Chapter Three – Political Parties in Bulgaria – An Historical Context

a) The Historical Development of Bulgarian Political Parties

Two factions, Conservative and Liberal, were represented in the Târnovo Constitutional Assembly of 1879, the founding assembly of the post-Ottoman Bulgarian state. They were to be the dominant political cultures until the end of the First World War and still influential thereafter in the shaping of subsequent governments. The faction names were a borrowing from European political life of the period and were directly transliterated into Bulgarian as new words[1]. However in a largely agrarian society, the names themselves carried little intrinsic meaning for the majority of Bulgarians, and were supplanted by the colloquial terms 'old' (Conservative) and 'young' (Liberal). The borrowing, though, was a useful tool for the legitimisation of new political forces in that they represented established European political forces[2]. The names however did represent real divisions within society originating a century before independence, whose development can be ascribed to the impact in the Balkans of changes in European society after the French revolution, modified, however, by radically different political circumstance.

In the late 18th century, Bulgaria was part of the *Rum millet*, meaning Greek Orthodox people, an administrative division of the Ottoman Empire by which

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[1] The two party names in 1879, *Konservativnata Partia* and *Liberalnata Partia,* were direct transliterations both of the party type and the word 'party' which was itself a new concept.

[2] This is a similar process to the post-1989 shaping of political forces. Concepts such as 'Christian' or 'Social' Democrat carried little resonance and were quickly replaced by their ballot paper colours 'red' and 'blue'

subject peoples were divided by religion rather than ethnicity. Within these communities, Ottoman subjects had a degree of autonomy. Each *millet* established and maintained its own educational, religious and judicial institutions (Shaw, 1977, 46). Political authority within the *millet* resided in the church, the ecclesiastical authorities acting in effect as a 'state within a state' (Sugar, 1977,47) and the authority of the Sultan was channelled through the Patriarch's office and he in return was required to ensure 'the fidelity and obedience of the Orthodox community to the Sultan' and collect taxes from the *millet.* (Clogg, 1982, 40)

The Turks of the Balkans colonised the towns, to the extent that, as a 17th century traveller reported, Sofia was a 'place so wholly Turkish, that there is nothing in it that appears more antique than the Turks themselves'[3]. The majority of the Bulgarian population lived in the villages of the mountains or less commonly the plains. Theirs was a peasant society whose members, under the relatively enlightened Ottoman system, had hereditary use of a tract of land for their own purposes and, by comparison to their Western counterparts, a relatively light tax burden. Periods of war or instability apart, they remained largely untroubled by their Turkish rulers during the 17th and 18th centuries and, particularly in the more remote mountain villages, Bulgarian culture and language persisted from where it was to be resuscitated in the 19th century by Bulgarian intellectuals.

Once the Black Sea was opened to non-Turkish traders in 1774 under the terms of the Treaty of Kutchuk Kainarji, these conditions, which had allowed the development of an inter-village trading system, proved ideal for the evolution of a

[3] Rycaut, P. The Present State of the Ottoman Empire, (London, 1668), p. 212, quoted in Stavrianos 2000, 99

Bulgarian merchant class. Originating in the mountain towns of the Balkan range and the Rhodope, they traded in wool, cotton and grain to Central Europe and Constantinople (Stoianovich, 1960, 282). A period of instability known as the *Kârdzhali* wars, from the early 1890's until 1826, disrupted their trade[4] but also drove many of the Turkish inhabitants of the towns and cities of the plains into exile. Bulgarians, including many of the burgeoning merchant class, replaced them allowing the merchant class to spread its bases of activity.

By the 1850's a number of merchant family dynasties dominated Bulgarian commercial life, and concomitantly, an urbanised middle class was beginning to develop. The activities of these two groups supported much of what was to become known as the 'National Revival' movement, the promotion of Bulgarian language and culture in preference to the Greek predominant at the end of the 18th century. Initially taking the form of the establishment of Bulgarian schools and the publication of books and newspapers in Bulgarian, by the 1840's its focus was a campaign for an independent Bulgarian exarchate, in effect for the establishment of a Bulgarian *millet*. That there were few calls for an independent state, or even little social content, in the programmes of Bulgarian nationalists can be attributed to the fact that the majority of Bulgarian peasants had the sole use (if not undisputed legal ownership) of their land (Crampton, 1983, 3)

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[4] The central authority of the Sultan effectively broke down during this period. In northern Bulgaria, Osman Pasvantoglu overthrew the governor of Vidin in 1795 and established his own personal fiefdom in North-west Bulgaria. Additionally, the depredations of roving bands of mercenaries upon the peasantry inspired rebellions in Serbia and Bulgaria. The Bulgarian name for this period, the *Kârdzhali* wars (*Kârdzhali voini* or *Kârdzhaliistvo*) comes from the popular name for these bands. (Mutafchieva, 1993, 49).

The *Kârdzhali* wars had also sent a significant number of Bulgarian activists into exile and it was among the émigrés, more exposed than their internal counterparts to European and Russian literature, that the first calls for an independent Bulgarian state originated. It was also among the émigrés that the first competing visions of the path to statehood and the eventual nature of that state appeared.

One of the first signs of political influence appeared in an émigré sheet in Vienna in 1851 suggesting that the aim of the Bulgarians should be to obtain a position similar to that of minorities in the Hapsburg monarchy (Black, 1943, 509). However it was not until after the Crimean War that political independence, as opposed to the ecclesiastical independence sought by the internal activists became central to émigré thought.

Disillusioned by the limits of Turkish reform and the conduct of the church struggle, Georgi Rakovski, the leader of the émigré community until his death in 1867, first called from Belgrade in the late 1850's for an uprising of Bulgarian Christians to establish a federal Balkan state. In the late 1860's, Rakovski made a number of attempts to foment just such an uprising, unsuccessfully sending armed bands or *cheti* into Bulgaria. Rakovski was greatly influenced by the writings of Greek and Serbian nationalists such as Obradovic, Korais and Karadzic and drew upon a model of Western liberalism, pointing to the example of France, Italy and England, as the blueprint for the new state. His successors, Liuben Karavelov, the poet Hristo Botev and Vasil Levski, leaders of a revolutionary organisation based in Bucharest, refined Rakosvki's ideas on the nature of the new state. Karavelov had

studied in Moscow and had close links with the Russian revolutionary *Narodniki*[5], and Botev was an admirer of the Paris commune and a disciple of Bakunin. Learning the lesson of the failure of the *cheti* to gain popular support, they proposed an alliance of the peasantry and the intellectuals as the revolutionary force. In order to achieve this, the people had to be educated for the task and, to this end, groups of 'Apostles', led by Levski, were dispatched to Bulgaria during the early 1870's. The Apostles ultimately failed in their aim of a successful revolution, but the message they brought, of a liberal and essentially classless alliance between intellectuals and the peasantry, found fertile ground and formed the philosophical underpinning, in a less revolutionary form, of the Liberal faction in the Târnovo Assembly.

In contrast, the Conservative viewpoint reflected the concerns of the merchant class and the emerging middle class. For them, the final years of Ottoman rule, certainly until the rising of April 1876, had been a period of relative stability and prosperity, the 'Turkish peace' as it came to be known, and their vision of the new state was an extension of the hierarchical and patriarchal structure of the *millet.* The revolutionary movement of Karavelov and Botev threatened their interests more than the actions of the Sultan. Their view is perhaps best encapsulated by an 1881 memoir of Konstantin Stoilov, later to be leader of the Conservative Party. The Bulgarian people, it stated, had evolved political habits under Ottoman rule which made the application of a democratic form of government very difficult. For several generations a spirit of disregard for authority and revolt against the

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5 The *Narodniki* were a Russian revolutionary group of the 1860's and 1870's whose aims were the overthrow of the monarchy and kulaks, and the distribution of land among the peasantry. The

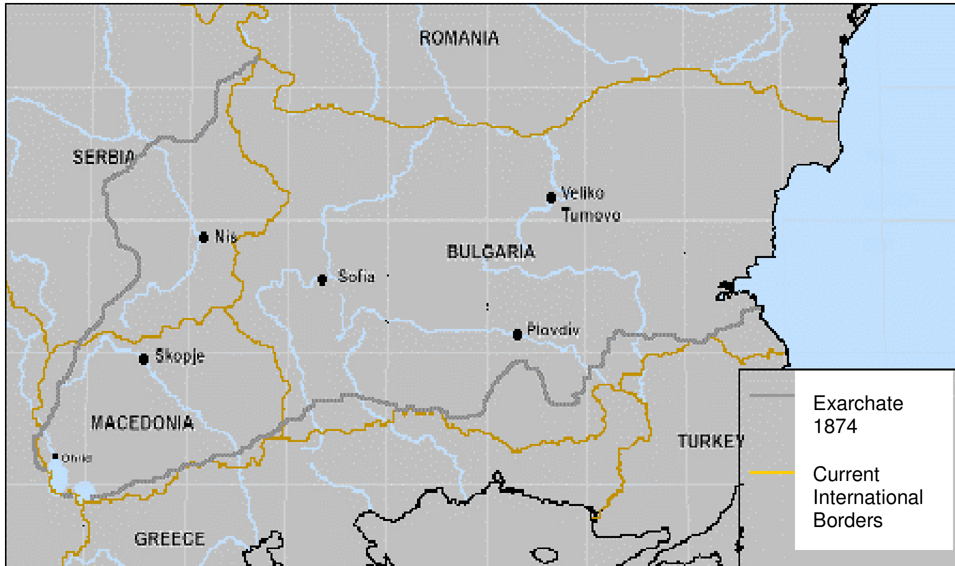
government had prevailed (Black, 1943, 515). Stoilov's solution was a strongly centralised administrative system, a restricted franchise, circumscribed civil liberties and a 'benevolent and paternalistic government' which would overcome the inherent faults of '"disorganised" democracy' (Plachkov, 1932,18).

Russia took a proprietary interest in the new Bulgarian state, an interest borne of long cultural, linguistic and religious ties, and the formal tie of a right of protection over the Porte's Orthodox subjects granted by the Treaty of Kutchuk Kainarji. From the beginning of the National Revival period Russia was seen as both guarantor and saviour of Bulgarian spiritual and cultural values[6] and Bulgarian volunteers fought on the Russian side in the Russo-Turkish Wars of 1806-1812 and 1828-1829. Bulgarian exiles and Russian nationalists participated in the formation of a Pan-Slavist movement during the 1850's in Russia which envisaged Slavic unity under Russian guidance. Although resisted by Tsar Alexander II, Russia's ambassador to Constantinople, Graf Nicholas Ignatiev, pursued this policy energetically until 1877 (Stavrianos, 2000, 398). Russian forces fought the Bulgarian War of Liberation in 1878 and negotiated with the defeated Turks the Treaty of San in March 1878, which granted de-facto independence to a Bulgarian state that largely replicated the boundaries of the Bulgarian exarchate granted in 1874 (Map 1).

Narodniki believed that capitalism was not necessarily a result of industrial development, and that socialism was possible without a first stage of capitalism. (Dukes, 1990, 180)

6 Bulgarians viewed this relationship not entirely as a 'big brother-little brother' bond. Bulgarians, according to that most influential of 18th century Bulgarian books, Paisi of Hilendar's Slavo-Bulgarian History, were the first of all Slavs to use the Cyrillic alphabet. They were also the first to adopt orthodox Christianity, as Hilendar tells his readers, 'before all Slavs, Bulgarians received the Slavic alphabet, Slavic books and baptism'.(Hilendar, 1960, 91) This in Bulgarian eyes gave the country a special claim to Russian attentions.

Map 1 – The Bulgarian Exarchate 1874



However Disraeli and Austro-Hungary, wary of giving Russia undue influence over the Balkans, objected to the San Stefano Treaty and another conference, the Congress of Berlin, was called in July of that year. The resulting Treaty of Berlin designated Bulgaria as a Principality under Turkish suzerainty. Crucially, it also reduced the borders of the new country to the Sofia region and the Balkan Mountains, meanwhile returning Macedonia, Thrace and Eastern Rumelia (the land to the south of the Balkan Mountains) to Turkey (See appendix 2 for maps of Bulgaria). These revisions generated a great deal of resentment among the Bulgarian population who viewed these areas, which had Bulgarian speaking groups, as naturally Bulgarian. Despite the changes imposed by the Congress of Berlin, Russia continued to exert considerable influence on Bulgaria; until 1885 Russian officers controlled the Bulgarian Army and the Defence Ministry was under its control.

In conformity with The Treaty of Berlin a Grand National Assembly was called in Veliko Tărnovo to elaborate a constitution for the new country in Veliko Târnovo in 1879 at which both Conservative and Liberal factions were represented. This assembly elected a prince, Alexander of Battenberg and adopted a, for the time, surprisingly liberal constitution for the new principality. The Târnovo Constitution was modelled partially on the Belgian Constitution of 1831 and with a legislative structure borrowed from the Serbian constitution. Bulgaria was to be a constitutional monarchy with a unicameral legislature, which however was of two types, a Grand National Assembly (*Veliko Narodno Subranie*) and an Ordinary National Assembly (*Narodno Subranie*). The function of the former, with twice the number of MPs as an ordinary one, was to choose a new Prince, elect regents or change the constitution and was convocated only when one of these tasks became necessary. The latter, a legislative assembly elected by universal male franchise, would meet once a year after the harvest. Political power and responsibility were vested jointly in the executive and legislature. Executive authority lay with the Prince but was exercised through a Cabinet or Council of Ministers chosen from members of the Subranie. Legislation could be initiated by the executive or the legislature but had to be approved by both. The constitution guaranteed individual freedoms, of association, of worship, of movement and expression (Metodiev, 1990, 20-36).

For the first six years of independence the party system revolved around the Conservative and Liberal parties, an arrangement mirrored in the largely Bulgarian populated but Turkish administered province of Eastern Rumelia. Popularly, at least, if not in practice, the liberal vision dominated with the Liberal Party the more

popular with the electorate but the Conservatives favoured by Alexander of Battenberg. The Liberal Party was better organised than the Conservatives and its calls for political equality for the peasant and its rejection of Conservative dismissals of the peasant as politically inexperienced (it viewed the village communal council as the repository of all that was best in the evolution of the nation) struck a chord with Bulgaria's largely rural population, as did its commitment to restoring the land lost under San Stefano. Its leader, Petko Karavelov, brother of one of the Apostles Liuben Karavelov, was also a gifted orator who could use rural dialect to great effect.

Battenberg however viewed the constitution as an obstacle between him and the people and shared Stoilov's view of the unpreparedness of the Bulgarian people for democracy. Writing in 1880 he was to state that the Constitution

> 'places the person of the Ruler in continual opposition to the National Assembly, and this must constantly become more acute, and culminate in time in open enmity. Besides this the people lack the most elementary requirements for constitutional life. The nation suffers under it, and only a few aspiring commonplace men profit by it' (Stavrianos, 2000, 429).

In this view he was supported by the Russians; Tsar Alexander III viewed the Liberals as little more than Socialists.

The contradiction in the constitution between the extensive powers of the monarch and a parliament elected by universal franchise was to dog Battenberg's time in office, as it was to dog that of his successor, Ferdinand Saxe-Coburg Gotha, and

Battenberg in 1881 attempted to resolve this by restricting the franchise and weakening the National Assembly. An election in 1882 using this system brought in a short-lived Conservative government. However the popularity of the Liberal Party at the ballot box undermined Battenberg's constitution-writing and the Târnovo Constitution was restored in 1884 (Table 1).

Table 1- Proportion of seats won in General Elections 1879-1884

Election Year	Liberal Party	Conservative Party
1879	140	30
1882	7	49
1884	139	48

Source: - Kostadinova, 1995

However the restoration brought to the fore again the conflict at the heart of the constitution and the Liberal Party split over ways in which to resolve this. One faction, the pro-Russian Progressive Liberal Party led by Dragan Tsankov (known as the 'contented') were prepared to compromise with Battenberg and the Conservatives over eventual changes in the Constitution. The' discontented', led by Petko Karavelov, opposed any change in the constitution, viewing it as 'ideal regulations that can only make a model out of Bulgaria' (Kostadinova, 1995, 11) A second cleavage emerged with the breakdown of relations with Russia in 1886-1887 and led to a further fractionation of the Liberal Party. The search for Battenberg's successor, Ferdinand, had been conducted by three regents, Karavelov, Mutkurov and Stefan Stambulov with the support of an

organisation called ‘Bulgaria for itself’. After Ferdinand’s election as Prince, Stambulov, then Prime Minister, transformed this organisation into the National Liberal Party, which supported the idea of the development of Bulgaria and the monarchy independent from Great Power, and especially Russian, interference as a requisite for the successful development of the country. To counter Russian influence, Stambulov sought a rapprochement with Germany and Austro-Hungary. Another faction in 1887, adopting the mantle of the old Liberal Party and led by Vasil Radoslavov, campaigned against Great Power interference in Bulgarian affairs and was sympathetic to another of the constant themes of Bulgarian politics, that of a union of the Southern Slavs (Ilchev, 1993, 27). Stambulov’s NLP ruled from 1887 to 1893, overcoming the conflict between monarch and legislature by reducing the size of the Subranie and ensuring a pliant Subranie by extensive electoral fraud, the result of which was a constant NLP majority. Stambulov resigned in 1893, to be replaced by a Conservative administration under Stoilov. A further splintering of the Liberal movement occurred in 1896 with the formation of the Democratic Party led by Petko Karavelov. However its call for ‘a principled and civilised parliamentary life’ initially at least failed to bridge the gap between the political elite and the peasantry (Tsvetkov, 2000, 14) and until 1906 it was not able to gain more than 8 seats in the Subranie.

Ferdinand meanwhile had developed from a young and inexperienced prince in 1887 to a consummate political manipulator and in the years following Stambulov’s resignation he was to solve the constitutional contradiction by undermining the party system. As the French consul in Sofia said of him in 1907: -

> He does not like the army, he ignores financial matters, and he has little

> taste for administration. In domestic affairs he concentrates all his attention and skill upon dominating the political parties and keeping his ministers divided and insecure. (Stavrianos, 2000, 436)

The result of Stambulov's domination of the parliamentary system and the development of Ferdinand's control over his ministers, what became known as Ferdinand's 'personal regime', was an enormous increase in the power of the executive. In part this was possible because of the absence of substantial policy differences between the political parties, a situation that became even more marked after Ferdinand's rapprochement with Russia in 1896 which removed, for a short period least, the pro and anti-Russian cleavage.

In a precursor of the situation in the 1990's, social divisions within the population, other than as the broadest of brush-strokes, did not exist to support political differentiation. Between 1880 and 1920, the proportion of the population living in urban areas remained below 20%. In the countryside the vast majority of the population lived off subsistence farming of small-holdings (Table 2).

Table 2 – Distribution of Land by Ownership, 1897	
Ownership	Percentage of Usable Land
Private	41.28
Village Communes	23.78
State	10.54
Religious and Educational Institutions	1.33
Provincial Authorities	0.01
National and Agricultural Banks	Under 0.01
Total	100

Source – Crampton 1983, 186

Of the privately owned land, some 86% of it was parcelled in agricultural holdings of less than 25 acres, just sufficient to support a family, and half of that figure in holdings of under 5 acres, insufficient to support a household, although this was mitigated by access to communal land for grazing and to *parakende* holdings, plots in other villages often gained through marriage dowries. Less than 1% of the land was in holdings large enough to employ wage labour and even at the end of the 19th century when drought and high tithes brought hardship to many rural communities, no more than 2% of the rural population were engaged in full-time waged labouring (Krâstanova, 1986, 34: Crampton, 1983, 187-188). Although, as Table 2 illustrates, a considerable amount of land, in an enduring characteristic of the structure of Balkan land-ownership, was held communally. A necessary

circumstance of such social conditions was strong familial bonds[7], in order to provide enough labour to work the plots, and a communal ethos in the village in order to complete those tasks too large for one family[8]. It was a society in which the basic norms were the unity of the family and communal working (Kabakchieva, 2001, 40: Krâstanova, 1986, 37) and one which most desired, as an English commentator observed,

> 'independence, and to be governed by their own people, according to their own ideas, customs, and sentiments. Education and material progress may possibly enlarge their aspirations, but for the present an autonomous peasant community, comprising the whole Bulgar-speaking race within its bounds, forms the ideal of the Bulgarian people. (Dicey, 1894, 147)

Thus the structure of the major part of Bulgarian society was not fertile ground for fine distinctions in political policy, especially when many of these distinctions revolved around choices between the patronage of different Great Powers, choices that little affected the rural peasant. Where there was a distinction, it was made by personalising the parties with the names of their leaders - the 'Tsankovists', the 'Stambulovists' and the 'Radoslavists'.

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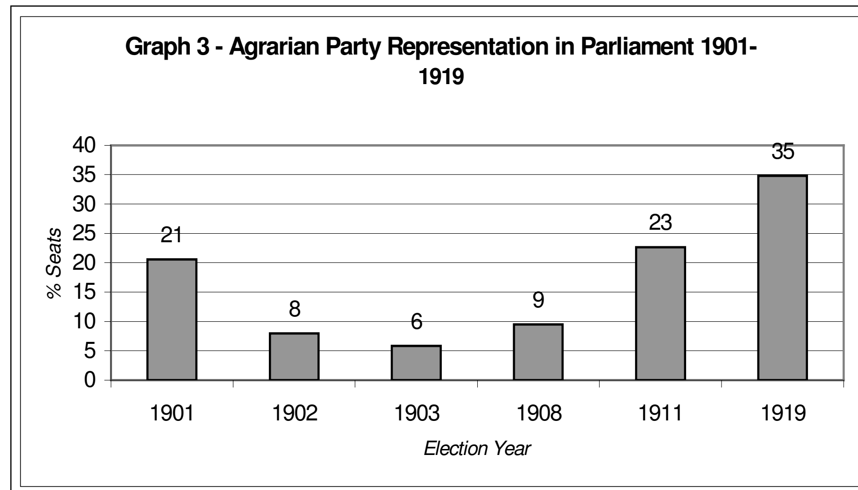
[7] The zadruga, a communal farming community generally formed of one family or a clan of related families, was prevalent throughout the Balkans in the 19th century. The zadruga held its property, herds and money in common, with the oldest capable patriarch usually ruling and making decisions for the family. For a revue of the importance of the zadruga in Bulgaria see Halpern,1970.

[8] The Bulgarian revolutionary, G. Rakovski, was also a noted ethnographer. In 1864 he wrote of the prevalence of communal working in the village, stating:- 'From past times, the villagers had the custom to invite relatives, neighbours and friends to help with various tasks such as shelling maize, knitting blankets, grape collection, taking in the harvest and building new houses – jobs which a villager can't do by himself'. (quoted in Krâstanova, 1986, 43)

Stoilov's government remained in power until 1901 and thereafter Liberal parties, and their offshoot, the Democratic Party, would remain, with the exception of a short-lived Conservative government in 1911, the dominant political force in the Subranie until 1919 (Graph 1).



However, the alliance between intellectual and peasant that had been the bedrock of the old Liberal Party was beginning to unravel by the end of the 19th century. The rural communities had little benefited from this alliance; the material condition of smallholders had changed little since 1878 and in many cases, because of increased taxation, had worsened. The intelligentsia meanwhile had benefited, becoming the main source of recruitment for the bureaucracy of the new administrative structure. *Partisanstvo*, the trafficking of political office, and corruption within the bureaucracy made this situation worse. The necessity of maintaining party structures by rewarding supporters with government posts, meant that this bureaucracy grew continuously, by 1900 there were over 20,000 civil servants, less than 20% of whom had anything more than elementary

education (Crampton, 1983, 327). The peasant's disaffection with the political system was emphasised by an exceedingly low turn-out in the elections of 1894 and 1896 in which only 26% and 30% of eligible voters voted (Kostadinova, 1995, 18). A series of bad harvests in the late 1880's and 1890's which brought about great hardship in the countryside, coupled with the imposition of an unpopular tithe by the Stoilov government, finally brought matters to a head and, while the Liberal movement still officially championed an intellectual-peasant alliance, the business of constructing one moved into other hands and in the process ushered in an era of mass politics.

In the 1880's a small but significant portion of the intelligentsia had begun to address the social and political problems the existing party elites had signally failed to tackle, and from this two strands of political thought emerged as inheritors of the Liberal party mantle, socialism and agrarianism. These were movements that were primarily interested, initially at least in the case of the Agrarians, in social change rather than political reform. Much influenced by the arguments of the Russian populists that the small group of people in society who are capable of critical analysis of their environment have an obligation to society as a whole, they proposed the education of the peasantry as an answer to the problems of *partisanstvo*, corruption and Ferdinand's personal regime.

The first of two mass parties to be formed from these strands was the Bulgarian Social Democratic Party (BSDP) in 1892. While Marxism had received only intermittent attention within Ottoman Bulgaria, socialism had been influential in shaping the views of the Apostles, in particular Hristo Botev, who had read both Marx and Engel in Russian translation (Mineva, 2001, 62). After independence it

continued to be an important undercurrent in Bulgarian political life, if not one represented in mainstream political life, as intellectual discussion clubs circulated socialist ideas and a number of short-lived journals were published. In 1890 and 1891 works of Marx and Engels were published in translation for the first time[9]. Given the paucity of industrial workers in Bulgaria, less than 2% of the total workforce during the 1890's, the focus of the socialists' activities was initially the rural population. In a popular tract of 1891 entitled '*What is socialism and is there ground for it amongst us?',* (Mineva, 2001, 64) one of the most influential founders of the BSDP, Dimitâr Blagoev, argued that Bulgaria had already begun on the road of capitalist development, with its inevitable and, in Bulgaria, incipient class conflict. In his view, the small-scale farmer was the country's future proletariat and he proposed the large-scale capitalisation of agriculture as a means of forcing the development of this new working-class. The new party campaigned for the abolition of the tithe and other measures to benefit the peasant, including attacks on corruption, and gained small but growing numbers of seats in the Subranie throughout the 1890's. However not everyone in the party agreed with Blagoev's orthodox Marxist analysis and, mirroring the ideological split in the Second International, a faction arguing that political democracy was a necessary prerequisite for socialism was expelled in 1903 from what was now renamed the Bulgarian Workers Social Democratic Party. The new party, the 'Broad' Workers' Social Democratic Party, argued that the proletarianisation of the peasantry was

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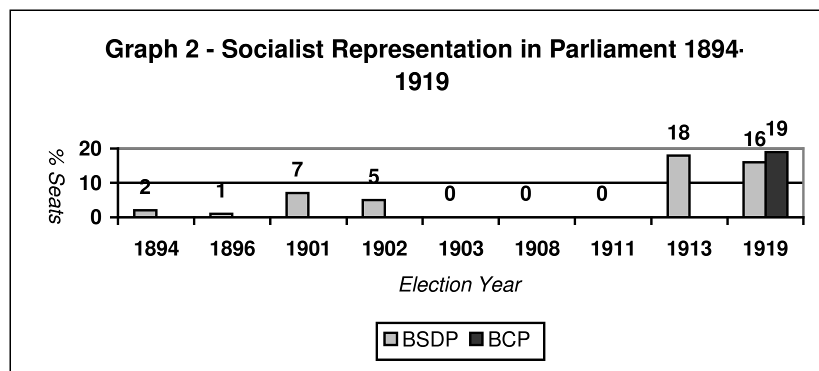
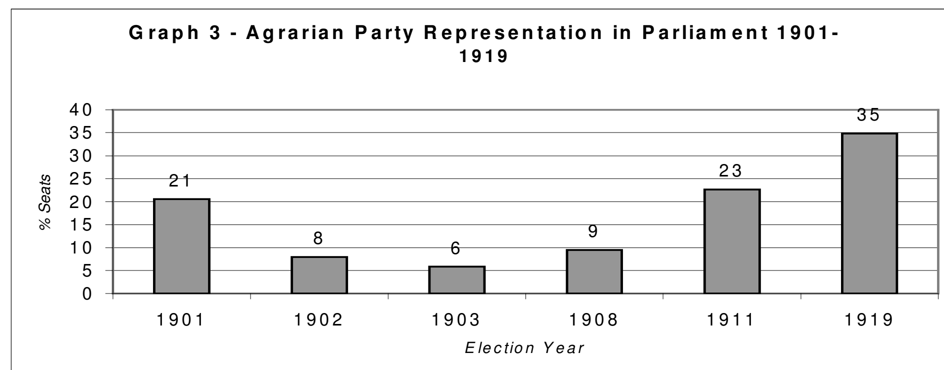
9 In 1890, *Wage Labor and Capital* by K. Marx and *Scientific Socialism* by F. Engels were published in translation by Evtim Dabev who had previously produced a Marxist-influenced journal, *Rositsa*, in Gabrovo; in 1891, *The Communist Manifesto* was translated and published with a fragment of Marx's *The Civil War in France* (Mineva, 2001, 66).

not imminent and a period of collaboration with other left-leaning parties, such as the Agrarians, was necessary in order to achieve this. Thus, while its leader Sakuzov, could propose the confiscation of all large estates in 1902, he stated that he would not touch the land of the small peasant proprietor. Blagoev's faction, known as the 'Narrow' Socialists, meanwhile rejected any form of collaboration, concentrating solely on the preparation of a full-scale socialist revolution, in which, ridiculing Sakuzov's proposed part-nationalisation of land, privately owned land was not permissible. The split was to decimate the socialists' parliamentary representation until 1919 when the BSDP and the Narrow Socialists, now renamed the Bulgarian Communist Party, gained almost 35% of the seats in parliament (Graph 2), The combined strength of the parties' memberships nevertheless formed the largest of the socialist movements in the Balkans (Crampton, 1983, 346).



The second of these strands, the Agrarian movement, emerged in 1899 from numerous local peasant associations set up throughout the 1890's. The spark that

brought them together into one movement was the imposition by the Conservative government in 1899 of a tithe in kind on arable agricultural holdings[10]. United by opposition to the tithe and detestation of existing political parties, the agrarians voted to form a Bulgarian Agrarian National Union (BANU), rather than a political party, whose branches were to be called *druzhbi,* friendly societies. The Union was to function as a pressure group whose aim was expressed very much in the populist tradition, as 'to raise the intellectual and moral standing of the peasant and to improve agriculture in all its branches' (Crampton, 1983, 331). BANU nevertheless fielded election candidates from 1894 onwards, initially with some success (Graph 3).



A faction within BANU had from its inception called for BANU to function as a political party and their hand was strengthened after the 1901 elections when, of 23 Agrarian deputies, 16 defected to other parties on promises of personal enrichment. The faction pressed on the movement the need for discipline and

[10] An unpopular tithe had been replaced in 1894 by a land tax, based on the amount of land held rather than the amount of produce from the land. The re-imposition of a tithe in 1899, an unpopular move in itself, was made worse by widespread indebtedness and by the halving of agricultural production in that year, caused by a drought, which caused considerable hardship.

regulation, a policy which after a damaging period of division finally bore fruit in 1908 when the movement began to recover electorally. By 1908 also Aleksandâr Stamboliiski had become the dominant figure in the party and was to remain so until his assassination in 1923. Stamboliiski more than any other figure in the movement was to shape and articulate BANU's philosophy through the pages of the movement's newspaper *Zemedelsko Zname* (The Agrarian Banner), of which he was editor, and in two influential tracts, *Political Parties or Estate Organisations* (1909) and *The Principles of the Bulgarian Agricultural Union* (1919).

Stamboliiski believed in a society which offered justice and equality for all, and one in which both the individual and the communal played a role. The individual, for whom the ownership of property was 'the motive force for work and progress' (Crampton, 1983, 335), depended however on a communal consciousness, in that individual well-being was inextricably dependent on the well-being of others. For Stamboliiski the village was the model for this society and the town the antithesis;

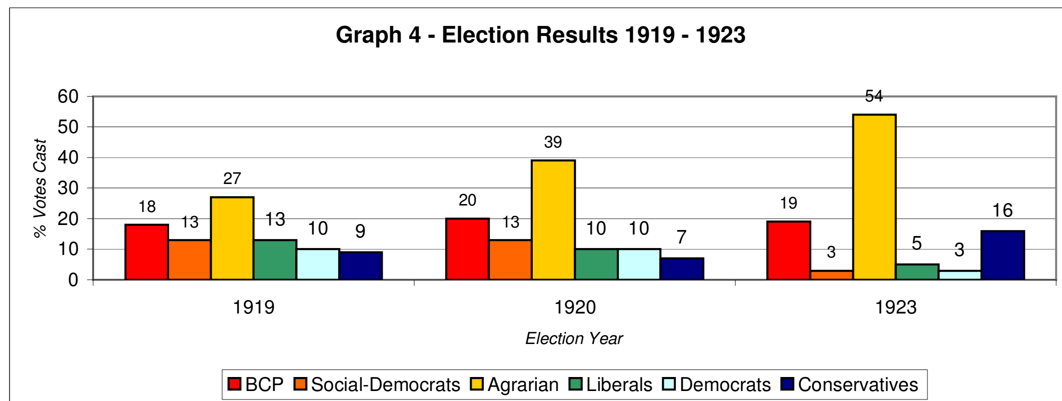
> 'In the village there lives people who work, struggle and subsist on an unpredictable and capricious nature. In the towns live people who construct their living by the exploitation of the countryside and the labour of others. The way of life in the village is uniform; its members hold the same ideas in common. That accounts for the superiority of the village over the city'. (Stoyanov, 1979, 131)

Village customs of common property, ritual kinship, work sharing and general sociability had been sustained when other systems, capitalist or socialist, failed. Moreover, while there was corruption and exploitation in both village and town, there was less in the village which was 'the centre of more sensible political

thought' (Stoyanov, 1979, 133). He disdained the idea of the proletariat which he considered a malleable and tractable mass to be manipulated by politicians. The Agrarian's task was to lessen the distance between city and village. This was to be achieved by limiting the size of individual land holdings and lessening the burden of the state by a decrease in military expenditure, a retrenchment of the bureaucracy and a diminution of royal power and expenses.

The dominance of the old conservative and liberal parties over the party system was brought to an end by Bulgaria's defeat in the First World War, as was Ferdinand's reign. Ferdinand was replaced by his son, King Boris III. Bulgaria had in effect been at war, with only a short respite, since the beginning of the First Balkan War in 1912 and the economic hardship and disruption that came in the wake of war, plus the failure of the wartime governments to achieve their aim of restoring Bulgaria to its San Stefano borders, brought the country to the point of rebellion. The benefactors from the downfall of the now discredited Conservative and Liberal parties were the Agrarians and the Bulgarian Communist Party (BCP), the latter formed from the 'Narrow' Socialists in 1919. The result was a competition between the two over which should inherit the power of the *ancient regime*. The first post-war elections in 1919 gave the Agrarian party under Stamboliiski a slight majority (Graph 4), but not enough to form a government. The BCP and the BSDP both rebuffed Stamboliiski's offer of a coalition, the BCP continuing Blagoev's line of refusing to collaborate with the 'bourgeois' parties, and he was forced to turn to the Tsankovists and the Conservatives to form a government. The BCP meanwhile had made impressive gains in membership, particularly among the emerging class of industrial workers and, capitalising on

falling wage levels, organised a general strike in December 1919 with the collaboration of the BSDP. Stamboliiski declared martial law and, having forcefully put down the strike, returned to the electorate for a second mandate in 1920. The result enabled the Agrarians to govern alone and it was bettered at the next election in 1923.



The make-up of Bulgarian society in the inter-war years was little different from that prior to the First World War. While by 1926 industrial workers would increase to 14% of the workforce (Nonchev, 2000, 44), the value of their labour to the country did not reflect their numbers and by 1938 would contribute only 5.6% of GNP (Crampton, 1983, 141). In that year, the vast majority of the population, 77.5%, were classified as rural dwellers. Little had changed in their conditions, and indeed because of an increase in rural population which resulted in the fragmentation of agricultural holdings[11], the quality of life in many rural areas would decrease over the period. This was mitigated somewhat by the exploitation of new exportable crops such as tobacco and sugar beet, but nevertheless per

[11] Between 1920 and 1940 the number of agricultural holdings increased by 38.4% (Crampton, 137) and the number under 25 acres had increased to almost 90% of the total (Iosifov, 1999, 14).

capita income in 1934 from agriculture was only 60% of the average (Crampton, 1983,140). The importance of Sofia as the country's economic and industrial centre was firmly established, a structural characteristic of the Bulgarian economy that has continued to the present day, and the city accounted for almost one third of the country's industrial production during the 1930's.

The Stamboliiski government introduced a number of initiatives that resonated beyond the four years it was in office. Firstly, it limited the amount of land an individual could own, a principle that later governments did not rescind (even if later allowances were greater than that of the Agrarians). Secondly, it enshrined in legislation the principle of cooperative working, both in funding and creating agricultural cooperatives[12] and the establishment of *trudovatsi,* an enforced communal labour service for both men and women. Agricultural cooperatives served as sources of cheap credit and channels for the sale of farm produce and, again not rescinded by later governments, by 1937 almost 45% of rural landowners were members of cooperatives. Thirdly, Stamboliiski abandoned the notion of territorial expansion, a move which infuriated the Macedonian lobby and was to lead eventually to his assassination. As importantly though, the consequences of this act obviated the need for a Great-Power patron for the first time in Bulgarian history since independence. Finally, Stamboliiski changed election law in December 1919 to make voting compulsory, legislation that was to change the structure of the party system.

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[12] Agricultural cooperatives had existed prior to then, the first being established in Pirdop in 1896 (Iosifov, 1999, 14), but previous governments had done little to encourage their development.

The result of this latter initiative was a tendency of parties to form blocs or coalitions in order to maximise their voting potential. This had become apparent in 1921 with the founding of the Constitutional Bloc, a right-of–centre grouping of the Democratic Party and the successor to the Conservative Party, the United National Progressive Party (UNPP). It was led by the People's Alliance (*Naroden Sgovor)*[13], a mixed group of right-wing politicians, intelligentsia and military officers (The latter had also formed their own organisation in 1922, the Military League, which was to become one of the guiding forces behind the 1923 and 1934 coups.)

There was however other reasons for the founding of the Constitutional Bloc. Corruption within the government, the fact that the urban population, natural followers of the conservatives, had suffered disproportionately from inflation, the excesses of the Agrarian's own police force, the feared Orange Guard, and the Agrarians' circumvention of existing administrative structures by using instead the party's *druzhbi* had all driven a wedge between Stamboliiski and the right. The foundation of the Bloc was intended to form a cohesive opposition to Stamboliiski from forces demoralised by their electoral failure in 1919. Stamboliiski's reaction was repressive, the Constitutional Bloc's leaders were prevented from attending a rally in Veliko Târnovo in 1922 and, thenceforth, public meetings were banned. The Orange Guard, fresh from putting down a rebellion of Macedonian insurgents in Kiustendil, ransacked the property of Constitutional Bloc supporters in Sofia later that year. Stamboliiski handsomely won an election in 1923, but his harsh treatment of opposition, for which his administration was named the 'peasant

[13] The term 'alliance' is used here loosely as the original term in Bulgarian, *sgovor*, has resonances above and beyond the English meaning. *Sgovor* came to be used prior to independence with the

dictatorship', made impossible any working parliamentary opposition. In June 1923, members of the Military League, Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation (IMRO) and the National Alliance, seized Sofia and assassinated Stamboliiski and most of his cabinet. With King Boris' assent, the Constitutional Bloc formed a temporary government ushering in an era of right-wing rule.

While the formation of the Constitutional Bloc could be said to have been the result of Stamboliiski's repression of opposition as much as compulsory voting, the next election in October 1923 demonstrated the full effect of the changes in electoral law. It was contested by a number of coalitions or blocs which were little more than marriages of convenience, ideologically uncertain and constructed to maximise voting potential. The result was that the political system until 1934 was composed of multi-party blocs which identified themselves only in the broadest terms with one or other side of the political spectrum. Parties fragmented as factions joined blocs most closely aligned with their particular political programmes. In 1923, the Democrats and Radical Democrats and elements of the Tsankovist and Stambulovist wings of the Liberal Party allied themselves with the Constitutional Bloc to form the Democratic Alliance, led by Aleksandâr Tsankov[14] (factions of the Democrats and Radical Democrats refused to participate in the Alliance and stood separately). The remaining Liberals temporarily united under the banner of the National Liberal Party (NLP) and the Agrarians split into two factions, one forming a coalition with the Communists. The Democratic Alliance, governing in coalition with the Social Democrats, gained a majority.

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specific meaning of an alliance of a small group of independence fighters against the Turks. Its recurrence in the 1920's was a conscious attempt to recreate the symbolism of that earlier usage.

Further fragmentation occurred after the election as the Agrarian Party, now no longer held together by Stamboliiski, split into left and right factions which finally declared themselves separate organisations, 'BANU – Vrabcha' and 'BANU-Orange' in 1926.

The process of coagulation and fragmentation continued with Tsankov's successor government, that of Andre Liapchev. The next election in 1927 was contested by 3 large blocs; the Democratic Alliance under Liapchev; the Triple Coalition of factions from the Democratic Party and the Liberal Party as well as BANU-Orange; and the Lead Coalition of BANU – Vrabcha and the Social Democrats. The Radical Democrats also stood in coalition with another Agrarian faction. The 1931 election, the last in which political parties participated until 1946, marked an attempt by those Democrats and Radical Democrats who had not joined the Democratic Alliance, BANU – Vrabcha and a right wing of the NLP to unite in the People's Bloc in a concerted attempt to restore the Târnovo Constitution. This was perhaps the first coherent ideological programme presented by a political force since the Agrarians in 1919 and, in response, the electorate gave the Peoples' Bloc sufficient of a majority to govern alone. The Bloc however proved unstable and corrupt. Its internal failings combined with the deleterious impact of the Great Depression on the Bulgarian economy prevented it from carrying through much of the reforms it had promised. (Graph 5)

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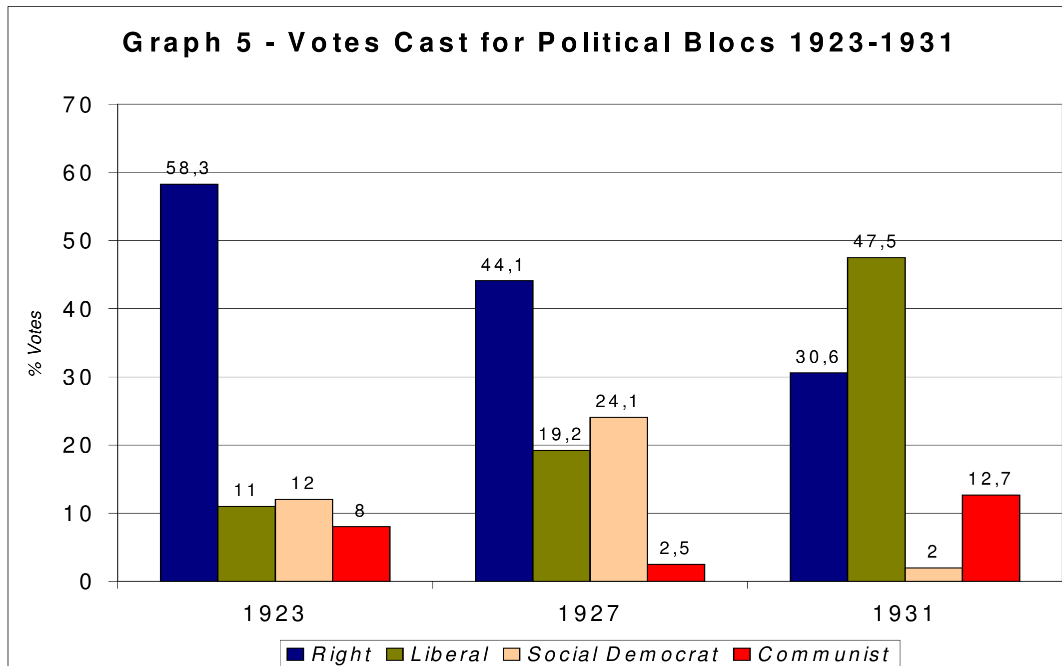
[14] No relation to the 19th century Tsankov



The failure of political parties to provide effective government or because of fragmentation to establish linkage with the electorate or ideological identification at a time when Italian Fascism, National Socialism in Germany and Communism in Russia were gaining adherents outside their respective states enhanced the popularity of existing anti-systemic movements and stimulated the formation of new ones.

The BCP, having been banned by Liapchev in 1924, was legalised as the Bulgarian Workers' Party in 1925. It proved effective in recruiting among trade unionists and industrial workers, a sector that had been particularly hard hit by the Great Depression[15]. It was to improve its vote both locally and nationally after 1927, achieving a majority of seats on Sofia City Council in 1931. At the other end

[15] While the peasant smallholder was also hit by the Great Depression, the impact was blunted by the fact that most could return, however unwillingly, to self-sufficiency as a means of survival. In the industrial sector, however, no such options were available and unemployment rose rapidly between

of the spectrum, the National Socialist Movement (NSM), a fascist group loosely based on Mussolini's Blackshirts led by former Prime Minister Tsankov, also drew on disaffected workers and announced plans to mount a rally of 50,000 people in 1934 to coincide with a visit to Bulgaria by Goering. Other anti-systemic movements also drew considerable support, a movement led by anarchists, the Youth Movement for Regeneration, could claim 10,000 members in 1930 (Daskalov, 1995, 134) and on the spiritual side, the Dunovists, a sect which disdained politics entirely proved widely popular.

The principal threat to the political system however came from none of these but from a group whose philosophy rested almost entirely on Bulgarian tradition. Zveno, a 'political circle' of army officers from the Military League and right-wing politicians, staged a coup in Sofia in 1934 with additional support from Tsankov's NSM and, with the assent of Boris III, formed a non-party government. Zveno (meaning 'link') had been formed in 1927 and drew very much on the Târnovo conservatives' conception of a paternalistic and centralised government.

In Zveno's view, political parties had put party considerations before the national interest and nowhere was this more clearly demonstrated than in the prosecution of the Balkan Wars and the First World War. Parties had also failed to bring political stability; by 1934 Bulgaria had had 50 governments in the 58 years since independence. The failure of parties was also the failure of the Târnovo Constitution, the effect of which had been, in the words of one influential Conservative commentator, the equivalent of teaching someone to swim by

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1929 and 1933 and wages fell by 27% (Crampton, 1987, 107) over the same period proving a fertile recruiting ground for ant-systemic movements such as the Communists.

throwing them in the water. Democratisation, he opined, required a popular understanding of democracy before the introduction of democratic laws, not the opposite way around; durable and effective democratic laws could only be introduced gradually so that they 'harmonised with the progressive changes in peoples' spiritual make-up'. (Mihailovski, 1941, 633)

Proposing a clean sweep to achieve this end, Zveno suspended the constitution, outlawed political parties and organisations and dissolved the Subranie. A new parliament was created in which organisations representing seven 'estates' – peasants, workers craftsmen, intelligentsia, civil servants and members of the free professions – would participate but its role was to be subordinate to two Zveno members and army officers, Kimon Georgiev, who had taken the post of Prime Minister, and Damian Velchev, whose role was *ex-officio*. Regional administration was centralised by reducing the number of provinces from 16 to 7, and the controlling bodies composed of half elected and half centrally-appointed members. Zveno's ideas would be communicated to the country through the one permitted trade union, the government controlled Bulgarian Workers Union, and a new ministry, the Directorate for Social Renewal whose task was to 'direct the cultural and intellectual life of the country towards unity and renewal' (Crampton, 1983, 114). Bulgaria was to be a 'classless society' led by the 'elite of the nation, who will bring discipline to political life[16]' While much of this programme was achieved during Zveno's year in power and much of it would remain until 1946, Zveno itself faced two problems in power. Firstly, it could not claim mass support for its actions. While the parties had been banned, they still continued a shadowy

existence within which they were able to generate considerable opposition to the government. Secondly, Zveno had given little thought to the role of the monarchy. Boris had taken a markedly less public role than his father, interfering little in the political machinations of the 1920's, but when Velchev speculated openly in January 1935 on the abolition of the monarchy, Boris moved to force the resignation of Georgiev. Without substantial popular support, Georgiev had resigned by the end of the month, to be replaced by Pencho Zlatev, a pro-monarchist general.

Fearful however that the army could still challenge his authority, Boris quickly engineered Zlatev's removal and appointed a former diplomat, Andrei Toshev, as Prime Minister with the role of drawing up a new constitution. However squaring the circle of opposition from both the communist and agrarian left and the right (represented by the Military League and NSM) to anything resembling the Târnovo constitution, with the demands of the traditional parties for representation proved impossible. After two drafts were rejected Toshev resigned and the constitutional project was abandoned (Metodiev, 1990, 11). Boris himself then assumed a central political role appointing a pliant former diplomat close to him, Georgi Kioseivanov, as Prime Minister. He finally rid himself of any threat from the military by dissolving the Military League and dismissing or transferring officers sympathetic to Zveno in 1936. Army officers were henceforth to be forbidden from 'taking part in politics in any form whatsoever' (Stoianova, 1993, 228)

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[16] Kimon Georgiev, leader of Zveno and Prime Minister 1934-1935, quoted in Tsurakov, 2001, 199

With this move all the forces that had had the potential for government were discredited or weakened to such an extent that they were no longer capable of commanding enough popular support. The traditional parties of right and left, the moderate Agrarians, the Democrats, Liberals and Conservatives were tainted with the failure of their war aims, prime among them the restoration of San Stefano Bulgaria, and by the ineffectiveness of the governments they had participated in subsequently.

On the extreme right, NSM and a number of other movements modelled on the Italian fascists were gaining more adherents as Nazism grew in strength, but, popular as they were in the cities, could not yet claim to be a national force. On the left both the left-wing Agrarians and the Communists were discredited as a national force respectively by their failure in government in 1923 and by the still powerful memory of the Sveta Nedelya bombing of 1925. They nevertheless retained enough followers to be a potent political force.

Boris himself was by instinct authoritarian, intent on creating a ‘controlled democracy’, which, in a direct echo of Konstantin Stoilov words from fifty years before, was to be a ‘tidy and disciplined democracy imbued with the idea of social solidarity’ (Crampton, 1983, 118). Reflecting Mihailovski’s concern that a democratic spirit should precede democratic laws, the ban on parties was continued but it was envisaged that social movements would be allowed to emerge at a later date when ’the soul of the people is completely healed’ (Crampton, ibid)

Where these social movements would emerge from and whether they would emerge in a form that would allow the continuation of consensual politics engaged

both Boris and Kioseivanov. The extreme polarisation of the Communist left and fascist right made it less than certain that one side would tolerate the other in government, although Hitler's rapprochement with Stalin in 1939 opened up the possibility of concerted action between the two. The middle ground of the traditional parties was also an unknown factor. The dissolution of political parties meant that there was no way of knowing the extent of support for the traditional parties and thus of support for an openly democratic system. A strike of tobacco workers in Plovdiv in 1936, orchestrated by the Communists and openly supported by sympathisers in the army, as well as a well-attended congress of the NSM in that year which saw the movement ally itself more closely with fascism, underlined to Boris and Kioseivanov the dangers of proceeding with elections which were likely to result in increased support for anti-democratic movements. However, to the leaders of the traditional parties, the king's stance indicated an unwillingness to allow any assembly that was not under his control. In consequence, in May 1936, BANU-Vrabcha, the Social Democrats, a faction of the Radical Democrats the Liberals and a faction of the Democrats, united in an organisation known as the 'Five' which called for the restoration of the Târnovo constitution. Boris and Kioseivanov did allow elections in 1938, however under strictly controlled circumstances. Candidates were to stand personally, not as a representative of any political party, and were to declare that they were not Communists. The Five joined in coalition with every other party, excluding NSM but including the Communist front party, the Bulgarian Workers Party, in an unprecedented and thus far unmatched alliance of political forces called the Constitutional Bloc. The election became in effect a referendum on the king's authority, as the single issue it revolved around was candidates' support for or opposition to government by

Boris and Kioseivanov. Despite suppression of opposition political meetings, an outright ban on opposition electoral publicity and a redrawing of electoral constituencies to favour the government, the Constitutional Bloc gained 61 seats against the government's 96[17]. NSM standing separately won 3 seats. In a post-election analysis, the Ministry of the Interior gave the reasons for the government's lack of an overwhelming mandate as, the unity of the left and in particular the agitation of the cooperatives on their behalf, a lack of coordination among government forces and, in a telling comment on the predominant political philosophy of the period, 'the liberty which was given at elections and was not appropriate for the time'[18].

The unity of the Constitutional Bloc was not to last. Kioseivanov found the Subranie unworkable and, citing the need for national unity in the face of an increasingly complex international situation, declared new elections in 1939. In these elections, the Bloc found itself divided by attitudes to the war, a division that was to mark the beginnings of the cleavage between the Fatherland Front and the opposition in 1945. The immediate cause was the non-aggression treaty between Germany and the Soviet Union. The Liberals and the Democrats, traditionally sympathetic to France and Great Britain, opposed the treaty while the BWP, under the influence of the Comintern and working in coalition with an Agrarian faction and Zveno, supported it, declaring that the war was an 'imperialist adventure' by the Allies. Again there were considerable restrictions on campaigning and the

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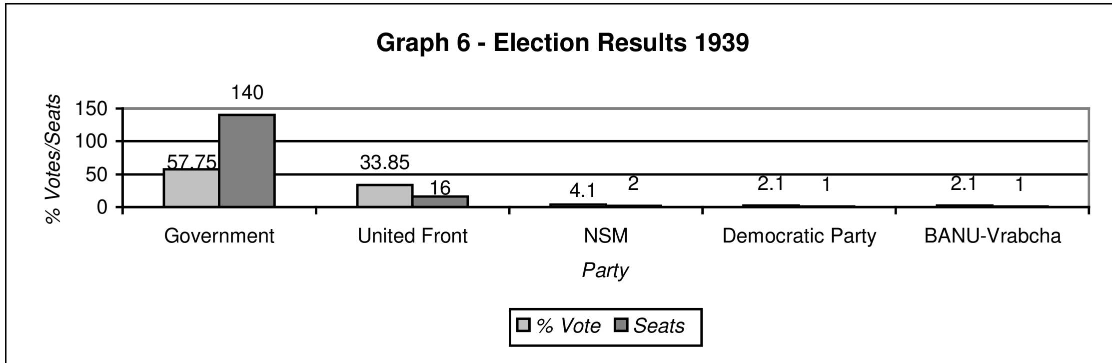
[17] This election was the first in which women were allowed to vote, a proposal that found favour in the cities but was much opposed in the country districts, and most particularly in the mountains, where it was said to dilute 'the strength of our oligarchic traditions' (Kostadinova, 1995,74).

[18] The archive of the Ministry of the Interior, quoted in Kostadinova, 1995, 77.

number of seats allocated to each force in the Subranie bore little relation to the vote. Nevertheless, as an indicator rather than an accurate reflection of the national mood the results of the election are instructive (Graph 6)



The strong vote for the United Front coalition of the BWP, Zveno and left-wing Agrarians (those that most closely represented Stamboliiski's concept of a peasant dictatorship) indicates an increased polarisation of the political system between irreconcilable opposites, between Boris's attempts to maintain a neutral stance in the conflict and the United Front's pro-Soviet stance. The victim was the Târnovo constitution. The combined 4% vote for the democrats and right-wing Agrarians marked its final demise and that of the liberal consensus that underpinned it. The constitution itself of course had been suspended since 1934, and attempts to replace it had been unsuccessful, as we have noted, however support for its restoration had not been dissipated, as evidenced by the electoral success of the 'Five' in 1938. Yet, as had happened so often in the past, the impact of external events was such that it resulted in a complete reshaping of the country's political system.

Both Germany and the Soviet Union had manoeuvred throughout the 1930's to

extend their influence within Bulgaria. Germany's principal foreign policy aim in South-Eastern Europe was that of securing a source of raw materials secure from blockade and pursuant to this appears to have been concerned to minimise industrialisation in those states. A 1933 memorandum written by Hans von Bulow, the German foreign minister analysed German principal economic problems in the 1930's as 'over-population [and a] narrow raw material base' to ameliorate which he stressed 'the need to combat the industrialisation of agrarian states'. He went on,

> 'These political considerations form the basis for our policy of economic support for the states of the Lower Danube (Hungary, Romania, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria), which found preferences for wheat and the aid which we gave to those states…..We must, therefore,….pursue it more effectively by increasing the exchange of goods with the states of the lower Danube as far as possible'. (Noakes, 1995, 655)

In relation to Bulgaria, Germany implemented this policy by buying up large quantities of tobacco and cereals that could not be sold elsewhere and by 1939 had become Bulgaria's principal; trade partner (Table 3).

Table 3 - Bulgaria's Trade with Germany 1921-1939 (% of Whole)		
Year	Exports	Imports
1921	10	17
1929	30	22
1935	48	54
1939	68	66

Source: Stavrianos, 2000, 657

By 1939 it had acquired control of an increasing proportion of foreign investment in Bulgaria as it over-ran Austria, Czechoslovakia, France and the Low Countries. It also pursued a 'cultural-political offensive' to increase German sympathy and influence inside Bulgaria not without success among the intelligentsia and nationalist groups. By the late 1930s Germany was the most 'successful' revisionist country in Europe, and hence it appealed to those groups in Bulgaria that were dissatisfied with the country's present borders, who saw Germany as the Great Power that could most ably help Bulgaria settle its own revisionist claims against its neighbours. Outside of military and political circles, Germany's cultural and intellectual achievements were held in high regard by the Bulgarian elite. Almost half of Bulgaria's professors had studied there or in Austria, and German books in the library of the country's most prestigious university in Sofia nearly outnumbered all other foreign language books combined. German cultural

influence in Bulgaria did not begin with the Third Reich[19] and perhaps it is for this reason that though many Bulgarians sympathised with Germany during the 1930's, relatively few were active supporters of Nazism (Kiuliumova-Boyadzhieva 1991).

Russia operated politically through the fifth-column of the BWP. Remaining relatively quiescent after the outrages of 1923, the Soviet directed BWP nevertheless continued its recruitment activities, culminating in 1936 with the creation of 'the Popular Front from below' – a network of apparently innocent committees which they would dominate and upon which they would build social and political power (Crampton, 1987, 117). The appeal of Communism was both economic and political and the Comintern in Moscow was careful to design its message for the Balkan peasantry. As Georgi Dimitrov, the Bulgarian-born leader of the Comintern was to put it in

> 'We Communists are the *irreconcilable opponents*, *on principle*, of bourgeois nationalism in all its forms. But we *are not supporters of national nihilism*, and should never act as such. The task of educating the workers and all working people in the spirit of proletarian internationalism is one of the fundamental tasks of every Communist Party. But anyone who thinks that this permits him, or even compels him, to sneer at all the national sentiments of the wide masses of working people is far from being a genuine Bolshevik, and has understood nothing of the teaching of Lenin and Stalin on the national

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[19] The first German language school in Sofia was opened in 1882 for German-speaking students of diplomats, but by the turn of the century two-thirds of its students were Bulgarian, (Kiuliumova-

question.' (P*olitical report to the Seventh World Congress of the Communist International*, *August 1935 (Dimitrov, 1975, 17))*

The result was that some 10,000 copies of Izvestia were sold daily on the streets of Sofia and 26 Soviet films were showing in Bulgarian cinemas, (Gorodetsky, 1999, 42). The British consul in Varna commented on the popularity of Soviet cinema. The public, he reported, 'flock to see these films, securing their places (standing) very early. Many come in donkey carts from which to obtain a better view, and not a few peasants drive in from neighbouring villages' (Gorodetsky, 1999, 43).

Such economic dependence on Germany gave Germany considerable leverage in Sofia and, immediately after the 1939 elections, under German pressure Boris had replaced Kioseivanov with a pro-German Prime Minister, Bogdan Filov, who, with Boris's unwilling accession, led Bulgaria into a formal alliance with Germany in March 1941. At the same time Communist and Agrarian United Front deputies were expelled from the Subranie and many potential opponents of the regime were interned, both communist and fascist, the latter because Boris feared that the Germans would use the NSM as fifth column to unseat him. These developments along with Hitler's attack on the Soviet Union in June of that year produced a dramatic realignment of political forces within the country. From the ruins of the United Front emerged a clandestine organisation, the Fatherland Front composed of the communists, Zveno, the left-wing Agrarians led by Nikolai Petkov and a social-democrat faction. Its formation was announced by the Russian based Bulgarian-language radio station, Hristo Botev, in July 1942 along with a non-

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Boyadzhieva 1991).

negotiable programme that included Bulgarian neutrality, the removal of the army from Royal control and a ban on all fascist organisations. Originally intended as a recreation of the Constitutional Bloc of 1938, the Democrats and BANU-Vrabcha refused to participate, although a faction of the Radical Party joined the Front in 1943. Led by a committee containing among others, Petkov and the former Zveno Prime Minster, Kimon Georgiev, by 1943 the Front had regional organisations throughout the country and, although it only had 3600 members in early 1944, was well placed to assume its role in government after Soviet troops entered Bulgaria on the 9th of September 1944.

By the end of 1944, an opposition bloc had also been formed composed of the Liberals, the Radical Party, the Democratic Party, a faction of the Social Democrats and Nikolai Petkov's Agrarians (who had left the Fatherland Front in that year). The opposition bloc was not allowed to register until just before the first post-war election in 1945. In protest, they boycotted this election but in an election the next year, the conduct of which by all accounts was marred by substantial irregularities, gained about 30% of the vote.

Boris died in 1943 and was replaced by his then six-year old son, Simeon, and a council of regents. The period from 1935 until Boris' death remains controversial even today. Different interpretations of it, whether Boris was forced to adopt a central role in government after the failure of other forces or whether as some centrist and left parties would have it that he deliberately recreated the 'personal regime' of his father or the 'Royal dictatorship' of Communist Party mythology, fuelled much of the discussion in the Subranie of the shape of the 1991 constitution and became again controversial with the return of his son, Simeon, to

Bulgarian political life.

The 1946 election was notable for the domination of the popular vote by the communists; of the 70% of votes gained by the Fatherland Front, the communists gained 79%. The Communist Party had thus moved from 12% of the vote in 1931 to 56% in 1946 and by that year had increased its membership to 250,000. The reasons for this are complex; Boris's alignment with Germany in 1941 drove many Russophile Bulgarians into the arms of the Communists. The Party's superior organisational ability also drew in new members and supporters, Party structures were strengthened and enlarged by large numbers of political detainees released in 1944 and the generally honourable conduct of the Red Army in Bulgaria after September 1944, which many Bulgarians contrasted with the harsh regime the British had established in Greece, eased the fears of the sceptical about the Party's intentions. To a great extent, though, its success can also be attributed to the country's lack of economic progress during the twenties and thirties. Bulgarian society during the inter-war years had changed little from the time of independence. While Stamboliiski's Agrarian government had eased a little the lot of the peasantry, subsequent governments had repealed much of its legislation, although crucially not the agricultural cooperatives, which remained and which even the opposition in the 1944 election felt had to be retained (Ognianov, 1992,36). Additionally reparations demanded by the allies in the Treaty of Neuilly-sur-Seine in 1919, the Great Depression and economic dependence on Germany in the 1930's had hampered economic growth, so that by the late thirties Bulgaria was still largely an agrarian country in which 69% of the Bulgarian population worked on the land, 84% of them on smallholdings of less than 10 hectares.

(Crampton; 1987,136) By the eve of war in 1939, popular disillusion with a system that failed to provide either an equable distribution of economic resources or political representation ran high. Talking of the generation who reached maturity during the war, Bernard Lory comments that ;

> Their childhood was miserable, suffering during the long period of war (1912-1918) from the shortage of males, the breakdown of social relations in the village and the absolute poverty. Their childhood was brief and their education rudimentary (4 years in Primary School in general). They came to adulthood early (with an early marriage), but the shortage of land kept them tied for long periods to the preceding generation. The economic crisis of 1930 shattered the dreams of these young adults and their prospects of advancement were blocked. (Lory, 1997) [20].

These conditions were to be a powerful factor in the creation of the situation the country found itself in 1944, when, as Oren notes, 'the grip of Communism over the minds and deeds of a substantial segment of the Bulgarian people was there to be acknowledged by all' (Oren: 1961,260). The grip of the Communist Party over the instruments of state was strengthened with a referendum to abolish the monarchy in 1946 and the adoption of a constitution modelled on that of the Soviet Union a year later. However by the elections of October 1946, they had yet to

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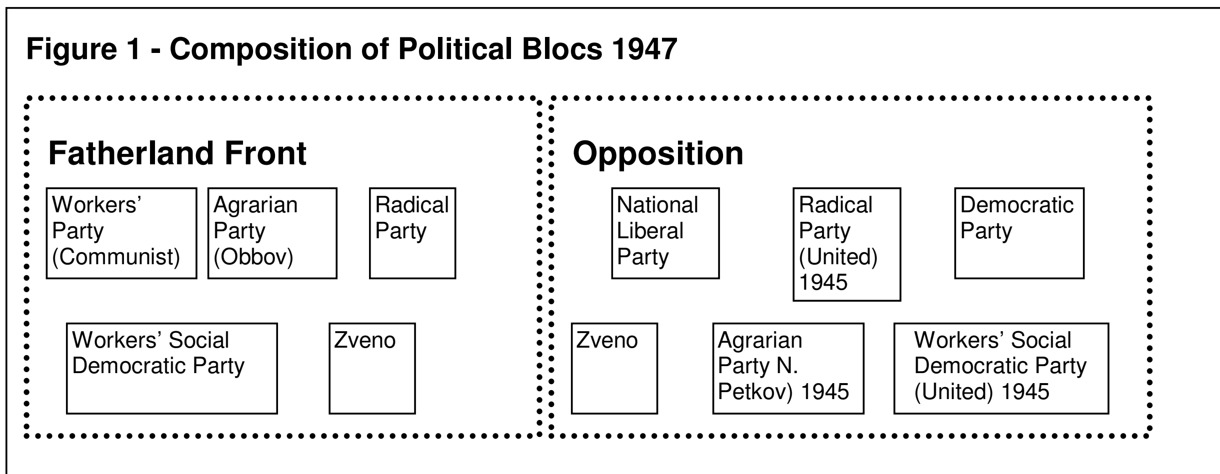
[20] Leur enfance est plutôt misérable, subissant la longue période de guerre (1912-1918), d'absence des hommes, de perturbation des rapports sociaux dans les villages, de pénurie alimentaire. Cette enfance est brève, la scolarisation rudimentaire (4 années d'école primaire, en général). Ils accèdent assez vite à la vie adulte (mariage précoce), mais le manque de terres les laisse généralement longtemps tributaires de la génération précédente. La crise économique de 1930 vient briser beaucoup de rêves de ces jeunes adultes. Les perspectives d'avenir sont très bouchées. (Lory, 1997,p.60)

consolidate their domination and these elections marked the beginning of a struggle between the Communists and their opponents that was to all intents and purposes, a local replication of the wider struggle between the Soviet Union and the allies.

The division between the opposition, led by Nikola Petkov, and the Fatherland Front was that of a preferred external alliance, between the Allies and the Soviet Union. The Fatherland Front was by 1944 a creature of the Soviet Union as the Communist Party came to dominate the Front and the opposition had developed strong contacts with the allies. The result of the 1946 elections was, however imperfectly, to set out the relative strengths of both forces and division sharpened rapidly thereafter. The opposition gained strength in the wake of the election. In parliament, Radical Party, Zveno and Agrarian defectors from the Fatherland Front driven out by, in the words of one Zveno leader, its 'doctrinaire Marxism', joined in the months after the election with the result that the Fatherland Front and the opposition contained fractions of the same parties (Fig. 1).

Figure 1 - Composition of Political Blocs 1947



In society, the opposition's constituency was those groups most affected by the government's gradual Sovietisation of Bulgaria, the bourgeoisie, constrained by new tax and banking laws restricting the amount of capital an individual could hold, peasants, resisting early moves towards collectivisation, and industrial workers suffering high unemployment. As well, the Orthodox Church, rejecting a government proposal that it should democratise, announced its support for the opposition. The Communists opened their campaign against the opposition by instigating a purge of anti-communist elements in the civil service, the police and the army and banning, or suspending the printing of, opposition newspapers in late 1946 and early 1947. They, however, felt unable to move openly against the opposition until the ratification of the Paris peace treaty by the United States in June 1947. With that action, the division of Europe into Western and Soviet spheres of influence drawn up at Yalta was confirmed and the Communists could do as they wish free of the threat of Western intervention. The day after the ratification, Petkov was arrested and within three months executed. In August, the opposition Agrarian party was dissolved and the others soon followed. With the formation of Cominform in October the leading role of the Communist Party was confirmed and the other parties in the Fatherland Front merged into the Communist Party. The one exception was the Obbov Agrarian faction of the Fatherland Front which was allowed to maintain a separate existence because of peasant resistance to collectivisation. It too though renounced any intention to form a separate government and acknowledged the Communists' leading role in 1948. In December 1947, the Communist Party under its leader Georgi Dimitrov, ratifed a new constitution for Bulgaria modelled on the Soviet constitution.

b) Bulgaria under Communist rule.

Having rid itself of effective opposition, the Party now turned to purifying itself. With Stalin's breach with Tito's Yugoslavia, Moscow in 1949 moved to strengthen its control of the BCP. It purged the party of 'home-grown' communists', `Titoists`, in a series of show trials, the most prominent of which was the trial of Traicho Kostov, a renowned partisan from the war years, who was executed. Dimitrov died the same year and was succeeded by his brother-in-law, Vulko Chernenkov, known as `Little Stalin`, who effectively Sovietised Bulgaria in a process that later came to be known as 'The Great Leap Forward'. Dimitrov introduced a two-year plan in 1947-48 and Chervenkov a five-year plan of 1949-52 both of which duplicated the 1920 Soviet GOERLO plan with its emphasis on expansion of electric power and a consequent establishment of heavy industry. The process of agricultural collectivisation was begun and all public services centralised, a process that was as painful in Bulgaria as it had been in the Soviet Union. Agricultural production remained at pre-war levels however and shortages of basic foodstuffs and commodities were endemic.

Stalin's death in 1953 removed Moscow's support for Chervenkov and he lost the party leadership to a collective leadership that included a number of factions. A faction around Chervenkov's immediate successor, Anton Yugov, professed a mixture of a Stalinism and a nationalism, a Chervenkov faction which deplored Kruschev's revisionism, a progressive faction which advocated more independent relations with Russia greater flexibility in economics and political approaches and a faction around Todor Zhivkov, a Kruschevite former partisan (Ionescu, 1969, 228). Zhivkov's faction was to be the dominant one and by 1962 he had assumed

both the chairmanship of the party and the prime ministership, both of which posts he was to hold until 1989. Zhivkov came to power for a number of reasons, because he was a 'home-grown' communist and a partisan who had not been directly associated with the repressions of the late 1940's, but overwhelmingly because Khrushchev viewed him as the kind of leader who might combine loyalty to the Soviet Union with an ability to revitalise, and thus legitimise, after the privations of the Stalin era, communist rule. As J F Brown was to put it, 'Zhivkov prospered because Khrushchev prospered. In the beginning, it was as simple as that.' (Brown, 1986, 141)

Thus it was to prove. Khrushchev's belief in Zhivkov's abilities was amply rewarded and it was those qualities that ensured Zhivkov's longevity. By assuring Moscow that the Soviet regime had Bulgaria's constant support on issues of geo-strategic and geopolitical significance within the Soviet bloc, so much so that more than once he was to propose that Bulgaria become the sixteenth Soviet Socialist Republic, Zhivkov ensured continuing Soviet support for his leadership. As he was to put it graphically in 1973, 'Bulgaria and the Soviet Union shall act as one body, which breathes from the same lungs and is nourished by the same blood supply.' (Kalinova, 2000, 178). At the heart of this relationship was the importance to the Soviets of Bulgaria's strategic situation. As the southernmost of the Warsaw Pact states Bulgaria shared a border with a NATO member, Turkey, whose control of the Bosporus threatened Russia's access to the Mediterranean. It was thus important to Russia that Bulgaria remain pliant and stable. In return, Zhivkov was allowed considerable leeway on domestic and regional policy and instituted a regime that has been described as 'authoritarian-participatory' (Brown, 1976, 112).

It was participatory in that it combined revolutionary fervour with the construction, from the 1960's onwards, of a personality cult around Zhivkov. For general public consumption he constructed a public identity designed to appeal to the more traditional elements of Bulgarian society. As '*Chichu Tosho*' (a colloquial version of 'Uncle Todor') he developed the persona of a man of the people, whose qualities of approachability and openness were derived from his village upbringing. He was to use this cult in different ways also to neutralise intellectual dissidence through the device of highly personalised direct appeals to key groups and individuals within Bulgarian society. Georgi Markov, the Bulgarian dissident, describes in some detail meetings he had with him in the 1960's as part of a series with prominent creative figures. The purpose of these meetings was to soften potential opposition to Zhivkov and their basis was always a direct but subtle appeal to personal advancement, so that Markov concluded,' While the cult of Stalin had its roots in Party fanaticism, the cult of Todor Zhivkov was based exclusively on a careful calculation of the benefits to be gained from it' (Markov: 1984,239). The regime was authoritarian in that while in other states, policies, such as the 1968 New Economic Mechanism in Hungary appeared to have been designed to heal the breach between Party and society, to placate public discontent with Communist rule by means of decentralisation, the acceptance of interest groups and the withdrawal of the Party from various branches of public life, much, if not all, of the Party's policies in Bulgaria were ideologically driven. Experiments with decentralisation were ended in 1968, one month before the Prague Spring, and thenceforth, as the BCP's programme of 1971 stated unequivocally 'the stage of the building up of a developed socialist society is characterised by a further increase in the role and significance of the Communist

Party as the leading and directing force' (Brown, 1976, 115). No changes in the management of the economy could take place until, in Zhivkov's words, 'the Party's eye looks everywhere'. (Zhivkov, 1997, 258) Interest groups were not tolerated and Zhivkov, with Soviet acquiescence, was able to dispel any potential domestic political opposition by frequent reshuffles and purges within the upper echelons of the Party. Zhivkov further consolidated the dominant position of the Party in 1971with the introduction of a new constitution. Until then the state structure of Bulgaria had closely resembled that of the Soviet Union. The 1971 constitution however created a State Council as the supreme permanent organ of state power, with the power to implement legislation independently of the National Assembly and, uniquely among Warsaw Pact states, control over the Council of Ministers.

The result was that such open opposition to the regime as there was until 1987 tended to be individual and isolated expressions of discontent, as in the much publicised case of Georgi Markov. There were few other instances of such high-profile dissent. Apart from one little reported and unsuccessful coup attempt in 1965 by a group of former partisan Army officers, which was the result of discontent with 'the particular severity of the BCP and the general harshness of political control' (Ionescu, 1969, 217), the Zhivkov regime was neither challenged nor held publicly accountable for thirty years. There was no equivalent of the Warsaw uprising or the Prague Spring in Bulgaria and such events engendered little direct reaction in the bulk of the Bulgarian population. Not that there was no discontent, a Soviet journalist working for the KGB noted in 1974 resentment at the low standard of living, but concluded that Bulgarians were too afraid of the

Security Services to grumble publicly (Andrew, 2000, 357). The severity of the party extended to action against émigrés, who they considered to be working against them from abroad. Apart from the well-publicised umbrella murder of Georgi Markov in 1978, Boris Arsov, the editor of an émigré newspaper in Denmark, was abducted to Sofia and died in Sofia prison cell in 1974 and three other defectors were shot in Vienna in 1975 (Andrew, 2000, 506-507). Such actions and others like them were to have consequences for the BSP after 1989, in that they hardened the attitudes of émigré politicians returning to Bulgaria with the memory of Party attempts on their lives and livelihoods.

The changes in the Soviet Union from 1985 onward though were of a wholly different nature. Through a Soviet television channel broadcast in Bulgaria, the effects of Gorbachev's policies of perestroika and glasnost in the Soviet Union and elsewhere in Eastern Europe were there to be observed by any Bulgarian citizen who had a television. Rapprochement with the West lessened Bulgaria's strategic importance to Russia and thus its previously almost automatic support of Zhivkov. While Gorbachev, as a new broom, could sweep away many of the most unpopular aspects of the previous regime, Zhivkov, one of the bedrocks of whose rule had been a slavish commitment to the model of socialism espoused by Khrushchev in the April plenum of 1956, was unable to replicate the Soviet initiative without undermining the basis of his regime. A number of policy changes were formulated, the most important being a set of proposals for restructuring announced in July 1986 that in part replicated the Hungarian New Economic Mechanism, but were half-heartedly implemented and were in any case accompanied by increasing repression of the many dissident groups that had

begun to spring up since 1987. A violent campaign of assimilation and expulsion of Bulgaria's Turkish population brought both international isolation and open Soviet disapproval and by late 1989 the distance between Zhivkov and the Soviet leadership had become an unbridgeable gap. In a re-enaction of a scenario that is a characteristic of Bulgarian history, the withdrawal of great power support that had ended so many of his predecessors' regimes also unseated Zhivkov. In what amounted to a palace coup, a group of reformers, acting with the acquiescence of the Soviet Union, forced his resignation on the 10th of November 1989. As Zhivkov's rise to power had been a consequence of changes in the Soviet Union so was his deposition.

The changes wrought by the Communist Party on Bulgarian society and its economy were far-reaching and had consequences for its post-1989 development, in particular for the UDF.

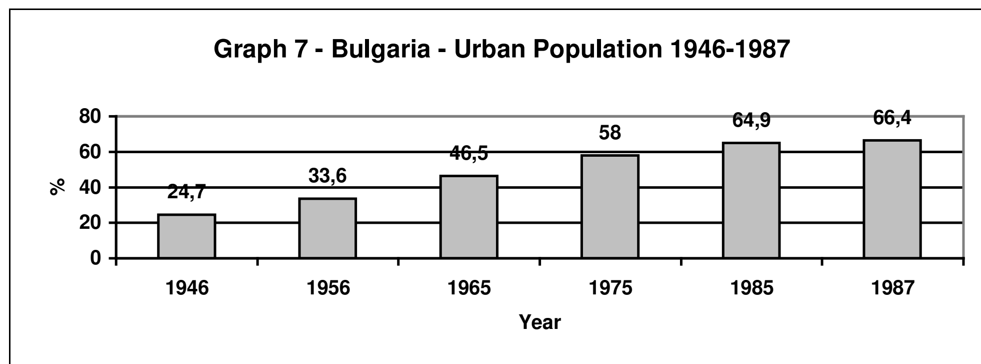
While Bulgaria under Zhivkov suffered no less than any other Warsaw Pact country from the vicissitudes of Communist rule, it also brought an almost unprecedented period of political stability and the first substantial industrialisation of the country. The result was, in the words of a 1990 paper;

> '…Communism in Bulgaria did not appear out of the blue. It did manage to find suitable and stable terrain in our national reality because it answered - or seemed to answer - the social expectations and needs of large enough sections of the population. Communist ideas were not simply something "imported" from the outside, but found an active and a relatively mass social carrier'. (Centre for the Study of Democracy, 1990)

The social expectations that Communism answered were largely those of the peasantry. Industrialisation required workers and between 1947 and 1956 a mass migration from the rural areas to either already established or new urban settlements took place. For the majority of peasants who became the new industrial class, it represented an opportunity for advancement that the land could not offer. Education and housing programmes aided this advancement. In the countryside, agricultural collectives and their later manifestation, agro-industrial complexes, while resisted in many areas until 1958 (Migev, 1997,4), offered the rural population a status that was something other than 'peasant'. The collectives, staffed by 'workers', took the burden of the land from individuals and offered the opportunity of economic diversification that smallholdings could not. So much so that de-collectivisation in the early 1990's was resisted in many areas on the grounds that for many it represented a return to the smallholding economy that their grandparents had rejected (Creed, 1995, p.860). While for many intellectuals the dominance of the Party represented an existence 'under a lid which we cannot lift and which we no longer believe someone else can lift' (Markov: 1984, xvii), for the majority of the rural population and Bulgaria's emerging industrial workforce at least that lid provided a continuity of existence and an opportunity for advancement that had been threatened too often in the past.

The Great Leap Forward was conducted with, as John Lampe put it, 'a curious combination of revolutionary enthusiasm and police pressure,' (Lampe 1986: 143) and brought in its wake extensive demographic and social changes, in particular the creation of the expansion of Bulgaria's professional class which was to be the main recruiting ground of the UDF. The percentage of Bulgarians living in urban

centres rose dramatically (Graph 7)



The construction of a heavy industrial base, 'accomplished by fits and starts, without regulation and plan, spurred often by subjective orders, achieved by "any means,"' (Vasileva, 1991: 44) was similarly dramatic and within twenty years the importance of the agricultural sector, Bulgaria's dominant economic sector since independence, had been overtaken by industry (Table 4)

Table 4 - Share of Sectors in Net Material Product 1948-1985(%)

Year	Industry	Agriculture	Construction	Transport and Trade	Other
1948	7.9	82.1	2.0	3.7	4.3
1956	12.9	70.5	3.3	6.0	7.2
1965	49	29	8	12	2
1970	55	18	9	16	2
1980	51	19	9	18	3
1985	59.9	13.3	9.9	14.5	2.4

Source: Lampe, 1986: 160 and Economist Country Report Bulgaria 1990-1991

Industrialisation also required an educated workforce and education provision throughout the country was expanded considerably (Table 5).

Table 5 - Level of Education, Percentage of the Population		
Level of Education	1946	1985
Higher	0.9	6.3
Secondary/Technical College	4.6	30.7
Primary	18.7	32.7
Primary Uncompleted	75.7	30.3

Source: Nonchev, 2000, p. 67

Initially the regime attempted to create a new intelligentsia with a working class or peasant background in order to link more closely the intelligentsia and the people. This strategy was later abandoned because the results were not encouraging and also because, one assumes, such a strategy hampered the social mobility of the elite's own offspring. The result was the creation of a largely self-perpetuating educated urban professional class. This class fuelled an expansion of professional membership of the Party (Table 6).

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Table 6 - Communist Party Membership			
Year	Workers	Farmers	Professionals and Intelligentsia
1944	26.5	51.9	8.0
1948	26.5	44.7	16.3
1954	34.1	39.8	17.9
1962	37.2	32.1	23.6
1971	40.1	26.1	28.2
1976	41.4	23.0	30.2

Source: Szajowski,1981, 39

By the 1970's the demographic and social changes which characterised the 1950's and 1960's had run their course and the urban white-collar class was now a stable group accounting for roughly 24% of the population (Nonchev, 2000, 74). It did however consist of two distinct groups, what has been termed the cadre elite, administrative and other staff chosen for their loyalty to the Party and recruited largely from families with a history of Party loyalty, and a technocratic elite, either co-opted into the Party for their skills or promoted for those skills without being Party members (Hanley, 2003). 'New Class' theorists have speculated (see for instance Giddens 1973 and Konrad & Szelenyi 1979) that the relationship between the two was such that this 'new class' was a homogenous group, the ruling elite and technical and non-technical intelligentsia unified by the general influence of Soviet Marxist ideology. Later research by Szeleni and Hanley (Szelenyi 2002 and

Hanley 2003) however seems to indicate that the two groups remained distinct and rapprochement between the two often gave way to retrenchment by the Party bureaucracy, as in Czechoslovakia after the Prague Spring when thousands of intellectuals were purged from the party and removed from positions of authority and in Hungary between 1974-78 when conservatives in the Party largely dismantled the NEM. While empirical evidence is lacking, anecdotal evidence (see for instance Chakurov, 1990 and Zhivkov, 1997) would suggest that the two in Bulgaria were distinct and that a similar process of retrenchment occurred in Bulgaria after 1985, albeit in a milder form than the two examples above and that retrenchment gave rise to the formation of the first dissident groups after the failure of the 1986 reforms. There is little evidence in Bulgaria to suggest, as some have (see for instance Szelenyi and Szelenyi 1994 and Verdery 1996), that the ruling elites in Eastern Europe were split along generational lines as a result of an earlier shift in patterns of elite recruitment from an emphasis on ideological conformity and political loyalty to an emphasis on technical competence and merit. Thus, they argue, an unintended consequence of the party's increasing emphasis on technical competence as opposed to ideological conformity was the formation of a technocratic faction within the elite that had little interest in maintaining state socialism and a considerable interest in bringing about its collapse. A large proportion of the membership of dissident groups after 1987 and the UDF after 1989 did come from just that technical elite, joined by a smaller number of reforming members of the cadre elite, but initially, and arguably until the failure of the Russian coup in August 1991, many within the UDF viewed the future as a modified form of democratic socialism.

One aspect of Communist rule that was to have an effect on the post-1989 political system, constraining both the UDF's and the BSP's freedom of action, was the country's economic situation in 1989.

As Table 7 illustrates, looking at basic statistics, the starting point for the Bulgarian economy in 1990 was not significantly different from other CEE countries.

Table 7 – Economic Performance selected CEE countries 1990

	Czech	Hungary	Romania	Slovenia	Poland	Bulgaria
Nominal GDP ($bn)	32.3	33.1	35.1	17.4	59.0	19.2
GDP per capita PPP ($)	9526.0	5750.0	3966.0	9225.0	4221.0	4487.0
GDP (% change)	-1.2	-3.5	-5.6	-4.7	-11.6	-9.1
Industrial production (% change)	-3.3	-10.2	-19.0	-10.5	-24.2	-16.7
Unemployment (%)	0.8	1.9	0.4	4.7	6.3	1.7
Average monthly wage ($)	182.6	212.8	138.6	900.2	n/a	157.5
Inflation (%)	9.7	28.9	5.1	549.7	585.8	23.8
Foreign debt ($bn)	6.4	21.3	1.2	2.0	49.4	10.9
Population (m)	10.3	10.4	23.2	2.0	38.2	8.7
Foreign Debt (% GDP)	19.9	64.4	3.4	11.5	83.7	56.8

However the structural anomalies of the Bulgarian economy placed it, as Dobrinsky notes (Dobrinsky 2000, p.582), closer to the CIS states than the other Comecon (CMEA) member states of Eastern Europe. Among the latter, Bulgaria

was the most closely attached to the Soviet economy. While in the 1970s and 1980s a number of east-European countries attempted to reorient some of their trade flows with other trading partners, the degree of Bulgaria's dependence on trade with the Soviet Union grew continuously during that period. By 1989 Bulgarian exports to Comecon accounted for 81% of total exports of which 70% was with the former Soviet Union[21]. Trade with these countries accounted for over 50% of GNP, a level not recorded in any other European CMEA country[22]. Additionally, as Ognan Pishev (Pishev, 1991) points out, the commodity structure of Bulgarian industry was not defined by the comparative advantages it possessed but by the interests of its largest market, the Soviet Union. In a country with relatively few natural resources of use to heavy industry[23] and an agricultural sector that was the country's prime source of exports prior to the Second World War, the exigencies of the Comecon intra-bloc trading system demanded that Bulgaria develop the capacity for large-scale steel and machinery production. To

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[21] Economist Country Profile 1993-1994

[22] As reported by the official Bulgarian and CMEA statistics of that time. However, it should be borne in mind that past trade data for centrally planned economies are notoriously unreliable. There was no universally accepted methodology of converting 'transferable rubles' (the accounting unit of intra-CMEA trade) and different countries used different approaches which resulted in wild variation in the reported statistics. In 1991, the UN Economic Commission for Europe tried to recalculate past trade statistics using the Hungarian conversion factors which were considered most realistic (EBE, 1991). According to these alternative estimates of the dollar value of CMEA trade at world market prices, the degree of Bulgaria's dependence on trade with the Soviet Union was lower than 50%, but nevertheless still the highest among the CMEA countries.

[23] Bulgaria has deposits of a variety of both metallic and nonmetallic minerals. There an estimated 4.1 billion tons of proven recoverable reserves of coal, mostly lignite although other promising deposits of black coking coal have also been identified. Lignite and brown coal fuel the country's thermal power stations and are used as fuel and as raw material for many of its industries. Deposits of iron ore are estimated at 317 million tons; one of the largest reserves is at Kremikovtsi near Sofia, the site of the country's largest metallurgical plant. There are significant deposits of nonferrous ores (copper, lead, and zinc), although their location in the mountainous regions of the country makes commercial exploitation difficult. The country also has deposits of less valuable minerals, including rock salt, gypsum, limestone, dolomite, kaolin (china clay), asbestos, perlite, feldspar, fluorite, and barite. There are minimal oil reserves, although a potential oil field has been

this end the regime embarked on a programme of constructing large industrial complexes, the largest of which were the Kremikovtsi steel mill about 10 kilometres from Sofia, the Balkancar works in Sofia which produced one of Bulgaria's more specialised exports, fork-lift trucks, and the Neftochim petrochemical complex in Burgas which accounted for about 1/6th of the total regional workforce. Crucially for the later privatisation programme, of 17 such large complexes a number were built in less populated areas with the intention of creating employment in less-favoured regions. In the 1970's Bulgaria began to develop an electrotechnical industrial sector specialising in computing, audio tape and compact disc production. By 1989 industrial production amounted to 56% of net material product and agriculture 14%[24]. Table 8 illustrates this shift by detailing the percentage of the working population employed in the agriculture, industry and services sectors. Agriculture, which since independence had employed around 80% of the workforce, within forty years of the communist assumption of power had been reduced to less than a fifth of the total. Industry, which accounted for 11% of the workforce in 1950, employed almost half by 1989 and the service sector, benefiting from an increase in tourism though the construction of two large purpose-built resort complexes on the Black Sea coast[25], expanded from 9.5% in 1950 to 35.4% in 1989.

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identified in Bulgaria's coastal waters of the Black Sea. Most of the country's oil requirement and all of its gas are currently imported from Russia.

[24] Economist 1991. Net material product, also known as national income, is the value added output of goods and services relating to physical production, transport and distribution. Banking, health, education, public administration and defence are all excluded. The figure given relates to 'NMP produced' which also excludes any net foreign trade surplus and losses in production.

[25] Bulgaria attracted a constantly growing number of visitors, mostly from the Comecon bloc, throughout the 1980's, achieving 49% growth in visitor numbers between 1983 and 1989 (Economist 1991)

Table 8 - Employment, By Sector 1950-1989 (% of total)					
Year	1950	1960	1970	1980	1989
Agriculture	79.5	55.5	35.7	24.2	18.6
Industry	11.0	27.4	39.2	43.8	46.0
Services	9.5	17.1	25.1	32.0	35.4

Source: OECD (1992, Annex I, Table 1), updated by World Bank data and National Statistical Institute (1992, p.53).

Maintaining such a large heavy industrial base depended on access to cheap raw materials from the Soviet Union and markets for these products within Comecon and the structure of Bulgaria's foreign trade until the mid-1990's reflected just such a dependence. In 1990 machinery and equipment accounted for 55.8% of exports while raw material (including oil) accounted for 37.3% of total imports (Economist 1994-1995). In all 67% of exports were dependent on raw materials obtained by a barter system with the Soviet Union that relied on the Soviet desire and ability to maintain what was in effect a client state. With the collapse of Communist regimes throughout Eastern Europe in 1989, the Soviet Union had neither the economic ability nor the security rationale to maintain such an uneven relationship.

The immediate cause of Bulgaria's economic problems in 1989 however was not trade with Comecon but its trade with developing nations. Bulgaria achieved a trade surplus with Comecon in 1988 and 1989, in part due to positive net sales of services (in particular the growing popularity of its Black Sea tourist resorts), but from 1986 onwards recorded a growing deficit in trade with non-Comecon countries. While this trade accounted for only 20% of the total for most of the

1980's, its value to the country was greater because it provided 'hard' (convertible) currency as opposed to the 'convertible rouble' used for intra-bloc trading. The first sign of trouble appeared with the 1986 oil price crash. A large part of non-Comecon trade was Soviet oil processed in Bulgaria and re-exported. Supplies of Soviet oil were restricted following the oil price crash and Bulgarian exports suffered. As a result its current account deficit grew from $85 million in 1985 to $1.3 billion in 1989. Financed by loans from abroad, the country's foreign debt concomitantly increased from $3.2 billion to $9.2 billion in the same period. Additionally, in an attempt to find other sources of oil, Bulgaria had also provided some $2.4 billion in export financing loans to developing countries, chief among them Iraq and Libya whose loans alone amounted to $1.9 billion. Sanctions against Libya, imposed in the wake of the Lockerbie bombing, and the Gulf War would further worsen this position. Despite this, it is important to point out in order to put in context future developments that little of this was generally known or understood by the time of Zhivkov's resignation. The level of foreign debt in 1989 was understated at US$ 7 bln. as opposed to its real level of US$10.3 bln. and the true inflation rate obscured by suppressing the official value of the *lev*. For most, the Communist Party had managed to avoid economic collapse and there was little disenchantment with the Party's economic policies.

c) Bulgaria and its Minorities

Finally, a survey of Bulgarian parties would not be complete without an examination of the background to Bulgaria's one parliamentary-represented ethnic party, the Movement for Rights and Freedoms (MRF). The MRF has consistently played a pivotal role as either power-broker or coalition partner in the Subranie

since 1990 and the context within which it operates is important to understanding both attitudes to it and its actions in relation to the initially two and later three major parties. Thus what follows is an exposition of the Zhivkov regime's changing attitude to the country's Turkish and Muslim minorities followed by a brief survey of ethnic relations since then.

According to the 2001 census, minorities in Bulgaria constitute approximately 16% of the population, the major groups are 746,664 ethnic Turks (9.4% of the population); 370,908 Roma (4.7%);10,556 Vlaks and 5,071 Macedonians[26]. Although not strictly an ethnic minority, some 220,000 Bulgarian Muslims (2.7% of the population: known as *Pomaks*) form a distinct sub-group who largely support the MRF.

The tenor of later Communist attitudes to minorities was set by the Party's Central Committee plenary session in April, 1956 in a claim that 'Bulgarian Turks are an inseparable part of the Bulgarian people', an integral part of the uniform, socialist Bulgarian nation whose sole language was to be Bulgarian (Mutafchieva 1995, p. 29). Two causes brought the Party to this conclusion, both of which were to remain at the forefront of its thinking in its dealings with ethnic minorities. Firstly, attempts to assimilate minority communities through education programmes and collectivisation, in effect to establish in them a firm socialist identity, between 1951 and 1955 had failed. In the case of the Muslim Pomaks and Turks, collectivisation was seen as a threat to their traditional way of life, particularly as regards the role of women in the life of the collective farm. Where the education programme had

[26] Source Bulgarian National Statistics Institute, www.nsi.bg

worked it had created an educated Turkish elite with sympathy towards Turkish nationalism and Kemalism. Secondly, the intensification of the Cold War brought about a chilling of relations with Turkey, now seen as a Western ally. Turks within the borders of Bulgaria, particularly from the latter group, could not now be viewed as naturally loyal citizens. After 1956, cultural autonomy was no longer permitted. As a result, one minority group after the other was claimed to be 'Bulgarian' by nationality and ethnicity and subject to assimilation campaigns that attempted to Bulgaricise religion, names, dress codes and finally language. Those policies of 'national rebirth' were first conducted among the smaller Muslim minorities (Muslim Roma and Pomaks). In the early 1970s, Pomak communities were obliged to change their names to traditional Bulgarian ones; if they refused, they were denied identity papers which enabled them to draw money, pensions, and state salaries from bank accounts (UNHCR, 1994). Resistance and protest often resulted in violence and imprisonment (Poulton, 1991, 111-115).

By the 1970's the Party had begun to concentrate on the Turkish population. Until 1970, Bulgarian historians not only acknowledged the existence of a sizeable Turkish minority in Bulgaria but also located the origins of this minority outside the Balkan Peninsula. (Eminov, 1997, 8) However this attitude began to change. An important harbinger of this change was laid out in the 1971 constitution which does not mention minorities, only 'Bulgarians of non-Bulgarian origin'. During the 1970s, an intellectual consensus on a new concept of Bulgarian nationality grew around the figure of Zhivkov's daughter and influential Minister of Culture, Ludmilla Zhivkova. Zhivkova was able to pursue a cultural policy which was both liberal, by Soviet-bloc standards, and vigorously nationalist, and was supported not just by

the Party but, crucially, also by dissident and non-Communist intellectuals - especially historians and ethnographers. It endeavoured to prove continuity between modern Bulgaria and the Bulgarian kingdom of the Middle Ages. Couched in esoteric and pseudo-intellectual language, it traced an uninterrupted history of the Bulgarian nation since its inception in the 7th century and posited a 'national revival' similar to that of the 19th century movement that led to Bulgarian independence. Implicit in this was a common national goal of the 'national rebirth' of Bulgaria's ethnic minorities, a return to the fold of Bulgarian nationality that was to extinguish all differences that an oppressive history had created among the Bulgarian nation. In 1977, the Party stated that 'Bulgarians are almost of one ethnic type and are moving towards complete homogeneity' (Mutafchieva 1995, p. 31).

Pressure was put on Turkish communities to abandon their traditional dress and customs, the latter to be replaced with secular rituals under the control of the state. However, such measures failed; the Turkish population of Bulgaria remained a group which differed from the majority population in its language, its dress codes, its habits, its religion, its demographic behaviour, and its self-perception.

Finally, the Party turned to the most radical attempt to solve the Turkish question: in 1984 it officially declared the Bulgarian Turks to be Bulgarians. They were no longer perceived as a different ethnic group, but as ethnic Bulgarians who had been forced to adopt Islam and Turkish as their mother tongue under the 'Ottoman Yoke'. Like Pomaks, Turks were now viewed as Bulgarian Muslims, and since religion could not determine ethnic belonging, they were true Bulgarians whose ethnic identity could now be restored (Brunnbauer, 2001). As a consequence, a

campaign of Bulgaricisation, the Revival Process, similar to that inflicted upon the Pomaks some years earlier, was started in June 1984 and intensified in December of that year.

Assimilation efforts took the form of curtailing religious activities, imposing fines on the use of Turkish in public places, and limiting work opportunities for Turks who did not change their names. Dissenters were routinely arrested, and beatings in detention and internal exile were not uncommon punishments (Ibid., pp. 139-147; see also U.S. Department of State Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 1985, 1986). The then Minister of the Interior revealed in February 1992 that a total of 820,000 Pomak and Turkish names had been changed during the period 1984-1989 (UNHCR, 1994)).

In May 1989, the authorities expelled prominent ethnic Turkish activists from the country. These initial expulsions quickly evolved into a mass exodus of the Turkish population, as the authorities allowed others critical of the official assimilation policy to depart as well by liberalising passport regulations and eliminating exit visa requirements. By 22 August 1989, when Turkey closed its border with Bulgaria, over 300,000 people had emigrated to Turkey (Poulton, 1991, 157). The expulsions were accompanied by violence in both the Turkish and Pomak communities. Seven people were reported to have died in clashes with the militia during street demonstrations in northeastern and southeastern Bulgaria in April and a further fifteen from the Pomak community died during riots in the area of Gotse Delchev in southwestern Bulgaria in mid-August.

The impetus behind the Revival Process appears to have been fourfold: -

1. The threat of a Muslim minority potentially allegiant to an unfriendly neighbour, Turkey.

2. Tensions resulting from a contradiction between a Communist rhetoric of modernity and the traditional life-style of the Muslim minorities; the Party accepted that its policy of assimilation through secularisation and integration had not only failed, but had led to increasing nationalist sentiments among a growing group of Turkish intellectuals

3. The influence of a strongly nationalistic faction in the Party leadership

4. An attempt to establish a national consensus at a time when growing economic problems and the introduction of perestroika and glasnost in other Warsaw Pact countries challenged the traditional pillars of communist rule. (Brunnbauer, 2001, p.42)

The Revival Process ended with the downfall of Todor Zhivkov but its ramifications continue to reverberate in contemporary politics.

During 1990, some 150,000 ethnic Turks who had left during the previous year's exodus returned to Bulgaria (Vasileva, 1992, 349). Subsequently, the National Assembly instituted a number of reforms that improved the rights and freedoms of minorities and the 1991 constitution allows for minority rights. By March 1991 some 600,000 non-ethnic Bulgarians had reclaimed their original names (UNHCR, 1994). However, the returnees were confronted with a host of difficulties; many had no housing because they had sold or rented their residences prior to departure. In some districts houses of returnees had actually been destroyed (Poulton, 1991,159). Reportedly, some 77,000 Turks were considered homeless in

1990, representing half the population that returned from Turkey (Vasileva, 1992, 350). The National Assembly as part of an indemnity package, resulting in the return of some 3,000 houses to their previous owners eventually addressed property issues. However, many ethnic Bulgarians reacted negatively to the reforms. In early 1990 a series of backlash demonstrations took place as an expression of opposition to the government's new policy towards minorities and a reaffirmation of Bulgarian nationalism (UNHCR, 1994). Reasons for the unrest were attributed to several sources, fear of an Islamic resurgence in those parts of Bulgaria where ethnic Bulgarians are in the minority, concern that Turkey might gain more influence over Bulgaria's political arena, and fear that those who had profited from the Turkish exodus by purchasing houses, goods, livestock at superficially low prices might be 'stripped of their gains'. (Engelbrekt, 1990; Poulton, 1991,164)

Ongoing government reforms relating to minority access to the media and education continued to be met with resistance. A February 1991 proposal by the Ministry of Education to introduce Turkish language courses in selected schools generated protests, particularly in those areas that had mounted the strongest nationalist opposition to the 1990 reforms. The BSP-dominated parliament subsequently legislated against the teaching of Turkish in October 1991. However, a new minister of education at the time effectively defied the law, and allowed Turkish to be taught on an optional basis (Engelbrekt, 1991).

Minority groups remain economically disadvantaged and the Roma, in particular, seem to suffer a disproportionate number of human rights abuses. The US Department of State reported in 1994;

> ‘[m]any newspapers routinely attribute crimes to Gypsies before any formal investigation has taken place. The quality of Gypsy housing is relatively poor, with many houses still lacking water, electricity, and sewage facilities. Gypsies reportedly encounter difficulties applying for social benefits. Rural Gypsies are discouraged from claiming land to which they are entitled under the law dividing up agricultural collectives’ (Country Reports, 1993 & 1994)

Ethnic Turkish areas of Bulgaria have tended to be economically stagnant and, until Turkey introduced a visa regime for Bulgarian Turks in 1993, some 120,000 Turks were reported to have emigrated. (Koinova, 1998)

The position of the Movement for Rights and Freedoms (MRF) in the Subranie has also been a source of some contention. The membership of the party, while not limited solely to ethnic Turks, is drawn largely from the Turkish and Pomak communities. It has constituted the major parliamentary representation for the Turkish and Pomak communities since its inception in 1989, although a breakaway faction joined the UDF in 1997 and several smaller parties without parliamentary representation have been formed. Most of these were offshoots of the MRF which largely shared its aims and programme, although a pan-Islamic Turkish Democratic Party emerged in Southern Bulgaria in the late 1990’s which advocates the creation of a federation of Bulgarians and Turks in Bulgaria, in which all predominantly Turkish areas should be given administrative and cultural autonomy.

The MRF’s founding leader and former dissident, Ahmed Dogan, announced at the party conference in 2003 that he would be standing down as leader in 2004.

This coupled with the fact that in 2003 the party elected a number of ethnic Bulgarians to positions of responsibility within the party organisation has given rise to speculation that the party may be moving away from its ethnic origins and attempting to attract a mainstream constituency. In the event Dogan stayed, but the candidate list for the 2005 elections showed much more ethnic diversity than previously. Under the 1991 constitution, political parties formed within ethnic groups are prevented from registering or from standing in elections (Article 11(4)), however, the MRF was allowed to register as a party in 1990, before the new constitution took effect.

The Turkish population has suffered more from the post-1989 reform process than most other sections of the population, registering consistently higher unemployment than the national average. Constituting between 15 and 20% of the national workforce, about three-quarters of the population live in rural areas, a large proportion of whom work in the tobacco industry. They were particularly hard hit by the land UDF's 1992 land reforms, which returned land to pre-Communist owners, because few Turks owned land prior to 1946. Two sections of the act had particularly damaging consequences; the regulations on the restitution of land to its original boundaries, which limited the possibility for the re-distribution of land to those who had little or no land (Arts. 20 and 21), and an article requiring that the private plots which the former regime placed at the disposal of collective workers also be given up. The result has been that where Turks have managed to retain land, it has been largely in small parcels managed on a subsistence basis[27]. For

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27 Subsistence farming has re-emerged in a large part of rural Bulgaria, not just among the Turkish population. For a discussion of the reasons for this see Kostov, 2002.

this reason, the MRF has been particularly sensitive to the consequences of the restitution of land and privatisation processes, such as that of *Bulgartabac*, the country's state-owned tobacco producer, which impinge upon its ethnic constituency.

Finally, a word should be added about Bulgaria's other politically active minority, Macedonians, largely resident in the Pirin region of Southern Bulgaria. Of the organisations that claim to represent this group, the largest is the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation - Union of Macedonian Societies (IMRO-UMS) led by Krasimir Karakachanov and named after the revolutionary organisation of the same name active in the inter-war years. It registered as a political party in 1990 and was part of the UDF until 1997. It governed in coalition with the UDF as a separate party until 2001 and is currently a parliamentary right-of -centre party.

While IMRO-UMS has never advocated either regional autonomy for Macedonians or a rejoining of Pirin Macedonia with the Macedonian state, a number of other smaller organisations have and have in consequence been refused registration as political parties by the Bulgarian courts. A separate UMS emerged in 1989 intended to develop Macedonian culture and provide political representation. An offshoot separatist organisation, UMS-Illinden, split from UMS in 1990 and by 1998 was demanding an independent Pirin Macedonia and the removal of Bulgarian 'occupation' troops from Pirin. It claimed 10,000 members in the mid-1990's but its current strength is unclear. It was refused registration in 1990 and remains proscribed. An 1999 offshoot of the latter group, UMS-Illinden-Pirin, claims to be a non-separatist democratic party committed to working to preserve

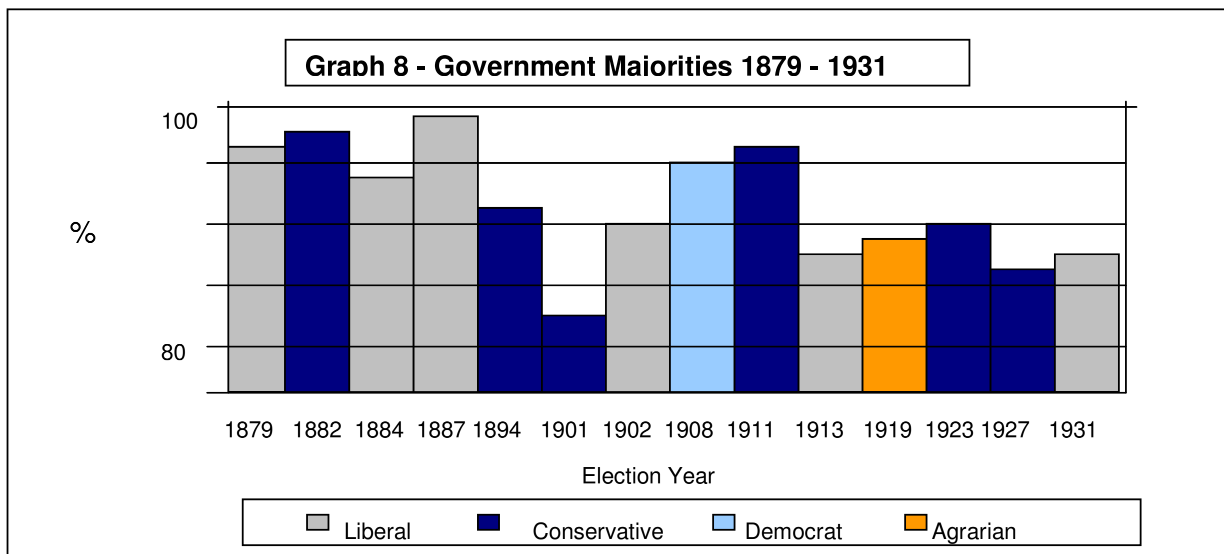
the spiritual values, traditions and culture of the population of the Pirin Mountains' area. It was allowed to register as a political party in 1999, and won two village mayorships in the local elections of 1999. However the Constitutional Court annulled its registration in 2000 and its leadership has announced that it will take its case to the European Court of Human Rights.

f) Conclusion

This brief survey of Bulgarian parties since independence serves to illustrate the dominant themes that shaped the development of political parties and their interaction. In summation these are:

1. The persistence of an authoritarian/liberal cleavage

The Bulgarian party system between independence and 1946 functioned around an authoritarian/liberal cleavage, with the liberal parties in the middle of a spectrum between left and right wing authoritarian factions. As Figure 2 illustrates, until 1921 it was not a stable system with parties subject to frequent fragmentation.



The subsequent crystallisation of parties into blocs stabilised the system somewhat but the blocs themselves were rarely stable. Until the coup of 1934 most governments were formed by conservatives or the liberal party, or offshoots of it (Graph 8).

The 1934 coup itself was seen by its instigators as a reassertion of conservative values that the parties had failed to deliver, values that were at the heart of the ‘royal dictatorship’ that succeeded it. The one government not formed from these forces, the Agrarian government of 1919 was overthrown by a conservative putsch in 1923. The two positions on either side of this cleavage could be characterised as on the conservative side as government by a self-chosen elite, the masses being deemed incapable of making an informed judgement about political affairs, and on the liberal side government by an alliance of the intelligentsia and the peasantry. On one level, the Fatherland Front/Opposition divide after 1944, despite the dominance of the communist party over the Fatherland Front, could be seen as the re-emergence of this cleavage in that the splitting of parties between the two blocs reflected conservative/liberal factions within the parties.

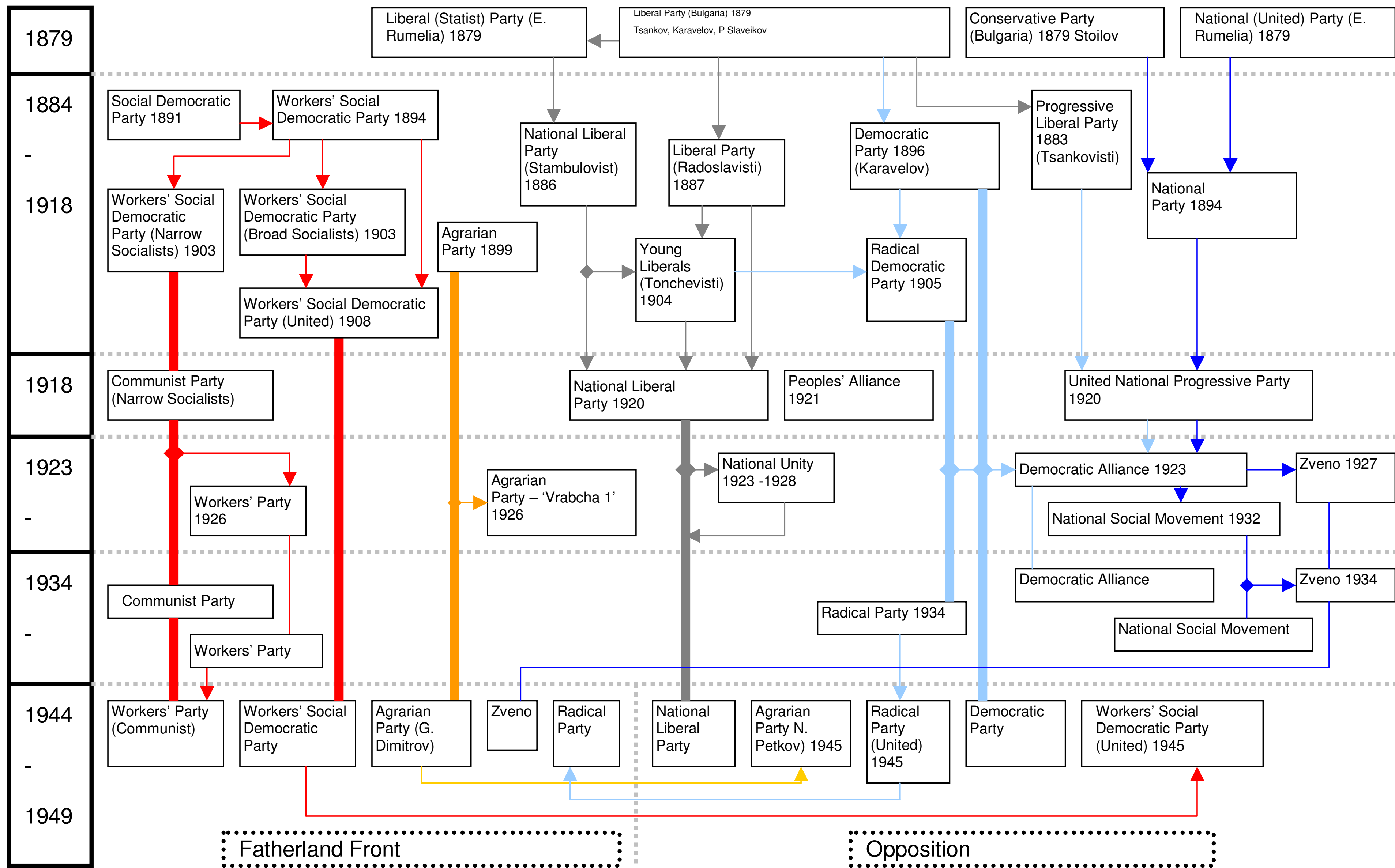


FIGURE 2 - BULGARIAN POLITICAL PARTIES – 1879-1949
1879
1884
-
1918
1918
1923
-
1934
-
1944
-
1949
Liberal (Statist) Party (E. Rumelia) 1879
Liberal Party (Bulgaria) 1879
Tsankov, Karavelov, P Slaveikov
Conservative Party (Bulgaria) 1879 Stoilov
National (United) Party (E. Rumelia) 1879
Social Democratic Party 1891
Workers' Social Democratic Party 1894
National Liberal Party (Stambulovist) 1886
Liberal Party (Radoslavisti) 1887
Democratic Party 1896 (Karavelov)
Progressive Liberal Party 1883 (Tsankovisti)
National Party 1894
Workers' Social Democratic Party (Narrow Socialists) 1903
Workers' Social Democratic Party (Broad Socialists) 1903
Agrarian Party 1899
Young Liberals (Tonchevisti) 1904
Radical Democratic Party 1905
Workers' Social Democratic Party (United) 1908
Communist Party (Narrow Socialists)
National Liberal Party 1920
Peoples' Alliance 1921
United National Progressive Party 1920
National Unity 1923 -1928
Agrarian Party – 'Vrabcha 1' 1926
Workers' Party 1926
Democratic Alliance 1923
Zveno 1927
National Social Movement 1932
Democratic Alliance
Zveno 1934
Communist Party
Radical Party 1934
National Social Movement
Workers' Party
Workers' Party (Communist)
Workers' Social Democratic Party
Agrarian Party (G. Dimitrov)
Zveno
Radical Party
National Liberal Party
Agrarian Party N. Petkov) 1945
Radical Party (United) 1945
Democratic Party
Workers' Social Democratic Party (United) 1945
Fatherland Front
Opposition
Key:
- Absorption
- Fraction
- Communist/Left
- Agrarian
- Liberal
Moderate Conservative
- Authoritarian Conservative

2. Voluntary dependence on Great Power patronage

As Drezov notes (Drezov, 2001), Bulgaria has historically been voluntarily dependent on external actors, adapting to an externally determined environment by opting for self-limiting behaviour that is calculated to extract political and economic benefits from dominant outside powers. One may contrast this with the countries of central Europe, a large part of whose rejection of communism, in one view at least, can be seen as a historical rejection of Russian domination of the region and a return to a Europe in which the countries of Central Europe presume themselves to be equal partners (Kundera, 1996, 217). For the west, and Germany in particular, as Garton Ash notes, the recreation of Mitteleuropa has been an important part of its Ostpolitik since the 1960's, a conscious attempt to reposition Germany as the land of the centre (*Land der Mitte*) (Garton Ash, 1991, 4) in a newly integrated Europe that includes at the least what have become known as the Visegrad countries. One might argue, as Ash and others do[28], that this takes little cognisance of East Central European views of European development, but however it is phrased at the heart of the debate is an acceptance on both sides that the security and economic development of the west and the Visegrad countries are inextricably tied. The position in Bulgaria, as it is in much of the Balkan states is less clear. Bulgarian foreign policy until 1944 was in good part driven by the need to restore the Bulgaria of the San Stefano Treaty. This became the grail of national fulfilment, used by a succession of politicians as a major reason for the country's political and economic inadequacies. Redemption of this position was pursued by a series of strategic alliances with one or other of

the Great Powers, Russia in the late 19th century, and Germany from 1914 until 1944. This had two consequences; firstly it led Bulgaria to adopt an attitude towards its Balkan neighbours of, as one commentator puts it, 'us against the others', disregarding the potential of regional alliances to achieve its aims in favour of Great Power patronage. (Vasilev, 1999, 14); secondly it led Bulgaria into what in Bulgarian hagiography has become known as the First National Catastrophe of the second Balkan War in 1913 and the First World War and the Second National Catastrophe of the Second World War, the direct result of which in this view was the unopposed imposition of Communism upon what Winston Churchill termed Caitiff Bulgaria. During the Communist years the power of the San Stefano syndrome weakened and after 1989 while there have been brief periods of tension between the newly-independent Republic of Macedonia and Bulgaria, Bulgaria has long since renounced any territorial ambitions beyond its current borders. Bulgaria, too, has participated in measures to enhance regional cooperation in the Balkans, particularly in the wake of the Yugoslav civil wars. There remains sensitivity, though, to geopolitical currents expressed in terms of fears about Great Power moves on the Balkan 'chessboard' (Pirinski, 1999, 53) and descriptions of Bulgaria's relationship with the EU as 'benevolent exploitation' (Gingev, 1999, 47). In foreign policy terms this has currently manifested itself in a debate about whether a new relationship with post-Soviet Russia should be fostered to counterbalance a fast-developing relationship with the West.

The reflection of this in Bulgaria's internal politics has been, as Todorov (Todorov, 1999, 6) has noted, the propensity for the assimilation of foreign political models in

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[28] See also for instance Judt, 1991

Bulgarian politics since independence and their use as legitimising devices for political parties. The adapted philosophies of the first parties, Conservative and Liberal illustrates this, as was the rise of agrarianism which owed much to Tsar Alexander II's emancipation of the Russian serfs in 1861[29]. Similarly fascism, anarchism and above all communism were borrowed, adapted to local circumstance, and legitimised by their origins.

3. *The expectation of discontinuities*.

The other side of the coin of Great Power dependence is that Great Power *realpolitik* rarely takes cognisance of the internal ramifications for their client states, other than when it impinges upon their own strategic aims. The result has been for Bulgaria a series of discontinuities caused by the vicissitudes of Great Power *realpolitik* since independence. The events surrounding the death of Stambulov, the reparations imposed by the Treaty of Neuilly-sur-Seine, the conditions of trade with Germany and the shaping of Bulgarian markets to Soviet needs, to take a few instances, have engendered a sense that Bulgaria is never quite the master of her own destiny. It would be too much of a stereotype to call it, as J. F. Brown has, a 'national inferiority complex', stating as he does that 'The sense of thwarted destiny, continual defeat and international opprobrium…produced both an inferiority complex and a victimisation psychosis' (Brown, 1992, 112). More apt is Milan Kundera's description of the condition of a small nation - 'The small nation is one whose very existence may be put into question at any moment: a small nation can disappear and it knows it' (Kundera,

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29 The serfs were emancipated each with a parcel of land, the cost of which was borne by the state, but were required to farm the land in the traditional communal way (Longworth, 1992, 102)

1996, 221) This encapsulates well the expectation that Great Power politics will always impact on the internal political process in unanticipated and disruptive ways. As Wydra has argued about Poland, that much its post-partition history is conditioned ‘by a social and political habitus of expecting discontinuities’ (Wydra, 2000, 45) so in Bulgaria there is ‘ deeply rooted in our national psychology the idea that internal Bulgarian politics are fatally predetermined and dependent on the great powers of the day’. (Zagorov, 1994, 258)[30] The habituation of this expectation limits internal political choices and imposes an almost continuous state of ‘transition’, a state of politics characterised by the instability of norms, contested legitimacy and recurrent appearances of anti-systemic movements.

4. Agrarianism and a tradition of rural cooperativeness

Bulgaria, as we have noted above, has been for much of its history since independence a primarily agrarian state, in which the majority of farms were sufficient for the subsistence of one family. In such conditions communal working was a necessity and constituted a ‘stable traditional cultural phenomenon, an integral part of the social development of the Bulgarian state over the centuries.’(Krâstanova,1986,159). Agrarianism built this into a political philosophy in which the communal traditions of the village became the model for the wider

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[30] The phrase used by Zagorov in this extract, which I have translated as the much less emotive ‘internal Bulgarian politics’, is ‘the Bulgarian national question (*Bâlgarskia natsionalen vâpros*)’. Much political analysis and discussion is devoted to identifying and elaborating the nature of the ‘Bulgarian national question’, the ‘Bulgarian national doctrine’, the ‘Bulgarian political model’ or, in the case of Zagorov’s book, the ‘Bulgarian national idea’. (See for instance the conservative magazine ‘*Nie*’ which in recent editions has published articles on ‘The right and the crisis in the Bulgarian political model’ (Vol. 10/1), ‘The sovereign dimensions of the Bulgarian national question’ (Vol. 11/1), and President Pârvanov who lists his research interests as a historian in the 1980’s as the Bulgarian national question and the early history of social democracy in Bulgaria (www.president.bg/bio_p.php)). While all four phrases have slightly different emphases, the discussions on their nature constitute a search for a paradigm of political behaviour, a robust internal political culture able to withstand the buffets of geopolitics.

development of society and the agricultural collectives established by the Agrarian government of 1920 were to remain a feature of Bulgarian agriculture throughout the inter-war years. The BCP used an appeal to tradition in the early stages of collectivisation (Iosifov, 1999,21) before resorting to other methods, but an acknowledgement, as the above quote from Krâstanova's book, (published by the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences in 1986) illustrates, of the traditional importance of the collective ethos in the village was always an undercurrent of socialist rule in Bulgaria.

On the other hand the growing number of artisans and small factories in the late 19th century and early twentieth century provided another political dynamic, that of emergent capitalism, and one of the principal tensions in Bulgarian politics until 1946 was between these two forces. The former was championed by a conservative political elite and the latter initially by representatives of the Liberal party and later by the agrarian movement. This tension would reappear in the 1990's in a slightly changed form, over the issue of UDF representation in rural areas and its approach to restitution. Creed has suggested that this tension was a result of the threat that economic transition poses to rural identities constructed within the socialist system (Creed, 1998, 239) but a longer reading of the history of agrarianism in Bulgaria would suggest that it is a tension that has been intrinsic to Bulgarian society since independence.