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WHY THERE WAS ONLY WEAK OPPOSITION AMONG BULGARIAN INTELLIGENTSIA?

The answer to the question why was the oppositional potential of Bulgarian intelligentsia weak on the eve of the great changes that took place in Eastern Europe in 1989 and brought to the collapse of the imposed by the Soviet Union system of state socialism should be sought much further in the history of Bulgaria.

After almost five centuries of Ottoman domination, the Bulgarian state was reestablished in 1878 as a result of the Russian-Turkish War of 1877–1878. The Bulgarian contribution to the Liberation was the National Revival in which the intelligentsia played a leading role. This circumstance predetermined its major role in the modern Bulgarian state. Besides, the most influential part of the intelligentsia – the one related to speech and called artistic-creative intelligentsia, preserved its social sensibility and revolutionary sentiments in the new Bulgarian state. It
could be claimed with a great degree of certainty that in the first half of the 20th century left-wing poets and writers had the strongest public influence. They met the revolutionary changes that took place at the end of the First World War and the October Revolution of 1917 in Russia with hope and enthusiasm. The revolution was glorified by Bulgarian poets, the most talented among them being Hristo Smirnensky who entitled one of his popular poems “The Red Squadrons”.

The left-wing and pro-communist sympathies of the creative intelligentsia were reinforced also by the acute political confrontation in Bulgaria in the interwar period, which resulted in two military coups (1923 and 1934), two uprisings (1918 and 1923) and political persecutions and murders that we call today “civil cold war”. This tendency gave rise to the Bulgarian uniqueness in the years of World War II – on March 1, 1941 the Bulgarian government signed the Tripartite Pact, but among the Bulgarian people anti-Nazi sentiments continued to be strong and it organized the only partisan movement among the Third Reich’s allies in the period 1941–1944. A great number of the intelligentsia joined the resistance1, while one of the most talented modernist poets Nikola Vaptsarov was sentenced to death and shot because of his communist activity.

The left-wing and pro-communist sentiments created favorable opportunities for the establishment of the Soviet type of state socialism. In contrast to most of the states in Eastern Europe belonging to the Soviet sphere, in Bulgaria there was a marginal resistance to this process.

1 Дочев, Д., Партизаните - мит и реалност. Социологическо изследване. Пловдив. 2004, 116–118. In the book is compared the data about 1660 partisans. In their view, the participants in the partisan movement had an education 2.5 times higher than the average for the country.
Moreover, although they entered in Bulgaria after declaring war, the Soviet troops passed through the territory of the country for three days without fighting a single battle. The Soviet army was given a warm welcome – with flours, in the same way as the partisans. The left-wing intelligentsia met with enthusiasm the changes after September 9, 1944, when the new government of the Fatherland Front coalition in which the communists had a leading role was formed. The politically unengaged intellectuals and the sympathizers of the right-wing politicians (mostly because of their nationalism) took a waiting position.

The first repressions connected with the new pro-Soviet and pro-communist government were carried out by the so called People’s Court (1944–1945), but they affected a relatively small number of intellectuals (ideologists and propagandists of the regime prior to September 9, 1944). The next repressions were provoked by the political struggle in the period of transition from “people’s democracy” to Stalinism (1947–1948). In this period were arrested and sentenced journalists who published in the opposition press. However, the reaction of the intelligentsia in the course of the repressions from the Stalinist period in Bulgaria was nor directed towards resistance, but rather towards adaptation to the new realities. Most of the renowned intellectuals from the previous regime adapted in one way or another to the new regime – the most prominent among them preserved their literary positions, their books were published in big numbers, they received state prizes. This refers also to such talented poets and writers as Elin Pelin, Elisaveta Bagryana, Dimitar Dimov, Dimitar Talev.

\(^2\) An evidence of this is the record in the diary of one of the prominent literary critics. Делчев, Б. Дневник. София, 1995, 22–23.
Quite different was the position of the part of the intelligentsia that was connected with the communist party before 1944 or had joined it after that date. This group became the most enthusiastic advocate of the idea of building socialism (of course, on the Soviet model, as after USSR’s victory in the war nobody in Bulgaria could think of another one). These intellectuals carried out the transformations in the sphere of culture and education that were called “cultural revolution”. They established the united creative unions that were built on the political principle of “democratic centralism”; they devised the new school programs for the secondary and university education in accordance with the new ideology. The “cultural revolution”, which, apart from the ideologization, included also an access to education and culture for all the citizens, necessitated a big number of new young cadres to be trained quickly (for a successive, yet not for the last time the idea that the young cadres were heralds of the new and the progressive was launched). In this way the Sovietization of the so called ideological intelligentsia began – the professors in Marxist philosophy and history of the communist and workers movement were trained hastily in the Soviet Union or in the Central Party School in Bulgaria that was built on the Soviet pattern. These cadres that were educated in the dogmas of Stalinism replaced a part of the old, the so called bourgeois scholars in the course of the “purges” in the field science and education. They changed radically the traditional outlook of the Bulgarian intelligentsia.

The small number of teachers, doctors, engineers, who generally had not a large but a stable income and everywhere in the countryside formed the urban elite, were replaced by the mass Bulgarian intelligentsia in which the teachers, doctors and engineers continued to be the major
groups, but this time they were thousands in number. The massovization of the intelligentsia was called forth by the necessity to satisfy the demands of mass education, free healthcare and accelerated industrialization. The result was a numerous new “socialist” intelligentsia, but not very well paid. The new intelligentsia had the feeling of a great social leap forward (most of them were of workers or peasant origin) but that was not coupled with a similar material leap. The combination of intellectual self-confidence and lack of material satisfaction would gradually make the teachers, doctors and engineers the most dissatisfied by socialism in the last stage of its existence and the strongest anti-communist groups in the first period of transition. Yet, during the period of socialism the discontent was directed only towards the material conditions and it did not have a clearly expressed ideological nature.

However, it was the more narrow humanitarian and creative intelligentsia and not the mentioned above the mass groups of intellectuals that played a much more important role for the intellectual climate in the country and the attitude towards the Bulgarian Communist Party, which together with the satellite Agrarian Union ruled Bulgaria throughout the entire postwar period. The people from the learned professions and the literary set in fact formulated the ideological basis of state socialism and propagated publicly its major messages.

The humanitarian intelligentsia included the university professors and the researchers in the academic institutes, who had to present their knowledge of the society from the point of view of the so called Marxism-Leninism (in fact we are speaking about the Soviet interpretation of Marxism). It set up the parameters of all the ideological
disciplines that were thought in the secondary schools and the universities. The leading and most privileged in this group were the scholars from the ideological institutes to the Bulgarian Communist Party Central Committee (BCP CC) – initially that was the High Party School, and later the Institute of History of BCP and the Academy for Social Sciences and Social Management (AONSU). They received higher salaries, had a greater access to information about the government and had a higher position in the social hierarchy. The result of such stratification of the scholarly humanitarian studies was the gradual loss of its social prestige. The studying of “scientific socialism” that was a product of the activity of this group and compulsory for the entire educational system turned into a tedious obligation and a source of jokes. Besides, it should be kept in mind that almost nobody, including people among the ideological proponents of the government in the 1980s, believed in what he propagated. That was the intelligentsia which in the second half of the 1980s adopted the western ideas of pluralism and democracy\(^3\), but had neither the desire, nor the intention to become a leader of the changes, because it was dependent on the system to which it served without approving it.

Only after the beginning of the changes the intelligentsia nourished in the institutes of the BCP CC became a part of the new social forces and launched the first and most fierce anti-communist ideas. In that endeavor it was helped both by its own knowledge in Marxism-Leninism and the discontent from the official position of servants to the BCP CC in which

\(^3\) The ideological institutes had a wide access to western literature and information. Bulgarian Telegraphic Agency prepared special editions for these institutes. For example, Bulletin of the Institute for Contemporary Social Theories. See: Архив на БТА.
it found itself, as well as the desire to preserve its social positions. However, from a moral point of view the activities of that intelligentsia were strongly disputable and to this day the politicians and researchers of such an origin are often reminded of their past of servants to the socialist system. Similar was the fate of well-known proponents of right wing political and economic ideas in the years of transition such as the director of the Centre for the Study of Democracy Ognyan Shentov, the Director of the Institute for Market Economy Krasen Stanchev, the Director of the Centre for Social Practices Evgeni Dainov, the Director of the Institute for Studies of the Recent Past Ivaylo Znepolski.

Writers and poets were traditionally very influential in the Bulgarian society. In the period of socialism they were not controlled and guided by the BCP in such a direct manner as compared to the representatives of the humanitarian studies. The greater freedom enjoyed by them was due to their different function – they were not ordinary propagandists of the system, but were assigned the task to recreate it with the means of art, which were quite diverse and allowed for a wide array of means of expression.

The relations between BCP and the artistic intelligentsia were not trouble-free. During the Stalinist period in Bulgaria (1949-1956) strong pressure was exerted also on this group of the intelligentsia to accept unconditionally the so called “socialist realism” as the only correct artistic
method⁴. A number of show attacks were carried out against artists who had diverted from the dogma (the most indicative among them was the 1950 campaign against the communist painter Alexander Zhendov⁵). However, the aim of such campaigns was not the annihilation of the ideological opponents, but bringing under control the more free thinking followers. It became obvious that the new rules had to be observed by all, even by the communists.

As a compensation for the limitations, the literary set was offered a wide range privileges. The members of the creative unions had the opportunity to receive a much higher payment, they had at their disposal creative centers in different parts of the country where they could work in peace, the system of state orders and buying offs was introduced which reached the amount of a one to two annual salaries for a single work, something the ordinary people could not dream of. In the beginning of the 1960s after consolidating his power, Todor Zhivkov made special efforts to change the policy of the “stick” with that of the “carrot” in an attempt to attract the intelligentsia to the government. A group of young poets and writers were defined as the “April generation” (the name comes from the April Plenum of the BCP CC, at which Todor Zhivkov took the lead of

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⁴ That was not an artistic method, but political obligation to establish the new system. The requirement was not to make a realistic reflection of the reality, but to present it in the way it was supposed to be according to “Marxism-Leninism”. I define it as “surrealism with elements of non-science fiction”. Банева, И. Полша, Чехословакия и Унгария в годините на "униформения социализъм" 1945–1956. В: Димитър Луджев, Бойка Василева, Искра Банева. Утопия и реалност. Университетско издателство, 1991, л. 95.

⁵ Политическото убийство на Александър Жендов. Стенографически протокол на годишното отчетно-изборно събрание на първичната организация на БКП при Съюза на художниците в България, състояло се на 7, 8 и 10 юли 1950 г. – Вести на ВС на БСП, 1990, кн. 4–7.
the BCP), because they took a stand for a greater creative freedom in accordance with the process of de-Stalinization that had began. Todor Zhivkov knew how to court the creative intelligentsia, making personal meetings and establishing additional privileges for it. The privileged intelligentsia responded with gratitude and with works supportive of the regime. The most telling example of the mutual flirt between Zhivkov and the intelligentsia was the sequel of books of poetry entitled “April Hearts”, where a large number of poets and painters openly glorified BCP and its leader. The attraction of the major group of the Bulgarian intelligentsia to the government does not mean that the intelligentsia as a whole supported and advocated the system. Yet, the greater part of the creative intelligentsia felt comfortable under socialism. The writer Alexander Tomov (one of the activists of the anti-communist forces in the years of transition) recollects about the favorable position of the Bulgarian intelligentsia under socialism: “I shall point out only some of the privileges we enjoyed. Membership in the Writers’ Union, which guaranteed the publishing of you books after waiting for a certain period of time in the Union’s and also in the other publishing houses. A guaranteed work in the system of culture. Holidays in the holiday houses of the Union of Bulgarian Writers together with your entire family. Special health care, official trips abroad, etc. Even the people who rejected the system in themselves, in one way or another made use of its benefits.” The created with the propaganda tools of the government

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6 Априлски сърца. С., 1980.
material privileges and high social prestige of the intelligentsia made it a part of the political elite, and not its opponent.

Among the intelligentsia there were also critics of the government. Some of the most outstanding figures of Bulgarian culture, as well as many others did not agree to serve the authorities. They preserved the typical for the intelligentsia critical attitude towards the authorities, but unlike the previous periods, the criticism was not direct, but resorted to the Aesopian language (criticism on the brink of what is allowed). In the period of de-Stalinization the group of the dissenters was formed, which gradually extended its criticism from Stalinism to the entire system. Some researchers consider this intellectual criticism was actually the Bulgarian “dissidence”\(^8\), but this thesis could be hardly accepted, as most of the dissatisfied intellectuals had anti-fascist and communist past and preserved their close private relations with the authorities – with Todor Zhivkov or with some of his close associates. The most popular rebel was the poet and author of epigrams Radoy Ralin, who unmasked the ailments of socialism, but whenever there was a more serious problem he met Zhivkov and talked to him. It is true that, according to his own words, he had never asked Zhivkov for something for himself, but only for the others, but it is also true that Zhivkov had never refused to help him.

There were also intellectuals who did not fit into the system, but were not related to the BCP. Such were the writer Georgi Markov and the poet Constantin Pavlov. Georgi Markov, however, became an opponent of the regime only after he emigrated and started to work at Radio Free Europe and BBC, while in Bulgaria he cooperated with the State Security

Service and belonged to circle of writers who were close to Todor Zhivkov (the so called hunting group). Georgi Markov and the malcontent intellectuals-communists addressed political criticisms, while the poet Constantin Pavlov rejected the philosophical basis of the system. Already his first book of poems “Verses”, published in 1965, provoked a negative reaction on the part of the ideological custodians of the regime. In his case the repressions were quite peculiar – he was not allowed to publish his poems, but was offered a job in the cinematography where he worked successfully until the collapse of the system and was the script writer of many good Bulgarian films.

In other words, at no point during the entire period of socialism was the Bulgarian intelligentsia persecuted in the way that was done, for instance, in the Soviet Union and in some other states from the Eastern Bloc and so it has never openly opposed the authorities. In the Bulgarian case, the repressions for disobedience were expressed in deprivation of privileges, but not in deprivation of work or means of existence. The result was at hand – almost until the end of the system’s existence no organized dissident movement appeared in Bulgaria, and after the system collapsed it turned out that the Bulgarian artists did not have works they had written for themselves and could publish them only then. An exception to this rule were the reports of Georgi Markov, but they were written in emigration.

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10 Again in the words of Alexander Tomov, Konstantinov not only worked in the cinema, but became a close friend to the longtime Director of the Cinematography Nikola Nenov. Томов, А.. Цит. съч., с. 72.
And yet, though only a year and a half before the “autumn revolutions” in Eastern Europe, in Bulgaria also emerged a dissident movement. On March 8, 1988, after the public showing of the documentary film “Breathe!”, devoted to the ecological problem of the Danubian town of Rousse (periodically polluted with chlorine from the chemical plant in the Romanian city of Gyurgevo), the first organization established without the knowledge and permission of the authorities came into being – the Public Committee for Ecological Protection of the Town of Rousse\textsuperscript{11}. The Committee was initiated and constituted by representatives of the intelligentsia and it proclaimed ecological aims which concealed an attempt to oppose the government. However, more than a half of the 33-member leadership (namely 20 people) were members of the BCP, including participants in the anti-fascist resistance. The Rousse Committee did not do anything more, because immediately after its establishment the authorities exerted pressure on the founders, who gave up further activity. However, the Rousse Committee was very important, because it showed that in Bulgaria had emerged overt opponents of the system.

Bulgarian dissident movement differs significantly from the dissident movements in the other Eastern European states. The first difference lies in the fact that it did not emerge independently but was inspired by the “perestroika” carried out in the Soviet Union. This is evident from the constant reference to the Soviet “glasnost”, as well as from the support granted to the Rousse Committee by the correspondent of the Soviet official newspaper “Pravda” Leonid Zhmiryov. The more

\textsuperscript{11} See: Баева, И. Из историята на българското дисидентство - Общественият комитет за екологична защита на Русе и властта. – Известия на държавните архиви, бр. 76, 2000, 33 - 53.
serious reason for the dependence of Bulgarian dissident movement on the Soviet “perestroika” were the close relations of the Bulgarian intelligentsia with the Soviet one built on the traditional Russophilia. The second difference was the attempt to avoid the political topics, instead bringing to the fore the politically neural ecological problems. The third reason was the relation of the dissidents with BCP – most of the dissidents were BCP members and acted rather as an internal party opposition, than as speakers of the dissatisfied with the government society. These peculiarities would be maintained also in the next dissident organization that was political this time – the Club for Support of Glasnost and Perestroika, established on November 3, 1988. In the very name of the organization there was a reference to the Soviet perestroika and in the Club’s leadership once again one could observe predominance of the BCP ranks and the communists-veterans.\(^{12}\)

In 1988-1989 were created also some dissident organizations that were not related to BCP but included opponents of Marxism and state socialism. Such were the Independent Association for Protection of Human Rights in Bulgaria of Ilia Minev, the Committee for Protection of Religious Rights, Freedom of Mind and Religious Values of Hieromonk Christofor Sabev and the Independent Trade Union “Podkrepa” of Dr. Constantin Trenchev. However, these dissident organizations were created by the adherents of the regime existent prior to 1944 or by people having no public authority whatsoever, besides, they carried their activities in the countryside and for that reason remained almost unknown for the Bulgarian society.

Thus, the end of the Cold War found the Bulgarian society totally unprepared. Even when the collapse of the system in Eastern Europe began with the victory of “Solidarity” in the Polish elections on June 4 and 18, 1989, with the decision of the Hungarian government to remove the fences on its border with Austria in June and September 1989 so that to provide an opportunity to the citizens of the German Democratic Republic to reach the Federal Republic of Germany, when the Czech and Slovak youth started to demonstrate, to the Bulgarians these events seemed distant and insignificant. Bulgarian intelligentsia still considered the most important was to continue its attempts to obtain bigger concessions from Todor Zhivkov’s regime after the example of the Soviet “perestroika”. In the spring the attention was focused mainly on holding of the creative unions congresses, where their greatest achievement was the election in the leaderships of candidates, proposed by the delegates, and not the ones approved by BCP. However, in most of the cases the new leaders were also BCP members\textsuperscript{13}.

The real challenge for the Bulgarian intelligentsia came in the beginning of the summer, when the smoldering ethnic conflict reached its climax. We are speaking about the forceful change of the names of the Bulgarian Turks that was carried out at the end of 1984 and the beginning of 1985. Until the spring of 1989 the Bulgarian intelligentsia almost “did not notice” this problem – probably because of its inherent nationalism which was traditionally valued highly by the intelligentsia (let us not forget that we are speaking here about the Balkans where nationalism makes a part of the national ideology). However, in May 1989 things changed – Bulgarian dissidents sought for a cause that would distance

\textsuperscript{13} Данаилов, Г. Доколкото си спомням. 2. С., 2001, с. 195.
them from the government and found it in the agitation among the Bulgarian Turks. In the second half of May the Turks from northeast Bulgaria organized protests which resulted in clashes with the police and human victims (nine people were killed)\textsuperscript{14}. In this new situation the main dissident organizations prepared and submitted two Declarations (on May 9 and July 18, 1989) to the Parliament, in which they expressed support for the civil rights of the Bulgarian citizens of Turkish origin\textsuperscript{15}.

The clashes brought to a turn in Todor Zhivkov’s policy who declared on May 29, 1989 that according to the agreements of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Vienna meeting each Bulgarian citizen was free to leave the country. A large part of the Bulgarian Turks decided to take advantage of that right and in the summer began their mass emigration which brought to a serious economic crisis. At that moment the dissident intelligentsia entered into an open conflict with the government, but the repressions that ensued did not go beyond the exclusion of the more prominent dissidents from BCP membership, as well as phone tapping and following of those who expressed their critical positions over the western radio stations. That was the reason why when at the end of May the Bulgarian delegation left for the OSCE Conference on the Human Dimension in Paris in the government plane boarded both the official delegation led by the Minister of Foreign Affairs Petar Mladenov, and the dissidents Blaga Dimitrova, Koprinka Chervenkova and Petko Simeonov.


Unlike the case in the other Eastern European states where in the summer and autumn of 1989 the society manifested its desire for change, in Bulgaria the attention was focused entirely on the emigration of over 300 thousand Bulgarian Turks and the problems related to crop harvesting and filling in the vacant work places, which resulted from that. The Bulgarian intelligentsia split in two – the smaller group showed sympathy to the Turks, while most of them supported the authorities in the anti-Turkish campaign. This specific conjuncture in Bulgaria left its mark on the beginning of the changes. They did not start with stirring up of the society, but with processes taking place within the BCP leadership and in the relations between BCP and the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU)\(^{16}\).

The role of Gorbachov for the replacement of the conservative party leaderships in Eastern Europe with reformist ones is beyond any doubt. In the Bulgarian case the interference was made directly through the Soviet ambassador Viktor Sharapov and indirectly with the assistance of the pro-Gorbachov group in the BCP leadership – the graduates of the Moscow State Institute of International Relations (MGIMO) Petar Mladenov and Andrei Lukanov. They organized other members of the party leadership and at Politburo of CC of BCP meeting held on November 9, forced Todor Zhivkov to submit his resignation which was confirmed at the CC of BCP Plenum the next day – November 10, 1989. Thus the Bulgarian transition to market economy and western type of parliamentary democracy started with a “royal coup”.

As for the dissident intelligentsia, it did not take part at all in these events. This evident from the way in which the dissidents met Todor Zhivkov’s removal from power. On November 10, 1989 everybody was surprised\textsuperscript{17} - the society, but most of all the dissidents. The news of Zhivkov’s overthrow was met with enthusiasm and gratitude to the “heroes of the day” Petar Mladenov and Andrei Lukanov, who had deposed the dictator T. Zhivkov.

About the attitude of the dissidents one could judge by an inquiry made by them (Evgenia Ivanova). The literary critic Mihail Nedelchev, who later took part in the reestablishment of the Radical Democratic Party: "Ivan Radoev, may he rest in peace, told me in 12 o’clock that everything has already happened and that was for sure. And I remember that I went then to Radio Sofia to get the official message. I received that message and my friends were sitting in the writers’ club and already in secret anticipation were drinking wine... And in the Writers’ Union a very strange gaiety set in, because some kind of a fever seized everybody, no matter whether they were Zhivkovists or anti-Zhivkovists, communists or anti-communists"\textsuperscript{18}. The writer Nikolai Kolev-Bosia: "That day I was in Dupnitsa. I was with Krassi Kanev. After that – in Yuzhnia Park (South Park) and then in "Tirolska sreshta", where we waited for the TV to say whether that was true. I was surprised that it happened on that particular day, but otherwise it was clear that the house was falling down"\textsuperscript{19}. The leader of the independent trade union “Podkrepa” Dr. Constantin Trenchev: "November 10th itself was to a certain extent a surprise for us.

\textsuperscript{17} Иванова, Е. Op. cit., p. 226.

\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., 222–223.

\textsuperscript{19} Ibid., p. 224.
I was in Stara Zagora when we heard on Radio Free Europe the news that Todor Zhivkov had submitted his resignation. The joy was great, the phone was ringing constantly, we were greeting each other, we thought that now we could be able to fight more easily for the causes that filled us with enthusiasm and that actually came true.\textsuperscript{20} The future leader of the Radical Democratic Party Elka Constantinova: "I regarded it as something quite unexpected. As incredible luck."\textsuperscript{21}

No less enthusiastically met the overthrow of Todor Zhivkov also that part of the intelligentsia which remained related to the BCP – both the scientific (ideological), and the creative intelligentsia. Under the influence of the Soviet “perestroika” of the mid-1980s the humanitarians started to think over their theoretical views about socialism. Typical for that process was that the closer the humanitarians were to the BCP apparatus, the greater freedom they enjoyed. This paradox could be explained with the fact that the freedom’s touch came from the CPSU and in postwar Bulgaria the position of Moscow was equal to law. In 1988–1989 the Institute of History of BCP organized closed discussions with the participation of Soviet philosophers, sociologists and historians, at which it invited also representatives of the Sofia University. The discussions were devoted to the “deformations” and the crises under socialism and were focused on the mistakes and crimes of the regime.\textsuperscript{22} The “heretical” views of the Soviet representatives that were expressed during these discussions were spread among the professors and the

\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., 224–225.

\textsuperscript{21} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{22} As a professor in contemporary history of Eastern Europe I was invited to participate in a discussion that took place in May 1989 in a holiday house of the BCP CC in Bansko.
students with the help of the established at that time workshops and other discussion forms devoted to the problems of socialism.

I shall point as an example the workshop I taught “The Political System of Socialism” in the 1988-1989 academic year, where professors and students from the Faculties of History, Philosophy and Law at the Sofia University, the Institute of History at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences and the Institute of History of BCP analyzed critically the socialist system – since 1917. This workshop was included in the so-called Party school year, it was supervised by the university party committee with the permanent participation of the party secretary of the Faculty of Law (Snezhana Nacheva), but that could not prevent the critical spirit. The discussed theses were in accordance with the dissident criticism not of the Bulgarian dissidents only, but also of the Polish and Soviet ones, and after the changes at least four of the lecturers entered the leadership of the anti-communist Union of Democratic Forces (UDF) (Dimitar Ludzhev, Snezhana Botusharova, Stoyan Ganev, Evgenii Dainov) or became ministers in the first UDF government (Dimitar Ludzhev, Stoyan Ganev). At the end of the school year was established an association of all workshops, which dealt with economic, political and cultural aspects of socialism, but it managed to hold only three meetings, as after November 10, 1989 most of its members turned towards political activity.

Could the intellectual activity in the last year and a half before November 10, 1989 be considered as an evidence that Bulgarian intelligentsia had managed to prepare itself for the upcoming changes and to lead the masses again (as in the period of the Bulgarian National
Revival and during the social cataclysms in the 20th century)? My answer is negative.

This did not happen not only because the time for change in the sentiments and the preparation of wider social circles was insufficient. The major reason lied in the fact that Bulgarian intelligentsia, no matter whether until the autumn of 1989 it was pro-communist, apolitical or anti-communist did not believe the system could collapse and be replaced with something else. Even Zhivkov’s official attempts to introduce gradually, in the Chinese manner, the principles of market economy with the July concept of 1987\textsuperscript{23} were not met with confidence. Nobody believed the system could be changed and even less – that Zhivkov could be removed from power. For that reason the intelligentsia did not put its mind to the question socialism could be replaced with. Even the humanitarian intelligentsia, which was supposed to analyze the processes that were taking place in the society, during the last year, focused its efforts only on the criticism of socialism and not on its alternatives.

The ideological and psychological unpreparedness of the Bulgarian intelligentsia for the changes resulted in they delay, even after the collapse of socialism in Eastern Europe. At the first free and democratic elections in Bulgaria held on June 10-17, 1990, the Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP) (successor of BCP) had an absolute electoral victory. It developed towards social-democratic positions, but did not manage to

\textsuperscript{23} Основни положения на концепцията за изграждане на социализма в НР България (Доклад пред пленума на ЦК на БКП, 28–29 юни 1987 г.). Живков, Т. Реалният социализъм. С., 2006, 283–386.
cope with the challenges of the new times and quickly lost power\textsuperscript{24}. At the same time, for the equally unprepared anti-communist UDF it was difficult to overcome its electoral failure and it focused its efforts on the political fight with BSP, and not on working out a strategy for economic transition. The result was a steady delay of the necessary economic transformations, and when the capitalist principles were imposed any way, Bulgarian society was not prepared and had difficulty in adapting to them. After all, for a number of reasons Bulgarian intelligentsia turned to be unprepared for the collapse of the system of state socialism that was called forth by outside factors. It did not manage to realize its ambitions to play a leading role in the social changes and in the years of transition lost its positions and was marginalized.

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\textsuperscript{24} In 1990 the Prime Minister A. Lukanov commissioned a team led by US economists to make a project for Bulgaria’s transition to market economy, which unfortunately was not realized. See: Доклад върху проекта за икономически растеж и преход към пазарна икономика в България подготовен от Фондацията на Националната камара на САЩ за НРБ. Ръководство и редактиране Ричард Ран, Роналд Ът. 31 октомври 1990.