

## Transition in Eastern Europe. The Impossibility of a Critical Public Sphere. Sociological and Political Science Discourse in the Media

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This study is an attempt to examine the topics and “ideologemes” of social scientists after 1989 (in the commentaries, analyses and other rubrics in the national mainstream dailies, as well as in certain cultural weeklies and the leading national TV network), in order to understand their role in the course of the disintegration of “the grand stage set” and the emergence of structures of civil society, of transformation of the mass into a public; to identify their positions and the interests they represent in the public sphere.. This presumes an attempt to institutionalize critique, which employs the available means to restrict, limit or at least rationalize political authority, to make it rational, to challenge the absolutist principle. But the Bulgarian transition has been a struggle of different groups for legitimation. Instead of rationalizing political life, politically committed social and political scientists were involved in the escalation and generation of various social problems. They agreed to live in “a past that would not pass”, and did not help develop a project for the future, for a common future of the nation, a national meta-narrative about the future of the nation. Yet the important question is ultimately who is the subject (agent, actor) of reforms, which elites stand to gain from them? In whose name is public opinion mobilized, risk situations solved, hard data for scenarios sought

However the events of 10 November 1989 and the subsequent transition may be defined, it is doubtless that they constitute a change.<sup>1</sup> The change, perceived through the

media and the media of the change, is indeed monumental. This study deals with transition at the level of disintegration of the “theatricalized public sphere (*Offentlich-*

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<sup>1</sup> This change is usually defined as a change from totalitarianism to democracy, from totalitarian to civil society, revolution or reformation; gentle revolutions in Eastern Europe or myths of revolutions in Eastern Europe; legitimacy crisis; “imposed transition”; “the Great Criminal Revolution”... The Ministry of Education guidelines defined in 1995 “transition to democracy and market economy” as a compulsory subject in all history textbooks. Of course, this analysis of the media in transition cannot preclude an analysis of the transition itself, explanations of the transition (cf. Avramov, Antonov, Kabakchieva, Kolarova, Boundjoulov, Deyanov 1995, Minev, Krastev and many others). The study of this particular aspect of

transition does not claim to be a strict content-analysis of the kind found in publications of “social and political science” (which, in my definition might also include historical, ethnological and other studies except those on economic issues). Giving examples of the tendencies, I will note exactly which “media” I am referring to. I have consistently monitored *Douma* and *Demokratiya*, the dailies of the two leading political forces in Bulgaria, the Bulgarian Socialist Party and the Union of Democratic Forces respectively, in the two months prior to the general elections in 1991 and 1994; and the cultural weeklies in 1989, 1990 and 1998. Cf. also the analyzed corpus in the study of Maya Grekova et al. 1997.

*keit*) of socialism and the restructuring of the public sphere: has this led to the constitution of not just a new, but of a *critical* publicity? Of course, neither the media nor social scientists are the "main propellants" of the process, yet neither should their role be underestimated. Either way, the battles for "the Fourth Estate" in a transition such as Bulgaria's (as well as in a broader context - of an increasingly global, virtual etc. society) are certainly not fourth-rate; as regards the social sciences involved in these processes, the post-1989 period has been crucial for their autonomy and potential for critique - it has seen the end of doublespeak, but apparently not of *langue de bois*, i.e. the cliched, uncritically "fair-weather" language, which indirectly serves the power of "networks" (Thom 1997). (This thesis needs to be proved.)

This language is clearer in a previous and shorter Bulgarian transition that ended in 1948. The year in which the communist party finally brought the public sphere under control: it monopolized the media, nationalized the film industry, "nationa-lized" readers of the press and listeners of "radio rediffusion sets," private

publishing houses, and closed down foreign-language schools... The ultimate objective was to produce masses mobilized for the Grand Construction Project, with the respective mass media generating "common will." (At that time democracy was assumed to be a mechanism generating common will, and the masses were integrated into politics by means of the language.)<sup>2</sup>

It would be interesting to compare the functions of the media in the two transition periods, but that is not the purpose of the present study. This study is an attempt to examine the topics and ideologemes of social scientists after 1989 (in the commentaries, analyses and other rubrics in the national mainstream dailies, as well as in certain cultural weeklies and the leading national TV network, *Kanal 1*, i.e. *Channel 1*), in order to understand their role in the course of the disintegration of "the grand stage set" and the emergence of structures of civil society, of transformation of the mass into a public; to identify their positions and the interests they represent. And, hence, to grasp – indirectly – certain principles of the transition in Bulgaria, the conditions for the existence of an autonomous public

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<sup>2</sup>Cf. Furet's thesis on the distinctive features of the so-called ideological society. In 1948, for instance, the authorities encouraged the release of the so-called *stenvestnitsi* (sing. *stenvestnik*: literally, "wall newspaper," a sort of in-house bulletin board) and "exposure in the press." (Here is one case of such "exposure": a magazine which "upholds... reactionary mystic and non-Fatherland Front [the communist-dominated coalition that seized power after the 9 September 1944 *coup d'etat*] positions, ... does not cultivate a progressive scientific worldview," therefore "*the respective department at the Committee of Science, the Arts and Culture ought to take an interest in this magazine*" (*Rabotnicheskio Delo*, the daily of the Bulgarian Communist Party's Central Committee, No. 61, 14 March 1948). The magazine in question, *Obedineni domakinski spisaniya* (*United Housewives' Magazines*), was licensed by the Ministry of

Information in 1946. Yet it apparently failed to meet the standards of transition. It claimed that the October 1917 Revolution had been carried out by "a handful of smart youths," that Spanish communist Dolores Ibarruri "had succeeded in evading justice," that Goethe, Beethoven and Raphael "had dedicated many works to God." "This irresponsible magazine is filled with materials about the charm of women and with mawkish, maudlin short stories, and there isn't a single line about the new female heroine - brigade leader and shock-worker." "To top it all," the magazine wrote that "future success ought not to be perceived as a mirage only, but also in terms of whether you have 'polished your shoes before going out.'" Consequently, the magazine misled, "*diverted attention away from the big tasks*," "poisoned the mind of subscribers" - subscribers, who were a mass rather than a public.

(rather than a mass), where everyone has a chance to hear another opinion or to be heard, where (to quote classical authors such as C. Wright Mills) virtually as many people express opinions as receive them, where public communications are so organized that there is a chance immediately and effectively to answer back any opinion expressed in public, and where opinion formed by such discussion readily finds an outlet in effective action, even against – if necessary – the prevailing system of authority, in the name of the common good, i.e. of good governance (which is not necessarily synonymous with government).

To understand the thesis formulated even in the title of this study, several other tenets need to be recalled. According to one of the tenets of the contemporary theory of the public sphere, the modern public sphere is associated with the reversal of the formula *Auctoritas non veritas facit legem*. Reinhart Koselleck argues that this process ended during the Enlightenment: in the West European public sphere, the formation of the political public sphere follows the moral imperative of the emancipation of law, science, etc. This presumes, *inter alia*, an attempt to institutionalize critique, which employs the available means to restrict, limit or at least rationalize political authority, to make it rational, to challenge the absolutist principle underlying the above-mentioned formula (Koselleck 1986). Consequently, a new cultural form emerged in Europe, a critical disposition which Foucault defines concisely as the art not to be governed in this way and at this price (Foucault 1997: 23). This critique is the obverse of modern power - it is concerned with the truth about power, with the limits of the right to govern. Critique is the art of the freely chosen non-service, of the rationalized disobedience (Foucault 1997: 25). In the "politics of truth," the function of critique is to eliminate obedience. Critique, however, exists only in regard to something that is different from the

subject of critique itself; it is an instrument, a tool for some sort of future or truth, which the critique itself will not know... it is a subordinate function to what philosophy, science, politics, morality, law, literature, etc. represent positively (Foucault 1997: 20).

Habermas associates critical publicity with the very essence of modern publicity, of the classical bourgeois public sphere (Habermas 1992: 140). (I am obviously referring to his categories here, albeit not to them only, since critical publicity is a Utopian horizon in Bulgaria, it is only a "will to critical publicity.") Critical publicity is the measure, the "living bond" between the public and the private spheres (the sphere of citizens as autonomous economic and, hence, freely trading, individuals). The published facts are subject to control by a "critical public." Yet the communicative linkage between the private individuals is often disrupted ("the reasoning public" is made up of private individuals). In that case the resulting public opinion partly breaks up into informal opinions of private individuals without a public, and is partly concentrated into formal opinions of institutions with public manifestations; according to Habermas, however, those opinions are "quasi-public"... (Habermas 1992: 247).

To understand the two "ideal types of public sphere" constituted here - theatricalized and civic publicity - it is important to consider Janos Kornai's thesis, further elaborated by Deyanov and Boundjoulov, whereby socialism is a society of disempowered "objects," i.e. of money that has no purchasing powers, of markets that do not function by market logic, of newspapers that do not inform. This is a society of "shortage," offset by the functioning of various back-up, doubling structures and "networks." The latter, however, are not public, they are beyond the public sphere, which is filled with theatrical props. In "the grand stage set," the theatricalization of power, the "mise-en-scening" of power, the media – which create appearance of involvement of the masses – are

naturally not a "pure" mediator of a reasoning public...

Thus the main problem in this study may be reworded as follows: have the post-1989 media become – or, more precisely, are they becoming – such a mediator, or have they again proved to be "back-up structures" (serving other "networks")?; do they provide adequate representation and extra energy to the various "pockets" of nascent civic action; do they avoid generalizing the news by the logic of partisan partiality, in the sense of both incomplete and biased reporting? And, more precisely, has the media discourse of social scientists contributed to the identification of those "pockets" and to strengthening the bonds between them (defined as "places of hope" by Deyanov, who analyzes them in connection with the nascent critical publicity), or has it walled them up, paralyzed them, screened them off from the public limelight? Has it effectively become a model of the type of generalization of messages that is usually associated with academic ethos, maintaining the autonomy of social knowledge and thus impeding the latter's easy political usages? How have the self-interpretations of the two roles – of the scientist and of the citizen - changed in the past ten years of transition? Has there been a true media debate between the different perspectives on transition? Has Bulgaria had an "agora" at all – to quote Merab Mamardashvili, one of the "places of hope" of an entire generation of social scientists : "after all, civic life crystallized precisely in the agora. Our problem is that we do not have such an agora" (Mamardashvili 1992: 139).

Post-1989 Bulgaria watchers note that the freedom of the media, especially of the press, is one of the most plainly visible

freedoms in the early period of transition. And a specific source of power, or at least of apparency of power. (The headline of a discussion between political scientists Andrei Ivanov and Ivan Krastev, "*Koy upravlyava stranata g-n...?*" ["Who's Ruling the Country, Mr..."], *Kultura*, No. 2, 1991], is symptomatic: Ivanov: "The question 'who's in power' rules out the answer 'nobody' ... that's why the question shouldn't be 'who's in power,' but 'where's power.'" Krastev: "Well, in television! [Prominent Bulgarian TV journalist and talk-show host] Mr Kevorkian is, for me personally, the ideal exponent of TV super-power. The power of the autonomized mediator." At more or less the same time [11 September 1991] sociologist Andrei Raichev says: "Television in Bulgaria is not a medium of representing, but a medium of generating an event. Something has happened at all if [and only if] it has been shown on television... We have no place in common except television" [Raichev 1992: 89].) By the end of this period of transition, however, researchers note that "the media, albeit a main factor so far, now have a reduced potential, they are increasingly avoiding political risk" (*Bulgaria v regionalen...* 1997). To quote Georgi Lozanov's metaphor (Lozanov 1999: 168), the media were "politically drained" (because "the power they generated was promptly utilized by an extra-media actor; or because, according to other scholars, no "representative linkage" was established [Ragaru 1998 - 7], Western rhetoric was borrowed). This is associated with a specific feature of the Bulgarian transition: a struggle of different groups for legitimation, of groups – already and still – incapable of becoming public powers. (I am not referring to the so-called Operation Wedge, the alleged infiltration of the newly formed

opposition Union of Democratic Forces by communist secret service agents etc., because I assume that Foucault is right that power has no centre, that it is a balance of forces). This thesis is, I believe, supported by authoritative analyses of transition.<sup>3</sup>

That is why it was entirely explicable, at least in the early period of transition, why numerous sociological surveys were commissioned on condition that their findings would not be published even in professional publications. (Albeit explicable, this was unacceptable when the findings concerned fundamental branches and processes in society rather than, say, your favourite brand of whisky.) Which ruled out transparency, the clash of different academic opinions, and made it impossible to facilitate the development of the civic sphere in Bulgaria. The opposite case was explicable too – aggressive publication of the results of opinion polls and the battle for public opinion. In fact "sociologists" are one of the most clearly defined groups as far as the post-1989 media are concerned: a sociologist is anyone who, with or without a contract, serves journalists and politicians with public opinion data, who does or doesn't guess the results of elections (after the closure of the polls on Election Day, even political scientists are pompously introduced as "sociologists," contrary to the rest of the year, when all too often many sociologists are called or call themselves "political scientists," the undoubtedly more prestigious title; the transition has even produced the combination "sociologist-political scientist"). The so-called mass

consciousness identifies sociology with "sociological (i.e. polling) agencies" and poll-takers, with polls of the "how-does-Bulgaria-rate-in-the-world" type, and distinguishes between two types of sociologists: blue, i.e. Union of Democratic Forces (UDF), and red. The strategy of inviting one blue and one red sociologist each has proven reliable and effective for TV and radio hosts, but ineffective in forming civic expectations, in building confidence in the value-neutrality of sociology itself as a science and, hence, in developing other democratic "habitus" of modern man. Yet here I am not concerned with this type of practice, with opinion polls and their powerful presence in the media. I will only note that despite the many interdepartmental rows and even scandals (the biggest scandal breaking out at the very beginning of transition, during the first multi-party elections in 1990, over the presence of foreign polling agency INFAS and the US\$ 300,000 the latter got from National Television for opinion polls on Election Day, there weren't too many professional debates in the media focusing not on the friends and associates of one polling agency or another, the competence and credibility of certain data (with arguments - unfortunately cited all too often by sociologists themselves too - of the sort "the data are wrong because he's a friend of X, married to Y or from the clan of Z," but the boundaries - cognitive and social - of the opinion polls, the modalities of their presentation.<sup>4</sup> Professional debates that would have made it clear that opinions are a

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<sup>3</sup>"While the changing parliaments were busy presenting political shows, invisible structures were busy operating and eventually surfaced in the public sphere..." (Kabakchieva, Minev 1996: 67); in Bulgaria "the invisible elite is not simply non-public, it is hidden and hypothetical precisely because the

top echelons have not yet been legitimated as such nor, perhaps, have they been fully constituted..." (Kabakchieva 1999: 22); cf. Krassen Stanchev in Baichinska 1997.

<sup>4</sup> Boryana Dimitrova raises the issue of the ethics of releasing opinion poll findings in *"Sotsiologut kato*

power relation, that there is something called "spiral of silence," that various manipulative strategies were applied to get the average person to give answers out of his or her natural context, with those answers subsequently reinterpreted in an entirely different context based on scales that were non-existent in his or her consciousness. (There were also different simulations of social and political science. They reminded me of a treatise by a physician from Lyon written several centuries ago: "The largest branch of practical medicine is in the hands of people who are beyond the domain of this art: old women, compassionate ladies, charlatans, magi, folk healers, hospitable people, monks, religious folk, drug-makers, herbalists, surgeons, pharmacists, heal far more, prescribe much more cures than the doctors.") Journalists often failed to tell them apart from the meaningful scientific presence, they enthusiastically reported scientific fora, which might have been *fora* (if not fronts) but were certainly not *scientific*, and ignored major events (as, for instance, the visit of Prof. Hans Mommsen, one of the leading German experts in de-Nazification); or rated participants in them by criteria that had nothing to do with the latter's contribution to the debate. The same policy was pursued in regard to the review of social science publications. There were few if any reviews of and discussions on

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*astrolog*" ("The Sociologist as Astrologer," *1000 Dni*, 25 September 1992). Roumen Dimitrov: "When the sociologist becomes a court political commentator, s/he inevitably turns his or her back on sociology" ("*Pridvornata sotsiologiya ot gledna tochka na bulevardniya pechat*," "Court Sociology from the Perspective of the Gutter Press," *24 Chassa*, 23 September 1992); cf. the debate between Boundjoulov and Slavov in *Kritika i Humanizum*, No. 2; Venedikov 1994.

<sup>5</sup>Fukuyama tops the best-seller list not only in the Bulgarian papers (cf. for instance, *Literaturen*

sociological theses, with the exception of the discussions on public opinion forecasts. Interesting books about communism, modernization and the transition weren't even mentioned. (Only Francis Fukuyama became popular in this country thanks to the Bulgarian media too.<sup>5</sup> In general, there were many translations and commentaries on articles from *Foreign Affairs*. Nor was there a single periodical considered legitimate by the different groups of intellectuals and serving as a forum for different points of view. In other words, there wasn't an "agora" in either the literal or, as we shall see further on, figurative sense. (For instance, those who read the *Kultura* weekly didn't read, or at least didn't write for, *Literaturen Vestnik* and vice versa, nor did they browse through the *24 Chassa* daily, etc.) Quite a few of the studies important for the transition hardly left a trace in the public sphere (or were made public by the media only if they included some VIP - besides, they were made public in a way that made no distinction between the participation of the respective VIP in a scientific conference or, say, in a meeting of grocers). Needless to say, there were many exceptions, e.g. the conference on "Poverty and Social Fragmentation in Bulgarian Society"; the conference on "Studies on the Communist Age" held in April 1996 and dedicated to Francois Furet's book *The Past of an Illusion*, etc.<sup>6</sup>

*Vestnik*, 27 June - 3 July 1993), but also in the world media. At the sociological congress in Lyon, he was the most quoted author, according to Elena Mihailovska. What kind of sociology we have in *The End of History and the Last Man*, and precisely why this particular kind is popular, is another interesting issue.

<sup>6</sup>This presupposes a special survey, which I have not conducted. Yet in the months which I have studied consistently, there are no analyses and issues adequate to the respective rubrics in the papers - generally speaking, rubrics such as "Society" deal

Of the numerous problems and forms of presence of social sciences in the media, this study will dwell on just several: the two different stages, which I will arbitrarily define as romantic-ideological and expert; the relation between the everyday language, i.e. the language of the so-called common sense, and the scientific language; the involvement of social scientists in the debate on communism and "the battles for memory," i.e. in the political usages of the past...

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There are at least two distinct, and even contrasting, stages in the media presence of social scientists. The beginning was promising. The enthusiasm of intellectuals, the euphoria of 1989, the opening up, the faith in "Europe of the citizens" and in the correctional role of unshackled civic activity, the liberated language and diversity of languages, "the attempt at speaking out,"<sup>7</sup> presaged dialogue (the open letter was a popular genre; even sociology students contributed to a commentary rubric called "*Sotsiologicheski pogled*" ["Sociological Perspective"] in the

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with the foot-and-mouth disease among sheep. A special comparison of the catalogues of, say, various foundations (cf. Open Society Fund, *Annual Report*...) with various effects in the public sphere (which I have not made consistently either), is also worthwhile.

<sup>7</sup> To quote the title of an article by Petya Kabakchieva and Raicho Pozharliev ("*Opit za progovaryane*"). The issues in those first years of transition ranged from classical texts on liberalism and totalitarianism, articles devoted to the ABC of fascism, Bolshevism, Utopia and myths (the myth of Lenin and other revolutionary myths were widely discussed in the wake of 1989), to the student debate on "the end of sociology," via discussions on anti-politics, "totalitarianism within us," "folk dancing culture," "the new worlds and Europe," the Russian criminal economy, postcommunist natio-

*Den* daily). The beginning was full of optimism. "We are about to return to the lost Bulgarian paths of the New Age, to its constructive spirit... and to its optimism" (Ivan Elenkov wrote in *Kultura*, No. 40, 1990). The presumption was that social sciences were now able to speak the language of "The Truth" ("*Istinata*," an article by History Professor Nikolai Genchev, *Svoboden Narod*, No. 78, 1990). That this was their responsibility (Sociology Professor Georgi Fotev, *Vek 21*, 1990). Incidentally, the intellectuals had not yet firmly committed themselves to a particular media, they were definitely a "hard-core electorate" but not "hard-core subscribers" (i.e. one and the same intellectual could write for *Kultura*, *Literaturen Vestnik*, the supplement of *Demokratiya*, and *Vek 21*).

At the beginning there were debates. Mainly on current events and on the values of democracy: the round-table on "Intellectuals and Politics" ("*Inteligentsia i politika*," *Kultura*, July, 1990); passionate polemics on Roumen Dimitrov's controversial article "*Demokratiyata e muzhestvo na razouma*" ("Democracy Is Courage of

nalism, de-communization, history and memory, poverty; Ivan Kostov, D.Sc. (Econ.), Prime Minister since 1997, published a study on "Economic Decline and Reformist Ideas" ("*Stopanskiyat oupaduk i reformatorskite idei*," *Dano*, No. 2, 1990, an independent monthly on power, society and sex). Apart from articles on the intelligentsia, there were many studies on Bulgarian scientists under the totalitarian regime (even "academics and intellectuals founded a public committee on the study of the damages of totalitarianism to the development of science," *Ecopolitika*, No. 7, 23 April 1990). There were numerous articles on the "gentle revolution" itself, on "the screaming deaf-and-dumb revolution," the spectacle, the festive farewell to communism, and generally on "what's communism and does it have soil in this country" (*Sofia*, a biweekly review, No. 3-7, 1990).

Reason," *Kultura*, No. 25, 1990)<sup>8</sup>, alternatively regarded as "the first serious critique of the UDF from the perspective of the values of democracy" and as "reactionary," because "the path towards the light runs through an anti-communism of reason"); later, on the communist nature of the *Kultura* weekly, on Edvin Sougarev's hunger strike and on other civic gestures, on xenophobia and fascism in Bulgaria...

In this sense Roumen Daskalov's thesis that posttotalitarian social scientists "took the path of professionalization, eager to be identified by expert rather than ideological messages" (Daskalov 1998: PAGE???) is only partly true. They were involved with the media, especially at the beginning of transition, foremost as socially committed intellectuals. Yet as is known from the history of intellectuals in Europe, intellectuals are committed thinkers. They could hardly be perceived in terms of the classical opposition of autonomy vs. commitment. As a result of a specific paradox noted by both Bourdieu and historians of the intelligentsia such as C. Charle, intellectuals emerged as an autonomous group precisely when they committed themselves to the Dreyfus Affair. They have been more effective in politics when they have become involved precisely as a group: "increasing their autonomy and, hence, their freedom, they increase the effectiveness of political action" (Bourdieu 1993: 17).

It was natural that the debate on the role of the intelligentsia would be extensive. In "*Intelligentsia i antiintelektualizum*"

("Intelligentsia and Anti-Intellectualism," *Kultura*, No. 22, 1 June 1990), Ivan Krastev defines the intelligentsia as a guarantor of the existence of truth "beyond and independent of the interests of politics": the intellectual is the opposite of "the secret counsellor," s/he needs publicity. But s/he is not "a servant" of the people who is answerable to the people – populism is anti-intellectualism, the symptom of which is "the rejection of high language." According to other authors, this was "the end of the intelligentsia" – the end of its functions as a herald of truth, of "its illusions of being a messiah." Either way, however, in their practical behaviour intellectuals did not follow the second role model, of "specialized humanists" defending "pluralism of values." There was strong political polarization, and professional social scientists took part in the media sphere not as professional experts but as intellectuals, while the intellectuals were policy-makers. (It was too early yet for "micro-politics," i.e. for the rejection of "the global, traditional divisions of the political space, since they create global social actors," "maintenance of differences not as a value *per se*, but as multiplication of the potential of life" (interview with Alexander Kiossev, *Kultura*, No. 33, 1992).

In the first stage, the language of social and political science could not have been expert. Expert discourse was inappropriate. And ironized: Ivailo Dichev ("*Osvetyavane na prizraka*," "Illuminating the Ghost," *Kultura*, No. 6, 1991) showed how the "*Kulturtrager*" was being replaced

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<sup>8</sup> Krassen Stanchev, *Kultura*, 29 July 1990; Eugene Daynov, *Nachalo*, 1990. (According to Daynov, the age itself is anti-communist, because it marks the end of all totalities: "Today any normal person is a communist in the sense described above. To be an anti-communist today means to be both a patriot

and a European.") Cf. also the articles by Alexander Kiossev in *Kultura*, No. 30, 1991; M. Mateva, *ibid.*; Encho Moutafov, "*Koufarche ot dissagite*" (A Briefcase from the Saddlebags, ), Edvin Sougarev, L. Grigorova and many others.



by the "dandy political scientist," who was indignant that what was happening in Bulgaria was far from "liberal, neo-conservative or whatever values," and therefore resorted to "confusing metaphors and shocking hypotheses, paradoxical comparisons." "Technological cynicism as a philosophy" was also criticized by Georgi Kapriev (*Kultura*, No. 5, 1991) in an article prompted by the dispute between A. Hranova, author of "*Znatsite na 1990*" ("The Signs of 1990," *Kultura*, No. 52, 1990), and Ts. Malamin, author of the election campaign logo of the Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP) and of the article "*Oboushtaryu, gledai si obouvkite*" ("Shoemaker, Mind Your Shoes"). Kapriev recalls "the intellectual's one and only weapon - truth"; and that the "good luck" (*spolouka*) in the 1990 election slogan of the Bulgarian Communist Party (BCP, subsequently renamed Bulgarian Socialist Party) is not a language "in which one can glimpse the truth of Being": "What is actually revolting in your article is precisely the deprived of any value-orientation technological analysis of a clash based on metaphysical positions, of a battle for being. The impartial specialized discourse free of moral commitment, irrespective of whether the issue in question is a cooking recipe, sexual intercourse or murder... precisely technological cynicism is the new language of the devil."

However, the problem of the social scientists committed to the battles of intellectuals for the values of democracy, was not in their commitment as intellectuals. The problem was that their arguments in the debates all too often did not differ from those of the man or woman in the street - they spoke just like Tom, Dick and Harry. For instance, the first critical article against UDF policies (by Roumen

Dimitrov, mentioned above), was condemned with arguments such as "... however, he had to write this [article] so that we could see the mask... this makes him ridiculously aggressive and gives away (if I'm not wrong) [former senior communist party functionary] Stoyan Mihailov's assistant" (Encho Moutafov). A sociologist-turned politician says in an interview that "parties are formed not on the basis of social-class identity, but by blood type... I only have to look at a guy's face to tell which party he's from" (*Kultura*, No. 18, 1993).

In an article in the UDF daily on the anniversary of the 1885 Unification of Bulgaria, Senior Research Fellow Plamen S. Tsvetkov wrote that "their faces contorted with inhuman fierceness, the communists are preparing to celebrate" (*Demokratsiya*, 6 September 1994). Writing in the BSP daily (under the rubric "*Obshtestvo*," "Society," *Douma*, No. 45, 1996), Corresponding Member Krustyo Goranov likewise notes "the savage thirst for power" of the then opposition, "which wants to smear" and won't stop at anything "in the name of seizing the plum of power."

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This type of language, of "plums" and "smear campaigns," reminds me of the language of the average Bulgarian, the way in which s/he still imagines the transition and power today (which we studied during the 1994 election campaign, cf. Petar-Emil Mitev 1999). I will dwell on this question in greater detail - the question of the relation between common sense, the media language and the language of intellectuals, since it is relevant to the subject of this study insofar as science should not accept the common-sense notions of the world

uncritically; the objective of science is not to classify, but to criticize those notions.

The above-mentioned study was concerned, *inter alia*, with the political and, generally speaking, the ideological language of the 1994 general elections - not with the political language of the party manifestoes, the preconceived or spontaneous language of the party "head-quarters," their rallies and slogans, nor even with the language of the non-partisan media, but with the real language spoken by the people, the language that "echoed" in their minds during the election campaign. Hence we were concerned not with the ideological doctrines, but with the everyday life-theories, the way in which the ideological concepts, distinctions, classifications of the world, myths and Utopias existed at the level of everyday consciousness, as everyday appearances and motives. We analyzed them on the basis of 112 semi-formal interviews conducted in the last week before the elections on 18 December 1994 (cf. Mitev 1999).

Everyday consciousness perceives things through the filter of its subjective, pragmatic interest. At the everyday level, "objective" social meanings are fragmentized, coloured subjectively, seen from a particular angle in each of its facets. "Abstract universalities" live in the world of concreteness. The everyday person assumes that a particular part of the life-world is The World, projecting the way in which the objects are hierarchized in his or her personal and partial life-world on The World. Everyday knowledge is "knowledge at hand," it is "cookbook knowledge," a book with all sorts of recipes (as Schutz said). This knowledge combines incompatible things, it can even accommodate contradictory facts insofar as it is "the immediately happening," "hypnotized" by

the concrete situation. (Once the situation is resolved, the everyday explanatory scheme, the scheme applied by the individual to define the situation, sputters out, becoming redundant.) The life-world of the everyday person is "teleologically oriented" – things exist insofar as they open certain opportunities to him or her, they exist as givens of success or failure, of hope or disappointment, of suffering or joy. That is why Almassi claims that the "logic of finality," ridiculed by Voltaire, is still alive at this level, i.e. the logic of Panglos according to which you have a nose so that you can wear glasses. The everyday person is, to quote another classical metaphor, of Claude Levi-Strauss, a *bricoleur*, i.e. a handyman who fixes things up from bits and pieces collected on the principle of "you never know when they might come in handy" (*bricolage*, i.e. odd jobs, makeshift repair, is the logic of the myth). The everyday person knocks things up from odds and ends in order to restore the reality that is missing from the abstractness of his or her life-world. But these bits and pieces are not evenly distributed along his or her counter, neither are they equally attractive at the different points of the individual biography. And another important characteristic of everyday knowledge: "knowledge at hand" is typified and is therefore easy to "wrap in aphorisms," i.e. proverbs and sayings, symbolic summaries of the life-theories.

Traditional sociological surveys, i.e. opinion polls, seldom focus on this language layer, they try to summarize it, to extract "the substance" from the respondent's answer so as to fit it into the Procrustean clusters of typologies. Yet how can one typologize answers such as "*Promyanata? Vyatur!*" - literally, "The Change? Wind!" - which in Bulgarian can

imply both "the wind of change" or "the change is like whistling in the wind"? Or the answer to the question "Will you vote?" - "I will if it's not a pain in the neck" ("*ako ne me murzi*," literally, "if I'm not too lazy to"); "I hate X and I'll vote for Y..."?

Thus what does an analysis of precisely this "layer" of language show? That notwithstanding the non-representative, in the statistical sense of the word, corpus, the everyday Bulgarian political consciousness uses a huge number of folk clichés and images, proverbs and sayings. Which very often serve as an argument for one opinion or another and are, moreover, assumed to be a sufficient argument: "The wolf may lose his teeth, but never his nature" (referring to the BSP); "It's like expecting an alliance between cat and mouse" (referring to the BSP and the UDF). A particularly interesting universalia in the present everyday political consciousness is the universalia of "the plum" (*kokala*, literally "the bone"), i.e. conceptualization of power as a fight for the plum: "Everyone's fighting for the plum, but there's only one plum"; "In Bulgaria, ever since the age of [Todor] Zhivkov, who had seized the plum once and for all and could rub his hands in glee 'cos the goodies were his for keeps"; "Everyone's trying to seize the plum" (that's how common sense explains the absence of national consensus). Bulgarians generally think of power and their participation in politics as "seizing the plum" (*dokopvane na kokala*), "breaking the fast" (*oblazhvane*), "the goodies" (*blaginki*), "windfall" (*kelepir*), "having

your fingers in the honeypot" (*burkane v meda*), "raking it in" (*goushkane*), "making it" (*ourezhdane*), "feathering your nest" (*napapvane*, literally, "having your fill"), "going to embassy receptions" (*hodene po posolstva*) and "cocktail parties." In this line of thought, "fish begins to stink at the head," "like politicians, like the people" - and vice versa, "like the people, like politicians." Politicians are thought to be "birds of a feather" (*edin dol drenki*). In this context, Aleko Konstantinov's popular motif of "all [politicians] are a bad lot" (*vsichki sa maskari*, from his book *Bay Ganyo*<sup>9</sup>) also appears (cited by one in ten respondents in the above-mentioned survey): "We're Bay Ganyos"; "all [politicians] are a bad lot." The implication of "Ganyo-ness" (*ganyovshchina*) often transcends that of "Bulgarian-ness," referring to the boorishness of Balkan mores in general. Thus the focus is not on "Ganyo" but on "Balkanski," i.e. "of the Balkans"; in other words, it's not just that "that's what the Bulgarians are," but "that's what the Balkan mores are."

Everyday political consciousness has an affinity for the quantifiers of universality: "Only the BSP can save Bulgaria"; "All communists are crooks." This is especially clear in the case of "money": "money's everything," "once they take power, they all start amassing [fortunes]."

If we go back to the language of social scientists in the media, we will see that its logic is not very different from the one described above. Nor does this apply to election campaigns and the party press only.

<sup>9</sup>Bay Ganyo Balkanski, whom Maria Todorova defines as "the immortal literary hero of the Bulgarian writer Aleko Konstantinov ... (1863-1897). ... Bay Ganyo, the counterpart of Tartarin and Schwejk in French or Czech literature, and the derivative noun '*bayganyovshchina*' (Bay Ganyo-

ness) has become the most popular byword created by Bulgarian literature, standing for boorishness, crudeness, grossness. ... [Bay Ganyo is] the savage among civilized ... the Balkan parvenu among Europeans ... the nouveau riche and newly hatched corrupt politician" (Todorova 1997: 39).

The above quotes from Krustyo Goranov and Plamen S. Tsvetkov, about "the plum" or "the contorted faces," are typical of the style of politically committed commentaries in the party press. Thus Vera Hristova, Ph.D., makes the following "analytic" comment: "If riding in an office Hyundai and high pay could be a bait and a juicy morsel for the academic who has entered the corridors of power..." (*Demokratiya*, No. 270, 23 November 1994). In *Demokratiya* (No 275, 29 November 1994) again, Senior Research Fellow Stefan Vassev, Ph.D., wonders "isn't your apolitical world superficial, sterilized, schoolmarmishly tailored. A world in which elite riders rein in their lusts through meditation and spiritual masturbation..."; or in *Douma*: "who'll get the prize called subsidies?" (No. 264, 1994).

Finally, I will quote Dragomir Draganov's controversial article explaining the motives of the opposition ("*Tainata na SDS*," "The Secret of the UDF," *Douma*, No. 14, 17 April 1990). The article is meant to answer the question of who's who in the UDF and, hence, who has the right to "dismantle totalitarianism" (the language of "the assemblers and the dismantlers," "*Montazhnitsite i Demontazhnitsite*," to quote the eponymous article by Philosophy Professor Dobrin Spassov in *Douma*, was widely used in this period). The scheme is quite simple: the existence of the UDF is attributed to the lost opportunities of the children of the communist *nomenklatura*: "the rosy prospects of the *nomenklatura* kids have paled," "the familiar mechanism, through which daddy's boy could become a boss, has disappeared." (A new party, i.e. the UDF, had allegedly been born in the academic institute serving the Bulgarian Communist Party's Central Committee, "a breeding ground for *nomenklatura* cadres.")

The secret of the UDF was supposedly encoded in its name, the Bulgarian acronym for "get up so that I'll sit down" (*SDS*, "*stani da sedna*"). This thesis is admittedly quite original, but the ingenious "decoding" certainly did not contribute to the promotion of civic forms of reflection and civil rights. To avoid leaving readers with the impression that such simplistic schemes were confined to the daily of "the outgoing party," I will also quote an article from *Demokratiya* (No. 87, 1991), in which Senior Research Fellow Nartsis Popov, Ph.D. (incidentally, a veteran propagandist of "the outgoing party" and author of a book about prominent philosopher and communist party functionary Todor Pavlov) explains why the BCP was renouncing Marxism: "Part of the communist feudal lords have become capitalists. The thirst for power is stronger than the belief in ideology"; "Marxist sociology ... a combination of Historical Materialism and the bourgeois science of society which Comte called sociology."

The entire context of media commentaries is not irrelevant either. Arguably, the whole media background was not conducive to reflection; besides, there was a long tradition in the style of political smear campaigns against the opponent and of debates as a neighbourhood row. Bulgaria did not have an agora, but had neighbourhood gossips.

Social scientists thus reproduced the prejudices of common sense instead of criticizing them; they perpetuated the stereotypes of mass consciousness instead of differentiating the mass by means of historical distinctions, they turned social difference into historically natural difference instead of writing the history of social inequalities - in order to dispel the perception of the political world in terms of

love and hate, "feathering the pols' nests" ("*pulnene na goushkite na polititsite*," literally, "stuffing the throats of politicians") and "lining journalists' pockets" ("*nahranvane na journalistite*," "feeding journalists") - archetypes of thought which no test in the discipline of civic education could ever dispense with. In sum, the social and political science analyses largely allowed the conceptualization of a primitive social world.

Instead of rationalizing political life, politically committed social and political scientists were involved in the escalation and generation of various social problems; in provoking, for instance, the public anxieties that create conditions for the rise of xenophobia and catastrophism, they provided tribal conflicts with data and arguments, allowed national identity to be perceived not as civic, but as "tribal," ethnic. They agreed to live in a past that would not pass, and did not help develop a project for the future, for a common future of the nation, a national meta-narrative about the future of the nation (the nation as a community of citizens rather than of two "peoples" - blue and red).

The debate on communism in the Bulgarian media actually did not take place, despite "the long farewell to communism" ("*Dulgoto sbogouvane s komunizma*," to quote a rubric in the *Zname* weekly). Petar-Emil Mitev is arguably right that "practical negation [of communism] outstripped theory ... perhaps it is worthwhile to start with an account of the cognitive mistakes, of the illusions of an illusion..." (*Kultura*, No. 20, 17 May 1996). Either way, the Bulgarian public debate on communism apparently ended before it had begun. (*Nova publichnost* [Elenkov 1999], an excellent collection of analytical articles published in

the press in 1998 - an overdue attempt to bring together the different perspectives on post-1989 developments - does not contain a single article analyzing the society we are departing from; this issue is hardly raised at all.) For at the beginning of transition discussions admittedly could not go beyond the slogans of "down with communism"; the problem, however, is that there were no real discussions later either. Not even when there were appropriate occasions in the public sphere - the debate on the law on the illegitimacy of the communist regime, the President's appeal for "national consensus." Because underlying the different narratives of communism and scientific interpretations were the interests of different elites. The memory of communism split the Bulgarian people in two: executioners and victims, traitors and patriots. (Historians, political scientists, etc. found it hard to write depoliticized, value-neutral commentaries.) The average reader, listener or viewer was not confronted with the question of what, in the final count, *was* communism: a social order or an idea, practice or doctrine, an idea or ideas? Was this idea a result of the logic of Modernity itself, and what made it different from the other forms of totalitarianism, what made it possible to build precisely an "ideological society" in Bulgaria? Was socialism in Bulgaria possible due to the logical continuity of the stages of unsuccessful modernization (B. Moore's theory of socialism as the result of an agrarian revolution following a launched but unsuccessful modernization was used by sociologist Georgi O. Dimitrov to show the different transformations of the basic contradiction between the powerful State and the undeveloped civil society and the inevitability of political violence)? Indeed, there were quite a few professional debates on communism or, more precisely, texts,

books and articles.<sup>10</sup> Many studies on "the new elites," a magic formula for donors, were funded... Yet the impact on the public sphere was insignificant. There was no flow of ideas from the academic debates to the cultural weeklies and on to the popular dailies, to say nothing of the party press. The Bulgarian environment proved quite impervious. Furthermore, a comparison between the interpretations of national Bulgarian history in the media and in the history textbooks (Grekova 1997) showed that the accents placed by the textbook authors themselves were quite different when the latter discussed the selfsame event in the party press.

Thus despite certain efforts to conceptualize the processes of transition, the different "streams" failed to meet in the public sphere. The public sphere was occupied by the "corporal" memories of communism and imported theories about communism.

Needless to say, there were quite a few efforts to conceptualize developments in critical rather than propagandist or romantic-festive terms. The critical publications, however, were not in the centre of the public sphere. They were marginal (with some exceptions) and marginalized. For instance, Roumen Dimitrov continued to uphold "the courage of reason." In "*Chernobeliyat kaleidoskop na xenofobiyata*" ("*The Black-and-White Kaleidoscope of Xenophobia*," *Kultura*, No. 51, 17 December 1993), an article prompted by newspaper headlines of the "Arabs-Shoot-Our-Politicians" type, Dimitrov

showed that "the media have already lost their mediating function," that following the logic of scandal, they offered a world that was not multi-dimensional and was convenient for readers, because "readers prefer to click their tongues rather than to rack their brains." "There's xenophobia everywhere. Yet if in Europe it rose from the riffraff, bottom-up, the very opposite happened in our country - xenophobia spread top-down, from the elites..." Dimitrov and other authors did not follow the official line in writing about Serbia (in 1993) and NATO (in 1999) either. But with insignificant impact and influence.

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The second stage in the media presence and ideologemes of social scientists - which arguably started around 1995 - saw the rise of experts rather than of socially committed intellectuals; it signalled a transition - as they say - from existential to pragmatic politics, an expression of the exhaustion of the language of gentle revolutions, the language of the break with totalitarianism. Did this happen after the UDF loss in the December 1994 general elections or after the 1996 American-style presidential primaries, proposed by experts who wanted to shift the discourse away from The Truth as such to "the truth as procedure" (Ivan Krastev); or, perhaps, after - as they say again - "the UN rehabilitated independent expertise" (referring to the Centre for Liberal Strategies' major study on "Bulgaria in a

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<sup>10</sup>Petya Kabakchieva's thesis of communism as an "elitist model" in opposition to the views of Voslensky and Seleny, Petar-Emil Mitev's analysis of the two types of "communism," the above-mentioned thesis of Georgi O. Dimitrov, Andrei Boundjoulov's thesis (incidentally, the subject of

another major debate - was a former Komsomol secretary entitled to theorize on communism - cf. "Vladislav Todorov sreshtou Komsomola," "Vladislav Todorov vs. the Komsomol," *Kultura*, No. 2000, 17 October 1997), and others on the circulation of the elites...

Regional Context. Analysis of Risk Situations") and "for the first time the expert, be s/he good or bad, appeared as an institutional text" (*Kultura*, No. 2000, 17 October 1997)? In fact this does not really matter; what does is the real difference in the media presence and style of speech - no longer on behalf of The Truth, but on behalf of the form, the procedure, no longer through open letters, but through "scenarios," scenarios with non-gentle names... The Kozlodouli N-Plant Scenario, The Holbrooke Scenario, the Tequila Scenario, the Kosovo Scenario...

Of course, there was propaganda disguised as expert discourse at this stage too - pseudo-expertise as effective political agitation. For example, lecturer in economics and BSP member Roumen Gechev based his entire 1994 election campaign - "the shock change of system and monetarism have proven 'a bluff'," inflation will be under full control in early 1997 - on the role of the professional: "first, I have better theoretical training since I have specialized in foreign universities, contrary to Ivan [Kostov]," "second, I am more familiar with Western literature on economics, because I have no language barriers" (*Douma*, December 1994).

Undoubtedly, "the centenarian," i.e. the BSP, was not the only one to assume that professional discourse was a flattering asset. In an interview in a daily on the other

end of the political spectrum, Marin Poundev, a Bulgarian-born foreign expert in Russian and Balkan history, initiator of an Association for the Promotion of Bulgarian Culture, author of the book *Bulgaria in an American Perspective*, says the following in the context of the thesis that "the Russian boot has distorted our national history": "Yes... unfortunately it is the French who have advanced the thesis of American cultural imperialism, because they want a French one" (*Demokratiya*, No. 273, 26 November 1994). (This smacks of the selfsame "get-up-so-that-I'll-sit-down" logic!)<sup>11</sup>

On the other hand, young political scientists were eager to "accelerate the modernization of the political class" and de-personalize relations with the old type of politicians, i.e. not to work on the basis of friendship and political loyalty, but to create conditions for formal decision-making mechanisms "recruiting political expertise"; to be "the agent who severs the warm, syncretic and spontaneous bonds of pre-modern society and replaces them with alienated, formalized [ones]" (Eugene Daynov et al., quotes from a conference on "Political Sciences in Power" organized by the Centre for Social Practices, *Demokratcheski Pregled*, No. 6-7, 1996).

They introduced a new language - along with "scenarios" and "recruiting expertise," "the democratization paradigm,"

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<sup>11</sup>There were other American experts too: Byron Scott, Professor of Journalism, Dean of the American University in Blagoevgrad, Southwestern Bulgaria, founder and head of an "institute for Media Management in the Balkans," in *Demokratiya*, No. 274, 1994; Orelia Fernandez, a US diplomat in Europe, negotiator in the arms control talks in Vienna, with a current project on the establishment of an "International Media Foundation" supporting the independent media [because "state subsidies are a threat to the

independence of the media," "a media should be first and foremost a good business organization" (*Demokratiya*, No. 201, 1991). Conversely, *Douma* reproduced many articles from the left-wing *Le Monde diplomatique*. Yet the experts - in most cases foreigners, for that's how it's supposed to be in "the normal countries," the argument "that's how it's in Europe" being familiar from an earlier Liberation, that from Turkish rule in 1876, too - in the party press were of two kinds: ours and non-ours, and changed places respectively.

"political agenda," "installation of a fair state based on American values - multiculturalism and a liberal social contract," "memo," "lobbying," "think tanks," "policy-making process." In brief, policy.

This was a new language of intellectuals too. Arguably a genuine English, after Fortinbras's "take up the bodies" extensively quoted in the first, romantic, stage of transition... Contrary to Alexander Kiossev - in an emblematic, key discussion marking the transition to the new stage ("*Intelektualetsut i expertut*," "The Intellectual and the Expert," a discussion with Boyko Penchev, Ivan Krastev, Ani Ilkov in *Literaturen Vestnik*, No. 20, 26 March 1996) - I will not consider the question of how this transition from "the language of the late Dadaists to the language of the experts" was possible. Nor will I take the position of the moralist, defended by Kiossev even with his "corporal" presence in the Bulgarian public sphere, who, rejecting both the 19th century intellectual and the expert, rejects "the easy way in which those who changed their identifications from late Dadaists to experts, have suddenly forgotten what they know," namely that "expert reason is a late hypostasis of 'instrumental reason'." For here I am concerned - not so much as a philosopher of morality but as a critical sociologist - rather with what type of elites and transition legitimate this type of expert discourse, what provokes the latter, with what social networks is it associated, to the logic of which social network and elites is it adequate, and which networks take advantage of it. That is why I will initially only try to describe the self-designations of experts, their arguments, the possible contradictions between their self-perception and the logic of expertise. After all, here we

are concerned with the rational arguments and figures of the presence of professional languages in the media, aren't we? It's true that, to quote Pierre Bourdieu, "there is no effective democracy without real critical counter-power" such as those languages could provide, isn't it?

Vladislav Todorov's interview "*Ako ima vtora vulna za NATO, shte bude pri razlichni ousloviya*" ("If There's a Second Wave [of Admission] to NATO, It Will Be on Different Terms," *Kapital*, 8-14 June 1998), is a typical example of expert discourse: "[US special envoy to the Balkans Richard] Holbrooke's statement [that Bulgaria may attack the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and claim its territory] is a case study of a scenario in which Bulgaria is an agent of the crisis. A spirit of '*heartless realism*' ought to be cultivated in Bulgaria, whereby Holbrooke is seen not as an *agent provocateur*, but as a scriptwriter of a collapse of the *status quo*." This "political scenario, due to the Bulgarian *complex of historical guilt* - oversensitivity to and oversuspicion of statements of external authorities - has caused such a stormy reaction. The role of the media is extremely important in this case. *They should open up space for reason and the rational unravelling of political imagination, and tame the Bulgarian passions* and this reactivity, which is obviously becoming a *national character trait* [?! italics mine]." The problem however, is whether this - "opening up the space of reason" - is possible at all if there is no public in the sense discussed at the beginning of this study (but only a mass that turns on the TV set to watch *The Lights of Miami* every night), if there are tendencies which are rather different from those until recently described by the Prime Minister about the growth of a middle class, e.g.



tendencies towards clientelistic models of representative linkage (noted by certain political scientists, e.g. Ragaru 1997: 28).

Another example of arguments in favour of the advent of "the age of experts" is the above-mentioned discussion in *Literaturen Vestnik* (March 1996): expert discourse is a discourse of normalization - it is impossible to live forever in "a world without everyday life," an expression of the transition from existential to pragmatic politics; the conditions for this transition came after the 1994 electoral defeat of the UDF, which for the first time "acknowledged the discourse of political science" (until then only those who were kicked out of the UDF had become impromptu political scientists); expert discourse protects the interest of the political system itself and, in this sense, the *status quo*; it accepts the names of the actors in the political sphere "such as they themselves identify by." "The truth is procedure." A necessary procedure insofar as any society has an "interest of surviving," which is manifested in the strategies of the *separate* [italics mine] interest - this is how "administrative forms which should stop crime, repair the streets, should be formed" (most quotes are from Ivan Krastev). I would not want to object by citing poetic arguments such as Ani Ilkov's (who claims that expert discourse was a transformation of "the second morality of communists"). Still, it is interesting to reconsider - in sociological terms - the question of whether there really are conditions for a pure liberal estate in Bulgaria?

Aren't authors like Bourdieu right in worrying about the schemes of neo-liberal thought, which tries to dissolve collectivities (collective survival interests and strategies), which fragmentizes any

resistance, any solidarity? Isn't this a case of "false universalization," of imposition of theories imported from different contexts (and leading, in the Bulgarian case, to de-historicization and depolitization) ? ("Naturalization of the schemes of neo-liberal thought, whose dominance has been asserted in the past 20 years thanks to the subversive activity of think tanks and their allies in the political and journalistic field," [Bourdieu, Wacquant 1998: 110]). In an article on American anti-intellectualism, Loic Wacquant shows how the market paradigm is imposed on all activities, how lobbies are bought, how the graduates from elite political schools start working for large commercial companies, how senior civil servants come from the multinational corporate and banking community. Wacquant is very critical of the so-called "think tanks," of "the unfair competition from the intellectual dumping of research institutes on public policy decision-making": "no need of independent thinkers as long as a hundred-odd think tanks are prospering in Washington by producing their polished savant compilations on order... fat technical documents, preferably with figures, and those dryish evaluation reports, well done to meet the requirements of the moment and to whitewash with rationality and neutrality measures taken on the basis of other criteria" (Wacquant 1996: 1). Think tanks have "the frills and hexis, the language and titles of the university professor, but lack his principal attribute - the capacity to formulate questions and the will to find answers with no constraints whatsoever, whatever this might lead to..." (Wacquant 1996: 1). (Of course, there are many reasons for the prosperity of think tanks in the US, not least the self-isolation of the university microcosm; there are also reasons for their transfer to and

consolidation in Eastern Europe, for the promotion of precisely this type of expertise...)

Hence I was quite surprised to hear that Eastern European think tanks had gathered at a seminar in Budapest. And I was even more surprised to learn that some of Bulgaria's top media intellectuals identified as think tanks. I am referring to Ivan Krastev, who offers convincing arguments for his thesis in the article "The Liberal Estate. Reflections on the Politics of Think Tanks in Central and Eastern Europe" (Krastev 1999; cf. also Krastev et al. in *Kultura*, No. 2000, 17 October 1997). This thesis is relevant to social science and its public effect in the "postcommunist era." That is why I will take the liberty of making a longer summary of Krastev's article. In discussing think tanks, Krastev is not referring merely to experts, but to experts from independent public-policy research institutes which are both non-governmental and non-market; his definition of think tanks also excludes government research units and social science institutes in the academies of science, consulting agencies, civic pressure groups and some pro-democracy foundations (Krastev 1999: 36). Think tanks have long been "perceived as typically, if not exclusively, American institutions," because "Anglo-Saxon culture, founded upon the power of rational argument, is the proper context for understanding the power of twentieth-century independent policy research institutes in America and Britain" (Krastev 1999: 37); they serve policy-makers on the basis of the conviction that hard data and public debate are important in decision-making. Krastev notes something very typical of many East European think tanks, namely that they "exist because of their donors, on behalf of their donors, and for

the sake of their donors" (Krastev 1999: 36). Yet - and with good reason too - he stresses that the transfer to another social and cultural environment in itself changes their function. That is why think tanks in Bulgaria have a different history and a different "agenda" - they "constitute a break from" (Krastev 1999: 39) the liberal intellectuals from the early period of transition, after the language of 1989 was exhausted (the attempt of first-generation liberal intellectuals "to reduce the political process to public debate" [Krastev 1999: 45] was exhausted). In other words, they are the second generation, who "re-wrote their essays on liberalism as policy papers in order to preserve their influence" (Krastev 1999: 53). They are not value-free (as a scientist should be). Their main purpose is to maintain the public debate - "it was the public, not the governments, which captured the imagination of the newly born policy institutes" (Krastev 1999: 44); their purpose is to maintain the "original paradigm" ("anti-Keynesian") against "populist consensus"; in other words, to preserve "the liberal consensus," "to compensate for the weakness or even the absence of pressure for further reforms on the side of local business communities" (Krastev 1999: 48); to attempt to bring about real dialogue between political liberalism and economic liberalism ("technopols"), whose influence was declining as a result of the pain of reform, but whose influence on policy-making had to be preserved. The think tanks have "capitalized on their good relations with the media" (Krastev 1999: 48); with "their high media profile," they have an impact on public opinion-making; since they are not "overtheoretical," they produce materials which are "comprehensible also for the rank-and-file public" (Krastev 1999: 44). Similar to the early intellectuals, with

whom they are associated, the discourse of think tanks is "charismatic and not fact driven. It is a discourse about politics, not about policy" (Krastev 1999: 42). Thus think tanks, as an autonomous centre of expertise, are "much more in the business of talking to governments (whether shouting or whispering) than of advising them" (Krastev 1999: 49). In lobbying for the idea of introducing the principle of presidential primaries in Bulgaria, the Centre for Liberal Strategies (CLS), as an institute of this type, produced more than 60 publications in a period of less than 60 days, "mobilizing their networking capacities" and social contacts (Krastev 1999: 51). As "representatives of an autonomous, though marginal center of power in an attempt to offer alternative mechanisms for the institutionalization of liberalism" (Krastev 1999: 46). Consequently, think tanks are associated with the changed role of intellectuals in the course of the development of the reform (with the need of replacing the old type of "ideological" language with the language of experts).

I believe that there is another important accent in Krastev's thesis: he repeatedly notes the link (second generation) with the intellectuals of 1989 and, in this sense, the difference from classical think tanks. Moreover, at the end of his article he calls them "knowledgeable managers of expert discourse [rather] than experts themselves," (Krastev 1999: 53) an "advocacy group for liberal solutions"; and projects that "the lack of a community genuinely committed to scientific work" will severely limit "their capacity to produce innovative policy solutions" (ibid.), therefore in this sense their present form of existence will prove invalid.

Obviously the problem of the media presence of those gifted media intellectuals

who identify as think tanks, albeit non-classical, is very different from the problem of Media Studies, the "Esperanto" of media intellectuals and the so-called media class in, say, France. L. Pinto (Pinto 1995: 9) has studied (before us) the commentary rubrics in *Le Monde*, *Liberation* and *Nouvelle Observateur*, to see whom does the press turn to for expert commentary, who is invited by the French media. His objective is to explain the logic of market demand for media-type intellectuals (whose archetype is the famous BHL, Bernard-Henry Levi), who are knowledgeable about a broad range of subjects - from organ transplants to Postmodern collage. In a widely discussed analysis of "the journalistic field," Bourdieu shows that the market logic exercises pressure on the latter which, in turn, facilitates "growth in the influence of the commercial over the pure" in the other spheres of culture too; which ultimately means that if you want to be heard, you must sell on the media market. Other countries have likewise seen the rise of this specific intellectual stratum created by pure market logic (Baumann), a logic that undermines the modern basis of the collective power of intellectuals - people who appear only to reappear, appearance - appearance'. What counts is the pure quantity rather than the content of their messages, with the quantitative media time, their salability proving to be more important (Baumann).

Thus the problem in Bulgaria is indeed different. Ivan Krastev is right that Bulgarian intellectuals with a "high media profile" are committed intellectuals. (In this sense - by this indicator - they tend to resemble Bourdieu's *Raison d'agir* group rather than BHL.) Yet the important question is ultimately who is the subject (agent, actor) of reforms, which elites stand

to gain from them? In whose name is public opinion mobilized, risk situations solved, hard data for scenarios sought? Considering that Krastev notes in his article that these are not the "local business communities," that we have a "marginal centre of power" which wants to institutionalize a policy, *whose* (not what - it is neo-liberal) is this policy? Needless to say, I certainly do not believe that there is a "Centre," least of all "Headquarters," sending us think tanks the way they used to send us tanks (let us recall the 15 "tanks of peace," i.e. tractors, which Marshal Tolbukhin, the commander of the Russian troops in Bulgaria after the September 1944 *coup d'etat*, sent as a gift to communist leader Georgi Dimitrov; and other tanks, too). Yet the analysis of the networking capacities of the second generation of liberal intellectuals is of paramount importance for the answer to some of the questions about the elites of transition and its main constituents: *what* networking capacities are mobilized, *when* and *how*. This does not concern only the high educational, cultural and linguistic - very important too - capital of the second generation of liberal intellectuals. But also the fact that their position is probably not marginal at all, and that they - and they alone - are capable of mediating more subjects (agents, actors), being part of much more networks, potential and actual constellations of forces (especially in comparison to the first - dissident - generation...). In other words, this very type of intellectuals do not simply talk to the governments or the public, but are consensual, legitimate in (and for) more networks, acknowledged (and identified) as mediators by more main "subjects" (agents, actors) of transition. As pure mediators. Yet are those the pure mediators which the media ought to be – as mentioned at the

beginning – according to Habermas and other non-anti-Keynesian social scientists? Hardly. All that could be said for the time being is that the Transition thus substantialized in this study (I realize that the transition is far more complex) needs their policy papers, with the respective hard data – not critical theory. It needs those – adequate – scenarios, i.e. the logic of pure form that is not burdened with warm allegiances (be it to the golden age of dissidents). That is why the scenarios have proven effective. And "the Bulgarian passions" - tamed. So as to supposedly open up – they say – space for reason. Existential politics is dead. Yet between "pragmatism pragmatism" there is no room for critical publicity.

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