

Mapping the revived Tradition: Continuity Requested and Rejected In Czech and Bulgarian Post-Totalitarian Experience
 Dessislava Velitchkova Dragneva School of Slavonic and Eastern European Studies University of London

. According to Zygmunt Bauman, the post-modern way of identification is characterized by the wish to hide one's identity by using different life strategies. The major difference between the post-modern and the modern identity, in his opinion, is that the latter could be depicted as a pilgrimage movement from one point to another, with the clear notion of what is before and ahead both in temporal and spatial dimensions.

Even if it is an almost inarguable fact that the times of modernity are already part of the past, the longing for continuity is rather obvious, especially when post-communist cultures on their way to democratization are observed. Constant references to the pre-socialist democratic traditions are not only part of every politician's way of gaining trust, but are also a part of everyday conversations.¹ The fact that in the pre-socialist period, selective references to the past were also common, creates an impression of continuity, interrupted by the socialist, i.e. foreign, rule. Thus, "tradition" was commonly accompanied by the word "revival" which stayed there only to stress that there was something to be revived. Interestingly enough, the prefix "re" usually appeared next to the noun "nationalism," depicting the unarguable existence of this phenomenon as "reemergence." In this way, not only the "positive" traditions of the past were underlined, but also negatively valued ones, such as nationalism, could find their excuse in the heritage from a foreign domination, suppressing the "natural" wish for identification with a "nation" by replacing it with the vague idea of "international" society.

As shown in the title, this paper will try to "map" the expressions of the attempts to "revive" the tradition in the post-communist Czech Republic and Bulgaria, and will search for the changes recognition and depiction of their common belonging to a "nation."

Self-Stereotypes: Specificity and Differences

Keeping in mind that the creation of stereotypes, like all cosmogonic mechanisms, follows similar models in all cultures, I will try to focus on the specific Czech and Bulgarian ones, and to point out their similarities and significant differences.

As an illustration of the major self-depicting

¹ This was extremely evident in the years immediately after 1989, when the major trend was towards achieving not only the public's trust, but mainly, towards achieving identity through narratives, directed to the public. By identity here is meant not only the public's wish to identify with a larger group, but also as the method of political legitimization of different parties, which have been employing similar techniques.

differences, one could use even the two nations' typical "national characters"-Svejk and Baj Ganjo-both created at the turn of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century, the period when the national idea was already shaped (even if the Czechs still had not created their nation-state) and an image concentrating all typical characteristics of the nation was needed. And if B. Anderson's assertion of the role of the printed press is also taken into account, the comparison might become more telling about the differences between the two ways of imagining the group.² Svejk and Baj Ganjo are both literary characters-expressions of the respective group's awareness of belonging to the same group. In the Bulgarian case, there are already prescriptions for what should be changed in order for a representative from the group not to be ashamed of his Bulgarianness. Nevertheless, the two symbols function in the same way-by giving a negative example, the Bulgarians have the chance of creating the sense of belonging "against"-a line of thoughts cultivated by generation after generation of literary analysts. But even without the help of the analysts, the fact that people could make the difference between the protagonists-Baj Ganjo and the intellectuals-automatically allowed them to identify themselves with the second one, which contributed to their feeling of being "educated" and "cultured." On the other hand, the constantly cheerful and Svejk, who survives in all situations, is commonly interpreted as an expression of Czechs' viability and resistance to all changes that might happen. Thus, his open idiocy is commonly interpreted as deliberate pretending. In this way, notwithstanding the fact that these were two different characters, pointing at different characteristics of the respective group, the way their images functioned was rather similar. They contributed to the perception of the two groups as "educated" and "cultured" ones,³ which led them to the conclusion that even if there were certain negative features that the Czechs or Bulgarians as individuals might have, the group as a nation could have only positive connotations.

Similarities are found in the way that the sense of belonging to the same nation is strengthened by populist discourses describing each culture as having a special position not only geographically, but also culturally. This is expressed mainly through self-describing metaphors using the words "bridge," "cross-road," "gateway," "centre," position in the "heart of," or in the "middle of." This specificity added to the conviction of their characteristics not only as "educated" and "cultured" people, but also as people who were always ruled by intellectuals.⁴

2

³ In "The Little Czech and the Great Czech Nation," L. Holy points out that when asked about the specific characteristics of Czechs as individuals, most of the people mentioned negative characteristics (envious, greedy, lazy, etc.). At the same time, when asked about the characteristics of their nation, their answers were mainly in the positive register, ascribing all the negative characteristics to the other nations (some of the characteristics pointed out were even exactly the same); the same way of distinguishing between individuals and nation is typical for Bulgarians.

⁴ See L.Holy, *op. cit.*, for more detailed analysis of Czech self-stereotypes as "cultured"; to him also belongs the conclusion that the Czechs have the idea of people who are always ruled by intellectuals.

The image of the nation as "educated" and "cultured" in the two cases was strengthened by the constant references to the pre-socialist democratic traditions and through these traditions to the "golden age" of the respective culture. The latter was interpreted differently, depending on what was considered important to be underlined. Thus, the public pointed to charismatic figures such as St. Wenceslaus, Charles IV, Jan Hus, Palacky, T. G. Masaryk, Colonel Svec, or, in the Bulgarian case, Tzar [King] Simeon, Kl. Ohridski patriarch Evtimii, Botev, Levski, Karavelov, Stambolov. Depending on the different purposes, different periods of history were underlined, selectively

reducing the importance of the others. The predictable result of this special attention that is paid to history is, of course, the over-stress on nationality.⁵ The common pattern is the construction of the history of the respective nation from the point of view of the contemporary period.

Charismatic Figures-Continuity and Discontinuity

The beginning of the changes (roughly since 1992) was marked by opposing the cult figures of the preceding period and raising cults towards new "martyrs." Still, some of the cults continued even during communist rule, and the newly created cults, which were the same as those banned during communism, followed the same models of creation as the most prevalent ones.

For example, among the reintroduced cults are those that belong to Masaryk, which is logically followed by the reintroduction of the cults towards Palacky and Hus.⁶ By adopting Palacky's motto "Byli jsme pred

Rakouskem, budem i po nem" ["We were here before Austria, we will be here after it"], he stressed the continuity not only in Czech history as such, but he also supported the impression of communication between different generations of historians and intellectuals. The fact that many of Masaryk's works were republished after 1989 supported not only the conviction of continuity of Czech history, but also could lead to the wishful interpretation of the same motto. The motto is interpreted as a proof that not only the Czechs resisted one foreign domination, successfully creating a democratic state afterwards, but they also survived a second, in the particular period interpreted as an even more devastating one. In addition, as Rokyta points out, Masaryk incarnates the cults towards Hus, Zizka, George of Podebrad, and Comenius, in this way underlining only continuity, because these were the figures he considered worth admiring in Czech history.⁷ The idea of Czech as a democratic nation is also connected with the cult towards Dubcek. The two cults fulfilled different requirements to

⁵ Or, as L. Holy asserts, "Nationalism is a discursive agreement that history matters, without necessarily agreement on what it is and what it means." p. 13.

⁶ By "logically," here I mean that the one who introduced the cult to Hus in the nation-building period was Palacky. Masaryk was the one who created the cult to Palacky.

⁷ Quoted in Pynsent, Questions of Identity: Czech and Slovak Ideas of Nationality and Personality, pp. 193-4.

hagiographic genres, which is not so substantial, taking into consideration the similar way in which they functioned.⁸ The fact that the two names, connected with the word "liberty," formed one of the slogans during the demonstrations that were held during the velvet revolution there, with no need whatsoever to add something to it or explain this slogan, is telling of the significance of the two figures. (The simple act of pronouncing the names had the necessary influence on the people.) The way in which Dubcek's image functioned in (mass) consciousness is evident also from one of the statements made by Cestmir Cisar, which said not only that "Dubcek had a messianic charisma" but also equated this charisma to that of Hus or (!) Jesus.⁹ His martyrdom aura was strengthened by the rumors spread after his death, according to which he was victim of Slovak nationalists. The cult towards Masaryk found expression not only in the republishing of his works mentioned above, but also in the republishing or first publishing of many works dedicated to him, including "samizdat" works that were written and banned under the communist rule. Another expression of the renewed cult was reinstallation of his statue in the pantheon of the Czech culture in the National Museum in Prague. In addition, many streets in different towns and even a railway station in Prague were named after him. However, there is still no monument dedicated to him in the capital. If the Czechs have been referring to the democratic tradition of the First Republic, Bulgarians have been stressing the democratic character of their first constitution, which was created right after the "Liberation" from the Turkish yoke. Thus, cult figures from the periods before and after the liberation are recalled. The cult towards some of them was not interrupted (sometimes it was even strengthened) by the communist rule. For example, the pronouncing of the names of Botev, Levski and Karavelov had the same magic impact on Bulgarians as the names of Dubcek and Masaryk in the Czech Republic. Even if their names no longer formed a single slogan, the cults towards this triangle pertained after 1989. The cult to Levski seems to be the most significant for all Bulgarians,¹⁰ and is exploited nowadays even by creators of mass culture,¹¹ and the monument, dedicated to his memory (one

⁸ Pynsent (op.cit. pp. 190-21) points out five elements of martyrdom: voluntary sacrifice of one's life~ betrayal~ sending message to the world; mockery; murder, Masaryk does not fit this model, but he fits the requirement of supporting Czechs' idea of themselves as an educated nation.

⁹ Cited in Pynsent, p. 194.

¹⁰ As stated in a popular saying, "Bulgarians do not need any kind of religion, as long as they have Levski." Even in the 19th century, his image was almost superimposed to that of Jesus.

¹¹ Significant for this attitude is the quarrel between the staff of two youth TV shows, which emerged after the split of one students' programme. The programme itself was extremely popular and the split was extensively discussed. The two offspring programmes have new names "Kanaletol the Chanel 2000," and (sic) Hushove (the way Bulgarian revolutionaries in emigration were called in the 19th century) Straight, after their split, there was a kind of quarrel, concerning the celebration of the anniversary of Levski's death.

Of the first monuments in Sofia) became a place for solving such problems. Similarly In the case of Masaryk's memorial. there is no single monument of Botev in Sofia, even if one of the major boulevards is named after him.¹² If the above discussed figure was an object of worship even during the communist rule, without losing its importance in the years following this was not the case with the newly emerged cult towards Stephan Stambolov which found expression in the publishing of a profusion of his biographies and in the publishing of his own works. Constantly recalled are his anti-Russian ideas, concentrated in the thought that he would prefer the Turkish yoke to be back just in order to prove that the Bulgarians are capable of liberating themselves on their own. If Masaryk's figure is closely connected with those of Frantisek Palacky and Jan Hus, Stambolov's figure has this kind relationship with two other key symbols of Bulgarianness-Hristo Botev and Vasil Levski.¹³ The cult also found expression in the building of a naturalistic statue in one of the key places in Sofia. The statue represents the head of Stambolov, obviously immediately after he was killed (there is a large cut on the left side of his head), and the building of the statue was only one of the special measures taken in order for the image of the place to be reintroduced in a new light. The final result is that the garden in front of "Krystal" hotel that had been an informal meeting place for the youth (mainly hippies) and the place from where the changes in 1989 began, absolutely lost its importance as a symbolic place.¹⁴

The change of the attitude towards the two common Slavonic saints-Cyril and Methodius-also deserves attention. They were traditionally praised for their contribution to the Slavonic cultures by all Slavs-an attitude that was supported under the communist rule. However, in the last ten years, the two Slavic groups under discussion have shown significant differences in the

¹² Actually, there was a statue in the biggest park in Sofia (before 1989-Part of Liberty, after-Bouris's garden), but it was lifted by criminals and handed over to be recycled; the criminals are said to be Gypsies. On the other hand, there is a large monument in the town, which is closest to the place of his death. The same monument was a place where all married couples, straight after the wedding ceremony, as well as high school graduates straight after their promotion, felt obliged to take pictures of themselves.

¹³ The information might be new, because under the communist rule, Stambolov was a kind of taboo, precisely because of his anti-Russian attitude; but it is definitely not new in the sense that it was constructed in order to serve the topical anti-Russian dispositions; for example, in the years before 1989 it was never mentioned that the first edition of Botev's poems was under the title "Pesni Botjova i Stambolova" [Songs by Botev and Stambolov].

¹⁴ The choice of this particular place for a monument was not made at random. It is between the actual place where Stambolov was murdered and the place where the creator of the Bulgarian national character (Baj Ganjo)-Aleko Konstantinov, was killed.

culti vated attitude towards these saints. The differences are engendered by the different religious backgrounds used to stress belongingness to the nation. As Holy mentions, "Although the majority of Czechs are nominally Catholic, Czech nationalism is expressed through Protestant religious symbols."¹⁵ The interpretation of Cyril's and Methodius's connection with the Orthodox tradition, with all the resulting connotations of their belonging to the "East," resulted in the exclusion of these saints from the post-totalitarian pantheon. On the contrary, Bulgarians, who are also trying to escape qualifications, who are classifying themselves as an "Eastern culture,"¹⁶ have changed the holiday dedicated to their memory into a national holiday. Even if nowadays the speculations with the saints' "real origin" are part of the past, nevertheless, the stress on their work was not only accepted but also developed in the First Bulgarian kingdom, as a way to underline the culture and high intellectual capacity that is typical for the Bulgarian nation. The fact that the first place to welcome the two saints is Great Moravia is interpreted in the same manner by the Czechs, but it is not followed by turning the saints into objects of worship.¹⁷ Thus, though underlining the same parts from the respective nation's self-stereotype in the same way, the cult to Cyril and Methodius has not only different, but even opposite, results in the two cultures.

The Organization of the Demonstrations

The importance of certain symbolic figures and places, not discussed till now, is particularly obvious from the analysis of the places chosen for the

¹⁵ The Little Czech and the Great Czech Nation, p. 41.

¹⁶ "East" in Bulgarian interpretation collects the connotations of the Oriental cultures, understood in Bulgaria as inferior to their own, and of the Soviet rule, which is valued negatively in the whole bloc previously dorrtinated by the USSR~ however, the Orthodox religion is not valued negatively. Quite the opposite, Orthodoxy is one of the traditions, into which most revival efforts are placed.

¹⁷ Actually, they used to be such, but in the nation-building period (19th century). At that time, the fact that they were non-Catholic, i.e. that they had a different religion from the religion of the dominant group in the Habsburg empire, was useful for stressing their difference. In addition, the Moravia mission was to talk about the early interest that the Czechs showed in science. Cyril and Methodius were also praised during the Reformation, which in the Czech lands was accompanied by interest to reach the truth through the native tongue. Both in the Bg and Cz cases, opinions such as those of Emanuel Radl are left without any attention. In Valka Cechu' s Nemci [The War Between the Czechs and the Germans] (Praha:1996), p. 31, the author asserts that it was neither a question of eagerness to achieve knowledge, nor assimilation policy, but a question of the Slavic population's inability to understand liturgy in any other language, except in their own. As a reason for this, he sees only Slav's intellectual limitations, as a proof for his hypothesis-the fact that at this time the Slavic language was allowed only in order for the Script to be understood, and all the claims for an independent church were rejected. This is why, in his view, it is quite bizarre that I exactly this part of the history became the motto both for the Reformation and for Democratization. ("Democratization" is used for the First Czechoslovak RepUblc.)

beginning of the demonstrations. As Dusan Tresnik asserts, the statue of St. Wencelaus was interpreted as a mythical center by people living in Prague.¹⁸ Consequently, the three most symbolic places where the demonstrations were held were the statue of St. Wenceslaus, Hus' s monument, and Jan Palach square. The dates of the demonstrations there also had symbolic meaning referring to the traditions from the past, when the Czechs were again expressing their protests or democratic inclinations. Notwithstanding the fact

that Bulgarians have no such a self-inducing circle of events the establishment of Czechoslovakia (28 October), the death of Jan Opletal (28 October), the execution of the students who demonstrated against the Nazi occupation (17 November), the ritual suicide committed by Jan Palach (19 January),¹⁹ the organization of the demonstrations still exploited symbolic places, suggesting the idea of Czech tradition, such as the square in front of the king's castle,²⁰ the monument of patriarch Evtim, and the previously-mentioned park "Krystal." Ritualizing the demonstrations in this way might result, as Roumen Daskalov points out, in "enacting the myth periodically, thus imprinting it on the "collective consciousness" in a powerful way."²¹

The two triangles were of course connected with the claim of continuity of the respective culture. For example, the specificity of St. Wencelav's statue is not only in the fact that it is made by Myslbek, or in its position exactly in front of the national museum,²² but in the image of St. Wenceslas that Czechs have created. He is believed to be the king, ruling in perpetuity, with the idea that the kings who come after him are borrowing the position from him. He is believed to watch from above and to him belongs the right to judge the respective king's rule, as the power to protect the Czechs

¹⁸ Dusan Tresnik, "Cesi: jejich narod, stat, dejiny a pravdy v transformaci" Tezky z let 1991-1998 (pp. 157 -159) gives a definition to a symbolic centre-this, according to him, is a place that, after conquered by a foreign power, symbolizes defeat of the entire place. This is why the memory of Soviet tanks in front of the statue was more painful than the same view in any other place.

¹⁹ See also Holy, op. cit. "What the demonstrations articulated, first of all, was a specific meaning ascribed to being a Czech-a meaning resulting from two competing constructions of the relationship between individuals and the nation. In one of these constructions, most clearly formulated in the ideology of Czech nationalism, individuals exist only as parts of the nation. In the other, formulated in the ideology of Western individualism, individuals are imagined as distinct and as endowed with agency not only as members of a collectivity but as persons in their own right. The meaning of being a Czech can be seen as being negotiated in simultaneous discourses on nationalism and individualism" (Holy, p. 51).

²⁰ The building was transformed into a gallery, which is not something unusual; the reason why it might be interesting is that it is located just opposite to George Dimitrov's Mausoleum, thus giving the opportunity to juxtapose the communist rule and the past tradition even visually.

²¹ Daskalov, Building up a Nation: the Case of Bulgaria, p. 2.

²² horse market in the century.

From all kind of troubles.²³ Thus, the Czech Lands were always referred to as the lands of the crown of St. Vaclav, which was the justification for all their irredentist claims. The fact that he died for Christendom, and the way that it is believed that he died, classifies him among martyrs, through which Czechs define themselves.²⁴ Judgment of how significant is the cult to St. Wenceslas may be made not only by the way that Czechs refer to themselves, but even by the fact that there were appeals during the demonstrations such as "Choose Havel, after all, he is Vaclav."²⁵ [No change occurred to St. Vaclav's statue from the time it was created until today only its surrounding changed.]

After starting at St. Vaclav's square, the demonstrations continued at Old Town square and the square in front of the Fine Arts faculty (renamed for Jan Palach after 1989 and for a short period in 1968). Thus, the images of Vaclav, Hus, and Palach were connected symbolically, giving the impression of the continuity of history in an almost palpable way.²⁶ The cult to Hus was revived not only because of the fact that his monument was used for the demonstrations, but also because of the fact that Hus's words "Seek the truth, hear the truth, love the truth, and defend the truth until death" became part of the slogan "The truth prevails," which was included in the new republic's coat of arms. His words were also reflected in Havel's appeal for life in truth.²⁷

If Vaclav's and Hus's and Palach's images are connected by the notion of martyrdom, Hus's and Palach's have the additional similarity of not only dying for a just cause, but being burned for it. Palach's way of expressing his protest was understood as repeating Hus's voluntary acceptance of death, and the fact that he called himself "torch NI" created the expectations that there are other "torches" to follow, and in this way suggested the idea that people who are ready to die for a fair cause are not exceptions among Czechs.

During the last ten years, Hus's monument was used as a place for demonstrations many times, such as the celebration of the victory of the Czech national hockey team, when again nationalist passions prevailed. A place that is meant to suggest continuity in Czech history, however, turned into a meeting place for foreign tourists. The reason for this might be found not only in the fact that the Czechs are not rethinking their identity as)

23 24 25 26 27

²³ Dusan Trestnik, *Cesi: jejich narod, stat, dejiny a pravdy v transformaci (texty z let 1991-1998)*, pp. 157 -163.

²⁴ Pynsent, pp. 196-198; he also argues against Masaryk's choice of St. Wenceslas as the first Czech martyr, because, according to Pynsent, Wenceslas was a heroic figure. He did not die defending some truth, but was killed by his brother; and "fraternal jealousy" played a serious role in the story.

²⁵ Dusan Trestnik, p.158 [Lidove noviny 28.09.1993].

²⁶ The fact that the same places were used for the demonstrations in 1968, and that even then the police had no problem allocating the demonstrators shows, as L. Holy mentions, not only that the velvet revolution demonstrators were referring to the Prague spring tradition, but also that the demonstrators and the police were sharing the same symbolic system.

²⁷ L. Holy, p. 40.

energetically as they did during the demonstrations, but also in the simple explanation that there IS no place left for them, because of the crowds of tourists. The most probable explanation for the choice of this particular place for a meeting place IS Its pOSItIon In the center of the old part of the town.

If in Prague the sym?olic triangle of the demonstrations is formed by places ,that are connected With the memory of Czech charismatic figures, in Bulgana only one of the three places connected with the memory of concrete persons where the demonstrations were carried out has such a condensed symbolic meaning. It is the statue of patriarch Evtirnii, and the cult to his

memory was often put into use not only in order for Bulgarian traditions as a cultured nation to be stressed, but also for the early, and even ahead-of-its-time, Bulgarian development. Claims that by the time Evtimii developed his religious and intellectual current, Bulgarians were reaching the Renaissance were frequent (if not obligatory) parts of history textbooks. This creates th~ conviction that belongingness to this particular nation is followed by inclusion into a group that is ahead of time (generally), and the causes for its being underdeveloped (now and in the last six centuries) is due to outside invasions.

The significance of this particular place, leading to its transformation into one of the centers for the demonstrations, is as much due to the cult to p. Evtimii as it is due to the specific meaning implied in the area surrounding it. It is just next to the notary's office, the back wall of which was called "Lennon's wall." The wall was popular among nonconformist youth, but it received extreme popUlaritY after one of the movies that accompanied the changes. The motto, borrowed from his film (written by the main character on Lennon's wall), "We are going to dance here," was largely used in any occasion and together with the slogan "Time is ours," which led to the next slogan that is similar to a conclusion that "45 years is enough." These slogans were raised also in the next symbolic place, where not only demonstrations were carried out, but also people, looking for different ways of expressing their protests, created "The City of Truth." The choice of location for this place was prompted partly by the fact that there was enough space for people to put their tents. The space was delimited by the President's residence, the Communist party's house, the Mausoleum of G. Dimitrov, and the palace of king Boris III.²⁸ Thus, it was connected with both tradition and innovation. The first renaming of this square, which used to be called "9th September" was done exactly while the "City of Truth" was there. Its new name was square "Democracy." Soon afterwards, the need for stressing the tradition prevailed and it was renamed square "Al. Bathenberg." The reference to "truth" that was essential for the Prague demonstrations (and was at the base of all the following changes there), was not only relevant, but was even made literal by the forming of the City of Truth in Sofia. .

The references to the early Middle Ages, fOCUSIng on the state and Christian traditions, which were made through St. Vaclav in the Czech

²⁸ The palace itself was built under the Turks and was used for a resi~ence for the Turkish rulers' afterwards it became Bulgarian kings' palace; after 1945 It was turned into the National Gallery~ it is still a gallery, although its restitution is in process.

Republic, were made through references to Bulgarian myths, mainly to the first Bulgarian king (Simeon), with the constant reminder that he almost reached and conquered Constantinople. Simeon was a symbolic figure even during the communist rule; even if references to Bulgarian "Golden ages," frequently formulated in the appeal "Bulgaria at three seas" are often made, however there is no significant cult to him these days. Although at the beginning of the 1990s some analogies were made between his glorious rule and the possible rule of the heir of Bulgarian kings, who has the same name-which was followed by the emergence of numerous pro-monarchy movements-Bulgarians did not underline the tradition so consistently; nor did these movements hold such a mass support as the movements stressing the continuity between S1. Vaclav and Vaclav Havel.

Changes of the Cultural Landscape

Visible results from the "liberation" after 1989 involve more events than the fall of the Berlin wall. The fall of the wall was followed not only by destruction of the monuments of the previous rule, but also by expressions of creativity that were not popular before. One such example that made Bulgarians think of themselves as unique was the realized idea of Hristo Javachev to wrap certain buildings. But even if this particular event was left without any nationalist comments, despite the comments that Bulgarians could finally be noticed by Europe (based upon on his intention to wrap the Eiffel tower in Paris as well), the case with the next example is not exactly the same. One additional reason to close my attention to these cases is that they show some significant differences between the Bulgarian and Czech mentality. The two most significant examples, in my opinion, are the changes that happened to the monument that was dedicated to the Soviet tanks in Prague-the monument was a tank itself-and the residence house of the Bulgarian Communist party. Two years after the "velvet revolution," the monument in the Prague district Smichov suddenly became pink. If in the Czech case this style of expression of an attitude towards the past dominance of the communist (= Soviet) rule had its author (a student in sculpture-David Cerny) and the act was only some jovial teasing of the public opinion, in Bulgaria, almost at the same time (1990), public opinion was struck by setting fire to the Bulgarian Communist party's House. Since nobody took the responsibility for the "incident," it was used by the two protagonist powers to gain public trust by ascribing the fault to the oppositional party. Robert Musil points out as one of the major specificity of monuments the fact that they are usually not noticed by people living next to them. In the post-totalitarian experience, many monuments were noticed and attracted public attention after the changes began.²⁹ Thus, on many occasions, discussions in the media about the monuments' fate was followed by peoples'

²⁹ More precisely, only after they had been replaced many monuments were noticed. Only with the negation of the monument there was some meaning put into them. Hájda, Zdeněk and JIn Pokorný. *Pomníky a zapomínky*, p. 220.

realization that there was such a monument. The predictable result of such discussions was usually the destruction or removal of the respective monument, starting with those of neo-Stalinists and statues generally connected with the communist rule.³⁰ What is interesting is the fate of Stalin's statue in Prague; after it was replaced, the area that was left free was used for growing potatoes. Afterwards, "the bell of freedom" was erected, and in 1991 in the same place an enormous metronome was installed, which was later stopped, in order to symbolize the end of the communist rule. From the same place, for a while a private

radiation station was dismantling its emissions.³¹ Thus, again, both tradition and innovation were undermined, taking again a multiplicity of forms.

The exploitation of the symbolic meaning of time is one of the similarities between the Czech and Bulgarian post-communist arrangement of "our" world. It is true that it is inevitably included in any reconstruction of the world, to which the meaning of "our" is ascribed, thus it is to be found in most countries that are previously dominated by the USSR. Nevertheless, it receives one of the most succinct expressions exactly in the Czech Republic (the metronome) and in the Bulgarian slogan "Time is ours."

Following the logic of the changes, Georgi Dimitrov was buried and his Mausoleum was left empty. In the years to follow, the Mausoleum was used as a tribune for meetings, organized by the Socialist party, while the opposite building (the king's palace) was used for the same purposes by the Democratic Union. There are two events that do not follow common expectations: the first is the use of the same building for opera performances (the actors were using the same place as a stage where up until 1989 the Communist party leaders greeted the population during the obligatory manifestations on Labour's Day or the national holiday of the ninth of September; the public was in open air outside the building). This event was one of a series of events that confirmed the Bulgarians' idea of themselves as a "cultured nation"-namely, as one that can not only overcome the inheritance from the communist rule, but can even make use of it for cultural purposes. The second event-the funeral of Todor Zhivkov, the procession for which started from the Mausoleum, came to refute this conviction. This is not because of the pure fact that the procession started from there, nor that there were speeches pronounced there. The justification for my claim might be seen in the essence of these speeches, the most frustrating example of which is the appeal made by R.Vodenicharov to Bulgarians to react to (meaning: to change) the fact that they are currently ruled by Gypsies, Jews, and Turks. In this way again national identity was stressed, but in contradiction to the almost fully developed idea of "us" as a "cultured," "tolerant" nation. This same idea played a great role in the discussion about the fate of the monument of the Soviet army in Sofia. In this case the idea gained prevalence, and the monument was not removed. If in the Czech Republic most of such monuments were moved into large depositories, we are left with the

³⁰ The statues from the Stalinist period were already removed after the early sixties.

³¹ See Hojda, Zdenek and Jiri Pokorni, *op.cit*, p.221.

opportunity to claim tolerance, usually omitting the real reason for this tolerance—the lack of such depositors.

All of the remaining examples are connected with a transformation in the meaning of what was previously meant to be typically national monuments. The most striking example in Bulgaria is the monument "1300 years Bulgaria," which was built with the idea to show continuity in history. Neither when it was built (during the communist rule), nor afterwards, did it have any popularity among the population. Quite the opposite, in response to the problems of the day, some letters from the patriotic slogans there were erased, thus punting their pathetic meaning.³²

Rather different were the changes in Prague, most probably because they were prompted by the wish to attract more tourists. This is why the graves of important Czech Renaissance people have turned into tourist attractions (Vysehrad), and it is even possible to find T-shirts sporting an image of Kafka's grave. The cult to Kafka also supports the idea of Czechs as cultured, despite the fact that he wrote in German (and was actually a Jew); this is why the house where he was born was transformed into a museum. The same is the fate of the Charles bridge, which is connected not only with the memory of the "educated" ruler, but also represents a kind of pantheon of all the great figures from the old Czech history. It is also the place from which the legend of St. Jan Nepomuk's death begins. With the reintroduction of religious symbols, not only was the cult to Nepomuk renewed, but also the place at the Charles bridge from where it is believed that he was thrown in the water obtained a special magic power.³³

Without claiming to have exhausted the topic, this paper was an

attempt to show some of the similar mechanisms in the ways the Czechs and Bulgarians construct their post-totalitarian world, or, in other words, redefine their concepts of themselves. The images of the above-listed charismatic figures could and were used as "models of" (to borrow the term from Geertz) for the proper characteristics of Bulgarian and Czech(ness). The over-stress of national identity becomes very predictable, since the most clear examples of such cults are the cults to "national" heroes. In addition, in the transition period there was a strong desire for people both to identify themselves with somebody well-known for his or her contributions to world history and belonging to "our" community, and to identify themselves against somebody, preferably from the neighboring country. This is followed by Czech and Bulgarian perceptions of their own history as continuous, interrupted only

³² One of the examples is the change of the slogan "the one who falls in a fight for freedom never dies" into "cry for water" (it is impossible to be translated in the same way, but in Bulgarian it is possible only by omitting some of the letters); it was a direct response to water shortages in Sofia, that left the population there with water only once in three days.

³³ It is marked by a cross and it is believed that wishes, made while touching the cross, will become true; the point here is that the tourists are touching not only the cross (probably because of the queues in front of it) but also the dog from the statue next to it, which has nothing to do with Jan Nepomuk.

from outside, but also by brimming over with people who had great importance for world history. The fact that most of these figures in the Czech case were martyrs logically leads to the development of "masochist nationalism."³⁴ Even if Bulgarian objects of worship are not predominantly

~ martyrs, the mechanism employed for stressing the continuity is the same (to use another Pynsent's term)-"active atavism." The notion of martyrdom is still present in Bulgarian case-not only in the meaning imputed to it in an post-communist countries, stressing the sufferings under communist rule, but is also frequently fueled by the recalling of Bulgarian sufferings under the Ottoman yoke. While in the period of nation-building the "other" was much more necessary in order to imagine the group successfully, in the contemporary period, when there is no longer any need of proving common belonging to the group, but only of proving the meaningfulness of belonging to it, the focus is changed from the other to the self. Even if this stress on the importance of one's own culture is done in order to "catch up" with the constitutive other, thus leaving behind the neighboring states, nevertheless the major comparison is to the expectations that the revived tradition has imposed. Since this "reviving" of the tradition is done not only in order to raise the self-assurance of the respective group, but mainly to give the direction to be followed in the future, the collective identities in the two cultures under discussion are much closer to what Bauman calls "modern" identity.

References

Anderson, Benedict. 1991. *Imagined Communities: Reflections of the Origin and Spread Of Nationalism*. London: Verso.

Bauman, Zygmunt. 1997. "From Pilgrim to Tourist-or a Short History of Identity." In Hall, Stuart Paul du Gay. *Questions of Cultural Identity*. Sage.

Elenkov, Ivan and Roumen Daskalov, ed. 1994. "Zashto sme takiva" [Why we are such]. Sofia.

Gleason Philip "Identifying Identity: A Semantic History." In *The Journal of American History*.

Hall, Stuart. 1997. "Who Needs 'Identity'?" in Hall, Stuart Paul du Gay. *Questions of Cultural Identity*. Sage.

Hojda, Zdenek and Jiri Pokorny. [1996] 1997. *Pomniky a Zapominky*. Praha: Paseska.

Hosking, Geoffrey A. & Goerge Schopflin, ed. 1997. *Myths and Nationhood*. London: Hurst and Co.

³⁴ The term is coined by R. Pynsent. *Questions of Identity: Czech and Slovak Ideas of Nationality and Personality*.

Holy, Ladislav. 1996. *The Little Czech and the Great Czech Nation: National Identity and the Post-Communist Transformation of the Society*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Karagyozov, Panayot. 1995. *Past Slavs Today*, Sofia. Krusteva, Ana et al. 1995. *Identities*. Sofia: IMIR.

1996. *Universal and National in Bulgarian Culture*, Sofia: IMIR.

Pynsent, Robert. 1994. *Questions of Identity: Czech and Slovak Ideas of Nationality and Personality*. London: CEU Press.

Rak, Jiri and Byvali Cechove. *Ceske historicky myfy a stereotypy*. Praha: H&H.

Reznik, Milos and Ivana Slezakova, ed. 1997. *Nations-Identities. Historical Consciousness*. Universitas Karolina Pragensis. Fakultas Philosophica. Seminar Obecných dějin při Ustavu svetových dejin FFUK, Praha.

Smolicz, Jerzy J. "Core values and cultural Identity." In *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 4:75-9.

Tresnik, Dusan. 1999. *Cesi: jejich narod, stat, dejiny a pravdy v transformaci (texty z let 1991 -1998)* 1 57 -163. Praha. Materials from MIRA ATR.]

1999. *The Beginning of the Change*. Sofia.