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BULGARIAN TRANSITION: GENERATIONAL DISCOURSE

Summary

Age is a factor in the struggle for power. It affects relationships of politicians, their alliances and oppositions as well as public perceptions. This rule especially applies to state socialism and the subsequent transition to democracy. Personal power, characteristic of Eastern Bloc countries during the time of L. Brezhnev, led to a process of geriatrization of party and state power. In the beginning of 1984 USSR was ruled by K. Chernenko (born 1911), Bulgaria – by T. Zhivkov (born 1911), Hungary – by J. Kadar (1912), DDR – by E. Honecker (1912), Czechoslovakia – by G. Husak (1913). When M. Gorbachev (born 1931) came to power and perestroika commenced, generational changes took place. Bulgarian transition, which started as an attempt for restructuring, brought forward the generation of people born in the 1930-ies. In 1990 the socialist P. Mladenov (1936) became the country's president, later replaced by Z. Zhelev (born 1935). V. Valkov (1936) was the leader of BANU. Transition quickly worn politicians out. Only a year later the ex-communist party was led by J. Videnov (1959), the anti-communist UDF – by F. Dimitrov (1955), and MRF, based mainly on ethnic voters – by A. Dogan (1954). F. Dimitrov and J. Videnov successively became prime ministers. In both cases the lack of governance expertise in the complex transitional situation caused their terms of office to be terminated prematurely. There followed generational correction in cadre selection. Transition has a specific generational logic, which is characterized by the opportunity of fast career rise, sharp change of generations and quick wear. If revolution eats its children, then the reform makes them obsolete.

Transformation of the Balkans “from periphery of the East to new periphery of the West”, as accurately defined by Prof. L. Mitrovic, has its “little secrets” in generational relations.

Key words: Bulgarian transition, generations, biological age, political biology, gerontization

Generational relations – or, putting it simply, the relations between elderly and young people, are part of the political process. Age is a factor in the struggle for power, it affects relationships of politicians, their alliances and oppositions as well as public perceptions. In the time of dynamic changes, the age aspect becomes an important prerequisite for better understanding of political processes.

This paper discusses generational relations in the process of Bulgarian transition to democracy. Certainly, comparisons with the other countries of the so-called Eastern Bloc are unavoidable.

GENERATIONS IN THE BULGARIAN COMMUNIST PARTY

During the totalitarian regime in Bulgaria (1944 – 1989) there were three distinct generations in the governing body of the Bulgarian Communist Party (BCP). According to the historian engaged in research of BCP rule, the first one is the “Stalin generation”, the second one includes the “Zhivkovists”, the peers of T. Zhivkov, and the third one is the generation of the so-called “technocrats”.¹

The Stalin generation in BCP was formed in the Bolshevik period, under the strong influence of Stalin, and most representatives of that generation spent the good part of their active lives in the Soviet Union. Characteristic features: cult of personality, “iron fist”, dogmatic thinking, promotion of Soviet interests (even at the expense of Bulgarian ones), extreme internationalism, professing of Comintern ideas.

Zhivkov generation grew up in pre-war Bulgaria, passed through partisan fights during the war, had deep connection with Bulgarian rural community, professed strong patriotism, which sometimes evolved to straight forward nationalism. Most representatives of Zhivkov generation had working class and rural origins, lacked education but were possessed of strong character and self-confidence acquired during their underground activities and had accumulated experience and developed survival skills in intra-party fights, which were particularly hard in the end of the 1940-ies and the beginning of the 1950-ies.

Todor Zhivkov, who gave a name to entire generation, began playing a leading role in BCP after Stalin’s death and the policy change in Moscow, when the new Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) leader – Nikita Khrushchev – embarked on a course for de-Stalinization and dethroning of the personality cult. As a satellite country, which fell in the Soviet sphere of influence after 1944, Bulgaria was strongly depend-

¹ Везенков, Александър. *Властови структури на българската комунистическа партия 1944-1989*. Сиела, София, 2009, с. 141; Груев, Михаил, Interview, Obshtestvo.net, 20.01.2008 <http://www.obshtestvo.net/content/view/161/3/>; Баева, Искра, *Тодор Живков*, „Кама”, София, 2006, с. 14, 27, 31, 36, 62.

ent on Kremlin policy. With Khrushchev's support, Zhivkov started a similar change in Bulgaria. In the period 1956 – 1962 he gradually pushed out the Stalinist generation (those born at the end of 19th century and the beginning of 20th century). He surrounded himself with new people, people of his own generation (born mostly in the 1910- and 1920-ies), personally loyal to him, and, with their support, strengthened his power. They grew old together in power. For 37 years Zhivkov was part of the body, which de facto ruled the country, and 33 years was its irreplaceable leader.

GENERATIONAL DYNAMICS OF TOTALITARIAN REGIME

At the end of 1960-ies and in the 1970-ies, the country government faced new realities and tasks. Zhivkov was flexible and encouraged the formation and rise of the next generation in BCP – the so-called “technocrats”.

The new generational wave was born naturally first in economy, where new type of economic managers made their way – younger, more pragmatic and better prepared for the new management tasks. The honored party cadres progressively resigned or only kept their party positions. This process often created tension between the new economy managers and old party functionaries. One reason was that economy managers were solely responsible for possible failures whilst the continuous intervention of purely party functionaries in economic activity was uncontrolled. Differences became notable in education, qualifications and views between the two generations and this forced Zhivkov to begin attracting, though furtively, new people aged 30-35 to the party and government around the old, so-called “9th of September core”.

The new generation in governance shared certain features – well educated young people, most of them Soviet university graduates (educated in the post-Stalinist period), self-confident, proficient in foreign languages.

One very important difference between the two generations is their connection with the past. Technocrats were unburdened with party past, had no conscious emotions associated with World War II, did not participate in the anti-fascist resistance, Stalinist repressions were unknown to them, they had no real notion of the time before the April party plenum (the forum, which initiated the country de-Stalinization in 1956). Unlike Zhivkov's generation, nothing of this historic tradition in BCP was part of technocrats' personal biographies though many were the offspring of older generations in the party.

The so-important topics for the older generation associated with the “heroic past” and the “fight” were far removed from technocrats' agenda, which reflected modern realities and practical issues. Unlike

Zhivkov's generation, which kept reverting to the strongly idealized past, stroked balances, reminded events, processes, for technocrats the party history was more a part of a general knowledge- good for its time – which remained solely in protocol and party tradition.

GERONTIZATION IN THE COMMUNIST PARTY

In the second half of 1980-ies gerontization of country governance clearly showed in BCP Political Bureau, in BCP Central Committee Secretariat, in the government, and in the only other party – the Bulgarian Agricultural National Union (BANU). This is outright substantiated by the average age of the cadres in those institutions.

The average age of BCP Political Bureau members elected at the XIII Party Congress in April 1986 was 61.1 years, and on the eve of 10 November 1989 it was already 65.5 years.² At the same time, for BCP Central Committee secretaries it was even higher – 66.57 years. For comparison: in the first Political Bureau to include Todor Zhivkov as member elected at the VI BCP Congress in March 1954, the average age was 49.7 years – almost 16 years less than that of the members on 10 November.³ At that time Zhivkov was established as party leader, gradually assumed control over the country and prepared one of the most important political events in totalitarian times – the April 1956 BCP Plenum, which adopted the so-called “April Line” of the party.

The situation in BANU was similar. The Permanent Presence (PP) of the party elected at its XXXIV Congress in 1981 was of average age 63.3 years. At the next, XXXV Congress in May 1986, it remained nearly the same – 62.6 years.⁴ Immediately prior to 10 November 1989, BANU management body members were of average age exactly 66 years. Data shows that in the agricultural party the average age was higher than in BCP; cadre stagnancy was also in place and even more distinct gerontization processes.

There was also a sustainable trend for age increase of governments after the beginning of the 1970-ies. The government with Stanko Todorov as prime minister, which ruled the country in the period 1971-1976, had ministers of average age 50.9 years at coming into power. The next one, again led by Todorov - – 50.1 years. In the government of PM Grisha Filipov (1981-1986), the average age was already 53.0, and of his succes-

² In the Political Bureau the oldest members included Zhivkov – 78, D. Dzhurov – 73, G. Filipov – 70, M. Balev – 69, P. Kubadinski – 73.

³ Political Bureau members elected at BCP Central Committee Plenum on 4 March 1954, Central State Archive (ЦДА), ф.1, оп. 5, а.е. 134, л. 1-12.

⁴ Names and age of members were taken from official publications, by resolutions of the 34th (1981) and 35th BANU Congresses.

sor – Georgi Atanasov – 57.4 years, which was the oldest average age of Bulgarian government in the entire history of the country.

Nevertheless, the average age of the governments after the beginning of 1970-ies was always distinctively lower than that of BCP leaders. Older party cadres kept their control of the party whilst the younger generation was assigned to operative positions for implementing party policy. Both management bodies, however, followed a sustainable trend of average age increase, stagnancy and aging of cadres. Many members of BCP Central Committee and of the Government, being elderly, were of poor health, which impeded their productivity and the making of day-to-day management decisions.⁵ Gerontization of BCP leadership is one, though not the most important, reason for de-legitimization of totalitarian regime and the emergence of social discontent (mostly among intelligentsia and young people) in the years preceding the onset of democratic changes in the country.

GERONTIZATION IN THE EASTERN BLOC

Similar gerontization process was in place in the other east European countries at that time. The issue gathered head in CPSU in particular. Leonid Brezhnev's rule was defined as „*zastoy*” (stagnancy), a term first used by Mikhail Gorbachev.⁶ There was also cadre stagnancy subjected to the principle of immovability of managers on various levels of governance. This can be seen by comparing average ages of CPSU leaders elected at various party congresses at the time of their election.⁷

CPSU Congress	Date of the event	Average age of Political Bureau members	Average age of secretaries
XXIII	8 April 1966	60	56.5
XXIV	9 April 1971	61.9	58.6
XXV	5 March 1976	67	63.5
XXVI	3 March 1981	70.7	68.7

Membership of Political Bureau and CPSU Central Committee secretariat remained more or less the same for decades. Renovations were associated with increase of numbers (for instance, the Political bureau had 10 members elected in 1966 and 16 – in 1976). The newcomers were of

⁵ A special team of nurses was attached to the Political Bureau. See Милушев, Георги. *По коридорите на властта*, ИК “INTRA book”, Sofia, 1991, p. 77.

⁶ Political Report of Mikhail Gorbachev at the XXVII Congress of CPSU, 6 March 1986.

⁷ Official CPSU publications were used. *Материалы XXIII съезда КПСС*, с. 296; *XXIV...*, p. 313, *XXV...*, p.249; *XXVI...*, p. 215; *XXVII*.

the old members' generations – born in the end of the 19th and in the first years of the 20th centuries. The only exception was Mikhail Gorbachev, who was elected at the XXVI Congress at the age of 50. At the same congress, for example, the following members were reelected: Pelshe at the age of 96, Suslov – 79, Kirilenko – 75, Tihonov – 76, Brezhnev – 74.

The successive rule of three leaders – Brezhnev, Chernenko and Andropov, was marked by „stagnancy, which impeded career development in the party. In the Government and in the Central Committee, positions of power were assumed by people aged even over 90”.⁸ This observation was made by the Bulgarian leader Todor Zhivkov, who had in-depth knowledge, in the course of decades, of the processes in CPSU.⁹

The new elected Secretary General, Mikhail Gorbachev, initiated substantial rejuvenation of party leaders. The average age of Political Bureau members elected at the XXVII Congress was reduced by 6 years, and of the Secretariat – by 8 years. With radicalization of *perestroika*, generational changes became even more prominent. Only in April 1989 110 members and candidate – members of CPSU Central Committee were sent into retirement simultaneously.¹⁰ As leader of the country dominating the Eastern Bloc, it was only a matter of time for him to transfer the criticism to the other socialist countries. Bulgaria is the emblematic example – at the time it was the country with the longest standing leader among East European states – Todor Zhivkov.¹¹ The leaders of Czechoslovakia, DDR, Hungary, Romania were aged between 70 and 80 years. The Polish State Council Chairman, Gen. Wojciech Jaruzelski, born in 1923, was the youngest.

THE GENERATION OF THE PEOPLE BORN IN THE 1930-IES ON THE ROAD TO POWER

The third generation BCP leaders, which later replaced Zhivkov and his generation, were Andrei Lukanov and Petar Mladenov.¹² The general opinion is that Lukanov was the leading figure, who organized and directed many processes in the end of 1980-ies and the beginning of 1990-ies. Both were born in 1930-ies – Mladenov in 1936, and Lukanov

⁸ Живков, Т. Цит. съч., р. 485.

⁹ This was substantiated also by: Костадин Чакъров. *Втория етаж*, К & М, Sofia 1990, р. 124; Яхиел, Нико. *Тодор Живков и личната власт*. Спомени, документи, анализи. М-8-М, Sofia, 1997, р. 270.

¹⁰ CPSU Central Committee Plenum, April 1989

¹¹ See: Горбачов, Михаил, *Преустройството и новото мислене за нашата страна и за целия свят*. Партиздат, София, 1988, с. 22.

¹² Трайков, Боян. *Превратът 10 ноември 1989*. Труд, София, 1999; Карасимеонов, Георги. *Партийната система в България*. ГорексПрес, София, 2006.

– in 1938. Still very young when they assumed extremely important and powerful political positions: Mladenov became foreign minister of Bulgaria when he was 35 (1971), and Lukanov – Vice Premier at the age of 37 (1976). In the following years, until the onset of transitions, both of them were always in the government.

This generation in BCP, somewhat nuanced, included also Alexander Lilov (1933), Ognyan Doynov (1935), Georgi Atanasov (1933), Chudomir Alexandrov (1936).¹³ In addition to age and good education they all had in common one other thing – they were personally named by Zhivkov and, thanks to him, remained on positions of power for many years.¹⁴

In 1980-ies, mostly around the 1930-ies generation leaders, groups were formed in the party, which disagreed with the actions of party governance and wanted change.¹⁵

The ambition, characteristic of political acme, preordained technocrats' wish to play a new role in governance – first of the party and thence - of the country.¹⁶ For part of this generation (Lukanov, Mladenov) the way to self-accomplishment passed through the ousting of the party leader. The “young”, however, realized that they cannot do this alone. And found allies in the face of Gorbachev and the new generation of CPSU leaders.

Soviet support was a strong argument for attracting individual representatives of Zhivkov's generation to such plan. Without the involvement of some so-called “*Chavdartsii*”, the change, as it was done, would not have been possible. Here, the names should be pointed out of the long-standing Minister for Defense, D. Dzhurov (1916), P. Kubadinski (1918), S. Todorov (1920), D. Stanishev (1924). In his memoirs for Bulgaria at that time, the German diplomat Lewalter wrote: „*Dzhurov was old and had nothing to fear*”.¹⁷ For veterans, the ousting of Zhivkov, had

¹³ Alexander Lilov was BCP Political Bureau member; .In 1976 became member of the State Council of People's Republic of Bulgaria. He was aged 42 at the time. Atanasov from 1986 until 1990 was the country prime minister. Alexandrov was first Vice Premier (1984-1986), member of BCP leadership.

¹⁴ Interview with Georgi Dzhagarov, в. Знаме, бр. 15, 26 юли 1990. „His heirs were truly his because: firstly, this was not a coup-de-etat and secondly – these people were chosen by him”; Милушев, Георги. Цит. съч., с. 155; Чакъров, К. Цит. съч., р. 150.

¹⁵ Карасимеонов, Г. Цит. съч., р. 48-49.

¹⁶ Чакъров, К. Цит. съч., р. 96-97, „*His generation of politicians was particularly dangerous – the former Komsomol cadres. The old generation of leaders had their own countenance, position, ambitions, and biography. The new generation was meticulous, adroit and ready to compromise about anything and capable of doing anything except for one thing – to think and work honestly.*”

¹⁷ Таслаков, Румяна. *Две десетилетия преход. България през погледа на германските дипломати*. Изток-Запад, Deutsche welle, София, 2009, р. 37.

idealistic motives, too. They acknowledged disintegration of state and the extent of crisis. They insisted on preservation of the socialist line, on strengthening of the system. Another strong motive was election of a younger leader, who would improve the relations with the Soviet Union – relations of the highest priority, traditional, somewhat dogmatic for that generation.

For technocrats, the driving force was “*perestroika*”, which, though not entirely clear as political vision, included unifying elements such as glasnost, new economic relations, emergence of opposition parties. Certainly, the wish for self-accomplishment was also important, characteristic of every generation – a way to show themselves, to remain in history, to realize their ideas.

THE REPLACEMENT OF TODOR ZHIVKOV IN GENERATIONAL DISCOURSE

The replacement of Todor Zhivkov became possible – not only on the grounds of accumulated problems in the country and the social and intra-party will for change – also because of the generational disagreement between himself and CPSU leadership after 1985. The election of Mikhail Gorbachev as Secretary General of the Communist Party of USSR caused the first serious generational disagreement between CPSU, BCP and the rest of East European rulers. Gorbachev was the first leader of the generation, which grew up after World War II (born 1931). Similarly to Bulgarian technocrats, for him it was part of the history. He came with the ambition to change the style of governance and the cadre vision of the party.

One seemingly unimportant factor had a negative impact on Gorbachev’s attitude towards the Bulgarian leader. Todor Zhivkov was the doyenne of East European leaders and very proud of that, pointing that fact out at every opportunity, especially during the meetings with the younger Gorbachev.¹⁸ In this role, he had a lot of information and personal impressions about the development of processes, relations and individuals throughout the Eastern Bloc. On the other hand, as the oldest one of the eight secretaries general, he also had a number of protocol functions – he was the first to extend congratulations, to deliver speeches at informal meetings, to make toasts (which, by protocol in the socialist countries, were long and full of political messages), to speak on behalf of

¹⁸ Яхиел, Н. Цит.съч., с. 246, 338; Боев, Иван. *На крачка зад държавния глава. Записки на преводача 1979-1990*, София, 2002, с. 245 [He (Zhivkov) summarized his attitude towards the Soviet leader with the words: “Lout! He wants to teach me...”]; Трайков, Б. Цит.съч., с. 34 [For Gorbachev, Zhivkov was “the old guard”, and for Zhivkov, Gorbachev was “stripling”].]

everyone else.¹⁹ All this made it possible for him to influence the tone and direction of various events at the highest level. The protocol role gave him self-confidence, which annoyed Gorbachev and aggravated the communication crisis between the two of them. Their dialogue became complicated and at the end of 1980-ies was actually discontinued.²⁰

At a meeting of Zhivkov and Grigor Stoichkov, Political Bureau candidate-member (the last one, tête à tête, immediately before resigning), Zhivkov said: „*Gorbachev does not want me, does not like me and I should not jeopardize the relations between Bulgaria and Russia*”.²¹ The Bulgarian leader underestimated the role of generational factors in cross-country relations. In a system of dependencies such as the Eastern Bloc was, biological age characteristics should not be brought forward in paternalistic context.

At the same time the dialogue between Bulgarian “technocrats” and the new Soviet leadership became intensive, proceeded to friendly level, too. These were representatives of the same generation, speaking the same language, having similar biographies. These relations, especially the ones of the Bulgarian foreign minister Petar Mladenov and his Georgian counterpart, Eduard Shevardnadze, were described by Zhivkov, again, who did not spare criticism and gave a simple but irrefutable argument: “*Andrei Karlovich, Petar Toshevich, etc. did not take Russian variants of their names in vain...*”²²

The generational factor emerges also in the analysis of one of the centers, which prepared Zhivkov’s replacement and with which technocrats kept in constant communication – the Soviet Embassy in Sofia. During the entire socialist period Bulgaria was the closest ally of USSR, Bulgarian – Soviet relations run most smoothly. There were practically no crises in these relations such as the Hungarian events of 1956, the Prague Spring of 1968, the processes in Poland in the beginning of 1980-ies, Ceaușescu’s political and emotional instability, the permanent tension in Berlin. To this end, the ambassador’s position in Sofia was not hard and, after the 1950-ies, it was assumed by diplomats of pre-retirement age, at the end of their careers.²³ In 1988, however, Victor Sharapov arrived as ambassador in Sofia. The KGB general was Gorbachev’s coeval (born

¹⁹ Боев, И. Цит.съч., р. 176.

²⁰ Живков, Т. Цит.съч., с. 583; Милушев, Г. Цит. съч., с. 10; Боев, И. Цит.съч., с. 83, 88; Яхиел, Н. Цит.съч., р. 305; Трайков, Б. Цит.съч., р. 34.

²¹ *Григор Стоичков на 80 години*, сборник. Съст. проф. Станиш Бонев, Аси Принт, Sofia, 2007, р. 332; Author’s conversation with Grigor Stoichkov in the latter’s home in Boyana, 3 August 2009. The meeting between Stoichkov and Zhivkov took place at 10 a.m. on 9.11.1989.

²² Живков, Т. Цит. съч., с. 586, 578.

²³ Трайков, Б. Цит. съч., р. 42.

1931) and political advisor. He played a key role in Zhivkov's ousting and represents additional proof of the complete generational change, which began with Gorbachev and did not include Zhivkov and his generation in its future plans.

Thanks to his long political expertise and sharp intuition, Zhivkov was aware of that and, immediately after Gorbachev's election, realized that his power was in jeopardy. During his rule he skillfully balanced the generations in party leadership. After Gorbachev came to power, however, he did exactly the opposite – promoted to BCP Political Bureau and Central Committee Secretariat mostly old party cadres. This especially applies to secretaries, all with “*underground struggle experience*” and all born before 1930.²⁴ This was one of the actual reasons for gerontization of party and state leadership in the second half of 1980-ies. The Bulgarian leader looked for security and support for himself in an insecure political context. That is why he leaned on the old cadres, whom he trusted. His plans for renovation and balance at the time were pushed backwards by his wish to retain power.

As a last attempt to preserve his rule and the status-quo in Eastern Europe, Zhivkov looked for the support from some of the old East European leaders, with whom he was close, had collaborated for many years and were of the same generation and almost of the same biological age. The Czech Gustáv Husák (1913), the Hungarian Janos Kadar (1912), and the German Erich Honecker (1912) were the people, which agreed with the Bulgarian leader to oppose jointly the younger Gorbachev. Thus, “*the doyenne of East European dinosaurs*” became the informal leader of the attempt for discrediting of the Soviet leader.²⁵ No real action was taken and one of the reasons for this, according to Zhivkov himself, was the fact that the other three were of poor health.²⁶

Thus, with the strong support of the generation, which replaced the old neo-Stalinists in CPSU, Bulgarian technocrats prepared Zhivkov's replacement and the power takeover in the party.

THE GENERATION OF THE PEOPLE BORN IN THE 1930-IES AT THE HEAD OF THE STATE

After the party plenum of 10 November 1989, where Zhivkov's resignation was voted, the “reformers” took the power in the party through the election of Petar Mladenov as the new BCP Secretary Gen-

²⁴ Везенков, А. Цит. съч., р. 147. The secretaries were: D. Stoyanov (1928) , G. Filipov (1919), Y. Yotov (1920), M. Balev (1920), V. Tsanov (1922), D. Stanishev (1924), E. Hristov (1924).

²⁵ Искра Б. Цит. съч., с.59; Милушев, Г. Цит.съч., р. 189-190.

²⁶ Живков, Т. Цит. съч., р. 341.

eral. They also gained command of the State Council (a collective body, the equivalent of today's Presidency). They differentiated themselves from the previous regime and transferred to it the responsibility for all errors.

Reforming intentions of technocrats could not be implemented by them only in a new external and domestic political reality. In the first months that followed the November plenum, the political stage was naturally invaded by BCP functionaries born in the 1930-ies. The stagnancy years de facto slowed down the normal generational development and this was a process characteristic of the entire Eastern Bloc. This generation apotheosis in Bulgaria was the XIV Extraordinary Congress of BCP held in February 1990. Congress decisions must respond to public and intra-party expectations for renovation after the stagnancy. The 55-year old Alexander Lilov came at the head of the party. New leadership was elected dominated by representatives of 1930-ies generation (nine of total 17 members).²⁷ Average age – 52.4 years (for comparison: on the eve of 10 November the average age of Political Bureau members was 65.5 years, and of the Central Committee secretaries – 66.5 years). Pronounced rejuvenation. The new leadership may be called a presidency of the political acme.

Renovation at this congress took place not only in the age aspect. The new members' profiles were in contrast to the former communist party leadership. Better educated (Alexander Lilov, Peter – Emil Mitev and Chavdar Kyuranov were professors), with pro-European orientation (Mitev was leader of the Bulgarian Road to Europe Faction, Lilov had studied in London), the majority professing new socio-democratic ideas (Philip Bokov, Georgi Pirinski, Mitev, Kyuranov), associated with reformer trends (Kyuranov was one of the founders of the united opposition – UDF), with diplomatic careers in the West (Alexander Strezov, Rumen Serbezov), almost all of them speaking Western languages. This was an entirely new generation at the head of the party, which imposed a new tone in the political language of the country and stood on clear reformers' positions.

Something substantial needs to be pointed out. The representatives of that generation (the most prominent ones were in the party leadership) shared common characteristics; they were active in the same political

²⁷ Members of BCP Supreme Council elected on 3-4 February 1990. Chairman: Lilov – 31.08.1934, Alexander Strezov – 13.03.1935, Rumen Serbezov – 4.02.1939, Vasil Stoyanov – 12.11.1938, Ivan Stanev – 28.09.1932, Peter – Emil Mitev – 21.04.1936, Stoyanka Krastanova – 11.05.1935, Nadia Asparuhova – 1.04.1942, Petya Yordanova – 12.07.1948, Philip Bokov – 3.06.1948; Georgi Pirinski – 10.09.1948, Nenko Temelkov – 5.12.1948, Yordan Radichkov – 24.10.1929, Chavdar Kyuranov – 16.05.1921, Dobri Dzhurov – 5.01.1916.

context but should not be perceived as a unity. Each of them had their own specifics, their own political road and their own unique place. And last but not least – notwithstanding the common party genesis - they had different political visions and ideas, which inevitably affected their interpersonal and professional relations.

This BCP leadership started work under double-sided pressure: on the one side – on the part of the emerging opposition (the street, regime – discontents, students, repression-sufferers, *informals*), and on the other side – on the part of retrograde circles in their own party, which did not want change and reforms of the type favored by 1930-ies generation. Such circles included participants in resistance movement, party secretaries at enterprise level, neo-Stalinists, more conservative older party members.²⁸ The old party cadres were particularly active in this process, the so-called “Stalinists”, which were kept aside from the social life in Zhivkov’s time.²⁹ They believed that Zhivkov renegeed communist ideology and betrayed the cause of Marx, Lenin and, most of all, Stalin. In his replacement they saw an opportunity for revenge and for realization of their utopian ideas – strengthening of the party role in public life (single-party rule), proletarian dictatorship (perceived literally), maximally stringent law, dispensation of justice, revival of the Stalinist model of state ruling from 1940-ies and 1950-ies in its pure form. This is clear utopia for reversing of the time. Interestingly, for a historical moment, in the first weeks after Zhivkov’s ousting, many of them turned to the emerging opposition – Union of democratic forces (UDF) regarding it as opportunity for realization of their ideas. Thus, in an absurd way, they and the political veterans of historical parties, though fleetingly, fell into the same political context.

The first party leadership after the changes did a lot of work for totalitarian state demolition in the initial stage. To their credit is the course of complete de-Stalinization, which became possible because the leaders were not associated with Stalinist dogmas. It undertook a number of radical measures and as early as 15 January 1990 the General Assembly voted for revocation of Article 1, par 2 and 3 of the Constitution of the People’s Republic of Bulgaria, which formulated the principles of

²⁸ See Карасимеонов, Г. Цит.съч., р. 49. According to Prof. Karasimeonov, a success factor for this transformation was the discipline of BCP members.

²⁹ Gen. Tsvyatko Anev (1911-2002), is a symbolic figure of that generation, commandant of Sofia Garrison, who in 1965 was involved in the conspiracy of Ivan Todorov Gorunya for Todorv Zhivkov’s ousting and re-Stalinization and Mao-ization of Bulgaria; Prof. Vasil Ivanov, who was advisor to Valko Chervenkov and for many years lecturer at the Department of Philosophy of St. Kliment Ohridski University of Sofia.

BCP guiding role.³⁰ It created conditions conducive to political pluralism, initiated the “Round Table”, managed to rename the party (by means of intra-party referendum) from communist to socialist party, tolerated emergence of internal factions, abolished the principle of “*democratic centralism*”, made law enforcement structures non-political, sent into retirement a huge number of managerial cadres in the Ministry of Interior and Ministry of Defense, disassembled party organizations at enterprises (primary party organizations – PPO), prepared elections for Grand National Assembly, thus giving the start of political system democratization, supporting, and having dialogue with, the emerging opposition.

Andrei Lukanov had close relations with UDF leader – Zhelyu Zelev, his almost coeval. Zhelev was born in 1935; his political career started as a Komsomol activist, at the age of 25 he joined the communist party and thereafter embarked on a scientific career in philosophy. Later on, because of his reformer views on Marxism – Leninism, he was expelled from BCP and exiled from Sofia. When he became UDF chairman in 1989 Zhelev had no practical ruling, administrative and international political experience. Unlike the technocrats, he was not refined or fluent in Western languages. Only in 1990 he first left the territory of Bulgaria. In Lukanov- Zhelev relationship we see again the role of the generational factor. Though it does not presume political collaboration a priori, it can facilitate it.

REVOLUTION EATS ITS CHILDREN

The leaders, who implemented the first changes, were worn out very quickly in that eventful period. Petar Mladenov, who was the initial “blade” of the reforms and Chairman (President) of the Republic of Bulgaria, had to resign under public pressure (students’ protests, strikes, huge rallies). At the age of 53 he was slandered, politically wasted, and, having fulfilled his mission, left politics for good. The same fate befell the last Bulgarian prime minister before the reforms, Georgi Atanasov. In 1992 he was indicted for misappropriation of state funds. He was sentenced to 10 years in prison but reprieved by President Zhelyu Zhelev.³¹ Andrei Lukanov was as the head of two successive governments in 1990. His role in the beginning of transition is not yet adequately evaluated. Indisputably, he led the processes associated with the formation of a democratic oppo-

³⁰ See Карасимеонов, Г. Цит. съч., с. 28-31; The Constitution was adopted on 16 May 1971 (promulgated in SG # 39) 18.05.1971. Article 1, par 2. The governing force in the society and the state shall be BCP; par 3: BCP shall direct the building of a developed socialist society in the People’s Republic of Bulgaria in close cooperation with BANU.

³¹ Decree 169 dated 1.08.1994 of President Zhelyu Zhelev.

sition, especially the establishment of UDF. The economic crisis and the strike wave, which flooded the country, forced him into resignation and his official great political career ended at the age of 52, in the prime of his life. In 1994 he was not even elected a member of the Socialist Party Supreme Council. Alexander Lilov resigned as BSP chairman to make way for the younger Jean Videnov.

Thus the major figures, which participated in Zhivkov's ousting, which mastered and led the processes in the party and in the state, in less than two years were completely pushed out of the events in the country and by new generations of politicians in their own party.

Notwithstanding different opinions of the actions of the 1930-ies generation in Bulgarian politics, it cannot be denied that this generation initiated the democratic reforms in Bulgaria in a difficult socio-economic, ethnic, intra-party, and social context. Its efforts, activities and intentions remain, to a high degree, misunderstood in the transition period, its role was demonized, their names were associated with a number of political myths, to which the fate of Andrei Lukanov was instrumental, who was shot in front of his house at the end of 1996.

Mladenov, Lukanov, Atanasov, Alexandrov, and Lilov are representatives of the new generation of politicians of the late Zhivkov's rule. After the changes, however, they became the collective image of party and state leadership from Zhivkov times. The rise to the political peak, for which they worked diligently and for a long time, actually led to their political demise. Too quickly, they turned from new to old generation. Analogies and negative images of the past were transferred onto them. Whilst, at the beginning of transition, Mladenov and Lukanov, for example, were perceived as renovators, only a few months later, the students were invoiced in their ousting as President and Prime Minister („Resignation of Mladenov” – June 1990, „Resignation of Lukanov” – November 1990).³² In only a few months the reformers in BCP were thrown out. Similar fate later befell their Russian mentors, Gorbachev and Shevardnadze, who also left the political stage prematurely, pushed out by events and by new generations of politicians.

EMERGENCE OF NEW LEADERS IN THE BEGINNING OF TRANSITION

In a short historical time period, a sharp generational change took place once again: the 1930-ies generation of politicians was pushed out

³² To the following question: „How would you explain, using the classic expression “the revolution eats its children, the fact that the change very quickly ate its children, including yourself?”, Petar Mladenov answered: “A fact is a fact”. Interview for Boyan Traykov, Цит.съч., p. 119.

by those born in the 1950-ies. Thus, the leaders of the three main parliamentary parties, Jean Videnov (BSP), Philip Dimitrov (UDF), and Ahmed Dogan (MRF) were born in 1959, 1955 and 1954, respectively. They had no real ruling and parliamentary expertise, by the dynamics of the transformational historical moment pushed the first two up to the positions of prime ministers, and the last one, for more than 20 years, has been the leader of a party, which participated in three Bulgarian governments. But the lack of expertise of both young leaders of BSP and UDF was not sufficiently compensated by political skills. Both governments failed to complete their mandates. In both cases, age correction followed.

The opportunity for fast political career of biological young leaders is not an isolated event, characteristic only of the beginning of Bulgarian transition. Similar examples from the first half of the 1990-ies can be found in the disintegrating Soviet Union, in Poland, Hungary. These include the architect of the shock therapy in Russia, Egor Gaidar, who became prime minister at the age of 36. The youngest Polish prime minister in history, Waldemar Pavlak, twice held this position in the first half of 1990-ies, when he was 33 and 34 years of age, respectively. His predecessor, Jan Bielecki, came to this position before turning 40. The leader of the Hungarian right-wing party, FIDEZ, in 1990 was the 27-years-old Victor Orban, who several years later, at the age of 35, became Prime Minister of Hungary. This generation of young leaders also includes the Polish President, Aleksander Kwaśniewski, who was born in 1950-ies.

Transitional political times have their own specific politico-biological and generational logic. It is characterized by opportunity for fast political career, swift change of entire generations and leaders in the political landscape but also by quick wear of politicians, political organizations and entire political generations.

Transformation of the Balkans “from periphery of the East to new periphery of the West”, as accurately defined by Prof. L. Mitrovic, has its “little secrets” in generational relations.³³

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БУГАРСКА ТРАНЗИЦИЈА: ГЕНЕРАЦИЈСКИ ДИСКУРС

Резиме

У борби за моќ старост представља један од фактора. Она утиче на односе меѓу политичарима, нивове савезе и опозицију као и на јавно мњење. Ово правило нарочито важи за државни социјализам и консеквентну транзицију ка демократији. Лична моќ, карактеристична за земље Источног блока током Брежњевљеве ере, довела је до процеса геријатризације партије и државне моћи. Почетком 1984. године Русијом је владао К. Черњенко (рођен 1911), Бугарском – Т. Живков (рођен 1911), Мађарском – Ј. Кадар (1912), Источном Немачком – Е. Хонекер (1912), Чехословачком – Г. Хусак (1913). Када је М. Горбачов (рођен 1931) дошао на власт и када је кренула перестројка, дошло је до генерацијских промена. Бугарска транзиција, која је започела као покушај реструктурисања, избацила је у први план генерацију људи рођених тридесетих година прошлог века. Социјалиста П. Младенов (1936) је 1990. године постао председник државе, а касније га је наследио Ж. Желев (рођен 1935). В. Валков (1936) је био вођа БЗНС-а. Политичари су се брзо трошили под транзицијом. Само годину дана касније, бившу комунистичку партију је водио Ж. Виденов (1959), антикомунистичку УДС – Ф. Димитров (1955), а ППС, чије су чланство чинили углавном етнички гласачи, А. Доган (1954). Ф. Димитров и Ж. Виденов су касније постали премијери. У оба случаја је недостатак управљачке експертизе у сложеној транзиционој ситуацији довео до превременог окончања нивових мандата. Након тога је уследила генерацијска исправка у одабиру кадрова. Транзиција има специфичну генерацијску логику, која се карактерише могућношћу брзог напредовања у каријери, оштрим променама генерација и брзим замарањем. Ако револуција једе децу, онда их реформа чини сувишним.

Трансформација Балкана „од периферије Истока до нове периферије Запада“, како је то прецизно дефинисао професор Љ. Митровић, чува своје „мале тајне“ у генерацијским односима

Кључне речи: бугарска транзиција, генерације, биолошка старост, политичка биологија, геронтизација