin discourse. This discourse was taken up by politicians of the likes of Klaus all over the region to legitimize the neoliberal restructuring of states and societies. The ‘return to Europe’ discourse also created a dichotomy that divided the region into two Eastern Europes – Central Europe and the Balkans and Eurasia. Havel for example makes this distinction that Central Europe belongs to the “western sphere of European civilization.” Todorova concludes that “the Balkans were evoked as the constituted other to Central Europe alongside Russia. She argues that this dichotomy functioned as part of the Balkanism discourse; a mental map that forms attitudes and perceptions toward the Balkans. This mental map presents a frozen image of the Balkans that was set around World War I and has been reproduced since. For Todorova the era of the Soviet model did not substantially change this image but re-enhanced the symbolic position of states like Bulgaria as the irrational other. The views of George Kennan, the founding “father of containment” and instrumental figure for the start of the Cold War, demonstrates this notion. Todorova writes, “[i]t manifests an evolutionary belief in the superiority of orderly civilization over barbarity, archaic predispositions, backwardness, petty squabbles, uncomforting and unpredictable behavior, that is, ‘tribalism’. 

3.9. Transition to Capitalism or Feudalism (Really Existing Neoliberalism)

Paradoxically, Bulgaria’s third road to modernity that started with the Fall of the Berlin Wall brought the country back to an earlier stage of history. As opposed to the official neoliberal discourse of Eastern Europe’s transition from totalitarianism to the free market and democracy, many scholars of the Soviet and post-Soviet system argue that the social changes that occurred in the Soviet Union, and in the regimes closely

123 Todorova, Imagining the Balkans, 156.
124 Ibid., 192.
125 Ibid., 184.
emulating the Soviet system, such as Bulgaria, resemble more a transition from socialism to feudalism. Katherine Verdery draws on the works of Simon Clarke, Perry Anderson and Georges Duby to develop her argument that feudalism can be viewed both as a metaphor evoked by those who are affected by the transition and as the social system that the first years of post-socialism resemble. 126 Simon Clarke describes the soviet enterprise as resembling a feudal estate since it not only serves economic purposes, but functions to organize social life through a top down distribution of services and facilities. Thus, due to the control of the economy by the Party-state, this enterprise is the ultimate base of social and political power. 127 With the collapse of the socialist system the centralized control of the Party-state collapsed and the vertical dependence of the bureaucracy on the nomenklatura ceased to exist. But, horizontal networks that previously enabled the planned economy to function merely came to replace the vertical dependence of the past. This is how the disintegration of the centralized state transformed into a system of “partial sovereignty.” Katherine Verdery uses Perry Anderson’s concept of “parcellization of sovereignty” as “constitutive of the whole feudal mode of production” to make the analogy with the collapse of socialism. According to Anderson, a feudal system does not have a “universal centre of competence.” 128 The “hierarchy of powers” is replaced by “competing networks of clients.” The same process occurs in post-socialist countries where the decentralization of power transforms into decentralized horizontal networks of power held by the Party elite.

As an example, Vladimir Shlapentokh makes a direct analogy between early West European and Russian society during the presidency of Boris Yeltsin. He describes how the effects of corrupt economic privatization led to a complete disconnection between the old perceptions of the “superiority of public interests over private ones” that characterized Soviet society, and the shift to a new extreme that replaced collectivist ideology with privatization of social and political life, translating into

126 Verdery, What Was Socialism, and What Comes Next?, 204–229.
indifference for social values and public issues. An alliance between corrupt bureaucracy, corrupt business and criminal organizations created a system in which economic, political and cultural advancement depended on protection from corrupt state bodies or organized criminal groups. This is a system based on personal relations as opposed to the rule of law and it permeated all levels of political power, including the presidency. In that sense, it is not so different from feudal Europe before absolutism where the king ensured his survival by surrounding himself with powerful figures. The analogy is that the post Soviet Empire president seeks the protection of powerful oligarchs directly connected to organized crime networks. The state exercises privatization that enriches a few players, directly coming from, or linked to the previous elite, and this leads to a disconnection between the majority that looks for support from the nation-state and higher state officials involved in those practices. As Vladimir Tismaneanu, in his study of political myths points out: “as the Leninist authoritarian order collapsed [societies became] …atomized and deprived of a political center able to articulate coherent visions of a common good.” This created a situation of distrust and apathy, and the feeling that one can rely only on oneself and family members. Giovanni Arrighi claims that the rise of the modern capitalist system is characterized by the transition from scattered (unorganized elements of capitalist enterprise) to a concentrated capitalist power, in which the most important aspect is the “unique fusion of state and capital.” By the early 1980s the neoliberalism of western political leaders such as Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan had recalibrated the terms of this fusion in a highly individualistic direction, graphically demonstrated by Thatcher’s widely-cited comment that there “is no such thing as society.” Capitalist states were coming to define the public role of the state as the promotion of individual wealth creation and capital accumulation.

130 Ibid., 402.
If the creation of the capitalist system, as a system of governance entailed the fusion with the state, the rise of the post-communist capitalist elite in Bulgaria, entailed the destruction of the socialist state. We can make a case that a reverse process of capital accumulation was taking place, in which the state, the owner of economic wealth, was pillaged by the new emerging capitalist elite that used social capital, thorough political connections, in order to acquire economic capital. Venelin Ganev states “[t]he party-state was in control of the entire wealth of the nation. Precisely these resources – amassed by the state – are targeted by political elites in post-Communism.”¹³³ The existence of strong state institutions, such as functioning judicial and executive powers, was an obstacle to predatory elites, who might be a subject to persecution.

In Bulgaria, the process of eroding the state from within for the purpose of private gains is well documented by Ganev. He lists several cases of, what he calls, “extraction from the state.” Probably, the most prominent example of how individuals, acting on part of the state, employed and used popular support, for financial enrichment is the so called Orion Case. The Orion circle consisted of former State Security (modeled under the KGB) officials. They used their close ties in the West to lobby for Zhan Videnov, at that time candidate for PM from the Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP) -the ex-communists. After Mr. Videnov’s victory in 1994 the members of the Orion Circle were appointed to various high ranking positions in Videnov’s cabinet in communication and media relations. One of them became director of the Press-Center of the Council of Ministers, responsible for the communication between the cabinet and the public.

The Orion circle used its position to create the Bulgarian Agricultural and Industrial Bank (BAIB) and to start a large scale money raising campaign. The campaign received substantial coverage in the media and officially was framed as an attempt to protect Bulgarian ex-cooperative farmers from the new capitalist relations that were inevitable. BAIB worked together with the Union of the Agricultural Cooperatives in Bulgaria (UACB), an organization that was run by BSP officials but operated as an NGO, with support from farmers reluctant to give up the form of state cooperative farming. As result of the campaign a great amount of money was collected that ended up in the

¹³³Ganev, Preying on the State, 186.
hands of the Orion circle, most of who escaped to South Africa, leaving the farmers bankrupted. The Orion Case shows how acting on behalf of the state, by using the energy of groups in civil society, and employing a rhetoric that forewarned the farmers about the realities of global capitalism, a grass roots movement was channelled and used for the private interests of political figures directly connected to the PM of Bulgaria.

The case of Multigroup is a typical example of how the former nomenklatura, in symbiosis with the State Security (SS), worked together with newly formed organized crime groups. Multigroup was the corporate Empire of Ilya Pavlov, a former wrestler and SS asset. Pavlov had close relations to the first PM after the fall of the Berlin wall, Andrey Lukanov – former dictator Todor Zhivkov’s closest economic adviser and the leader of BSP. Lukanov was an emblematic figure who became the symbol of the old nomenklatura’s reorientation and its metamorphosis into new capitalist elite. Pavlov also gained the support of the leader of the newly founded and largest democratic labor union, himself a former SS asset. Thus, having received the blessing of the ruling government and the labor union, Pavlov intentionally destroyed Bulgarian state enterprises and built a criminal corporate monopoly over agriculture, transportation, energy, and various other industries. With the use of expropriation and pure violence, Pavlov started the process of organized crime’s corporate takeover of the Bulgarian economy. Vassil Prodanov describes this process as a “a system of gigantic economic violence” in which ex-communist state property was transferred to a small minority.

These, and various similar cases, signalled a transformation in Bulgaria in perception of the role of the state. According to Ganev, if Charles Tilly’s model of state creation involves predatory elites who created a robust state structure in the face of popular resistance, the post-Communist reality in Bulgaria was characterized by predatory elites that weakened the state structures, despite the persistence of popular demands for more and better government. When in 1996, as a result of massive protests, the government of the ex-communists was replaced by the United Democratic

134Ganev, Preying on the State; Glenny, McMafia; Васил Проданов, ‘Разрушителният български преход’, Le Monde Diplomatique (n.d.).
135Проданов, ‘Разрушителният български преход’.
Forces (UDF) the shock therapy pressured Bulgarians to re-conceptualize the role of the state and the role of the individual in it.

3.10. The Neoliberal Ideological Discourse

Frederic Jameson, among others, has pointed out the ambiguity of the ideological term ‘free market’. Its origins come from the conception of the inherently violent nature of humans. Hobbes feared that violence and competition will erupt into chaos and thus only a strong state can tame and control this chaotic outcome. In Adam Smith it is the market that substitutes for the centralized state – “the competitive system, the market does the taming and controlling all by itself, no longer needing an absolute state.” In other words, Jameson defines the market as the “Leviathan in sheep’s clothing” because, just as the absolute state, it is a mechanism for control of the individual, because human beings are incapable of controlling their destinies. Therefore, there is a fundamental paradox in the neoliberal equation between free market and individual freedom. By putting an equal sign between free market and democracy (rule of the people) neoliberal ideologues conceal the fact that in traditional liberal thought the market is a mechanism for control.

That the market is a mechanism for control becomes obvious if we examine neoliberal regimes of governance in relation to the role of the state. As Wendy Brown points out, “[t]he state… must construct and construe itself in market terms, develop policies and promulgate a political culture that treats citizens exclusively as rational economic actors in every sphere of life.” The success of neoliberal policies depends on a process of normative measures designed by state apparatuses whose objective is to shape individuals as homoeconomicus subjects. In other words, to be successful,

137 Ibid., 290.
neoliberal governance requires a process of social conditioning. Through concrete policies, the state both rewards behavior and attitudes driven by economic self-interest and punishes those groups that are not economically savvy enough to adapt to the new rules of the game. An example of the first strategy can be seen in states’ lifting of regulations on trade and finance, as well as deregulating culture industries in an effort to promote competition and consumerism (lifting restriction on advertising for children, etc.). An example of the second strategy is the states’ gradual withdrawal from social policies, aiming to ameliorate the conditions of the most vulnerable. Obviously, such an extreme view of individuals and social relation opens up the chasm between the ideological postulates (free market and democracy, competition, human value) and the outcome of the policies that supposedly follow the ideology. We can recall Lefort’s paradox that Yurchak introduces. In an essence it is the paradox by the ideological enunciation (in this case human well being can only exist in a completive market environment) and the outcome of political decisions prompted by the ideological postulates (extreme socioeconomic polarization on a global scale, ecological crisis, etc.).

As I pointed in the previous section Yurchak shows that after Stalin -- who served as the ultimate outside arbiter and editor of what is Marxism-Leninism -- late socialism became characterized with an increased discrepancy between the rigidity of ideological narratives and rituals and the reality of “actual socialism.”

Eayl, Szelenyi and Townsley claim that the Central European “career civil servants” were attracted by the monetarist ideas of Hayek and Friedman because of their frustration with the rigidity of the planned economy. ¹³⁹ According to the authors, “[m]onetarism appealed…to those economists, social scientists and other professionals who were blocked in their careers, and interested in a radical overhaul of the system.” ¹⁴⁰ The communist system led by the modernist belief in progress through science and technology had created its own technocratic organic intellectuals. Those intellectuals observed how the system of flexible accumulation had lifted the restraints on the free flow of financial and economic capital, and they felt that they were lagging

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 90.
behind the modern world. Technocrats who were frustrated with the state’s economic dysfunction, coupled with the dissidents who were striving for political freedom. Thus, a hegemonic historic bloc formed consisting of technocratic organic intellectuals created by the previous regime, the dissident intellectuals and managers of the state owned industrial enterprises whose experience was a valuable asset in the restructuring process.

Contrary to the thesis of Szeleni et al that the dissidents in Hungary and the Czech Republic formed a block with the technocratic reformers, Chalukov claims that the opposite took place in Bulgaria. The opposition of the communist party did not ally with economic reformers, due to short-sightedness. The author argues that the opposition lacked a clear economic strategy and deep knowledge of “modern economic theories.” According to Chalukov Bulgaria lacked economic experts schooled in neoliberal thinking, as opposed to Hungary where many intellectuals were formed in British and U.S. Universities, such as LSE, and Harvard. In a somehow different fashion, former Prime Minister Kostov argues in an article written in 1990, while still an associate professor of political-economy, that the reforms should first clear out the Party nomenklatura from its political power, not from the economic and state administration.

The first prominent Bulgarian neoliberal think-tanks, known in the country as NPOs, were formed by experts in the political and sociological institutes of the Bulgarian Communist Party. These were party cadres who were engaged in the analysis of the public sphere – the formation of public opinion and the mechanisms of

\[\text{Чалъков, Мрежите на прехода, 283.}\]
persuasion. Lavergne has shown that these experts were physically connected with the political nomenklatura in the Party. Thus, these are the organic intellectuals of the last Soviet model generation in Bulgaria. They used their social and cultural capital to find a niche and form networks where they could exercise their social power of expertise and persuasion in influencing public opinion. Lavergne, who conducted numerous interviews with most leaders of those think-tanks, suggests there was a teleological mission as a primary drive of their function. The underlining logic of this teleological mission is once again underpinned by the need to import foreign civilizational models. The mission this time is the importation of democracy. In the same manner as those intellectuals that embraced the ideas of socialism as a formula for modernization,

\[142\] The first think-tank was formed as early as 1989 before the ousting of Zhivkov. Some of the most prominent Bulgarian think-tanks include the Center for Liberal Strategies founded by Ivan Krustev. The Institute for Market Economy, whose mission is “to promote market-based solutions to social problems, founded in 1993 by Krasen Stanchev who had major influence on the right of center political formations in their decision not to negotiate with the socialists. Institute for Regional and International Research (O. Minchev known for his staunch anti-communist rhetoric; Center for Social Practices (E. Dainov advocating that democracy can be imported from outside. Samson’s analysis of NGOs acknowledges major characteristics – hierarchical structure on top of which are the Western donors, such as US and EU aid agencies, as well as private foundations of big corporate entities – Soros, Ford, Carnegie. The local NGOs undergo training by foreign experts employed by the Western donors whose objective is “democracy promotion.” The offices of NGOs are populated primarily by Western educated young people who serve as the organic intellectuals of the neoliberal model. NGOs operate under the ideological discourse of democracy, modernization and free market, but ultimately serve as institutions that are instrumental in state policy formation, this works both as a coercive mechanism and as a source of revenue for state official. In the first case the weaken post-Soviet state seeks the approval of NGOs as powerful institutions favoured by the West – NGOs and NPOs are praised as indicators of the existence of civil society in EU and US ideological discourse. In the second, funds of NGOs become a source of corruption and embezzling, or using the money for political campaigns. Ultimately NGOs are engaged in the creation of projects that assure donor’s funding. Ultimately project creation is not about ways to ameliorate the conditions of those in need, or two suggest democratic practices; local knowledge is disregarded. As Sampson points out projects are about control over resources, knowledge and ideas. The technocratic bureaucracy of the Soviet era tried to acquire more resources from the Party nomenklatura in a struggle for control over workers, now the role is reversed NGO experts, as well as state officials are providing control over their societies in return for funding.

\[143\] For example the founder of Center for Social Practices Evgeni Dainov defines think-tank experts as ‘seeing among the blind’ Anguelova-Lavergne, Ekspertite Na Prekhoda.

\[144\] The founder of one of the most prominent think-tanks – the Center for Liberal Strategies summarizes what this mission entails: ‘think-tanks have to stand against any attempt to question the reforms as advocated by the IMF and World Bank and pretend for some invented national model’ ibid.
without regard to the local socio-economic characteristics, think-tanks in Bulgaria wholeheartedly embraced the promotion of the neoliberal understanding of democracy.

3.11. The Discourse of Think-tanks

Here I will explore the discourse of the Bulgarian think-tanks in greater depth in relation to their role as producers or disseminators of ideological models. For this purpose I employ Slavoj Zizek’s Lacanian model of ideological analysis. As Zizek points out ideology has nothing to do with illusion. Its narrative can be accurate, but this accuracy is limited and reduced to a certain aspect, hiding others as to enhance certain position of power. Zizek’s model of ideology shows that the ideological space exists always within a narrative that is in confrontation with other narratives to win over its representation of “reality.” Ideological space is made of non-bound, non-tied elements, ‘floating signifiers’, whose very identity is open, but whose loose ideological elements are ‘fixed’ together into a coherent structure of meaning by a ‘nodal point’. Thus, the ideological struggle occurs over the determination of the nodal point that functions as the prism through which the floating ideological signifiers will be understood and connected through a master-signifier. The nodal point is the point where a master-signifier is introduced that interpellates the individual into an ideological subject. What determines the existence of the master-signifier in the ideological field is not its uncontested truthful meaning, but the outcome in a struggle over meaning. The master-signifier is an empty signifier initially, but at a key nodal point it centralizes and unites all of the ideological elements to represent a specific understanding of reality. For example, democracy is an empty signifier because it depends on one’s ideological view to make meaning of it. Yet, the process of meaning making entails power struggles.

In Bulgaria, if we take transition as a master-signifier, we can see that the concrete power struggle that enabled it to become such was a hegemonic struggle over political and economic models. The winners of this struggle formed the meaning of

transition through their ideological lenses; that is how the term became a master-signifier of neoliberalism. Transition manifested itself as the restructuring of state and society under the neoliberal model, in which an equal sign between democracy and free market was made possible by interpellating the subject with the master-signifier of the transition. As discussed above, Szelenyi et al. point that it was the historic bloc that formed between technocrat reformers, managers and dissidents in Central Europe that brought about the neoliberal shift. In the Bulgarian case despite the shock therapy reforms of right centrist Ivan Kostov’s cabinet, the corrupt privatization benefited mainly the former political elite.

The formation of Bulgarian neoliberal think-tanks has been instrumental in the formation of the dominant discourse of transition in Bulgaria. Transition becomes the nodal point of the ideological field around which all the floating signifiers – democracy, civil society, human rights are grouped. The discourse of transition has some key ideological elements that become mechanisms to justify current neoliberal practices – especially the import of democracy and applying it as a model with disregard for local specifics. In her study of Bulgarian think-tanks, Lavergne notes how the self-appointed experts of the transition formed an intellectual discourse to justify the imported model. The failure of anti-communist parties to win the elections in 1990 prompted accusations against the Bulgarian people as backward and incapable of deciding their own destiny and these accusations became materialized in neoliberal ‘transition’ discourse.

I will argue that there are two main ideological mechanisms that enable such an accusation to become an element of the transition discourse. On the one hand such an accusation can be evaluated from the standpoint of older narratives where Bulgarians backwardness signifies the Ottoman legacy, with a shift in the ideological vector toward the Soviet legacy. On the other hand, the hegemony of the neoliberal ideological discourse in the whole of the Eastern bloc does not permit a social-democratic alternative and any cautious approach toward the remedy of neoliberal shock therapy


147 Yet, attempts for social-democratic coalition with progressive members of the BSP were made but did not meet the support
is considered a desire to preserve the old regime. Lavergne explores the symbolic significance of the discourse of shame for the lack of influential dissident movements in Bulgaria, in contrast to Central Europe. The discourse of shame serves to explain Bulgaria’s comparative slowness to implement neoliberal reforms. It also posits intellectual ‘experts’ as the revolutionaries of the transition after 1997.

1997 is a seminal year in the forming of the discourse of think-tanks in Bulgaria. If we can point to any one hypothetical moment where the signifier, civilization choice, is incorporated into the master-signifier, transition, it is in the speeches of President Petur Stoyanov between 1997 to 2002. During the presidency of Stoyanov, and the cabinet of Ivan Kostov, think-tanks gained direct influence in the forming of political discourse. As noted earlier, at the core of the civilizational choice narrative is the dichotomy West/Europe that signifies civilization, modernity, progress and the future vs. East/Russia that signifies the backwardness of the communist past. This dichotomy further leads to opposing other ideological terms – individualism/open society/modern vs. Communism/closed society/non-modern.

The civilizational choice narrative is directly associated with the back to Europe discourse. I have already noted that the confrontation between West and East was used as a strategy by Central European intellectuals to sever their connection with the Soviet model. Stoyanov’s rhetorical strategy consisted of using interchangeably the need for membership in EU and NATO as guarantee of the proper choice. Those who questioned the need for membership in a supranational military organization under the control of the US were dismissed as belonging to the past. Another element of the transition discourse is the notion of the peasant and peasant culture as “the sickness of Bulgaria left out of modernity.” Before, in intellectual discourse, especially between the two wars, the peasant functions as a symbolic sign dividing the local – folk culture tradition from the foreign – modernization/Europeanization characterized by ambiguous oscillating

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148 See for example Ivan Kostov’s articles on the Polish model in Rabotnichesko Delo
149 Anguelova-Lavergne, Ekspertite Na Prekhoda, 134–156; Чалъков, Мрежите на прехода.
150 Anguelova-Lavergne, Ekspertite Na Prekhoda, 135.
151 Ognian Minchev cited in Ibid., 150
between praise and dismissal.\textsuperscript{152} The intellectuals of Bulgaria’s think-tanks, after the transition, eradicate the ambiguity – peasant becomes the signifier that links to the backwardness of the communist past and peasant culture is the culture of the backward mentality of collectivism. At the core of the think-tanks’ social and political imaginary is the notion that Bulgaria “lacks an impulse for modernization”, thus a centralized top-down process is needed exercised by \textit{elites} where the experts see their mission of revolutionaries.

Lavergne’s interviews show the striking resemblance between this contemporary discourse and the Leninst view of modernization. Some experts even go so far as to say that the end goal of the transition is “removing of national sovereignty.” Yet, if in Lenin’s revolutionary program, at least in theory, the withering away of the state occurs due to the creation of classless society, and in the name of social and economic equality, the think-tanks imaginary future resembles more of the opposite – a polarized society controlled by elites. Following the old Stalinist logic, those who cannot adapt to the future have to be sacrificed. Not surprisingly the experts are particularly hostile and acerbic toward the most vulnerable – the old generations who are nostalgic for the social safety of the previous regime.\textsuperscript{153}

If, according to Marx, the function of intellectuals in the capitalist system is to sell their intellectual labor on the market, we can clearly see how this process works in a peripheral region. The experts of think-tanks started selling their intellectual labor to Western donors in return for exercising social control over their own populations. As Sampson has pointed out, at the core of this relationship lays the imperial logic of economic expansion and subjugation of cultures. From Lavergne’s interviews it becomes clear that the tendency of intellectuals to see themselves as leaders, yet disconnected from those that they lead, is still very present. Anyone who disapproves of the transition as prescribed by the think-tank experts is labelled backward. On the other

\textsuperscript{152} Еленков и Даскалов, \textit{Защо сме такива?}.

\textsuperscript{153} The type of society imagined is one controlled by foreign elites, where Bulgarians perform the role of obedient workers. Examples of progress are those areas where foreign corporations have acquired access to human and natural resources. All those that cannot adapt to the new realities “will drop dead” cited in Anguelova-Lavergne, \textit{Ekspertite Na Prekhoda} 165-166.
hand the entrepreneurial spirit of neoliberal *homoeconomicus* is praised and promoted, and such individuals are deemed examples of modern European citizenship. One need to go back to Kiossev’s thesis of self-colonizing cultures to fully grasp the logic of the think-tanks’ sense of mission.

Here I would like to propose that the role of Bulgarian intellectuals as agents of the Western paradigm of modernization can be understood by linking the self-colonizing concept to Zizek’s analysis of imaginary and symbolic identification. According to Zizek “imaginary identification is always identification in account of the certain gaze in the Other.”  

In Zizek’s example, a woman’s performance of femininity is prompted by symbolic identification with the paternal gaze, to which she wants to appear likeable. If we relate this notion of acting under the gaze of the Other, the Superego to fulfill its expectations to the self-colonizing mentality, we can see how the model works. The peripheral intellectuals’ traumatic experiences of humiliation and their lack of civilizational qualities under the Other’s gaze, brings about the need to act and identify in accordance with the Others’ expectations. The Other in this case is the symbolic West in its empirical form – the EU and U.S.A.

The neoliberal transformation of Bulgarian society and economy once again put the intellectuals at a dilemma. Those, who were able to use their cultural and social capital and integrate into the new economic reality, reverted to a familiar role as disseminators of ideological norms and values. But the majority chose immigration, which gave rise to an ongoing brain-drain.

It is useful at this point to bring this long background discussion back to the Monument of the Soviet Army. Engraved in the existence of the monument, and the act of its transformation, are questions about importation of foreign civilizational models. Kiossev poses the question: Is the historical rhythm of self-colonizing cultures one of eternal repetition and return?  

In the early 20th c. a portion of the Bulgarian intelligentsia embraced the Marxian project of modernity through the strong influence of Russian intellectual thought. In the end, this manifested itself in the paternalistic, centralized

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155 Kiossev, ‘The Self Colonizing Cultures’.
authoritarian state, where the newly formed organic intellectuals either entered the ranks of the Party as ideologues or technocrats, or became disillusioned with the failed promises of the teleology of rational distribution as passive resisters, using the Aesopian language of non-direct confrontation. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the organic intellectuals of late socialism formed think-tanks to disseminate the ideas of neoliberalism which materialized in the creation of oligarchic criminal elite and pauperized society on a massive scale.

Arturo Escobar's work on the "invention of development" in his book *Encountering Development: Making and Unmaking of the Third World,* is a good source to draw a parallel between the outcome of the Soviet model in the Eastern bloc and the geo-political project of the US during the Cold War. Escobar traces the formation of the development discourse under Western ideological lenses and the restructuring of "third world" societies in accordance to these lenses, with total disregard for their cultures - "[A] type of development was promoted which conformed to the ideas and expectations of the affluent West, to what the Western countries judged to be a normal course of evolution and progress." Development was perceived solely on the basis of concrete economic transformations that required the complacency of local political elites. Modernization came to be understood as the only force capable of destroying archaic superstitions and relations, at whatever social, cultural and political cost." Just as Susan Buck-Morss has commented on the outcome of the Stalinist top-town modernization as infantilization of society, the same way Escobar argues that "infantilization of the Third World was integral to development." Development is the Master-signifier of a Western-centric ideological view of civilization as imported top-down model with a foreign meta-narrative that excuses the practices of cultural and economic genocide in the name of "catching-up." Stalinism as a top-down model, with equally horrendous consequences for subjugated peoples and

157 Ibid., 24.
158 Ibid., 34.
159 Ibid., 30.
their cultures, or for those classes or strata deemed expendable in the name of progress, also contained the meta-narratives of modernity. Ironically, despite the socialist vision of pursuing an alternative path to Western capitalist modernity, this vision came very close to the objectives of the West towards the Third World, and did not spare the populations of socialist countries in the course. I argue that the collapse of the Soviet Union did not lead to the disappearance of the development discourse. It was simply updated in accordance with the postulates of neoliberalism. But, the paternalistic top-down approach was simply reapplied to the losers of the Cold War. In Bulgaria the discourse of transition became the Master-signifier formed by Central European intellectuals and disseminated from the offices of Central and Eastern European think-tanks. The debate over the ‘desecration’ or ‘transformation’ of the monument articulated the complexities of this discourse and of reactions to it.
4. “Truths” and the Way They Function

In the first chapter, I suggested that discursive positioning around the desecration/transformation of the Monument of the Soviet Army could be sorted, roughly, into three broad categories: the anti-communist narrative, the nostalgia narrative, and the commodification narrative. I went on to note that consideration of these narratives takes us deep into a discussion of the realm of ideology in Bulgarian society. In the last chapter, I mapped the shifting role of intellectuals in Bulgaria as producers of ideological discourses. This chapter examines issues of ideology, more conceptually, and in greater depth. The chapter focuses on the function of dominant narratives in the process of invented traditions that serve as ideological rituals of the state. I discuss the symbolic meaning of the space around the MSA where the invented traditions of the state are contested by grass-roots movements whose struggle then becomes a component of those newly invented traditions. The chapter looks at the use of nostalgia, in particular, as a political instrument, as well as the symbolic battles over contested stories of the past.

The chapter begins with an overview of Zizek’s mapping of the concept of ideology. My intention is to discuss the problematic of materialization of ideology as demonstrated by Althusser, but in relation to questions of narratives of nationalism and national identity. I examine the formation of narratives and their materialization in the rituals and invented traditions of the state, both as modeled under the instrumental role of the Soviet Union, and in the era of neoliberal “return to Europe.” I am also concerned with the problematic of nostalgia as a political mechanism. By introducing an Althusserian perspective on the materialization of ideology my objective is to inquire whether we can apply the concept to the construction of ideological narratives that transform into narrative rituals through constant repetition. I consider such a process both from above (state institutions and media) and below (social movements, activists). I argue that the identity narratives materialize in symbolic rituals of commemoration and protest in Bulgaria’s past and present.
4.1. Mapping Ideology

Zizek points out that at its core, ideology it is not necessarily a false representation of reality. Ideology can be accurate in presenting certain facts or truths. But as long as the true motives for this narrative remain hidden we are in an ideological space, where ideology may “lie in the guise of truth” but functions to hide relations of social domination. Thus, “the very logic of legitimizing the relation of domination must remain concealed if it is to be effective.”\textsuperscript{160}Zizek gives an example of how ideology operates by noting the U.S. media’s accounts of human rights violations in Third World countries as justification for war, while hiding the political-economic interests of the U.S.A. A more relevant example for my analysis would be the attempt to explain the disastrous outcomes of the \textit{transition} by reducing it to the narrative of the ex-political elites acquiring economic power. Such an explanation starts from the presupposition of the lack of alternative to the system of capitalism, where free market and democracy are used interchangeably. It completely ignores other factors in the process of state and society’s restructuring, such as the instrumental role of the World Bank and IMF, as well as the US’s and EU’s normative role by imposing conditions for \textit{democratization} that had negative social consequences for large groups of the population. Ultimately, despite its partial accuracy this explanation constitutes a part of a larger ideological discourse of \textit{anti-Communism} that conceals the geo-political context in which the ex-elite acquired power. When inverted, this very same narrative becomes a conspiracy theory about foreign domination that serves to trumpet ultra-nationalist sentiments.

Ideology contains element of truth but at its core are relations of domination – the Bulgarian state’s complacency toward the Soviet Union is not fiction, yet the realities of the politico-economic dependency and the intricate characteristics of the state’s subordinate role are oversimplified, to depict a situation that evokes an old narrative pattern of “explaining” Bulgarian’s identity. The Soviet ‘slavery’ narrative stands along the Ottoman slavery one, despite the different contexts in which those narratives were produced and the different political purposes they served. Such narratives can be

situated as part of the self-colonizing discourse. But they function as ideological narratives because they conceal relations of domination – the subordinated position of the people to the expertise of intellectuals working in think-tanks or educational institutions that produce such narratives. The end result is the self-perception of a disempowered people. This manifests in everyday speech, but permeates both mainstream media and online forums.

Zizek provides a model of ideology that dissects its three main elements – ideology-in-itself: as a complex of ideas (theories, convictions, beliefs); ideology-for-itself: the process by which those ideas become external and materialize through practices, always involving an aspect of concealed power relations; ideology-in-and-for-itself: the spontaneous self-experience through ideology. The third dimension of ideology – in-and-for-itself - is neither exercised through a doctrine, nor is materialized, but is rather a “network of implicit, quasi-’spontaneous’ presuppositions and attitudes” that supposedly follow “non-ideological” logic in theory but remain ideological in practice.

The second aspect of ideology – its externalization through material practices comes from the work of Louis Althusser. Althusser defines as Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs) both public and private entities that materialize ideology. A conventional example of such materialization will be the rituals and practices in the Soviet bloc – mass gatherings, parades, and rituals in the workplace and housing places, etc. The end result of this materialization of ideology is that the material outcome of ideological practices that an individual performs become the sources of ideas of this individual. This might explain what Yurchak calls the ‘paradox of late socialism.’ The Soviet citizen did not wholeheartedly participate in the crude ideological rituals that the Party enforced and was cynical about the state’s crude ideology. But, as Yurchak points out, oftentimes real humane values, ethics, friendships, and creative

161Ibid., 9–15.
162Ibid., 15.
164Yurchak, Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More, Chapters 2 and 3.
possibilities were opened up, despite the state’s official goal. It is these “unintended” experiences that underwrite the phenomenon of post-Soviet nostalgia. The values and ideals of socialism — altruism, selflessness, equality, community, ethical relations — that the Soviet system perverted and used as ideological mechanisms have remained, now that the coercive state is gone. The last section of this thesis will look at how to imagine a socio-economic and political reality that is alternative to the top-down models Bulgarians had to accept. How to imagine the ideals of socialism without the structures of the socialist state?

It is the dichotomy between external ideology (from above — “material, effective apparatuses which give body to ideology”) and “spontaneous” ideology (from below — “the social actuality of production) or what Zizek calls the ISA and commodity fetishism, or the State and Market that we need to take into account. Here I want to propose that the materialization of ideology works both on a performative (practices, such as rituals commemorations) and discursive level (narratives). This is similar to Michel Pecheux’s materialist theory of discourse. Pecheux draws upon Althusser’s theory of interpellation of the obviousness of the subject in ideology, i.e. capitalist ideology constructs subjects who self-identify as free individuals, a law abiding citizens, etc. One never asks how the subject occurs but just takes her role as a subject, or what Pecheux calls the evidentness of the spontaneous existence of the subject, as origin or cause in itself. To this he introduces the notion of the evidence of meaning, linking the constitution of meaning to that of the subject. The same way as the subjects never question their own subjectivity, they accept meaning, already constructed and self-internalized into “discursive mechanisms that generate evidence of Sense.” This process is similar to what Zizek calls ideology’s reference to ‘self-evidence’ as facts speaking for themselves.

Althusser’s famous example, taken from Pascal, is about an individual who by practicing the material acts that symbolize belief in religion through repetition with time will come to believe in it. Or as Zizek puts it, “the ‘external’ ritual performatively

generates its own ideological foundation.” Yet, the repetition of partial meaning-makers about national identity that function as fact speaking for themselves, aiming to explain why we are what we are can have the same function. Can the formula State/Market work in the Bulgarian case? The ISAs’ (especially think-tanks, educational institutions and mass media) repetition of narratives, combined with Bulgarians’ socio-economic experience under the Soviet model and the later neoliberal regime of governance, makes the relation between ideology-for-itself and ideology in-and-for-itself possible. Narratives, such as those that became associated with the Monument of the Soviet Army, before and after its transformation, become rituals, working on the level of repetition. These translate into attitudes and behaviours that tend to reproduce broader relations of domination.

To demonstrate the interrelationship between external and spontaneous ideology, I will give example from Bulgarian’s popular discourses about historical events. The Turk, as an enslaver and enemy of the nation, and the Russian, as a liberator and friend form in collective memory as “facts speaking for themselves.” The “facts” are rarely accounts from historical archives but rather folklore and later narratives from the Revival period that became engraved in the educational formation in the nation-state period, particularly during the Soviet period. In the last decades those facts have been challenged and new facts were presented that spoke for themselves. The Russian became enslaver and enemy and the Ottoman slavery turned into Ottoman presence. This required a search for evidence. It seems that this extreme revision, equally ideological in its function, was easy to contest by the old narratives; it created a highly

\[168\] Ibid., 13.
charged atmosphere that attacked as conspiratorial any attempt to demythologize those extremes.\textsuperscript{169}

4.2. The “Soul” of the Nation

Bulgarian nationalism was a latecomer in the Balkans and as such is characterized by its defensiveness in contrast to previously formulated nationalisms of neighbouring peoples such as Greeks and Serbs.\textsuperscript{170} The Balkans turned into an arena of struggle for territory and resources among the nation-states and antagonism that also has roots in the concrete policies of Great Powers towards the region. The constructed liminal position of a periphery of Europe has ideological implications both outside and within the Balkan states.\textsuperscript{171} Yet, defensive nationalism correlates with the ideological discourse of Orientalism that situates the Balkans as liminal – in between the civilized West and the uncivilized East.\textsuperscript{172}

Prior to World War I, the materialization of the ideology of the Bulgarian nation-state functioned on the level of commemoration to support a string of medieval rulers and keep alive the myth of San Stefano. According to Kiossev, because there was non-existent national territory during the Ottoman period there was a permanent need for a symbol of this non-existent territory – “an imaginary mechanism which should hold the

\textsuperscript{169} See for example the reactions to Martina Baleva’s and Ulf Brunnbauer project “Battak as a Bulgarian Place of Remembrance” that examined the role of fine arts in the creation of national myths. The authors were accused by media and political figures, including President Purvanov, of trying to manipulate Bulgarian history and deny the existence of massacres during the unsuccessful uprising against the Ottoman Empire. One television station went as far as to announce a reward for those who provide the address and picture of “the national traitor” – Baeva. For example of the other extreme, critiques on the left of the current political and socioeconomic reality in Bulgaria are demonized as Marxist, therefore pro-dictatorship. Plamen Tzvetkov often employs such rhetoric.

\textsuperscript{170} Todorova, ‘Course and Discourses of Bulgarian Nationalism’, 74–75.

\textsuperscript{171} In 1934 Konstantin Gulubov, a writer and critic, writes: ‘The Bulgarian wants to have everything that people in the civilized European states have... but his means are few and what follows is a ferocious struggle of each against everybody to accumulate money and ensuing roughening of the souls’ which will continue due to the limited material resources of the country. Еленков и Даскалов, Защо сме такива?.

\textsuperscript{172} Todorova, \textit{Imagining the Balkans}; Mocnik, ‘The Balkans as an Element in Ideological Mechanisms’.

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eternal national “body” together.”\textsuperscript{173} The process of formation of such a mechanism started during the Revival period, Kiossev gives as an example lyrics of revolutionary songs of that period with their prevalence of geographical and political “visions” where names of rivers and mountains serve as imaginary borders of the “national body.” In 1870, the Bulgarians long struggle for religious autonomy from the Greek Patriarchate in Constantinople came to a successful end. Sultan Abdulaziz issued a decree that permitted the creation of Bulgarian Exarchate. The Exarchate’s borders went on to extend over present-day northern Bulgaria (Moesia), Thrace without the Vilayet of Adrianople, as well as over north-eastern Macedonia. \textsuperscript{174} This is how the imaginary borders of the “national body” transformed into the real borders of the nation. The San Stefano treaty signed on March 3\textsuperscript{rd} 1878 between Russia and the Ottoman Empire after the Russo-Turkish war of 1877-1878 provided for the creation of autonomous Principality of Bulgaria. In an essence the territorial borders granted to Bulgaria were the borders of the Exarchate. But the euphoria of San Stefano was short lived. \textsuperscript{175} An enlarged Bulgaria that included territories form the Black Sea to the Aegean sea and under the direct influence of Russia was a threat to interests of Great Britain and Austria-Hungary in the Balkans, fearing a shift in the balance of power in the region. \textsuperscript{176} From June 13\textsuperscript{th} till July 13\textsuperscript{th} 1878 in the Congress of Berlin, a meeting between the three European Great Powers and the Ottoman Empire, was hosted by German Chancellor Otto von Bismarck.

\textsuperscript{173} Kiossev, ‘The Self Colonizing Cultures’, 75.

\textsuperscript{174} The Bulgarian Exarchate included all of the current Republic of Macedonia and substantial parts of Western Serbia and parts of northern Romania.

\textsuperscript{175} In 1975 historian Nikolai Genchev’s book on Bulgarian-Russian relations is stopped from publishing, because in it he gives archival accounts of previous agreements prior to San Stefano between Russia and Britain and between Russia and Austria-Hungary that excluded the creation of great Bulgaria. Making this account meant acknowledging Russia as part of the Concert of Europe and thus debunking the myth that the war was led because of the exclusive purpose of liberating the Bulgarians. See Daskalov, \textit{The Making of a Nation in the Balkans}, 219.

\textsuperscript{176} Jelavich and Jelavich write: “The Treaty of San Stefano of 1878 provided for the establishment of great Bulgarian state which was envisaged as the base for Russian domination of Constantinople and the Slavs. However, because of the immense significance of this act for the balance of power in the east, Russia was not this time allowed to make terms with Turkey alone...[It] ws forced to agree to the division of Greater Bulgaria into Bulgaria proper, Eastern Rumelia and Macedonia. Russian domination was allowed only in Bulgaria” Charles Jelavich and Barbara Jelavich, ‘The Danubian Principalities and Bulgaria Under Russian Protectorship’, \textit{Jahrbücher Für Geschichte Osteuropas} 9, no. 3 (October 1, 1961): 349–366.
to return the balance of power in the Balkans. A decision was made that split the San Stefano Bulgaria in three – Bulgaria proper from Danube to the Balkan mountains; Eastern Rumelia south of these mountains, as autonomous Ottoman province and Macedonia that was returned to the sultan. The Berlin Congress has remained in collective memory, enhanced by official historiography as a signifier of the hostility of the West, especially Great Britain, Austria-Hungary and Germany towards the Bulgarian people. The myth of San Stefano is enhanced by the strong metaphor of the divided “national body” represented in art and culture, especially the lithography of Nikolai Pavlovich, “The Split Bulgaria after the Berlin Congress” and the seminal book of Simeon Radev, “Builders of Modern Bulgaria.”

According to Todorova the period, roughly, between 1879-1918 is characterized with irredentist, expansionist nationalism prompted by the goal to achieve the San Stefano dream, which became indelible part of the nation-building project in educational and cultural institutions. Peter Sugar compares the San Stefano dream for Greater Bulgaria to the Greek project of nationalism Megali Idea. The Bulgarian Monarch King Ferdinand I (1887-1918) used the political and military elite’s zeal to acquire Macedonia that remained outside of the territory of the Bulgarian nation-state to pursue his own agenda – acquiring Constantinople itself. Bulgarian nationalism was irredentist; the nation-state objective in this period was to prepare for a confrontation with the Ottoman Empire. Todorova demonstrates how the choice of national heroes shifts in accordance with the political aspirations of the regimes. Medieval rulers are particularly appealing

177 In that relation Stephen Krasner gives an interesting account that the Bulgarians were excluded from the Berlin Congress talks due to Russia’s insistence, though he does not provide any sources. Stephen D. Krasner, Sovereignty: Organized Hypocrisy (Princeton University Press, 1999), 165.
178 Radev depicts the trauma among the national elite after the Berlin Congress’s decision. His language charged with emotional tones represents the reaction of the elite around the events - the dismay and outcry in Bulgaria, the organizing of petitions to the Great Powers, the preventing of Bulgarian representatives in the Congress. The dramatic words of future Prime Minister Stambolov -‘better enslaved but united, than free but divided’ serve to map the sentiments of the times. Симеон Радев, Пантелей Зарев, and Иличо Иванов Димитров, Строителите на съвременна България: Царуването на Кн. Александра, 1879-1886 (Български писател, 1990).
prior to the Balkan and WWI wars under the reign of Ferdinand I when Bulgaria aspires to settle scores, first with the Ottoman Empire and then with Greece and Serbia. After the humiliating defeats in 1913 and 1918 as well as demographic and economic crisis, Levski – an all-inclusive national hero of 19th century famous for his republican views -- takes the highest place in the national pantheon and remains uncontested till today.\textsuperscript{180}

The defeat of the wars led to a shift in commemorating practices in Bulgaria, from expansionist rulers to national revolutionaries that fought for independence. This shift parallels the shift of Bulgaria nationalism from irredentist to defensive. Later, Bulgarian socialism was characterized by Zhivkov’s move towards a nationalism that would be non-threatening to the Soviet Empire building project. The characteristics of Bulgarian nationalism in this era date back to the pre-power years when the Bulgarian communists under Stalin’s directive formed the Fatherland Front consisting of other left groups.\textsuperscript{181} Stalin was aware of the need to present the FF as a national liberation movement and advised the Communists to play down the ideology of internationalism and sovietisation. Thus, the FF declaration does not even mention the words Communism and socialism. The Communists constructed the perception of BCP as the leader of the people, itself coming from the roots of the people. The partisans served to continue the legacy of resistance of the people against oppression and became part of the national heroes pantheon standing next to the national revolutionaries of the 19th century.\textsuperscript{182} The Slavic background of Bulgarians became the only permitted discourse in historiography.

\textsuperscript{180} Todorova, ‘Course and Discourses of Bulgarian Nationalism’; Todorova, Bones of Contention.


\textsuperscript{182} According to Roumen Daskalov the commemoration of Bulgarian revolutionaries during the Soviet period, especially until the 60s Daskalov was characterized by a strict hierarchical order. This hierarchy was determined by several factors: how radical the revolutionary was, how consistent and permanent his views were, how close he came to social view of the struggle, not only national, what was his attitude toward the richer strata (chorbadzhi), whether he relied on the strength of his won people or sought foreign support (Russia was the only acceptable option in this criteria), what was his vision of a future government - republic or monarchy, what were his views of Balkan or Slav federation, and its political form of governance - “from above” or “from below.” Daskalov points out that this criteria puts Botev and Levski on top, the first because of his utopian socialist views and the second because of his devotion to the revolution, inside the country and without foreign help, as well as his republican views., The Making of a Nation in the Balkans, 176–177.
because Slavic kinship connected Bulgaria with the USSR. Zhivkov developed as a local functionary, as opposed to the apparatchiks who were trained in the Stalinist Soviet Union during the Stalinist period of Vulko Chervenkov. Despite being a Stalinist hardliner during Chervenkov’s years of repression, having taken part in the repressive collectivization process, Zhivkov viewed those Soviet-trained cadres with distrust. A type of cultural nationalism that never questioned the positive role of Russia and the Soviet Union came to characterize late Bulgarian socialism. It was selective in its concentration on various historical figures and events that, on the one hand, praised centralization and authoritarian rule (medieval kings) but, on the other hand, affirmed the dichotomy Enslaver (Ottoman) – Liberator (Russian/Soviet). Zhivkov state-promoted nationalism emphasized various aspects of the past, while silencing other aspects. In other words, for Zhivkov’s regime the praise of the authoritarian governance and centralization of medieval Bulgarian rulers, not only in history text books but in cultural institutions (various state-sponsored motion pictures and TV series were produced), signalled continuity of power, legitimizing authoritarian rule. The other era of history that was highly mythologized was the Revival period that brought about the struggle for national liberation that was made possible by the Russian war against the Ottoman Empire in 1877.

The revival period serves to affirm the symbolic dichotomy between enslaver (Ottoman) and liberator (Russian, later Soviet). Not surprisingly in historiography and history textbooks (written by the same historians) the period of Bulgarians’ existence under the Ottoman Empire was considered slavery and the term used was ‘Ottoman slavery.’ This ideological explanation of historical periods is enhanced by the representation of the Revival period not only in art and culture but also in scholarly work, both before and after 1944, as a symbolic period of “awakening from darkness.” The 19 c. Revival period functions as a founding myth about the birth of the nation, or re-birth

\[\text{183} \] This Slavic background discourse was in fact a reversal of the official discourse of Bulgarian historiography during the alliance with Hitler, when those searching for the Arian background were most renowned in the academic circles. The Communists took drastic measures to oust those academics who refused to reformulate their views. See Todorova, ‘Professionals’ and ‘Dilettantes’. On the repression in the academic circles and the cultural elite see Евгения Иванова Калинова and Iskra Ваева, Българските преходи 1939-2002 (Парадигма, 2002).
from the dark ages of Ottoman rule. In that sense such an assessment of the Ottoman Empire is in accordance with the narrative of modernity, where in the Soviet model period the Soviet Union replaced Europe as a signifier of modernity. Slavery as an ideological term had a double function. It pointed to Bulgaria’s slowed down historical development on the road to modernity—a modernity that was only successfully realized by the Party-State. It also was a way of justifying the position of the Soviet Union vis-à-vis Bulgaria, and the subservient role that the Party-State played. Thus, the role of Russia as Liberator of the Bulgarian people, and of the Party-State as the force bringing Bulgaria towards modernization under the wing of the Soviet Union was a major element in this nationalistic discourse. The governance of the Party-State was legitimized by the second liberation of the Soviet Union, this time from Bulgarian government itself (official historiography termed the prior regime monarcho-fascism). The result is a powerful myth of ‘double liberation’ – the notion of the Russians saving Bulgaria from slavery in the 19th century and then, a second time, Russia ostensibly liberates Bulgarian people, from themselves. This is how the Party-State’s official historiography rewrote history. The discourse of ‘slavery’ became a powerful myth that continues to live in political and media discourse. Not surprisingly, it is still the core of ethno-nationalism and it lent itself to a strong nationalist discourse during the debate around the transformation of the Monument of the Soviet Army.

Daskalov, The Making of a Nation in the Balkans, 249. In that sense such an assessment of the Ottoman Empire is in accordance with the narrative of modernity, where in the Soviet model period the Soviet Union replaced Europe as a signifier of modernity.

On the question of fascism in Bulgaria in Bulgarian and foreign historiography see Rumen Daskalov, Debating the Past: Modern Bulgarian History: From Stambolov to Zhivkov (Central European University Press, 2011), Chapter 3. Daskalov takes the position that the defining features of fascism were absent in Bulgaria, despite the existence of ultranationalist and extreme right organizations with fascist tendencies they did not have a wide social base and a developed Führer principle and party doctrine. There were also no significant ties with financial capital and big business. On the question of Nazism and Bulgaria, Daskalov points out that there was no occupation by German troops, no puppet regime and Bulgaria’s participation in the war consists only in occupation of neighbouring territories, which is largely accepted by the population as a process on national unification.
4.3. Inventing Traditions

I will follow up on Eric Hobsbawm’s theory of the invention of tradition to demonstrate how the invention of tradition in Bulgaria acquired specific meaning to affirm ideological perceptions and how those ideological narratives are negotiated in the realm of culture.186 Here I will use the Althusserian concept of the materialization of ideology through social practices and rituals. The Soviet system exercised direct control over all of Bulgarian society’s social groups and was highly suspicious of any shift from the official party line and tried to discipline behaviour through measures of coercion. The Soviet system projected its materialization of ideology by the organizing of massive events and ceremonies: parades, commemorations, and the creation of monuments that aimed to signify people’s support of the Party-State. The ISA’s of the communist system functioned to interpellate the obedient subject of the State and affirm the discourse of Soviet friendship and brotherhood.

The fall of the Soviet system ushered in an era of neoliberal transition that promoted gangster capitalism and a consumer society. In the course of the neoliberal transition practices of consumerism emerged as the new ideological rituals, disseminated in media and other cultural industries – reality shows, soap operas, sporting events, etc. As Hobsbawm points out the invention of traditions is a symbolic act that seeks to legitimize power by demonstrating continuity with the past. In his analysis of invented traditions in Europe from 1870 till 1914 Hobsbawm shows how imagery, symbolism and rituals are not only used to affirm the building of the nation-state, but also to counterweight the rise of popular democracy and the political involvement of the working classes. France of the Third Republic, and Germany in the time of Bismarck are two cases in which traditions were invented both to commemorate the nation-state and to mitigate the radical movements inside those states. After unification Germany defined itself as a nation by what it was against – France as an outside enemy. The Franco-Prussian war became part of an invented tradition that

attempted to unify all those various social groups under the banner of the nation. Similarly, in France new symbols emerged to commemorate the founding acts of the new regime, such as the Marseillaise, the tricolour and the mythical heroine of the revolution, Marianne. Hobsbawm defines the mass production of monuments as a major innovation of the Republican bourgeoisie in France.

In a similar way, we can trace how identifying the national enemy became part of the invented traditions that justified the creation of the Bulgarian nation-state, with a number of important implications. The Ottoman Empire whose subjects Bulgarians were prior to the formation of an independent state became a symbol of the national enemy. An indelible part of the formation of nationalism was the perception of Bulgarian people’s experience under the Ottomans, formed during the Revival period, as being enslaved by a civilizationally inferior power. The notion of Ottoman slavery is deeply engraved in national mythology. Ever since the formation of the state, and especially during the years of Zhivkovism, it has been an official explanation both in academic and cultural discourse for the way that Bulgaria lagged behind on the road to modernity. Although more nuanced assessments of this period have been published in Bulgarian historiography, the slavery narrative continues to live in public discourse and is taken up regularly by the media and politics. 

This attempt to present Bulgarians’ lack of a political state as slavery affirms the dichotomy enslaver – liberator, where Russia is assigned the role of a liberator.

A prominent example is the ultra-nationalist party Ataka (Attack) that channels support by using ethno-nationalist narratives in combination with fear mongering tactics, such as conspiratorial theories about secret Islamization process as a U.S. policy objective. It is important to point out that Ataka gained support based on rising popular concern of the unbalanced power acquisition of Ahmed Dogan - the leader of the Turkish minority party – Movement of Rights and Freedom (MRF), known for his corrupt practices and arrogance. By employing open anti-Turkish and anti-Roma and in many instances anti-Semitic rhetoric Ataka is attempting to evoke ethno-nationalist fears. The narrative of the Bulgarians that will become a minority in their own country, or the second Turkish slavery narrative echo the old narratives of the divided national body and the Ottoman enslaver. On the other side of the political spectrum, MRF keeps the fear of another Bulgarization campaign, known as the Revival process, against the Turkish minority alive. It is a well known fact that both of these political parties consist of large number of former State Security assets. Many of MRF’s leaders have themselves been accused of participation of the Bulgarization campaign.
The notion of an outside actor bringing salvation or liberating the people in a top-down process is another deeply engraved myth. It serves as an example of how historical experience acquires symbolic meaning that signifies characteristics of nation building. Strong rulers coming from abroad, and exiled martyrs of the national pantheon, compete with the outside liberators in the heroic pantheon of the nation-state. Three of the medieval Bulgarian kings, Simeon I, Kaloyan and Ivan Asen II, defined as most successful in Bulgarian history ruled after returning to the homeland from outside the country. Similarly, most of the national revolutionary leaders of 19th century operated the revolutionary committee from abroad. One can see how the notion of the outside saviour operates nowadays - most recently the expatriate son of the former king Boris III, Simeon Saxe-Cobur-Ghota, overwhelmingly won the elections with the promise to make Bulgaria a prosperous country in 800 days.

The paths of the two undisputed figures of national liberation – its ideologue and programmer Georgi Rakovski, and his successor Vassil Levski signify how the exile narrative has become embedded into the freedom – slavery discourse. Rakovski dedicated his revolutionary career to the search for foreign support and advocating the tactic of guerrilla warfare, with bands (cheti) attacking from outside the Bulgarian lands. At the end of his life he came to the realization that Bulgarians should not seek foreign support. Levski, developed this goal of the revolutionary cause to a clear program for national liberation. As an ideologue of the struggle for national independence Levski was clear in his objective - Bulgarians should not count on support from abroad but should strive to liberate themselves through massive national uprising. His energetic work as an inside organizer and subsequent death turned him into the martyr of the strife for national liberation. The failure to achieve Levski’s revolutionary doctrine continues to live in collective memory, as part of a national inferiority complex. The problematic of the

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189 The famous words of Levski “Whoever liberates us will enslave us” and “Time is in us and we are in time” had become part of the national symbolic capital, often used in political struggles both on the right and left. In the early 1990s UDF came up with the slogan “Time is ours” ,as a response to BSP’s staying in power, although no parallels have been made with Levski’s words, one can see the resemblance. Some have also commented at the caption in “Pace with Times” under the MSA in relation to Levski.

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national inferiority complex is taken up by Elitza Ranova. In her research she links it to the social imaginary of the ideal of Europe. If the modernized and united nation-state was the ideal from the 19th through 20th century, till the Soviet hiatus, the rise of new elites during the neoliberal shift has brought greater support for an anti-nationalist stance. Such a position is prompted by the elites’ understanding of the EU and their dream of Bulgarian participation. Those ideological narratives that juxtapose Levski’s covenant to struggle and gain your own freedom, and the shame/gratitude of freedom as a gift, have become incorporated in the Bulgarian collective consciousness and keep reappearing with pathos when political decisions have to be assessed. As such they became ideological practices and rituals that are widely disseminated in media forums, blogs, etc.

Bulgaria gained its independence as a result of the Russo-Turkish war of 1877-1878. Gratitude for the liberator became an indelible component of the nation-building process that required invented traditions. This gratitude continues to be present in the commemoration of the peace treaty of San Stefano in 1878. The day of the treaty is now celebrated as the official national day. This date has a significant ideological function. It not only signifies Russia’s status as liberator of Bulgaria, but is also a constant reminder of the dream of national liberation that never materialized. Numerous monuments all over the country commemorate both the Russian and Soviet liberators but two capture the essence of the historical myths that play a role in the invention of traditions in Bulgaria. One is the monument in commemoration of the Russian Tsar Alexander II – Liberator – which location symbolizes Bulgaria’s status in Russian-Bulgarian power relations – facing the parliament. The other is the discussed Monument of the Soviet Army built centrally in the park opposite Sofia University, in near distance from the parliament. To emphasize the symbolic significance of both location and purpose I will point out that Bulgaria’s biggest and most significant religious temple – the Orthodox cathedral St. Alexander Nevski, named after a Russian Prince and designed by a

190 Ranova, ‘Mirroring Gazes: Europe, Nationalism and Change in the Field of Bulgarian Art and Culture’.
Russian architect, completes this symbolic triangle. The triangle forms a public space that both affirms and challenges symbolic power relations and liberation/slavery narratives.

In the last two decades Nevski has become a symbolic manoeuvring ground where the character of the transition gets negotiated. 191 In recent collective memory Nevski signifies specially and temporally the beginning of the democratic processes where the first meetings and protests against the old regime were held, a place of hope and optimism for a better future that continued to be such, until its ritualistic meaning was challenged by a recent event. The space between Nevski and the statue of Tsar Alexander II is where the past meets the present. That was the main space of commemoration and celebration of national holidays. During the period 1944-1947 the FF organized parades and demonstrations there serving to legitimize the power of the Communists by symbolically linking the liberation of 1878 with the events of 1944. Thus, veterans of the war of 1878 participated hand in hand with the partisans of the anti-fascist struggle. 192

Nevski functions as the space where traditions are invented and identities contested. If in the period of the Party-State it became the arena where the rituals associated with the regime were practiced, after 1989 it transformed into a space where this very same regime was contested and nowadays it once again acquired symbolic significance in the current struggle over ritualistic practices pretending to become traditions. On June 10th 2010 the cathedral transformed into a concert stage. But this was not just one of those numerous concerts that supported the various political protests in the first decade of post-communist reality. On the contrary, this was an act of symbolic violence against all those whose hopes were shattered by the outcome of the

191 Maria Todorova indicates that the Cathedral “did become the symbolic opposition side in the early days of democracy."Mariia Nikolaeva Todorova, ‘Blowing up the Past: The Mausoleum of Georgi Dimitrov as Lieu De Memoire’, in Remembering Communism: Genres of Representation, ed. Maria Todorova (Social Science Research Council, 2010), 414.
transition.\textsuperscript{193} It was a ritualistic commemoration of the political apathy and the cultural submission to the dominance of the gangster neoliberal status quo. The concert was organized to celebrate 20 years of the production company of \textit{chalga} music, Pioneer, a company whose owner is known for his close friendship with prominent gangster bosses as well as the current Premier Borissov, who himself, allegedly, has a shadowy past related to organized crime business partnerships. \textit{Chalga} - organized crime’s favourite music – had not only monopolized the cultural market but had turned into a system of cultural values, affirming the heroic aura of the “tough boys” of new capitalist Bulgaria. At the concert, the flashy pornstar-look-alike images of the singers, known as gangsters’ mistresses, and the narratives promoting conspicuous consumerism, sexual pleasure and fast cars, as a reward of tough-boy status, combined with the monotonous standardization of oriental rhythms, to dramatize the Cinderella story of the repressed and to promote apolitical conformism. \textsuperscript{194}

As the presence of \textit{chalga} has grown within the Bulgarian culture industry, the dream of becoming a male gangster, or a female chalga singer, has obsessed the youth of Bulgaria. In a sense, the concert of Nevski signified a victory of the perpetrators of economic violence, the new owners of the means of production, over the discontented and politically active citizens. This is how temporally and spatially Nevski turned into the


zone where the nature of the transition was negotiated. The perception of Nevski with an arena of democratic struggle and change in collective memory was challenged by the reality of the change - an event that in the intellectual’s worldview represents the dominance of profanity and disappearance of “higher” culture that came with the gangster capitalism of today.

But the apparent seamlessness of this challenge was short lived. A week after the event, Sofia woke up to discover the Monument of the Soviet Army, one of the symbols of communist invented tradition, ironically updated to the new realities.

4.4. The Symbolic Significance of the Dissidents

The use of the Monument of the Soviet Army for an ironic commentary on neoliberal times invites us to consider in greater detail the history of dissident discourses in former socialist countries. A comparison between dissent narratives in Bulgaria and Czechoslovakia will shed light on how the past plays a role as a symbolic signifier of the present. In both countries Russia had come to symbolize the role of a liberator. I have already noted how Bulgarians gained their independence as a result of Russia's war against the Ottoman Empire and how this event was canonized in Bulgarian historiography as the Liberation. Especially after the imposition of the Soviet model the memory of the “The Liberation” helped to legitimize the decisive role of the Soviet Union in Bulgarian affairs. Alternatively, for the Czechs and Slovaks the Munich Agreement of 1938 between Chamberlain and Hitler, when the Sudeten lands were ceded to Hitler, symbolized the betrayer of the West. Germany was perceived as the enemy while the coming of the Soviet Union meant liberation and the guarantee of national independence. As Falk points out, even during the times of Stalinist terror, the Soviet Union’s aureole as a liberator did not diminish. To a great extent this is due to the great influence of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (CPZ) that attracted many intellectuals who saw themselves in a leadership position to bring the two nations on the road to modernity modeled under Stalin’s heavy industrialization project. Khruschev’s

Falk, The Dilemmas of Dissidence in East-Central Europe, 412.
de-Stalinization program did not lead to substantial transformation of the power structure inside the Party-State and the old Stalinist cadres remained in positions of power. Only when the consequences of heavy industrialization were evident – consumption was sacrificed in the name of production and centralized planning politicized the economy—did the intellectuals start to question the Soviet model. And, even then, the positive role of the Soviet Union remained largely unchallenged. Alexander Dubcek’s ‘Action Plan’ was an attempt at a radical transformation of the Soviet Party-State model, but it also remained true to the ideals of socialism and aimed to preserve the leading role of the Party in society. As Dubcek himself states, the purpose of the new policy was to create “democratic cooperation and confidence among social groups...freedom of assembly...freedom of the press...freedom of movement.” It never intended to dismantle socialism. The context of Czech struggle for socialism with a human face is characterized by a process of radical assessment of Russia’s role in the history of Czech independence. The Russian invasion became the turning point of reassessment of the Soviet Union from liberator to oppressor. The Prague spring, and subsequent events of resistance during the process of normalization, were charged with symbolic acts that later turned into rituals of the transition beyond socialism. Such acts included the self-sacrifice of the student, Jan Palach, who set himself on fire in protest of the Soviet invasion and in the demand for the democratization of real socialism. In Czech collective memory, Jan Palach transformed into a modern Jan Hus – the protestant who was burned at the stake for his heretical beliefs by the Catholic Church in 1415.

Another, seminal symbolic event was the self-sacrifice of the philosopher, Jan Patocka. In his study of philosophy and martyrdom Costica Bradatan situates Patocka’s tragic death in the “Socratic tradition of dying for an idea.” Bradatan makes the argument that, after realizing that his civic educational mission in Athens had failed, Socrates chooses to die and transforms his death into a powerful symbol of martyrdom in the name of truth. Due to his reputation, the figure of Patocka could serve to provide

196Ibid., 73.
moral grounds for the Charter 77 movement and to consolidate communist and non-communists into a unified bloc. As Falk points out, the Velvet Revolution in 1989 began with the twentieth-anniversary commemoration of Palach’s death. The point is, that such acts of self-sacrifice became powerful symbols of struggle that mobilized acts of real political resistance. Szelenyi et al. discuss the symbolic religious rituals of sacrifice, purification and confession as core elements that aimed to legitimize the transition in Central Europe, where former dissidents, managers and technocrats formed as the capitalist elite. The call for sacrifice is addressed to the whole society for the sake of the future. As the authors emphasize, such narratives can capitalize on the importance of sacrifice that the dissident discourse enacted, with the deaths of Palach and Patocka providing points.

Such narratives and dramatic symbolic acts are missing in the Bulgarian context. The communist party was not a driving political force prior to the coming of the Soviet Union and resistance was more muted. Indeed, participants in the meeting between Bulgarian dissidents and French President, Francois Mitterrand, in January, 1989, were subject to a strict process of selection by the Party. Zhivkov’s proposition to Khrushchev for Bulgaria to become 16th republic of the USSR, or the presence of Bulgarian troops in Prague in 1968 and the campaign against the Turkish population in

199 On January 1989, 12 intellectuals among whom future first democratic President Zhelev, whose book “Fascism” had gotten him in trouble with the regime and future vice President, Blaga Dimitrova, poet and novelist, who was subject to censorship, as well as prominent writers, scholars, journalists, a scientist and an art painter, that were known for their belief in the socialist ideals and many were members of the Communist Party met with French President Mitterrand in Sofia. This was the first official acknowledgment of the existence of dissident movement in Bulgaria by a Western leader. Христова, Специфика на българското дисидентство.
Bulgaria in the late-1980s, all contributed to narratives of the shameful past. These narratives construct the perception of Bulgaria as the most obedient satellite. The shame that Bulgaria did not have its Prague Spring, or Hungarian revolution, is part of a narrative deeply engraved in collective memory and is a key characteristic of Bulgaria’s national identity formation. This is the narrative of Bulgarians’ idleness and obedience to those in power, either foreign or domestic. Instead of stories of dissent, in Bulgarian collective memory the shame of compliance with the regime is one of the enduring stories of the communist past. Furthermore, unlike a country such as Poland, where some priests were in the vanguard of anti-communist struggles, religion is not a strong social factor in Bulgaria that could serve as an ideological connection to the dichotomy Communism/anti-Communism. The symbolic value of religion as a source for dissidence is not common.

The symbolic meaning of sacrifice in the Bulgarian case is substituted by shame. As I noted in Chapter 2 this gives ‘the experts’ justification to assign blame to the Bulgarian people and deem them incapable of ruling themselves. The next step in the ideological process of symbolizing the transition is the idea of purification. Purification simply entails cleansing society of its former past, which is interpreted only as dark period of pollution, not only environmental, but also of minds and souls. Those generations that grew up under the Soviet system are rendered hopeless for purification. The old generations are considered the ones that carry the sickness of

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200 Despite the popularity of the 16th Republic narrative, such a wording does not exist in the documentation of the speeches, Zhivkov proposes economic merger to Khruschev, due to the economic situation in Bulgaria. Usually this act is interpreted as Zhivkov’s total submission and complete political dependence. Rarely is it analyzed as a manoeuvre on part of Zhivkov to demonstrate loyalty in return for economic concession. In the international context of the Cold War such a merger was hard to conceive. For this position see Калинова and Baeva, Българските преходи 1939-2002. As Falk points out the presence of Hungarian, Polish, East German and Bulgarian troops as part of the Warsaw Pact is strictly symbolic and serves to legitimize the Soviet invasion. In that sense one can compare current US invasions in Afghanistan and Iraq where Bulgaria as a NATO member has to participate in actual combat operations. As Falk points out the presence of Hungarian, Polish, East German and Bulgarian troops as part of the Warsaw Pact is strictly symbolic and serves to legitimize the Soviet invasion. In that sense one can compare current US invasions in Afghanistan and Iraq where Bulgaria as a NATO member has to participate in actual combat operations.

201 Eyal et al., Making Capitalism Without Capitalists, 105.
collectivism and the backwardness of peasant culture. The final symbolic stage is confession. This translates into the formation of narrative that aims to reveal the crimes of the Soviet regime and assign personal blame on those responsible. In Bulgaria this process has had a very limited effect. Despite the militant anti-communist discourses of neoliberal think-tanks, and of the political right more broadly, the question of assessing the past is still an open one.

4.5. Battles over the Past

The discussion so far suggests that the debate over the reworking of the Monument of the Soviet Army is only the tip of an iceberg of ideological complexity. Bulgarians are living through a symbolic battle over the past that has been waging since the fall of Zhivkov’s regime. Recent debate around the monument and all the emotional reactions to it, became a component of this battle. This battle has substantial political implications because the past continues to be used as an instrument to justify claims to power. The battle is waged both from the right and from the left, but, ultimately, it is a battle waged by political elites, where selective reading of the past is pressed into the service of political agendas. In a political-economic environment which does not promise much in the sense of social and economic wellbeing, the narratives of the past can play a symbolic role that assigns meaning to the disorder of the new. Whose interpretation of the past will be accepted by Bulgarian citizens is based on the structure of the social order.

In the course of this symbolic battle the representation of the past often evokes feelings of nostalgia. On this point, Svetlana Boym differentiates between two types of nostalgia – retroactive and reflexive. Retroactive nostalgia is based on the premise of rebuilding a lost home, but it is a home that never existed, an idealized image, cleared

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202 Lavergne’s study contains many examples of the experts’ refusal to define the Soviet model as project of modernity. In their ideological vocabulary collectivism equals peasant culture. Anguelova-Lavergnee, _Ekspertite Na Prekhoda_.


204 Boym, _The Future of Nostalgia_.

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out of the controversies of history. Retroactive nostalgia longs for an idyllic mythical past of grandeur, which is temporally and spatially stale – that is how it can be so readily linked to nationalistic projects of revival that transform historical narratives into mythmaking of history. As Boym points out the retroactive nostalgics do not think of themselves as nostalgic, they believe that their project is about truth. National memory relates to a state of retroactive nostalgia because it is presenting what Boym calls “a single teleological plot” a narrative about history that has no gaps and discontinuities and turns into “a coherent and inspiring tale about recovered identity.”

Retroactive nostalgia has played a role during the various regimes that were engaged in nationalistic projects - the authoritarian rule of King Boris III, the emphasis on the medieval and revival period during Zhivkov and now it seems that there is a new form of nostalgia that capitalizes on the notion of a combination of former myths and conspiracy theories. Gerald Creed points that nostalgia is a product of modernity and a reaction to its accelerated pace of time that brings constant change. This change of time has been characteristic of the various projects’ on the road to modernity in Bulgaria, that required that the past be erased, thus creating the notion of constant repetition of

205 Ibid., 41.
206 Ibid., 53.
history. Not surprisingly 23 years after the transition to capitalism Bulgarians still cannot come to terms with their past; they shift from one form of nostalgia to another.

If we consider the Bulgarian capital, Sofia, we can trace the process of retroactive nostalgia as a mythmaking going back to the late 19th century. In 1879 the decision to make Sofia a capital was based on the national myth of the San Stefano dream, the logic was that in a united, Greater Bulgaria, Sofia would be situated at the center of the country. From 1941 to 1944 this short-lived nationalist dream of Greater Bulgaria materialized. The planning and state-sponsored development and innovation undertaken in Sofia in the 1930s and 1940s, under Mayor Ivan Ivanov, reveals a the combination between a fascistic aesthetic project of national mythmaking and a striving to create a modern European capital that would represent the achievements of the Bulgarian nation. In accordance with the ideological base of fascism, Ivanov’s mayorship was engaged in searching for the mythical past of glorious civilizational achievements. As Irina Gigova points out, Ivanov’s was a technocratic vision of modernization and rejuvenation that aimed to advertize the historical and modern achievements of Bulgaria to the world. Sofia was engaged in intricate invention of traditions that served to symbolize continuity between the glorious past and the rule of Boris III – the achiever of Greater Bulgaria, building monuments of heroes from the national pantheon. Ivanov aimed to show the continuity with the ancient Thracian civilization who gave the city its

Kiossev poses the question: Is the historical rhythm of self-colonizing cultures as eternal repetition and return? In the Bulgarian case we can identify three historical periods in which the state undertook three different civilizational models on the road to modernity imported from. If we define the Ottoman period as pre-state period the 19 c. Revival is the period when a small elite is introduced to the ideas of modernity – modernity embraced by a small intellectual elite. From 1879 to 1944 – the nation-state as a project of modernity between pre-modern and modern economic relations, overwhelmingly peasant society, small intellectual elite acquiring state posts (agrarian capitalism, lack of industrialization) - 1944 – 1989; Soviet Union as a failed project of modernity – to catch up with the West – rapid industrialization combined with pre-modern social relations; 1989 - EU as the new civilizational model. All of these projects require ceasing with the past and its demonization.

Bulgarians still use the ambiguous term changes when describing the period after the fall of Zhivkov’s regime. Despite the monopolization of language by think-tanks that introduced the term transition in public discourse, changes is still prevalent a word used by most Bulgarians. It refuses to assign any assessment of the system that emerged after the fall of the Soviet model.

older name – Serdika as well as with the medieval Bulgarian kingdom and the heroes of the national revolution of 19th century. Strongly influenced by one totalitarian system as a civilizational model whose ideology mythologized the past, Bulgaria later embraced with equal zeal another civilizational model, whose ideology required a race with time in the name of the ideal future.

Despite the difference in political affiliation and scale there seems to be a striking similarity here between Ivan Ivanov’s ambitious projects influenced by fascist aesthetic and Yuri Luzhkov’s megalomaniac projects as an architect of state capitalism in Moscow. During his 10 years as a mayor of Moscow, Luzhkov, in a top-down manner and in a corrupt process of selecting architects favoured by him, took it upon himself to restore the grandeur of Moscow based in a myth of the city as a Third Rome. Two of Luzhkov’s megalomaniac projects included the restoration of the biggest orthodox cathedral – The Cathedral of Christ the Saviour and the building of the largest shopping mall. As Boym points out, both of those projects symbolically challenged Stalin’s earlier rejection of religion and commerce. Yet, she argues that Luzhkov’s projects harbour a double nostalgia, both for Russia’s and Soviet’s greatness. The manner in which Luzhkov operated, and his ambition to be the father of new capitalist Moscow, revealed nostalgia toward Stalin’s grandeur and the era of Brezhnev’s “stability.” This stability was shattered when the symbol of Luzhkov’s new capitalism of conspicuous consumption was attacked – the mall was bombed a year after its opening with a note indicating an attack on consumerism.

We can say that before the phenomenon of nostalgia for late socialism, characteristic of all of Eastern Europe, Bulgaria first experienced nostalgic tendencies toward the pre-communist past. The fall of the Berlin Wall led to complete rereading of the history of the last 50 years. For example, the events of September 9th 1944 that were formerly celebrated as the people’s revolution against fascism, made successful by the partisans, was reassigned totally opposite meaning, given the status of a coup that could only be made possible with the advancement of the Soviet Army on Bulgarian

Svetlana Boym explores the elements of retroactive nostalgia in Luzhkov’s projects who attempted to revive the myth of Mosco as a Third Rome. Boym, The Future of Nostalgia, 81–121.
lands. This leads to the question of what kind of regime ruled Bulgaria before the events of September 1944. Current Bulgarian historiography leans more toward the argument that the existence of fascism in Bulgaria was minimal. In that case the stories of the heroic struggle of the anti-fascist forces that the previous regime massively produced started to be questioned. If there was no fascism in Bulgaria and if the Bulgarian government of Boris III was not oppressive to its own people, then who were the partisans fighting and who were they punishing after taking power? This raised the question of retribution that was particularly severe in Bulgaria and led to thousands of dead.

The new assessment of history inevitably brought the conclusion that what happened on September 9th 1944 was a coup enabled by a foreign power that installed a government that was friendly to the foreign power’s interests. The government committed crimes against the Bulgarian people on a massive scale in order to remain in power, because of the lack of popular support. On a symbolic level the regime was foreign to the organism of the Bulgarian people. More importantly, Judt shows how the imposition of the Soviet model in Eastern and Central Europe appropriated national myths for its own agenda. The regimes presented themselves as revolutionary.

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213 For example the People’s Court (1944-1945) brought to trial about 11 000 persons, 2618 are sentenced to death. In comparison The Nuremberg Tribunal issued 12 death sentences. The People Court’s objective was to eliminate the political, administrative and intellectual elite of the monarchist regime -regents, ministers, high-ranking army officials, civil servants, anti-communist intellectuals, and religious clergy. The FF labelled as fascist anyone who disagreed with the new power. The actual number of those killed by the new regime has not been documented, estimates vary from 18 000 to 30 000. Thousands were sent to labor camps. According to Gospodinka Nikolova the goal of the trials and repressions is to bring the process of Sovietization to an end and eliminate the old economic experts and destroy trade autonomy. Soviet specialists were appointed in all economic ministries. Daskalov, Debating the Past, 267–275.

214 Such views are expressed by scholars like PlamenTzvetkov, VenelinGanev, Georgi Fotev, MilenSemkov, Georgi Bakalov. See for example, Георги Фотев, Дългата нощ на комунизма в България (Изток-Запад, 2008); Цветков, Между руския комунизъм и германския националсоциализъм.
modernizers of backward states. While in fact “the true revolutionary cesura in modern Eastern European history came in 1939 and not 1945.” The Nazi Germany model was also a revolutionary model on the road to modernity, characterized by authoritarian rule and undermining faith in the rule of law in order to sweep away old elites. To the nationalistic intellectual and political elites in Eastern Europe, especially in Bulgaria, an alliance with Hitler promised the prospect for national unification and a new program towards modernity based on a theory of race. Many prominent Bulgarian intellectuals found an answer to the national question in the mythologizing of the past in accordance with the fascist doctrine. However, as Judt points out, the social revolution started under Germany was completed under the Soviet Union. Gigova’s study of mayor Ivanov’s projects shows the continuity of the municipal governments’ attempts to modernize Sofia in the transition from monarshism to the Soviet type republic and the similarities in the totalitarian aesthetics of fascism and Stalinism. The post-war planners strictly followed Stalinist monumentalism and transformed most of Sofia in accordance with this model. The attempt was to sever any connections with Western Europe and the capitalist past. New traditions were invented and new monuments built, with the revolution of the 19th century, and the liberation from the Ottomans, reinsignified as a continuation with the past. Yet, as Gigova points out, socialist architecture and city planning incorporated smoothly the main buildings and landmarks of the previous political regime.

Still, these revisionist interpretations in Bulgarian historiography present a quite romantic image of the past before the communist takeover. This romantic image diminishes the authoritarian manner in which the country was ruled during King Boris III’s regime. It underlines the diplomatic manoeuvres with which Boris III avoided sending troops to the Eastern front, saving Jewish citizens and preserving diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union, while the cultural climate during the regime is not taken into account. The romanticising of the monarchist regime plays to nostalgic sentiments and serves a double purpose. On the one hand, as I argued in the last chapter, it functions

216 See for example, Ianko Iankov, Stoian Mihajlovski, Naiden Sheitanov in Еленков and Даскалов, Защо сме такива?.
as part of the “back to Europe discourse” that became prevalent among ECECs – thus the years of Soviet power become a hiatus, a period that diverted Bulgaria from its historical path to modernity. The “back to Europe” discourse was especially pronounced during the presidency of Petur Stoyanov and the government of Ivan Kostov from 1997 to 2001 when Bulgaria was making serious efforts to become a member of NATO and the EU.

In his examination of the post-war years in Western Europe Judt discovers that despite the denazification process both in West and East Germany many of those who formed the Nazi apparatus actually took part in the reconstruction process and remained in positions of power. The same can be said for Bulgaria after 1989 where members of the nomenklatura and secret services are present in most influential political parties and continue to play major roles in political, economic and cultural life. Yet, the political rivals of the former Communist Party, that renamed itself socialist, many of whom came from the party ranks themselves, aimed to criminalize the previous regime on the ground of national treason and thus delegitimize the claim to power of its political legacy – Bulgarian Socialist Party. The opposition concentrated on the darker aspects of the past – the repression after 1944 and the People’s Court that sentenced members of the previous cabinets to death; the execution of the opposition inside FF; the labor camps; the oppression against Turkish minorities in the 80s; the political assassinations by State Security.

The first attack on this ideological battlefield came from the opposition to the communist regime. In 1990 UDF came with a map of all the labour camps – more than a hundred that spread around Bulgaria until 1962. A skull and bones marked every camp. This electoral PR strategy of a French expert backfired – Bulgarian society was not yet ready to discover the shocking details of the recent past. Anti-communist discourse in Bulgaria was prevalent until the late 1990s. This is also the period where the former BCP, now BSP, managed to remain directly or indirectly in power. The prevalent play in the political theatre was how to use the anti-communist discourse for your own political advantage and shift public support to your side. Thus, the Union of Democratic Forces (UDF) emphasized the atrocities of the communist regime claiming to provide the
democratic alternative, while BSP pointed to the presence of various fascist parties in the UDF. \(^{217}\)

All the responsibility for the existence of the system was assigned to the leader Zivkov. The new leadership presented themselves as Gorbachev style reformers who had to suffer under Zhivkov’s regime. Zhivkov was blamed both for repression and inadequate economic policies. Up until 1997, with the exception of a period of several months the anti-communist UDF was incapable of getting into power. The fading of the first stage of the anti-communist discourse was also in relation to the unsuccessful trials against Zhivkov and the supervisors of labor camps. Despite, initial interest the trials did not manage to gain public approval. The anti-communist discourse started to fade away during the early 2000s when UDF’s support dropped to catastrophic levels. From a strong political power it became a marginal center-right party.

Until the crisis of 1996, socio-economic conditions in Bulgaria were not as bad as they later became. \(^{218}\) In a sense the UDF itself unintentionally took part in a softening of

\(^{217}\) Baeva and Kalinova point that several parties were created that presented as heirs of existing political parties prior to the formation of the Party-State. For example Radical Democratic Party (RDP) of Mikahil Nedelchev was formed in December 1989. It was most active in creating a demonic image of the communist regime and aimed to reconstruct the present on the basis of pre-1944 past through property restitutions. The nationalist, Inner Macedonian Revolutionary Organization (IMRO) formed as a heir of the revolutionary group of the same name. Its anti-Communism was based on the Macedonian question, blaming the communist for betraying Macedonia; perhaps one of the most problematic parties was the Bulgarian Democratic Forum (BDF) that was a heir of the Bulgarian Legions founded in 1930 with pronounced fascist and anti-Semitic character, the BDF downplayed the Legions past praising it as a patriotic organization, striving for Bulgarian national values. Despite the marginal political role of those parties their strong anti-communist discourse was quite influential, while their presence in the UDF played on the fears of older generations of “return to fascism” this was cleverly used by the heirs of the BSP to claim de-legitimacy of the UDF. Iskra Baeva and Evgenia Kalinova, ‘Bulgarian Transition and the Memory of the Socialist Past’, in Remembering Communism: Genres of Representation, ed. Mariia Nikolaeva Todorova (Social Science Research Council, 2010).
the extreme political polarization that the anti-communist discourse fuelled. The period before UDF’s decisive victory in 1997, after the economic collapse that led to hyperinflation, was used to activate nostalgia, not for the recent past, but for the years of monarchism – notably, the Third Bulgarian kingdom. The production of books and documentaries showed King Boris III in a favourable light and brought nostalgia for the benevolence of his rule. Several monarchist groups took part in UDF and were very active to keep the image of Boris III alive and to introduce his exiled son Simeon II who started making visits to Bulgaria, meeting with supporters of his deceased father. The final result of this politicking was a triumphant political success when National Movement Simeon Second (NMSS) won the elections and Simeon became Prime-Minister. 219

Still, the devastating polarization of society, the catastrophic demographic and social results, the crumbling of education and health care initiated a reverse process, in which the recent past was perceived as not being so scary anymore. It seems that in this process the reflective nostalgia of personal and collective memory met the retroactive nostalgia fabricated by private and governmental interests. This type of nostalgia required the production of memory in which not only the state took part but also mass media and cultural institutions. However, the first step toward redeeming the past that later would progress into nostalgia came from the former dictator Zivkov. In 1991 Zhivkov wrote an open letter to parliament taking full responsibility for both negative and

218 According to Ganev this was the period when the former elites deprive the state of assets from within. Ganev, Preying on the State. The first big failure of the UDF was the agrarian reform that was implemented in 1991 during the short-lived government of Philip Dimitrov (1991-1992). The devastating results of the agrarian reform swayed the rural electorate towards BSP for decades For the ideological aspect of the land reform driven by nostalgic need to reverse the pre-1944 past and disregarding the current socioeconomic conditions and state of agriculture see Christian Giordano, and Dobrinka Kostova, ‘The Social Production of Mistrust’, in Postsocialism Ideals, Ideologies, and Practices in Eurasia, ed. C. M. Hann (London; New York: Routledge, 2002).

219 Ironically, in addition to an ill-conceived attempt to renegotiate Bulgaria’s debt, NMSS was known for granting permission to Simeon Sax-Coburg-Gotha to acquire substantial lands and state property, which he claimed as his heritage. This won him the nickname “Kradliv Dedo”, literally, “Stealing Grand Pa.” A short search on Google shows the popularity of the nickname when referring to the former Prime Minster.
positive developments during his tenure. Gradually this became the common position of BSP in an effort to capitalize on the socio-economic safety of the previous regime.

Boym has undertaken research on a roughly similar politics of nostalgia in Russia in the 1990s. According to Boym, this nostalgia in Russia was based on old Soviet movies that appeared during that time, a nostalgia that was prompted by a need to believe that Soviet life from 1960s to 1980s resembled those movies. Nostalgia was also born out of a different way of watching those movies – the scepticism about the depiction of Soviet life had disappeared in favour of a sense of longing and loss. What Boym observes in Russia seemed to be the case in Bulgaria ten years later, a period when Bulgarian movies from Zhivkov’s era started appearing on all TV stations and brought about feelings of nostalgia. Creed explains the existence of nostalgia in the former Eastern bloc, especially in Bulgaria, as a form of trauma. He defines this trauma as a national syndrome that comes as a result of the disappearance of the paternalistic state with no guarantee for social safety. Creed argues that nostalgia is a phenomenon that occurs when all possibilities of going back have been exhausted and when there is some evidence of improvement without any extensive amelioration. It is nostalgia of the disadvantaged. Maria Todorova points out that this nostalgia is not only based on a longing for the socio-economic stability and security that the regime provided but the feeling of loss of an older form of sociability, loss of dignity and sense of meaning. This is also what Yurchak describes as the “longing for the very real humane values, ethics,

221 This position was further reinforced by the memoirs of those who were close to Zhivkov – such as his advisers NikoYachel and Konstantin Chakurov. For contestation of this view see HristoHristov – The Secret Bankruptcies of Communism, whose research of the Party archive shows that during Zhivkov Bulgaria was bankrupt three times in 1960s and 1970s. This is what prompted Zhivkov to merge Bulgaria economically with the USSR, Христо Христов, Тайните фалити на комунизма: истината за краха на българския социализъм в секретния архив на делото Но 4/1990 за икономическата катастрофа (Siela, 2007).
friendships and creative possibilities that the reality of socialism afforded – often in spite of the state’s proclaimed goals.”

It seems that what Todorova and Yurchak describe is a form of reflexive nostalgia, according to Boym’s definition. Reflexive nostalgia, as opposed to retroactive, is about longing for something that is not coherent and characterized by totality; it is always open to individual and collective multiple readings and it is about fragments of various histories, not one totalizing history. As such, reflexive nostalgia has the potential to be critical of ideological spin. As Boym suggests, being nostalgic for the songs of a pop singer during Tito’s regime does not mean that you are nostalgic for the Yugoslavia of Tito’s regime. Reflexive nostalgia does not condone the power structures of the past in a way that retroactive nostalgia mythologizes history. Reflexive nostalgia is that of everyday people, unmediated by the narratives and stories of state and media institutions. It has the potential to subvert the retroactive nostalgia of state initiated inventions of traditions and commemorations of ideal past. In the mid 2005 BSP was once again given a chance of forming a cabinet, although in coalition with two of its former ideological enemies, the ex-king Simeon II and the Turkish minority party, MRF. BSP tried to capitalize on the feeling of reflexive nostalgia and turn it into retroactive nostalgia. The director of public television, BNT, Uliana Prumova, was close to the BSP leadership and the TV was extensively showing Bulgarian movies from the period of late socialism. The Prime Minister and leader of the socialists, Sergei Stanishev, even came up with his own book entitled “Because We Are Socialists.” Bulgaria’s acceptance to the EU during Stanishev’s government gave the socialists further incentive to capitalizing on the successful aspects of the previous regime by claiming continuity.

Yet, this claim was far from reality – not only were the socialists unable or unwilling to deliver the promise of the welfare state that their electorate nostalgically longed for, but their policies showed an outright incongruity with the ideals of socialism. For example, Stanishev’s government embarked on radical neoliberal policies, such as reducing corporate tax to 10%, making it the lowest in Europe. Stanishev was also quite complacent about the existence of US military bases in Bulgaria and was instrumental in

224 Yurchak, Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More, 8.
the decision to send Bulgarian soldiers to Iraq and Afghanistan. BSP lost the elections in 2009 after a series of scandals and accusations for EU funds embezzlement.

With GERB in power the theme of the communist crimes gained new popularity. For the first time the discourse was shifted from the victim narrative to an attempt to challenge the symbolism of shame.

4.6. A Story of Resistance

Against the backdrop of the power struggles and changes noted above, it is not surprising that the meanings associated with the commemorations and invented traditions become contested and can go through numerous mutations, once the ideological climate changes. The Monument of the Soviet Army illustrates this point. Surrounding the context of the building of this monument emerged new narratives that contested the traditional narratives of Bulgaria’s obedient past and Bulgarians’ obedience towards the Soviet Union. Built at the peak of the Sovietisation of Bulgaria under the Stalinist course of Vulko Chervenkov, this is the time when the last armed resistance against the Soviet model was crushed. These emergent narratives of the silenced past came to represent the drive of Bulgarian people to redeem themselves from the stigma of being the most loyal satellite of the Soviet Union, of being complacent to the system. Until recently, the dominant discourse of Eastern European resistance has focused on three key areas and events: the Hungarian revolution of 1956; the Prague spring of 1968; and later the rise of Poland’s Solidarity in 1980. The first two instances of opposition were attempts not to topple the system but, rather, to create

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226 It is an official discourse in the literature to explain the lack of massive protests Soviet system in Bulgaria as evidence of complacency. On the other hand, Daskalov has pointed to the much larger scale of repression in Bulgaria in the early Stalinist period in comparison to the Eastern European countries. Chalukov, explains the high level of complacency with the higher economic development of Bulgaria during 1960-1970s that gave the Party-State a much prestigious role. Чалъков, Мрежите на прехода.
socialism with a human face. The last instance, in Poland, started as a labor union struggle for better social conditions but gradually grew to became the force that enabled the transformation of Polish society along neoliberal lines.

Only recently has the narrative of obedience been questioned. The story of the Goriani has not yet entered official historiography but started to play an important role in media discourse. The question though is why did it take more than 20 years? In his book Silencing the Past Michel Rolph-Trouillot writes that “each historical narrative renews a claim to truth.” This is a claim both to knowledge from the producer(s) – that what is claimed is known to have happened and a claim to acceptance – the audience accepts the story as true. The narratives that exist in textbooks, museums, national holidays are sources where we learn history. Yet, the process of producing ‘history’ is selective:

Silences enter the processes of historical production at four crucial moments: the moment of fact creation (the making of sources); the moment of fact assembly (the making of archives); the moment of fact retrieval (the making of narratives); and the moment of retrospective significance (the making of history in the final instance).

What is told, and what remains silent, involves a process that requires the exercise of power - “the materiality of the socio-historical process (historicity 1) sets the stage for future historical narratives (historicity 2).” History is produced in accordance with the existing political conjunctures and the existing political orders. Conflicting stories about events that happened in the past are silenced and only one story remains as the official story of history’s interpretation. In Bulgaria, the creation of monuments symbolizing the Bulgarian people’s gratitude toward Russian, and later Soviet soldiers, is an example of selective interpretation that silences alternative stories of the past. Such silenced stories remain dormant, waiting to be retold, or they live in collective memory acquiring apocryphal status, challenging the dominant Truth. It is an act of Bakhtinian

227 Falk, The Dilemmas of Dissidence in East-Central Europe.
228 In this relation the political support from Thatcher and Reagan, the leaders of the conservative revolution, that Solidarity enjoyed has to be taken into account.
230 Ibid., 29.
turning of the social order on its head that opens up the space for such stories to come out. Yet, the making of history as Trouillot points out is dependent on power relations. What story will the historical narrative of Goriani tell and how depends on those that produce it.

The first attempts to retell the story were made by politicians and journalists. In the last two years two major events marked the process of reinterpretation of the past in relation to the question of resistance to Communism. One was a conference in the EU Parliament in 2010 entitled “The Endured European Dream of Bulgaria (1944-1989)” and organized by Andrey Kovatchev, an EU deputy from the center-right EPP Group and member of the ruling party GERB. Among the guests and the participants in the event were the President of the European Parliament, Jerzy Buzek; the former president of the EP and current chairman of the ‘Konrad Adenauer’ foundation, Hans Pottering, as well as journalists and historians. Some of the survivors of the regime’s repression were also present. The second event was a 2011 release of a documentary film by Atanas Kiriakov that specifically is dedicated to the story of the Goriani and consists of a series of interviews with the few survivors of the movement. The film was shown at a prime time on BNT. The distribution of the film was sponsored by Kovatchev himself. The intent was to send copies of the film to university libraries in Europe and North America.

The Goriani was an armed resistance movement that fought the Stalinist regime of Vulko Chervenkov from the mid-1940s to mid-1950s. Yet, the stories of resistance that were silenced seem to have a one-sided interpretation of anti-communist struggles, as if all of the resisters were united in their position, which aimed at a return to the monarchist regime. The motley political character of the movement – supporters of the agrarian party, anarchists, social-democrats, Monarchists, or unaffiliated peasants and ethnic Turks, triggered by the terror of the Sovietization - somehow remains out of the spectre of the analysis. The story of the Goriani is still awaiting its scholarly research and assessment. What compelled people from such different political associations to unite in a single struggle? Another interesting question is the primarily peasant character of the

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resistance and the absence of strong intellectual presence. Could this emphasize Bulgarian intellectuals’ commitment on the road to modernity through rapid industrialization, sacrificing the peasantry in return, or could this mean that the intellectuals of the previous regime were either physically eliminated or demoralized and stifled by fear?

Here I will attempt to put the rise of the armed resistance into context. According to the official history of the regime, the transitional period from capitalism to socialism occurred from September 9th 1944 till 1958 (collectivization is completed) marked by the Seventh Congress of the BCP. 232The period from 1944 till 1948 is called “people’s democracy” when the multiparty system still existed and the process of nationalization and collectivization had not started. The exchanges between Stalin and Dimitrov, which Dimitrov documents in his diaries, show that Stalin was aware of the lack of strong support of the Soviet modeled communist party in Bulgaria.233 He did not harbour any illusions about the strong position of the Bulgarian Agrarian National Union (BANU) among the peasantry as the most influential anti-monarchist and leftist political force. Both Stalin and Dimitrov knew that any attempt to implement collectivization policies like the ones in the Soviet Union would be met by massive resistance on the part of the peasantry that constituted about 80% of the Bulgarian population. Adding to the complexity, by the end of the 1930s, about 60% of all rural families were in the General Union of Bulgarian Agricultural Cooperatives.234 The cooperatives relieved the peasantry of financial debt to usurers and strengthened confidence in the agrarian union. The peasants saw in BANU their own party, and despite the short-lived reign and tragic death of Alexander Stamboliiski, his agrarian ideology was highly popular and his

232Daskalov, Debating the Past, 228–245.
234The establishment of the Central Cooperative Bank in 1911 and the GUBAC in 1914 improved the lives of Bulgarian peasants. The first BANU leader Alexander Stamboliiski was a member of GUBAC’s committee. He would later become a Prime-Minister (1919-1923).R. J. Crampton Bulgaria, Oxford History of Modern Europe (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 290-291.
234Not surprisingly in later years when the communists moved to acquire all the power, resistance came mainly from agrarian supporters.
educational reforms aimed at creating a strong base of rural intellectuals. Richard Crampton also points to the strong links between the rural intellectuals – teachers and priests – that ran the cooperatives and organized the peasantry. The agrarian union was a political party that had managed to create its own organic intellectuals that held strong influence among the rural population. Thus, Stalin proposed various tactics which the Communists could use to sway peasant support away from the agrarian union and towards the communists. In a letter that Dimitrov indicates in his diary, Stalin even urged the Bulgarian to form a Labour Party modeled under the British Labourites to allure the peasants into supporting the Communists. 235

1947 marked the “acceleration of the revolutionary process” – nationalization of banks and industrial enterprises and, in 1948, the multiparty system was abolished and the leaders of the other left organizations – Agrarian Union and Social Democrats were put on trial and executed. During the Sovietization period, as Ekaterina Nikova argues, “the small political, cultural and economic elite that this peasant nation had been growing for sixty-six years of its independent existence was practically wiped out...[along with] and the breaking of the backbone of the peasantry.” 236 The revitalization of the story of resistance between the years of 1944-1954, seems to be silencing the deeper implications of its significance in relation to the questions of national identity. In order to avoid limited representation of this struggle one needs to analyze the characteristics of the Goriani movement. In all three cases of resistance in Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Poland the role and presence of intellectuals were prevalent. That does not seem to be the case in Bulgaria, where the resistance took the form of an armed struggle primarily around villages.

A closer look at the Goriani reveals that they were an eclectic group formed primarily by the peasantry who resisted the Sovietisation of Bulgarian society and the imposed top-down project of industrialized modernization. The majority of them were supporters or sympathizers of the influential anti-monarchist Agrarian Union party, the

most numerous and organized political force and dangerous left alternative to the communists. The Goriani variously represented the interests of the peasantry – at that time most of Bulgarian population but there were also anarchists, Trotskyists, and former communist guerrilla fighters. In addition, the movement also included military officers from the monarchist army, right-wing nationalists, and minority groups whose religion was threatened, or anyone resisting the terror. The Goriani struggle intensified during the period of forced land collectivization and after the execution of the Agrarian leader, Nikola Petkov. The beginning of the movement occurred through symbolic resistance – taking out the portraits of communist leaders and replacing them with pictures of revolutionaries from the national revival period. The terror during collectivization, and the various acts of random violence and abuse of power committed by Communist party affiliates, brought about the need to form small resistance groups that hid in the local forests and struck out at local administrations. The struggle continued for a period of ten years, with an estimate of about 30,000 participants (fighters and supporters).

Yet, one can read the movement in the larger context of resistance not only to the oppressive Sovietisation of Bulgaria as anti-communist struggle, but also as a struggle to preserve culture and tradition and way of life threatened by what was perceived as foreign to the Bulgarian people regime. We should probably situate the Goriani closer to the numerous peasant revolts against the Bolsheviks that occurred during the years of the Russian Civil War (1917-1922). They were not expression of desire to return to tsarism, on the contrary, containing the utopian impulse of socialism,

237 From 1944 until 1947 the Bulgarian Agrarian Union is represented in parliament as part of the Fatherland Front - a larger leftist coalition led by the Bulgarian Workers, later Communist Party. The FF is modeled under Dimitrov’s initial strategy to build larger counteralliance against fascism formulated during the Seventh Congress of the Comintern in 1935. Dimitrov was in direct contact with Gramsci. One can see elements of Gramscian thought both in the attempt for counterhegemonic blocs against fascism and in the idea of the Fatherland Front that at least in theory aimed to build a coalition between workers and peasants. However, this coalition is used as a tactic to counter the claims of Communist suppression of the opposition. The beginning of the Cold War and Tito’s refusal to follow the Soviet model prompts Stalin to send a directive to Dimitrov to begin massive repression and purges against all that oppose the Soviet model. As a result the leaders of the political parties that constituted the former coalition – Agrarian Union and Social Democrats are trialed and executed.

they refused to be imposed a top-down utopia from above. The Kronstadt
Commune (1917-1921) was one prominent example of the drive to create a society
based on grass roots democracy, solidarity, egalitarianism and compensatory justice
that differed from Lenin’s Bolsheviks. The commune was formed mainly by Ukrainian
sailors of peasant origin. It contained strong anti-authoritarian and peasant-like
characteristics, with a square where decisions were made. This was one of the many
short-lived organizations that sought left alternatives to the establishment of the
centralized Soviet state. The crush of the Goriani armed struggle marks the practical
affirmation of Soviet dominance. This was also the process of the affirmation of the
Soviet modeled Party-State.

John Kelly, echoing Walter Benjamin, warns that without the active role of
historians to promote the memory of struggle, those who dared to change history can
fade away or be distorted by those who have power over knowledge. Most
importantly, by keeping the memories of past struggles alive, these memories can
become inspiration for political movements in the present and future. In that sense, the
story of Forest People or Goriani can serve as an example that resonates with
Benjamin’s warning. In the documentary “Goriani” one of the survivors of the movement,
Milcho Borissov explains that the name was formed as a result of a need to differentiate
from previous national resistance groups during the Ottoman period or the communist
guerrillas. Yet, the name links to the legacy of armed resistance struggles in the
Balkans. The forest is an important part of Bulgarian national mythology that has a
strong symbolic significance – both the haiduts, as resistance groups during the
Ottoman period, and the partisans of the WWII period used the forest as their home. Will
the Goriani serve as an inspiration for political movements in the present and future?
There is certainly room for a project on the history of the movement as a broad struggle
against foreign and domestic oppression, and forced systems of hegemonic structures of
power, rather than existing histories which view the movement within the limited
discourse of anti-communist resistance.

239 John Kelly, ‘Time and the Global: Against the Homogeneous, Empty Communities in
Contemporary Social Theory’, Development and Change 29, no. 4 (1998): 846,
4.7. Contested Heroisms

I would like to conclude the discussion here with the question of heroism and the concept of *weak nationalism* as defined by Maria Todorova, in relation to the dichotomy Soviet soldiers (debunked heroes) vs. Goriani (hero candidates). Todorova defines heroes or heroines as individuals whose deeds and sacrifices have come to represent the values, ideals and aspiration of a society or group and who function as a protection and legitimacy of this group’s political or territorial position. 240 They serve to set an example and as an inspiration. Here I will touch on some elements of heroism to analyze the opposition between soviet soldiers and Goriani in comparative perspective, as case of contested heroism. A key characteristic in the construction of a hero or heroine is the sacrifice in the name of the whole – the collective, or the nation. 241 There are key elements that link the national hero to the religious sanctity – sacrificing for the collectivity, the voluntary renouncing of the gift of life for the life of the nation, the renunciation of personal happiness. Of particular importance here is the subsequent immortality of the hero or heroine, as well as the violent death he/she suffers.

Thus, if we restrict heroism to the nation-state the question of how a hero/heroine functions, what values, ideals and aspirations it aspires for depends on the process of his/her ideological formation. The hero becomes such and lives in collective memory through a process of institutionalized production, which we can situate as part of Hobsbawm’s invention of traditions. Nationalism can be linked to the power of religion because in the same manner it evokes enormous emotional force and has a quasi-sacred character. Katherine Verdery defines it as ancestor worship, where national heroes occupy the place of clan elders. 242

The monuments of the unknown soldiers that were built after World War I in Europe “are the highest symbolic link between nation and individual death.” 243 They also

241 The analyses below derive from Todorova’s theoretical survey of heroism Ibid., 483-491.
242 Cited in ibid., 492.
reflect the “democratization” of nationalism when common people enter the national pantheon of heroes. In this sense Reinhart Koselleck situates war memorials in relation to the perception of modern time as linear and open to unknown future, where the past becomes “a topography or map onto which historical experiences are captured in museums, monuments, photographs and film.”  

At the same time the connection with religious martyrdom is preserved, this time in the name of secularism. The eternal flame in front of the monument of unknown soldiers symbolizes the immortality of the fallen heroes for the sake of the nations’ future but also requires the next generations to follow in their steps. The mythologizing of the war experience and glorification of death “was designed to mask and to legitimize the war experience [and] displace the reality of war.”

Heroism acquired a somewhat different ideological purpose during the building of Stalin’s Soviet Imperial project. As Rosalinde Sartorti shows the process of production of heroes and heroines in the Soviet Union started as early as 1920s. The heroism of these times was not the individual heroism of nationalism but the collective heroism of all the people. Heroes of labor were required for the purposes of rapid industrialization. We can recall Sergei Oushakine’s concept of the void Soviet subject, or the erasure of the self in relation to Raymond Williams’ concept of the structure of feeling in the early Soviet Union. This was the type of heroism that requires complete scarifies of the self, the type that promotes shock work. It was also produced under the threat of being labelled “parasite” or “saboteur.” Heroism served to give an impulse for scarifies for the future in the name of modernization, but with the outbreak of war the type of heroism needed changed its purpose. It had to mobilize the people to fight the enemy. The nature of the war – the cruelty of Nazism and its goal to enslave the Slavic population and annihilate the Jews shifted the focus from the terror within to the terror coming from

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244 See ibid., 152–153.
245 George Mosse citied in ibid., 154.
247 Oushakine, ‘The Flexible and the Pliant’.
outside. Stalinism used the horrors perpetrated by the enemy to catalyze the defence of the peoples of the USSR, themselves victims of Stalin’s terror.

Almost immediately a process of hero production started, not in newspaper reports but “in warm and moving account written by professional novelists” on the battleground in accordance with the canons of socialist realism. The heroism of the Great Patriotic War was later depicted in numerous works of cinema. The manner in which heroes were produced though, was stylized, uniformed and standardized. Despite the countless examples of self-sacrifice during the war, the heroic deeds were always strictly framed to affirm Stalin’s cult of personality. The heroes and heroines whose gruesome deaths and subsequent depictions in film and literature brought them closer to religious martyrs all died for the Fatherland and for Stalin. According to Valentin Bogorov, “Stalin firmly situated himself in the context of the Russian imperial tradition.” The heroism depicted in the monuments built all over Eastern Europe was not concerned with the destinies of the fallen and was not meant to commemorate their memory. Those monuments were part of the demonstration of “prowess of the Soviet state.”

Because of this uniformed depiction of the Soviet heroes, despite being real persons and having names, the lack of individuality that characterized their commemorative creation formed them as nameless and selfless. The Soviet soldiers committed acts of self-sacrifice that mobilized the nations of the Soviet Union to defend the “Fatherland.” They fought the Great Patriotic War in the name of Stalin who presented himself as an emanation of the Soviet collective. But now their heroic aura as liberators has been contested. With the collapse of the Soviet Union stories of the silenced past started to contested the heroic status of the “victors over fascism.”

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249 Ibid., 179.
250 Ibid., 79.
252 According to Sartorti by the end of World War II there were more than 10 000 heroes recognized by the Soviet Union. Sartorti, ‘On the Making of Heroes, Heroines, and Saints’, 176.
Estonia for example as in Bulgaria the official history of the liberation was challenged. It started to contradict the new narrative of national history.253

It is in this context that the Goriani emerge to contest the heroic status of the Soviet Army. It is still early to predict whether they will become part of the pantheon of national heroes. But we can propose that the process of transferring of the Goriani from individual to collective memory has already started. I argue that whether they will become part of the invented traditions of the state and in what manner is open to future political developments in Bulgaria. Will they be situated as part of the pantheon of the fighters for national independence?

Here I would like to shift the discussion from the analysis of heroism to Maria Todorova’s concept of weak nationalism.254 She differentiates it from the aggressive, highly emotive nationalism associated with the “mission of chosen peoples.” Todorova argues that weak nationalism can be thought of as empirical, measurable category and can be analyzed in relation to the ability to mobilize extreme nationalist message in the public sphere.255 Her main example of weak nationalism is the Bulgarian case. As opposed to the Greek, Serbian and Romanian nationalisms the Bulgarian project of nationalism was not harmonized, there were contesting visions of the national idea.256 This added to the fact that Bulgarian nationalism did not enjoy strong international patron, comparable to philhellenism, Serbian Piedmontese analogy, or Romanian “Latin” kinship.257 But perhaps the most important aspect as to why we can consider Bulgaria as a case of weak nationalism was the utter defeat and humiliation of its irredentist project at an earlier historical time. For Todorova the devastating consequences of the three consecutive wars (First and Second Balkan Wars and World War I) served as sobering shock to the jingoistic nationalism of the military elite around the monarch. Todorova asserts that the catastrophic results of the wars led to a lack of

255 Ibid., 507.
256 Ibid., 509.
257 Ibid.
self-confidence that guaranteed the non-aggressive, or weak nationalism, characterized for Bulgaria.²⁵⁸

This is how Vasil Levski - a 19 c. revolutionary for national independence, with strong republican views, who as Todorova argues symbolizes opposition to regimes of power became the uncontested hero at the pyramid of the national pantheon.²⁵⁹ Todorova points to the ambiguous role of Levski who both becomes the “legitimizing armor of the ones in power, and the protest banner of the powerless.”²⁶⁰

It is in the context of weak nationalism that we should analyze the story of the Goriani struggle. It works on the same symbolic level as that of Levski’s heroism – as opponents of regimes of power. Not surprisingly Goriani’s resistance started with symbolic removal of the portraits of Communist heroes, substituting them with heroes of the national revolution, whose leader was Levski. As mentioned, the manner of armed resistance – as guerrilla bands attacking from the mountains and forests, brings them closer to the legacy of the haiduts, as protectors against social injustice during the Ottoman period. The Goriani story seems to contain the elements of heroism – sacrifice for the collectivity, the voluntary renouncing of life for the life of the nation, the renunciation of personal happiness. These elements bring them closer to their ideological opposites. The tragedy of the unknown Soviet soldiers consists in the appropriation of their heroism for Stalin’s imperial project. From figures of reverence and veneration they transform into figures of resentment. Whether the Goriani will carry the protest banner of the powerless, or whether the meaning of their act will be shifted to serve the Master-signifier of transition and thus the status quo remains to be seen.

²⁵⁸Ibid., 511.
²⁵⁹ In 2007 BNT launched a campaign modeled on a similar British campaign to determine the 10th greatest Bulgarians in popular poll. The results of this poll showed the presence of only one expenssinist medieval ruler, King Simeon I, who ranked number four. Levski was at top, followed by the spiritual teacher, Petur Dunov. The founder of the state, Khan Asparouh, was fourth, followed by Boris I who Christianized the Bulgarian people, next to him were the founders of the Slavic alphabet St. Cyril and St. Methodius, then Botev – the revolutionary poet, etc.
²⁶⁰Todorova, Bones of Contention, 511.
In my view, this is the ideological arena in which the reworking of the Monument of the Soviet Army acquires a new symbolical meaning, in accordance with a new reading of the recent past. The reworking of the monument is meant to change the existing historical narrative almost in a Bakhtinian medieval carnivalesque manner, where the changing of clothes identifies a changing of the social image and in a reversed hierarchical order the jester becomes king.²⁶¹ After 1989 those branded as criminals and reactionaries during the communist regime, became victims and defenders of democracy, while the former accusers became criminals and national traitors.²⁶² The previous nomenklatura changed its clothes (ideological slogans) from Marxism-Leninism to neoliberal capitalism but remained the same. New histories started to emerge and stories of struggle contested the narrative of shame. The discourse changed but many of the individuals in power did not. The artistic transformation of the Monument of the Soviet Army seems to expose this process and shows how, if galvanized by popular action, monumental tools of propaganda can become potent sites of popular resistance. I will return to this discussion in the final chapter of this thesis.

5. Challenging the “Truths”: Utopian Potentials and Wars of Position

Having shown how the Bulgarian intelligentsia play an active role in the formation of dominant discourses that function to form perceptions of identity I now move to the question of alternative meaning to those discourses. Here I will draw on Bakhtin’s study of language and the novel and his oppositional concepts of monoglossia and heteroglossia, as well as Yurchak and Boyer’s discussion of hypernormalization of authoritative discourse and the tactic of subversive overidentification with it. These inquiries are made with the attempt to answer the question whether the dominant discourses of Bulgarian identity that “explain” the traumas of historical experience and are formed in the context of intelligentsia’s claim of authoritative knowledge of Truths, can be opened up to new meanings that give potential to mobilize social change. Can we situate MSA’s transformation as part of a war of position on the cultural front that challenges the ideological discourses and how will such a war be related to Bakhtin’s carnival?

Yurchak and Boyer’s analysis illuminates the question of hypernormalization of discourse in late socialism and late capitalism. In a sense the article is continuation of Yurchak’s study of what he calls the paradox of late socialism – the experience of a culture characterized by distrust of the crude official ideological performative aspects of the Party line. The ideological rigidity that the authors claim that characterizes late capitalism occurs when the U.S.A. remained the winner of the Cold War. During the Cold War two equally opposing ideologies competed in a bipolar world. There we face in a Bakhtinian reading of the ideological formation of thought in culture, the ideological

monoglossia in the Western world where the U.S. remains the sole arbiter of the master-signifier of democracy. Yet, the winner position of the U.S. cannot conceal anymore the discrepancy between the ideological text and the lived experience under neoliberalism.

Yurchak and Boyer make direct parallels between the institutional characteristics and the political and economic forms of centralization in order to claim that the social conditions under the two systems breed similar "official" cultural environment that aesthetically translates into over-emphasis on form, or the performative, disregarding meaning. If in late socialism the Party's control over media and cultural institutions brings about this hypernormalized authoritative monoglossia, in the US the centralization of mass-media under oligopolistic market leads to the same outcome. Equating free market with democracy cannot conceal the glaring discrepancy between the ideological postulates of neoliberalism, with competition as its core element and the actions of neoliberal regimes of governance and the supranational institutions put into place to secure neoliberal reforms on a global scale that have the opposite outcome – the increase of centralized corporate control that stifies competition.

I have already pointed out in Chapter 2 the paradoxes between the neoliberal ideological enunciation and the outcome of neoliberal policies. Using Yurchak's and Boyer's thesis of hypernormalization of the authoritative discourse one can look at think-tank and NGO experts as the key actors that spread such a discourse in Bulgaria. The hypernormalization of authoritative discourse closes down dialogism, it functions as what Bakhtin terms monoglossia, yet its over-emphasis on the performative and its monotony of structure makes it vulnerable to infusion with meaning that changes the ideological intent. For Yurchak and Boyer the effective way to expose such a hypernormalized ideological climate is through overidentification with the performative side of the official discourse. Yurchak uses the Russian term stiob for this form of art. In short stiob originates in late socialist Russia and is an ambiguous form of artistic expression because it creates a confusion as to the intention of the artists. According to Yurchak "stiob cannot be understood simply as a form of resistance to authoritative symbols because it also involves a feeling of affinity and love toward them."264 Stiob can be

characterized as a “displacement of the symbolic order” that “neither supported nor opposed the discursive field” but misplaced the ideological symbols to create ambiguity.\textsuperscript{265} In relation to this, Miglena Nikolchia writes that in a situation where the political is trivialized such as Eastern Europe during the Soviet model, refusing to make political art is itself a political art.\textsuperscript{266} Boyer and Yurchak give as an example the famous case in Slovenia where a poster proposed by the art movement NSK won a competition for the commemoration of the Youth Communist Movement. The problem was that the poster was a direct replica of a Nazi poster with slight changes of the background – from the Nazi eagle was turned into a dove and the swastika changed into a red star.\textsuperscript{267} NSK commented on the equal aesthetics of both totalitarian systems but refused to declare ideological position.

The transformation of MSA might be read as a case of \textit{stiob} because it exposes the equally hypernormalized aesthetic of slogans either declaring the soviets as “needed as the air and water for human beings” to quote Georgi Dimitrov or NATO and the EU as "the new civilizational choice that brings us back to Europe", this language is the new clichéd formula of political elites, so there is under-layer and it comes from the liminal, peripheral position of Bulgaria in the Balkans, Todorova’s historical method situates the external discourse in relation to the problem of self-perception. Her study shows that the perception that Western modernity forms about the Other (the Balkans) become internalized and as Mocnick has argued picked up by local elites, to justify the subordinate position of their lower classes.\textsuperscript{268}

In that sense Zizek’s concept of ideology here is helpful to explain why the art intervention can be read as attempt to disconnect the floating signifiers of the two major Master-signifiers of modernity’s discourse – Communism and Free Market. In a Bakhtinian fashion of changing of clothes symbolizes changing of status, the graffiti

\textsuperscript{265}Ibid. 
\textsuperscript{267}Boyer and Yurchak, ‘AMERICAN STIOB’, 185–187. 
\textsuperscript{268}Todorova, \textit{Imagining the Balkans}; Mocnik, ‘The Balkans as an Element in Ideological Mechanisms’.
seems to signify refusal to accept the *transition* as master-signifier and the discourse that think-tanks and NGOs invented to justify its outcomes. There is a refusal to accept the *back to Europe* discourse, exposing those that promote it as imposters. If we go back to Zizek’s dichotomy between reification and ISAs we can see that behind the consumer mascots lurks the face of US imperialism. *MSA* translates symbolically into the unfinished commodity of the neoliberal project in the periphery. The type of gangster controlled market that real exiting neoliberalism created made it impossible for many of the newly formed organic intellectuals to sell their labor. Many of them that formed as such in Western sponsored NGOs became disenchanted with the new system and gave rise to social movements that confronted the appropriation of resources both by outside MNCs and local gangster elites, many also stood against the surveillance projects of global capitalism demanding freedom of the internet and protesting against newly enacted surveillance legislation.

5.1. Hegemony and Heteroglossia

Can we read the transformation of the monument as an expression of the carnivalesque that opens up many communicative discourses and creates *heteroglossia*? This thesis now turns to this question.

Heteroglossia can be understood as the culture in which the multitude of discourses occur as a result of the socio-ideological contradictions manifested in language, idioms and dialects. For Bakhtin the meaning of language cannot be analyzed outside of its historical and social context, language should not be looked as a static, mathematical formula, but as an arena of historical struggles over discourses. The development of language is a process of continuous attempt to achieve centralization and unification and its opposing decentralization and disunification the dialectic of language written and spoken creates stratification and heteroglossia. In other words, language forms in the context of social struggles. In this struggle a discourse prevails as

the authoritative discourse that unifies and centralizes language; this is the discourse of power, whether it is the father, the Church, the Party. However for Bakhtin this discourse is always in antagonistic relationship with the languages of those social forces that challenge the official language.

This understanding of the social characteristics of language that is born out of struggle seems to complement Gramsci’s concept of struggle over hegemony. Hegemonic struggle entails rule through consent, a unifying “common sense” that is accepted by all classes and cultural institutions. One can say that language is inside the arena of ideological wars of position that signifies struggles for hegemony. Yet, in Gramscian analysis the struggle for hegemony entails a conscious political leadership, a vanguard that could successfully overcome in the struggle. It seems that for Bakhtin heteroglossia in languages is also a manifestation of a conscious struggle over meaning, where alternative discourses interfere with the official authoritative discourse and contest it. We can see how related to the monument the intervention can operate as heteroglossia that sabotages the official authoritative discourse. Here we have a visual representation of what Bakhtin is illuminating. It is here to mock all of the truths of socialism and the transition but it is also ambiguous in its ideological meaning, which brings it closer to stiob.

5.2. The Carnivalesque and its Utopian Promise

In his study of Rabelais Mikhail Bakhtin analyses the elements of the carnival as an expression of the autonomous formative spirit of folk culture. The carnivalesque opens utopian space and utopian time where the social order of class division and structures of power, depicted in Rabelais and in the folk culture, it can be argued is denied. It brings participants back to the primordial times of the collective ancestral folk body that is continually growing and renewed, perpetually becoming and unfinished, where the serious and the comic coexist and where there are no official truths. The sacredness of church symbols and rituals became an arena of grotesque derision and laughter. But, “the essence of the grotesque is precisely to present a contradictory and
double-faced fullness of life” Carnival for Bakhtin creates an image of a new world without social, political and economic divisions where all are considered equal and “people were reborn for new, purely human relations.” Thus, “the individual feels that he can become an indissoluble part of the collective, a member of the people’s mass body.” Bakhtin always suggests that this an emerging condition and that is the utopian aspect of his carnivalesque conditioning of culture that changes the way language changes. The MSA comes into visibility the way satire and vernacular always emerge unpredictably although as ‘communication’ they find addressees who are thinking already of how to make fun of that monument.

This utopian potential of the carnival was completely at odds with the socio-political and economic order. Bakhtin juxtaposes the official feasts of the Middle Ages that sanctioned the existing hierarchical order, the political, religious and moral values and prohibitions to the utopian spirit of freedom of the carnival. Clear examples of reinforcement of the existing order are the importance of showing rank during the official feasts as a symbolic signification of the persons place in the power hierarchy. Contrary to the joyous spirit of the carnival the tone of the official feasts was monolithically serious. The official feast looked back at the past and used the past to consecrate the present and reinforce the official truth. Bakhtin defines the 17th century as the period during which the state “encroached upon festive life and turned it into a parade.” This is the time of the “stabilization of the new order of absolute monarchy.” Rationalist philosophy and the aesthetics of classicism become the fundamental traits of the new official culture. A process of “generalization, empirical abstraction and typification” characteristic of the Enlightenment brings about the formation of the private bourgeois body that defines class society. The development of class society requires a differentiation between higher and lower culture, a clear hierarchy that does not permit

270 Bakhtin, Rabelais and His World, 62.
271 Ibid., 255.
272 Ibid., 9.
273 Ibid.
274 Ibid., 33.
275 Ibid., 101.
276 Ibid., 115.
the higher and lower to merge; praise and abuse have to be differentiated. Such a process excludes the perception of the world as unfinished; on the contrary it closes-off potentialities to question the dominant truth.277 Heroes cannot be laughed at, thus questioned, they have to be revered. The heroes of the national pantheon become seminal symbols of the ideology of the nation-state and serve to affirm the existing order which as I have shown in previous chapters to be the invented traditions of the state with its official parades and commemorations that always function as the material practices of ideology that masks social conflicts.

In its original form the MSA is a material expression of the dominant ideological truths of the discourses of the Party-State and the anti-communist discourse of neoliberalism. Such limited discourses can only play to evoke what Michael Gardiner terms conservative or nostalgic utopia.278 For Barbara Goodwin the idealization of the past is a longing for reversal of social developments. Those are backward looking utopias that valorize particular institutions, symbols and rituals that represent the past.279 Thus, in the Bulgarian case the monument functions as such a symbol of manifested desire to return either to some ideal pre-totalitarian time invoked by the “back to Europe discourse” or to the time of the social safetyness provided by the Party-state. As Gardiner asserts the backward-looking utopias “seek to enshrine existing inequalities (or resurrect earlier ones), and to sanction hierarchy, received authority and stability in the interest of particular social elites.”280 During the 1990s the polarized language characterizing Bulgarian political communication can serve to exemplify this point. In its extreme form the anti-communist discourse negates any existence of authoritarianism and social conflict prior to 1944, while in equal manner those nostalgic of socialism exaggerate the fascist characteristics of Boris III’s regime and show hostility toward the process of restitution that returned the nationalized property of a small minority. For

277Bakhtin emphasizes the perception of the unfinished, constantly dying and renewed world as a main characteristic of the carnivalesque, containing its utopian potential.
279Cited in: Ibid., 23.
280Ibid., 24.
Bakhtin this kind of nostalgia and romance with the past would be classified as an "idyll" – that is a form that borders on kitsch.

Bakhtin traces carnival to the pre-class and pre-political stages of social order where the serious and the comic were equally “official” and where heroes could be glorified and ridiculed at the same time. Carnival functions as a “second world and second life outside of officialdom...where coupled with serious myths are comic and abusive ones” it creates a double world whose origins go to the early stages of human existence.  

There is a clear dialectic in Bakhtin’s analysis – carnival is the common folks’ reaction to the serious tone of the oppressive authoritarian regime of the state and the church. According to Bakhtin one of the essential elements of the folk festival was “reversal of the hierarchic levels, suspension of norms and prohibitions, carnival is subject only to the norms of its own freedom.” Carnival is the “people’s second life that entered the utopian realm of community, freedom, equality, abundance.” Carnival is the event of utopian time where the comic is equally sacred and official. What is significant about the carnivalesque is that carnival was the time of year when people of all classes celebrated a temporary liberation from the prevailing truth and established order. With the consolidation of the state the wholeness between serious and comic is severed and the comic is transferred to the realm of non-official. But carnival permitted a special type of communication where the official ideology of the church and state was ridiculed and turned upside down in performing an act of symbolic rebellion against the social role assigned to common folk when the jester could become a king. The laughter of carnival is laughter that expresses the point of view of the whole world, everyone can be subjected to this laughter because during the utopian time that carnival creates there are no sacred figures; carnival brings down to earth, it degrades in order to rejuvenate. The double world of the carnival where hierarchy does not exist is threatening to the

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282 Ibid., 8.
powers that be despite attempts to be regulated by authority carnival often times has unpredictable results. 284

Perhaps one of the most threatening aspects of the carnivalesque for those in position to exercise any type of social power is the negation of the dominant discourse of official truth. Expert power is based on the perception of superior power and ability, whereas informational power depends on the quality of the message and persuasiveness of the agent. 285 Think-tanks or intellectual ideologues serve as the agents that pose and exert power and aim at persuading the non-experts with simplistic but effective messages. Because of its historical characteristic originating from the pre-class conception of wholeness of the serious and the comic, carnival challenges the social power of the experts and thus the social order per se. As Scott points out, carnival allows certain things to be said, certain types of social power to be exercised that are muted or suppressed. 286 The marketplace of the medieval times was the space of folk culture of the carnival where official truth was subject to mockery and laughter. Curses,

284 See James Scott on the carnival as a potential for resistance to established socio-political and economic orders. Scott critiques the safety-valve theory that claims that the carnival is a mechanism for social control authorized by the elites that after a symbolic inversion of order once a year makes the social existence of the dominated more acceptable. This seems to confuse intentions of elites with results, in contrast Scott points to the many historical instances since the Middle Ages till Franco that authorities have been suspicious of those folk festivities and have tried various forms of surveillance or even to ban them in times of greater social confrontation. James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (Yale University Press, 1992); See James Scott on the carnival as a potential for resistance to established socio-political and economic orders. Scott critiques the safety-valve theory that claims that the carnival is a mechanism for social control authorized by the elites that after a symbolic inversion of order once a year makes the social existence of the dominated more acceptable. This seems to confuse intentions of elites with results, in contrast Scott points to the many historical instances since the Middle Ages till Franco that authorities have been suspicious of those folk festivities and have tried various forms of surveillance or even to ban them in times of greater social confrontation. James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (Yale University Press, 1992), 173–182.; For the use of carnivalesque in social movements see L.M.Bogad, 2010. His case study of Clandestine Insurgent Rebel Clone Army (CIRCA) shows the direct influence of Bakhtin’s work on the carnival in CIRCA’s manifesto. L.M. Bogad, ‘Carnivals Against Capital: Radical Clowning and the Global Justice Movement’, *Social Identities* 16, no. 4 (2010): 537–557, doi:10.1080/13504630.2010.498242.

285 Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*, 188.

286 Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, 173.
profanities and improprieties subverted the conventions and etiquette of the established norms of verbal address.  

Here I will attempt to situate the conceptualization of utopia in Gardiner’s survey in relation to Bakhtin’s study of the carnivalesque.

Gardiner distinguishes between “traditional” (or hegemonic) and “oppositional” (or critical) utopias. “Total” utopias are a major category of traditional utopias, the others being the conservative or nostalgic utopia, discussed above. Exploring the subversive potential that Bakhtin assigns to carnivalistic practices, Gardiner writes that they “function as an ‘anti-body’ within a pathological social body, always threatening to rupture it from within.”

As Michael Holquist indicates, Bakhtin’s utopian vision of the folk is opposed to the official utopia of Soviet Russia under Stalin. In the 1930s a process of rapid Stalinization of Russian folklore starts to occur. Folklore is usurped for the purposes of ideological propaganda to affirm Stalin’s cult of personality who is depicted as the father of the people. The encroachment upon the folk culture leads to the formation of the highly stylized and idealized image of the masses that become mechanism for state propaganda. Bakhtin’s grotesque bodily image is in direct opposition to the cleaned up image of Soviet ideology. Bakhtin’s work of the carnival essential is a project to rescue the critical utopian potential of folk culture from the dogmas of Stalinism with its heroic representation of the peasant for Party consumption, particularly grim in the context of Stalin’s brutal collectivization.

Moylan defines particular forms of utopian discourse that can have oppositional and subversive potentialities as “critical utopia.” Those utopias are reflexive because they are aware of the limitations of the utopian tradition. They disrupt the homogeneity of “total utopias” of the Enlightenment that brought up totalitarian systems. Critical utopias attempt to demonstrate the multiplicity of possible futures. In that relation Paul Ricouer views utopia as the ability to imagine alternative society outside of the current socio-

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287 Ibid., 186.
historical situation which then subverts the ideological discourse. Ideology and utopia are in a dialectical tension. Ideology aims to affirm the social order by masking social conflict, while utopia aims to dissolve the social order by imagining alternative existence. The question then is could we view the carnivalesque as an expression of "critical utopia." According to Gardiner Bakhtin’s insistence on the utopian potential of the carnivalesque is dictated by this need. I will position Bakhtin’s study in the context of the Bolshevik top-down utopia and the anti-authoritarian peasant utopian organizations that existed for a short period in Russia. We can argue that the primary goal of Bakhtin was to keep the utopian spirit of folk/peasant culture alive in times of usurpation of the collective that construct the image of the selfless hero, scarifying him/herself in the name of the “Motherland” and Stalin “the Father of the people.”

5.3. Carnival and War of Position

Gramsci’s analysis of the function of civil society is dialectical. Civil society can be the instrument that assures the hegemony of the dominant elite, but can also become the driving force of a counter-hegemonic movement from below or already existing beneath or at the margins of the culture. A counter hegemonic project requires the formation of a new historic bloc that can successfully overcome the hegemony of the existing order. This in advanced capitalist systems and colonized nations, however, is a long process, during which the organic intellectuals have the decisive role to bring awareness to the masses, by actively engaging in educating, raising and transforming consciousness. This process Gramsci defines as the war of position. Gramsci gives as an example of war of position the struggle of India against British colonialism led by Gandhi’s passive resistance. War of position is launched by the organic intellectuals as a conscious aspect of the struggle for counter-hegemony. As such the battleground is often in the realm of culture and aims to change ‘common sense’. As Craig Brandist

291 Cited in, Ibid., 43.
292 Ibid., 31.
points “the political struggle is shifted to the sphere of art and culture.”

In Gramscian terminology common sense always has an ideological aspect; it is the normative perception of how things are and should be, the world view with which the hegemonic class establishes consent over society. Subverting the perception of the past and of historical truth, or challenging the invented traditions of the state in order to open up new readings of the past and present could be examples of war of position. Using elements of the carnivalesque that turns official truth upside down and inside out would be a tactic in this war. The Bakhtinian conception of the carnivalesque describes it as an act of spontaneity that lacks conscious political determination or strategy. It is a primordial expression of discontent and distrust with forms of authority, unrealized in an organized act of resistance. But the opening up of spaces of the utopian imaginary that Bakhtin analyses makes it charged with political potentialities. Thus, with its tone of laughter and its atmosphere of ridiculing the seriousness of order the carnivalesque becomes a symbolic signifier of the strife for decentralized world. The legacy of carnival spontaneity is in stark contrast to the disciplined vanguard of the Bolsheviks.

Craig Brandist claims that carnival culture threatens the very concept of discursive truth and as such is anti-hegemonic rather than counter-hegemonic because it does not substitute an ideological narrative with another. But this is only if we understand counter-hegemony in the Leninist sense – as a political project that requires a vanguard party. Bakhtin’s concept of ancient and medieval laughter demonstrates that he viewed positively the potential of carnival to imagine an alternative social world, not based on hierarchical structures of power. For Bakhtin the carnivalesque is not necessarily challenging the organization of the current order but temporally transforms the participants in a space that challenges the taken for granted rules and regulations of the system we live in. Yet, as Scott demonstrates throughout history state power has attempted to sanction the festival of the people but the threatening aspect of carnival spontaneity has remained and at times has erupted into rebellion against oppressive powers. Because of its collective spirit carnival has a threatening aspect to authority.

295 Ibid., 102.
Bogad’s case study of the carnival tactics of CIRCA, as part of the global justice, anti-capitalist movement show their direct influence of Bakhtinian thought. The pamphlet of CIRCA states: “we will remain faceless...because we are everyone...because the world is upside down...because we are everywhere...” 296 As Bogad suggest, this is in opposition to the “discrete, separate, closed-off bourgeois individual body” that Bakhtin differentiates from the universal collective body. The collective body of the people is the biggest threat to any elite holding political-economic power. The Stalinist regime turned collectivism into ideological dogma and in a top-down manner created conditions of enforced collectivism that rendered the process of collective solidarity obsolete. The dark times of class war turned all against all. The process of land reform was called collectivism only on name but in a reality was a state project that aimed to enforce the state’s acquisition of agricultural production and the creation of ‘dictatorship over needs.’ The altruist forms of collectivism could not be exercised in an environment characterized by the paternalistic power of the Party-State; surveillance that created distrust towards neighbours and friends; nepotism that formed cliques and groups in a hierarchical power relations and fear of oppression.297 After the fall of the curtain the hyper-individuality of neoliberal *homoeconomicus* substituted the ideology of collectivism.298 Yet, at times when the hegemony of the political-economic structures is threatened and consent from the ‘losers’ of globalization is hard to obtain, such as the current crisis of global capitalism, the liberatory potential of the collective, exercised in the activism of social movements becomes particularly dangerous for the structures of power. In a recent protest against neoliberal austerity measures by public service workers in London thousands of British police joined the protestors in solidarity. This response that CIRCA was trying to elicit from the police reflects its carnivalesque clownish performance during

296 Bogad, ‘Carnivals Against Capital’, 544.
298 This new subject differs from the constituted subject under liberal capitalism as homo juridicus – the citizen of the rule of law, or the legal subject of the state. The shift from homo juridicus to homo economicus is crucial, because if the equal sign between individual freedom and rational economic interest becomes the modus operandi of ideological discourse of states then its normative role is to make sure that laws do not contradict economic interests. In this shift promoting self interests, investment and competition become the priority principle of the state. See Jason Read, ‘A Genealogy of Homo-Economicus: Neoliberalism and the Production of Subjectivity’, *Foucault Studies* 0, no. 0 (2009): 29–31.
the G8 Summit on July 2005 in Edinburgh, Scotland. As Bogad points out “clowns could
dispel the intimidating power of the state, through fearless silliness and serious play,
possible.” For Bakhtin the universal character of laughter is not directed “at one part
only, but at the whole…it builds its own world versus the official world, its own church
versus the official church, its own state versus the official state.” 299

The Bolsheviks aimed to erase the past and then find it restored in order to serve
Stalin’s totalitarian project in his war with time. In the process Bulgarian people paid a
heavy price for their self-appointed leaders attempt to catch-up with history. The
neoliberal ideologues are equally concerned with erasing the recent past, while
promoting an idealist narrative of the pre-Soviet past. Their disregard for social welfare
shifted the repression from political voicelessness to economic misery. Laughter as the
defensive form of truth liberates from the fear of power. The liberatory potential of
laughter on its own is not sufficient to transform social relations but its potential to
subvert and turn the official truth upside down and inside out and expose power through
ridicule opens up the possibility to imagine alternative social existence. The monument’s
change of clothes is indicative of the growing sentiments of society where the discontent
with the old-new elite that changed its ideological zeal progressed into the rise of social
movements. The current Bulgarian political climate is charged with the tensions of
growing antagonism between citizens and the oligarchy. This tension can be situated in
the global context of the rise of various forms of active engagement in opposition to
official ideological climate of neoliberal market fundamentalism. In that sense the rise of
social movements reveal the desire to imagine another world, where the current
institutional structures would be radically changed. Bulgaria becomes part of the
globalization of social and political struggles. The passive distrust of authority,
characteristic of Bulgarians, as a reaction to centuries of overly repressive political
systems and corrupt institutional structures have now been channelled into an ongoing
rise of discontent, signified through a series of protests. It seems that the threshold of
endurance to unjust social existence has been reached.

299 Bakhtin, Rabelais and His World, 88.
We are not experiencing what Yurchak deems the attempt to live outside the system, while being in it, which is characteristic of the Soviet times. We are now witnessing the growth of a movement that becomes more and more unwilling to make concessions with power. But it took the assault against other symbolically significant hegemonic phases in Bulgarian historical memory - the realm of identity – the mountains, symbolically charged with the struggle for freedom against unjust power. The struggle over meaning reflected in the monument becomes a symbolic barometer of the potentiality of social forces to overcome the official invented traditions and substitute them with alternative social and political imaginary. Thus, the potentiality to look at the future with utopian eyes. This links to the Benjamin’s messianic moment but also to the legacy of anarchist political thought where the revolutionary potential is manifested in everyday struggle for existence.

Since the transformation the monument had already been turned into a place of symbolic struggle - newest is the struggle against ACTA - activists put blinders on the soldier’s eyes to protest censorship and surveillance of the Internet, recently activists put masks on the statue’s Soviet soldiers (short-lived US superheroes and consumer mascots) heads in solidarity with the Russian feminist band Pussy Riot. The Monument of the Soviet Army functions as a signifier of contested national identity that channels these political struggles on the cultural front.
6. Conclusion

In this project I used the Monument of the Soviet Army, and its metamorphosis, as an entry point into a broader discussion of competing discourses and ideological struggle in Bulgaria. In this regard I paid particular attention to Bulgaria’s failed attempts at modernization, or more promptly its failed civilizational choices. President Petur Stoyanov’s (1997-2002) emphasis on the “civilizational choice” that Bulgaria had to make by joining NATO, in the context of the Alliance’s bombing of Yugoslavia, demonstrates the type of choice that was presented. Bulgaria’s joining of NATO in 2004 and the EU in 2007, rather than “bringing the country back to Europe” situated it as part of the New Europe – that is becoming a U.S.A. protectorate, plagued by organized crime, corruption and lack of social-economic safety for the majority of the population.

My exploration has been reinforced as well as motivated by Katherine Verdery’s suggestion that the formation of knowledge depends on the way the knowledge seeker thinks of the object of interest; what images and associations one has of his/her object of knowledge influence the questions posed of it. The narrative of transition as a system of knowledge originated out of the Thatcherite common sense that ‘There Is No Alternative’ (TINA) to neoliberalism. It became a hegemonic discourse in the West and, after the Soviet demise, rapidly dominated Eastern Europe. For Gramsci common sense is an arena of power struggle over the ideological meanings that exist between social classes. What forms our perceptions of common sense lies in its relationship to the conditions of our social existence that depend on historical process. The euphoria of the fall of the authoritarian communist regimes, and popular enthusiasm for markets and democracy in CEECs, combined with the victory of neoliberal capitalism in the West

Verdery, What Was Socialism, and What Comes Next?, 204.
during the belle époque of US dominance.\footnote{Andrew Schwartz, \textit{The Politics of Greed: How Privatization Structured Politics in Central and Eastern Europe}, World Social Change (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Pub., Inc, 2006); Arrighi, \textit{The Long Twentieth Century}.} This enabled the neoliberal discourse to develop into the new common sense in the former Eastern bloc.

In this thesis I have attempted to explore ideas that contest the traditional neoliberal story of transition on the road to modern capitalism, in which the knights of Western knowledge come to rescue Eastern Europe, providing the remedy of “shock therapy” that will bring “the end of history.”\footnote{Verdery, \textit{What Was Socialism, and What Comes Next?}, 204–207.} In this story, eradicating the welfare state through rapid privatization, state deregulation, cutting on social programs and financial liberalization guaranteed the formation of democratic institutions and the creation of civil society as the main criteria for democracy. Contrary to this imaginary, I presented a competing story of Bulgaria’s neoliberal restructuring as a tragic outcome of an enforced, top-down, attempt by former elites to impose imported models of civilization. In this process the intelligentsia, as in the previous epochs played a crucial role.

The importation of civilizational models in Bulgaria has deep historical roots that date long before the end of World War II when Bulgarian communists, trained and instructed in Moscow, helped by the Red army, imposed the model of Soviet Communism. Alexander Kiossev’s theory of self-colonization has been referred to in how the process of adaptation operates: “self-colonizing cultures import alien values and models of civilization by themselves…they lovingly colonize their own authenticity through these foreign models.”\footnote{Kiossev, ‘The Self Colonizing Cultures’.} Self-colonizing cultures are those in which the intellectuals form the discourse of an absence of a whole civilizational model rather than some concrete civilizational achievements. A top-down importation of civilizational models is accompanied by the need to break with and erase the past. In that sense, Bulgaria’s last civilizational choice becomes part of a historical tradition of self-colonization.

Drawing on Susan B. Morss’s critique of Soviet modernization I examined Bulgaria’s road toward neoliberalism in the context of the political and economic legacy
of the previous civilizational model – Soviet Communism. At the same time Bulgarian neoliberalism is part of a process of securing the geo-political and geo-economic interests of the United States, in which the neoliberalization of the EU plays a prominent role. My analysis considers the main actors that formed the neoliberal discourse as dominant and enacted policies that gradually led to the eradicating of state mechanisms for control of the process of capital accumulation. I also reviewed how the “watch-dogs of the transition” – intellectuals employed in newly formed think-tanks - played a central role in the formation of the discourse of civilizational choice. They were instrumental in the development of the political rhetoric and function in accordance with the other think-tanks in CEECs that form a limited understanding of civil society.

Civil society in this historical period translates into numerous think-tanks and NGOs modeled under, funded by, and in direct connection with their neoliberal counterparts. As in Russia and CEECs the primary beneficiaries of neoliberalism are those who came from the higher ranks of the Communist Party elite – the nomenklatura. The intricate relationship and struggle for power between the Bulgarian Communist Party’s (BCP) political and economic nomenklatura were decisive in forming the characteristics of the neoliberal transformation. But the language of the transition was constructed by the think-tanks, where intellectuals brought up under the wing of the Party who were related by family to the ex-political nomenklatura, used their social power as experts and persuasive rhetoric to create the new authoritative discourse. Thus, they turned into the organic intellectuals of the neoliberal regimes of post-Soviet political elites.

The clandestine transformation of the monument, however, signifies that authoritative discourses are contested in social struggle. I attempted to weigh and


305 Anguelova-Lavergnee, *Ekspertite Na Prekhoda*.


307 Чалъков, *Мрежите на прехода.*
consider a range of ideological discourses to demonstrate how a symbol of domination from a past era has become infused with new meaning. The question of response to enforced importation of civilizational models is centered on the transformation of the monument. The monument that was built in the midst of Stalinist terror encapsulates two historical epochs of major transformations in the lives of Bulgarians and stands as a living example of how the past projects in the present. Its presence signifies both hegemony and resistance. It becomes a central figure around two manifestations of resistance – the silenced past of the armed struggle against Soviet domination and the social movements’ resistance against US neoliberalism. Buried with the construction of the monument is the history of “the first European armed resistance against the Soviet occupation” – the Goriani. Only recently has it found chroniclers, who challenge the well accepted notion that Bulgaria was the most obedient Soviet satellite. A limited reading of this resistance movement as anti-communist, renders the past into simplistic ideological formulas, making it safe for the ideological conjuncture of the present. In contrast, I proposed and elaborated how the recent transformation of the monument can be read as a Bakhtinian moment of heteroglossia, a carnivalesque subverting of ideological “Truths.” The artists changed the monument’s meaning from a defunct symbol of Soviet hegemony, to a grotesque representation of the winners of the Cold War, with their equally totalitarian consumer culture.

Although, at first sight, the graffiti might seem like a spontaneous expression of discontent, or worse an act that might be called postmodernist pastiche, I proposed that we can read it as an example of ‘stiob’ – a conscious political art, characterized by the ambiguity of its ideological message. The perplexing responses that followed varied from denying the past to hostility against the vandalism, or from hardly concealed nostalgia of the past to denial of the present paralleled this notion. Are the authors overidentifying with the new cultural, political and economic realities expressing approval of the new authoritative voices of US consumerism, while mocking the voices of the past? Is that what the caption “In Pace with the Times” signifies? And whether this Bakhtinian change is not also commenting on the structure of feeling nowadays - there are no heroes in the corporate offices of consumer society. Stalin’s heroes might have been “false” and “murderers” but they brought up an impulse to dream a better future. But what is the impulse now, and how are we going to escape the new chains (to use the old slavery symbolism - Ottoman/Soviet) of the businessman. In a sense, is not the statue
commenting that Bulgaria's enchantment with modernity is over, now as a pariah kid of the European family it can "enjoy" the cynicism of post-modernity?

Embedded in the presence of the monument remain questions of the interconnectedness between the material and the symbolic active in the historical process. My objective was to provide the historical context of the social, political and economic processes which enable particular state formation, characterized by intelligentsia in a self-appointed position of moral leadership, that underpin the formation of stories of identity. Channelled in the rituals and invented traditions of the state, or in media and political discourse, those stories materialize in ideological practises. Nevertheless, rarely do they remain unchallenged. In Chapter 2 I touched on the phenomenon of late socialism - living inside the system, while being outside - refusing to participate in the ideology, without directly politically engaging with it or opposing it. But another compelling question has emerged from this study: how can post-Soviet societies that have experienced this imposed "transition" that is a cultural and social adaptation to Euro-modernity afford to be anywhere outside of the consumer ideology of capitalism, that in the Bulgarian case borders on gangsterism? In other words can one who has been brought up in ideals that do not match one's real experience in and with the system become more aware of one's ideological environment, and with this awareness disengage from attempts to gain autonomy and agency? Does the subtle ideology of consumer culture make it impossible to gain autonomy and agency if the post-Soviet individual is pushed out of critical consciousness by having been assassinated by symbolic means, expressed in the remaking of the statue? This might be called an assassination of those that are labeled as "idle", through the new myths of self-made-man, hard workers, high achievers, disseminated in media discourses - advertising, reality shows, etc.

During the Soviet model being "idle", or "invisible" to the practices of the system, even refusing to perform in the activities of its reproduction was considered subversive. Bulgarian intellectuals who lived with the ideals of socialism, who opposed real existing socialism were sentenced to silence and isolation. Whether it is the armed struggle of Goriani fighting the Soviet model to save the soul of the peasant, or the rise of social movements against foreign and local control and appropriation of resources to preserve the sacredness of spring water and the spirit of freedom of the mountains, the symbolic is always present in this acts of resistance to the policies of the state. If the war of
position for an alternative to the neoliberal socio-economic order has already begun, then we need to consider nodal points of opposition in all their complexity. In my view, the Monument of the Soviet Army is one particularly illustrative point of the intersection between the symbolic, the historical, the political and the economic that is characteristic of the cultural struggles in Bulgaria today.
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Appendix A.

Timeline of Bulgarian History308

1396 - Ottoman Empire completes conquest of Bulgaria. Next five centuries are known as era of the "Turkish yoke."

1876 - Nationwide uprising against Ottoman rule is violently suppressed.

1878 March - Treaty of San Stefano - signed by Russia and Turkey at the end of their war of 1877-78 - recognises an autonomous Bulgaria.

1878 July - Treaty of Berlin creates much smaller Bulgarian principality. Eastern Rumelia remains under Ottoman rule.

1886 - Eastern Rumelia is merged with Bulgaria.

1887 - Ferdinand of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha elected prince.

1908 - Bulgaria declares itself an independent kingdom. Ferdinand assumes title of tsar.

1914-18 - World War I. Bulgaria allies itself with Germany. Some 100,000 Bulgarian troops are killed, the most severe per capita losses of any country involved in the war.

1939-45 - World War II - Soviet Army invades German-occupied Bulgaria in 1944. Soviet-backed Fatherland Front takes power.


Soviet-style state

1947 - New constitution along Soviet lines establishes one-party state. Economy and industry sectors nationalised.


1971 - Zhivkov becomes president.

1978 - Georgi Markov, a BBC World Service journalist and Bulgarian dissident, dies in London after apparently being injected with poison from the tip of an umbrella.

1984 - Zhivkov government tries to force Turkish minority to assimilate and take Slavic names. Many resist and in 1989 some 300,000 flee the country.

End of Communist era

1989 - Reforms in the Soviet Union inspire demands for democratisation.

Zhivkov ousted. Multiparty system introduced. Opposition Union of Democratic Forces (UDF) formed.

1990 - Economic crisis. Communist Party reinvents itself as Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP) and wins free parliamentary elections.

President Petar Mladenov resigns and parliament appoints UDF's Zhelyu Zhelev.
BSP government collapses amid mass demonstrations and general strike.

1991 New constitution proclaims Bulgaria a parliamentary republic and provides broad range of freedoms.

UDF wins election.

Todor Zhivkov sentenced to seven years in prison for corruption in office.

1993 - Mass privatisation programme.
1994 - BSP returns to power in general election.
1995 - BSP's Zhan Videnov becomes Prime Minister.

Economic turmoil

Bulgarian Supreme Court overturns Zhivkov's conviction.
Videnov resigns as Prime Minister and chairman of the BSP.

Interim government installed until elections, when UDF leader Ivan Kostov becomes Prime Minister.
Bulgarian currency pegged to German mark.

1999 - Protracted demolition attempts on marble mausoleum of first communist leader Georgi Dimitrov become national joke.

2000 - Post-communist prosecutors close file on Georgi Markov case. In December Markov is awarded Bulgaria's highest honour, the Order of Stara Planina, for his contribution to Bulgarian literature and his opposition to the communist authorities.

2001 June - Former King Simeon II's party, National Movement Simeon II, wins parliamentary elections. Simeon becomes premier in July.

2001 November - Thousands march through Sofia on 100th day of Simeon's premiership, saying he has failed to improve living standards.
Socialist Party leader Georgi Parvanov wins presidency in an election with the lowest turnout since the fall of Communism. He vows to improve people's lives and to speed up EU and NATO entry.

2004 March - Bulgaria is admitted to NATO.

2005 August - Socialist Party led by Sergei Stanishev tops the poll in general elections. After weeks of wrangling the main parties sign a coalition deal under which he becomes Prime Minister.

2005 December - Bulgaria’s contingent of 400 light infantry troops leaves Iraq. In February 2006 parliament agrees to dispatch a non-combat guard unit.

Bulgaria joins EU

2007 January - Bulgaria and Romania join the European Union, raising the EU membership to 27.

2007 June - The European Commission calls on Bulgaria to do more to combat corruption.

2008 February - European Commission interim report says Bulgaria and Romania have failed to show convincing results in their anti-graft drives.

2008 March - European Union freezes some infrastructure subsidies over corruption in the traffic agency.

2008 April - European Union calls on Bulgaria to take urgent action after two prominent gangland killings, including a senior figure in the nuclear industry.

Interior Minister Rumen Petkov resigns over police officers accused of passing state secrets to alleged crime bosses.

Government reshuffled in order to combat organised crime and wave of contract killings.

Ambassador to Germany, Meglena Plugchieva, appointed deputy Prime Minister without portfolio to oversee use of EU funds.

EU scrutiny

2008 July - European Commission suspends EU aid worth hundreds of millions of euros after series of reports criticise Bulgarian government for failing to take effective action against corruption and organised crime.

2008 September - European Commission permanently strips Bulgaria of half of the aid frozen in July over what it says is the government's failure to tackle corruption and organised crime.

2009 January - Russia's gas dispute with Ukraine cuts supplies to Bulgaria, resulting in a severe energy shortage lasting several weeks and widespread anger at the government's energy policies.

2009 June - Workers rally to protest at government's handling of economic crisis.

Centre-right government

2009 July - General election is won by the centre-right GERB party led by Sofia mayor Boiko Borisov.

2010 January - Boris Tsankov, a prominent crime journalist who specialised in reporting on the mafia in Bulgaria, is shot dead in Sofia.

2010 June - EU expresses concern over reliability of Bulgarian national statistics and says these may have to be subjected to EU scrutiny.

2010 July - Former PM Sergei Stanishev is accused of failing to return files containing state secrets relating to security and organised crime after losing the 2009 election, and is charged with mishandling classified documents.

2010 September - EU calls on Bulgaria to take urgent action to tackle crime and corruption.
2010 November - Bulgaria and Russia agree to speed up construction of South Stream pipeline that will carry gas from Russia to Europe via Black Sea.

2010 December - Government-appointed commission finds that 45 senior Bulgarian diplomats were secret service agents during the communist era.

France and Germany block Bulgaria from joining Schengen passport-free zone, saying it still needs to make "irreversible progress" in fight against corruption and organised crime.

2011 October - Outgoing construction minister Rosen Plevneliev, the candidate of the centre-right GERB party of Prime Minister Borisov, beats the Socialist candidate in the presidential election.

2012 January - Bulgaria becomes the second European country after France to ban exploratory drilling for shale gas using the extraction method called "fracking" after an overwhelming parliamentary vote.