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**Images of Europe:
A Glance from the Periphery**

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IMAGES OF EUROPE: A GLANCE FROM THE PERIPHERY

Roumen Daskalov

The purpose of this paper is to study the images of Europe in Bulgaria from the mid nineteenth century onwards and the attitudes associated with this.¹ I am well aware of the difficulties and limitations which underlie research on something as vague as "images" (or "representations").² The very notion of image is problematic.³ Then as in historical research in general, one has to rely on available written records of various sorts: the press, scholarly or popularising materials, literary criticism and essays, travellers' accounts and memoirs, and even works of fiction. This corpus of documents, extending over such a long period of time could not however be studied thoroughly, or subjected to such time consuming methods as content-analysis. While I have searched thoroughly through the texts of the period of (national) "Revival", it was not possible to do so for the periods that followed because of the practically inexhaustible body of materials. For these periods I had to select some texts, guided by my judgement of their importance. Most of these were written by representatives of the Bulgarian "intelligentsia", that is the strata of (comparatively) well-educated people, constituting themselves as the cultural and political elites. These people were often educated abroad and were usually well-travelled; also, they were strongly interested in politics.⁴ Thus it is reasonable to suppose that the representations of

¹ The author, being a Bulgarian himself, is in the rather peculiar position of being perhaps more perceptive to some of the issues raised, while for the same reason he is perhaps not able to distance himself enough from the object of the research. For anybody in this situation research means working on their own presuppositions at the same time as working against their biases.

² It goes without saying that there is no possibility of using systematic sociological questionnaires on past realities or of "representativity" in a strict sense. As a consequence it is impossible to speculate on how wide the notions were spread and shared, or about their distribution among the various social strata of the Bulgarian society.

³ As Richard Johnson notes, "image" as a metaphor implies several ideas: 1) of a reflection, mirroring a pre-given, known reality - and this association is especially unhappy in cultural studies - 2) a visual dimension and 3) as "self-image" it has the connotation of "style" and self-presentation, which links it to questions of identity and its construction. See JOHNSON, R. "Towards a Cultural Theory of the Nation", in: A. Galema, B. Henkes and H. te Vede (eds.), *Different Meanings of Dutchness 1870-1940*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1993, 161-162.

Europe would be best developed and elaborated among them. It is, in any case, primarily this (rather amorphous) group of people that left the written records which serve as a base for this research.

From this sort of research one can expect a description of at least some typical representations of Europe current in Bulgaria during the nineteenth and the twentieth century, with regard to their content on the one hand, and some of their general characteristics, pertaining to the specific "perspective" and its assumptions, on the other.⁵ I will also try to reveal the "motivation" that underlies and shapes these representations (e. g. political expectations, national ideas, psychological motives, etc.) and finally I will propose some hypotheses as to the "functions" of these notions for the society which engendered and sustained them.

Europe is mentioned quite frequently in the Bulgarian press during the period of *national Revival*.⁶ Several topics are prominent.⁷ Europe stands first of all for technology and industry. Among the modern scientific and technical discoveries, several made a great impression: electricity⁸, the telegraph⁹, cannons (made by Krupp)¹⁰ and above all the steam engine and its various applications as a locomotive, steam-propelled ship, etc.¹¹

⁴ They formed the core of the national "revival" activists and after the establishment of the independent Bulgarian state in 1878 these same literate strata undertook the political leadership.

⁵ The reverse, that is notions about Bulgaria, was studied by Tz. Todorov. He reveals the entirely contingent way in which "images" about Bulgaria were produced in France during the nineteenth century: thus Lamartine's travel through the Orient had to serve as a stimulus to his poetic imagination and to help him in developing his own personality. - See TODOROV, TZ. "La Bulgarie en France," in: Todorov, Tz. *Les Morales de l'Histoire*. Paris: Bernard Grasset, 1991, 25-40.

⁶ The Bulgarian national Revival comprises roughly the nineteenth century up to the liberation from the Ottoman domination as a result of the Russian-Turkish war of 1877-1878. There have been Bulgarian newspapers since 1844. The first newspaper - "Bŭlgarski Orel" - was edited by Ivan Bogorov in Leipzig.

⁷ STOIANOV, M. *Bŭlgarska Vŭzrozdenska Knizhnina*. Vol. 2., Sofia, 1959, 154-156, 173-175, 199-203, as well as its thematic directory: 952-954.

⁸ "Za elektrichestvoto", *Knigovishte*, 1, 5 (1875), 17.

⁹ "Za telegraficheskoto izkustvo", *Knigovishte*, 1, 5 (1875), 24-29; "Vŭzdushnii telegraf", *Zornitsa*, 2, 27 (July 7, 1877).

¹⁰ "Otkritiia i iznamervaniia", *Slaviansko Bratstvo*, 1, 5 (April 14, 1878).

¹¹ "Parnata mashina", *Zornitsa*, 1, 7, (February 13, 1876); "Zhelezni pŭt", *Liuboslovie*, 1, 1 (1844), 7; "Makhina", *Liuboslovie*, 1, 1 (1844), 7-8; "Istoriia na zheleznite pŭtishta", *Knigovishte*, 1, 1 (1874), 22-29, continued in 1, 2 (1874), 18-32; "Zheleznite pŭtishta", *Pravo*, 7, 27 (Sept. 11, 1872); "Opisanie na

One may see from the following early description how curious, and even exotic, the steam engine was to appear:¹²

One calls a steam engine this very wise invention, which moves, rotates and runs by means of steam (or smoke), which works and acts in the machine; some of you may have seen it on the steam-propelled ship A traveller who traversed these ways on such an engine attests that whoever embarks for the first time on this wonderful journey can never forget the experiences in his mind. Says this traveller: when we are sliding along the iron rails at a speed greater than that of the horse, we are overcome by wonder. Someone may argue that a speed as great as this would hinder the breathing of the traveller and that the mighty blowing of the wind would disturb him and will cause him great discomfort. It is the contrary, so regular and smooth is the running of the engine and absolutely free from the bumping which occurs on the uneven countryside paths. It is thus hardly possible for the traveller to believe that he is really moving at such a speed, and only then can he believe that, when he meets another person on another engine and another line of carriages and immediately loses sight of him, only then does he recognise for sure that he is passing by at such a great speed.¹³

Among the earlier inventions of the European civilisation special mention is made of printing, the advances in sea-faring, the implementation of machines in industry, etc.¹⁴ Here is an early and somewhat naive positive response towards the technological progress coming from Europe:

There are people, who regret the good old times... As far as I am concerned, I do not regret them... Our times are much better thanks to the railroads, the steam-propelled vessels, the electric telegraph, to all these devil's inventions. Some people think that the future times will be still better.¹⁵

zheleznite pūtishta", *Tsarigradski Vestnik*, January 24, 1848; SLAVEIKOV, P. R. "Iznamervaniia i otkritiia", *Pchelitsa*, 4 (1871), reprinted in: SLAVEIKOV, P. R. *Suchineniia v 8 toma*. Vol. 7, Sofia 1981, 240-141.

¹² It is hardly possible to render full justice to this description in translating it, as it is written in an antiquated and quite strange sounding language.

¹³ "Makhina", 7-8.

¹⁴ SLAVEIKOV, P. R. "Osnovite na dnešnata tsivilizatsia", *Makedonita*, 1, 35, (July 29, 1867), reprinted in: SLAVEIKOV, P. R. *Suchineniia v 8 toma*. Vol. 5, Sofia 1980, 398-401.

¹⁵ Makhina, 7-8.

Europe (and the New World, that is North America) is the motherland of the natural sciences and modern education, of trade and industry based on voluntary association of free individuals.¹⁶ Education is often accorded primary importance in the image of Europe and it is strongly exalted in the spirit of the Enlightenment. This is attested by phrases like: "knowledge struck like a lightning", "the light defeated darkness"¹⁷, "science comes down to the shepherd's cabin and moves at the speed of lightning"¹⁸, and the like. The advance of Europe in every field, also in freedom, is related to education and "enlightenedness", while despotism is said to flourish "when there is no awareness, lightened by the beams of education".¹⁹ Quite revealingly the words "enlightened Europe" (or "educated Europe") became an idiomatic expression in the writings of the Bulgarian revivalist activists, and of Georgi S. Rakovski in particular. Young Bulgarians are offered advice to do their studies in Europe in the following exalted language (revealing an anti-Russian bias, among other things):

Science and education are nowhere so bright as in the West, as we have known for a long time... Civilisation is nowhere but in Western Europe; there, one can find the great scholarly and literary centres which throw light on the whole world. Let us turn therefore to the light, let us walk to the redemption of civilisation, which will revive us and let us put aside the slumbering East, which will bury us in its coffin.²⁰

Europe is further characterised as the homeland of the *civil* and *political* rights and freedoms (rights of the individual and rights of the nation), of

¹⁶ "Pogled vŭrkhu istoricheskoto razvitie na chelovechestvoto", *Letostrui*, 4 (1874), 152-155; "Amerika i Evropa", *Zornitsa*, 2, 6 (February 10, 1877). Especially stressed are Britain's contributions: "Anglia i anglichanite", *Chitalishte*, 3, 5 (1873), 472-473, 476; SLAVEIKOV, P. R. "Uchenieto i industrijata", *Makedonita*, 4, 23 (February 7, 1870), reprinted in: SLAVEIKOV, P. R. *Sŭchinenia v 8 toma*. Vol. 6, 391-394.

¹⁷ SLAVEIKOV, P. R. "Kak i koga sa specheleni novite svobodi", *Makedonita*, 1, 34 (July 22, 1867), reprinted in: SLAVEIKOV, P. R. *Sŭchinenia v 8 toma*. Vol. 5, 391-394.

¹⁸ SLAVEIKOV, P. R. "Obrazovanieto", *Makedonita*, 1, 49 (November 4, 1867), reprinted in: SLAVEIKOV, P. R. *Sŭchinenia v 8 toma*. Vol. 5, 442.

¹⁹ SLAVEIKOV, P. R. "Za Prosveshthenieto", *Makedonita*, 2, 41-49 (November 4, 1868), reprinted in: SLAVEIKOV, P. R. *Sŭchinenia v 8 toma*. Vol. 6, Sofia, 1980, 142; SLAVEIKOV, P. R. "Za mnimosposobnite mŭzhe", *Makedonita*, 4, 59 (June 19, 1870), reprinted in: SLAVEIKOV, P. R. *Sŭchinenia v 8 toma*. Vol. 6, 494-498.

²⁰ "Novata Tsvivilizatsiia", *Turtstia*, 5, 2 (March 1, 1869).

representative democracy, of constitutionalism and the rule of law, of civil society and public opinion, and of local self-government.²¹ Civil and political freedoms are explicitly related to the bourgeois revolutions, the English and especially the French revolution.²² Respect for women and the advance towards gender equality are said to be an important feature of the modern European civilisation, in contrast to the contemptuous attitude towards women in the "Orient".²³

Although quite rare, one may encounter social criticism in the vision of Europe expressed in texts dating from the national Revival epoch.²⁴

Special interest is to be found in the Bulgarian revivalist press towards the "nation's character" and the mentality of various European peoples.²⁵ The "Englishman" (a typical generalisation in this sort of "people's

²¹ *ibid.*; SLAVEIKOV, P. R. "Predstavitelstvoto", *Makedonija*, 1, 40 (September 2, 1867), reprinted in: SLAVEIKOV, P. R. *Sučhineniia v 8 toma*. Vol. 5, Sofia, 1980, 414-417; "Iz angliiskiiia zhivot", *Chitalishte*, 2, 19 (1872), 874-883, continued in 2, 20 (1872), 915-923; SLAVEIKOV, P. R. "Edin Pogled", *Makedonija*, 4, 3 (January 18, 1872), reprinted in: SLAVEIKOV, P. R. *Sučhineniia v 8 toma*, Vol. 7, Sofia 1981, 175-176.

²² SLAVEIKOV, P. R. "Nakŭde navaliat narodite v Evropa?", *Makedonija*, 1, 33 (July 15, 1867), reprinted in: SLAVEIKOV, P. R. *Sučhineniia v 8 toma*. Vol. 5, 386-388; KARAVELOV, L. "Srŭbskata literatura", in: KARAVELOV, L. *Sŭbrani Sučhineniia*. Vol. 6, Sofia 1985, 59; KARAVELOV, L. "Desette muzha - tsvetŭt na frenskata natsia", *Svoboda*, 1, 42 (September 7, 1870), reprinted in: KARAVELOV, L. *Sŭbrani Sučhineniia*. Vol. 9, Sofia, 1986, 29. Karavelov expressed here his commitment to republicanism.

²³ "Anglia i anglichanite", 475-476 (The education of women in Britain is highly praised here.); SLAVEIKOV, P. R. "Osnovite na dneshnata tsivilisatsia"; SLAVEIKOV, P. R. "Zhenata (Vazhnostta i v krŭgŭt na obshtestvoto i neinoto vŭzpitanie v Bŭlgaria)", *Makedonija*, 3, 35 (July 26, 1869), reprinted in: SLAVEIKOV, P. R. *Sučhineniia v 8 toma*. Vol. 6, Sofia 1980, 267-371. Slaveikov argued here in favor of the education of women and their liberation, pointing to Europe and the U. S. A. as examples, and he mentioned the movement for extending voting rights to women.

²⁴ KARAVELOV, L. "Shto e prosveshtenie?", *Nezavisimost*, 3, 39 (June 16, 1873), reprinted in: KARAVELOV, L. *Sŭbrani Sučhineniia*. Vol. 5, Sofia 1985, 247; BOTEV, H. "Zheleznitsite sa vredni za nas", in: BOTEV, H. *Sučhineniia*. Vol. 2, 117-118. Botev, who was influenced by certain socialist ideas asserted that the European civilization and progress rest upon exploitation and a struggle between labor and capital, and warned that civilisation does not bring only good things. In the heat of argument, he even went so far as to renounce European "progress" altogether.

²⁵ "Anglia i anglichanite", 472-476; "Kratki ochertsi vŭrkhu prirodata i narodite v Evropa", *Chitalishte*, 3, 1872, 735-746, 793-816 (notes on Italy), 878-886, 996-1004 (notes on Switzerland), 1004-1009, 1102-1114 (notes on Belgium and Holland); "Harakterite na nemtsite i frantsuzite", *Pravo*, 7, 38-39 (1872). On the emergence of the concepts of "national character" and "national genius" see SMITH, A. *National Identity*. London: Penguin Books, 1991, 84-86.

psychology") is depicted for example in the following way: "self-willed, strange, intelligent, sometimes he abandons himself to very strange and indescribable revelries but sometimes he is overtaken by such a sadness and melancholy that he either sets forth on travel in whatever direction, or cuts his throat".²⁶ Such qualities and traits are ascribed to the English nation as haughtiness, cosmopolitanism and love for travel all over the world, formalism and ceremoniality, a preoccupation with dignity and appearances, as well as a strong loyalty to traditions, and a strict adherence to the laws.²⁷ The Italians, on the other hand, are described as religious, superstitious, brave, compassionate, communicative, hospitable, joyous and poetical, strongly emotional and imaginative, possessing a very keen feeling for the beautiful, and a passion for life and festivities in public; they love their homeland tenderly, and are committed to freedom and independence. As negative qualities of theirs, frivolity, easy irritability and revengefulness, as well as a certain propensity for telling lies and for perfidy are listed.²⁸ In harmony with the nationalist world view, which asserts itself in the Bulgarian revivalist texts, the world is divided into nations, each one having a special role to play, and a special mission to fulfil. Thus while Italy is conceived as a land of poetry, sculpture, painting and architecture, of art in general, Spain has contributed to the discovery and colonisation of the New World, human rights have been proclaimed most impressively in France, Britain has asserted itself as a country of industry and commerce, Germany is known for its science, and Russia has a civilising mission in Asia.²⁹

Very often and quite typically, Europe is contrasted to the East - Asia and first of all to the Ottoman empire.³⁰ Europe stands in this opposition for "development", "progress", enlightenment and freedom, while Turkey

²⁶ "Anglia i anglichanite", 475.

²⁷ *ibid*, 474-475.

²⁸ "Kratki ochertzi vŭrkhu prirodata i narodite v Evropa", 745-746, 794-800.

²⁹ *ibid*; KARAVELOV, L. "Evropeiskite natsii i Turtsia", *Libertatia*, April 6, 1871, reprinted in: KARAVELOV, L. *Sŭbrani Sŭchinenia*, Vol. 8, 459-460; SLAVEIKOV, P. R. "Narodno Prosveshtenie", *Makedonia*, 5, 51 and 52 (December 20 and 28, 1871), continued in *Makedonia*, 6, 2 and 4 (January 10 and 24, 1872), reprinted in SLAVEIKOV, P. R. *Sŭchinenia v 8 toma*, Vol. 7, Sofia 1981, 155-158.

³⁰ One should note that for the Bulgarian intelligentsia the European territories of the Ottoman empire, hence the Bulgarian territories themselves, seem to be excluded from the notion of "Europe". Europe in this geopolitical sense includes then only the Western and Central parts. On the other hand, when they speak about chasing the Ottomans away from Europe, the Bulgarian national leaders mean Europe in its geographical boundaries.

(and Asia in general) stand for backwardness (and even total inability to progress), subjugation of the peoples and despotism, superstition and religious fanaticism, the corruption of the moeurs (e. g. the polygyny of the harems and the harem education of the children), etc. The Ottomans' invasions in Europe are seen as an intrusion of an alien body into European civilisation and culture; according to the Bulgarian Revival activists the Ottoman Turks have to be expelled from Europe back into Asia - a term with a strongly negative value connotation in this usage. The opposition Europe/Asia (Occident/Orient) is stressed with greatest force by the Bulgarian poet and national revolutionary Hristo Botev. He repeats again and again in different contexts and on various occasions through the most vivid and drastic language that Ottoman Turkey is not capable of reforming itself, that it must be chased away from Europe into Asia, where it belongs. Botev calls (Ottoman) Turkey the "European China", the "plague of contemporary Europe"³¹, "the ill man", "the European Cashmere", "the evil once transported from Asia into Europe"³², "the barbarians from Asia"³³, "the European ulcer"³⁴, "the Asian dunghill in Europe"; he speaks about the "Turkish despotism in Europe"³⁵ and argues that the Turkish empire must be condemned by the civilised world and thrown "to the bottom of Asia"³⁶. A similar antithesis is made by another famous Bulgarian Revivalist - Liuben Karavelov - a man of letters and a national revolutionary.³⁷

31 BOTEV, H. "Narodŭt vchera, dnes, utre", in: Botev, H. *Sŭchineniia*. Vol. 2, Sofia 1986, 15.

32 BOTEV, H. "Iztochniiaŭ vŭpros lezhi na pleshtite na bŭlgarskiia narod", in: Botev, H. *Sŭchineniia*, Vol. 2, 53-54.

33 BOTEV, H. "Turtsia otiva kŭm propadane", in: Botev, H. *Sŭchineniia*, Vol. 2, 84.

34 BOTEV, H. "Bŭlgarskiiaŭ narod triabva samichŭk da potŭrsi svobodata si", in: Botev, H. *Sŭchineniia*, Vol. 2, 87.

35 BOTEV, H. "Vŭnshno politicheski pregled", in: Botev, H. *Sŭchineniia*. Vol. 2, 393, 417.

36 Botev, H. "Pak preobrazovaniia na dumi, pak reformi na kniga", in: Botev, H. *Sŭchineniia*. Vol. 2, 246.

37 KARAVELOV, L. "Niaколко dumi do brata R. za svoe opravdanie", in: Karavelov, L. *Sŭbrani Sŭchineniia*. Vol. 7, Sofia 1985, 61; KARAVELOV, L. "Bez oriŭzhie niama spasenie", in: Karavelov, L. *Sŭbrani Sŭchineniia*, Vol. 7, 215 (Ottoman Turkey is called here a "thorn" that must be cleared away from Europe); KARAVELOV, L. "Revoliutsia, revoliutsia, i kolkoto se mozhe po-skoro", in: Karavelov, L. *Sŭbrani Sŭchineniia*. Vol. 7, 302. (Ottoman Turkey is called here a "patchwork on the European clothes"; "Asian fanaticism" and "Asian immobility" are attributed to it); KARAVELOV, L. "Istoricheskoto pravo e i smeshno. i bezpomoshno", *Nezavisimost*, 3, 34 (May 12, 1873), reprinted in: KARAVELOV, L. *Sŭbrani Sŭchineniia*. Vol. 9, Sofia, 1986, 317; KARAVELOV, L. "Ruski vestnitsi

It is quite clear what generates the opposition between Europe and Asia (the Ottoman empire in particular), and what makes the contrast so sharp. But the same striving for a national liberation, which determines the vision of the Bulgarian nationalist activists at the time, also introduces a certain ambivalence in the attitude towards Europe. To the extent that Europe (that is the European "great powers") defended the integrity of the Ottoman empire and the status-quo, the Bulgarian national leaders often accused it of supporting serfdom and despotism on the Balkans. Karavelov's words may be cited here:

What about enlightened Europe? What about the highly praised European civilisation? What about the nineteenth century, so often cited by the "benignly minded persons"? Enlightened Europe kindly meets the Persian savage and enjoys his diamonds...³⁸

Another famous Bulgarian national leader - Georgi Sava Rakovski - also rebukes Europe for its indifference:

The enlightened world of Europe, which tries to introduce human rights into the African and other deserts, does not at the same time pay any attention to more than six million Bulgarians, who have suffered more evil from the Greek clergy, than the sufferings of the blacks in Africa.³⁹

The Bulgarian revival activists and national leaders were well aware of the political interests, entangled in the so-called "Eastern question", that is the controversy between Western Europe and Russia for domination over the Bosphorus, and the fear of the European "great powers" from a pan-Slav expansion.⁴⁰ I shall not pursue this line further but proceed to some general observations instead.

za turskata imperiia", *Nezavisimost*, 3, 39 (June 16, 1872), reprinted in: KARAVELOV, L. *Sŭbrani Sŭchineniia*. Vol. 8, 138.

³⁸ KARAVELOV, L. "V osmanskata imperiia ne sŭshstesvuva ni pravosŭdie, ni spravedlivost", *Nezavisimost*, 3, 50 (September 1, 1873), reprinted in: KARAVELOV, L. *Sŭbrani Sŭchineniia*. Vol. 8, 179-180.

³⁹ RAKOVSKI, G. "Slava bogu, che i", in: Rakovski, G. *Sŭchineniia*, Vol. 2, Sofia 1983, 121-122.

⁴⁰ KARAVELOV, L. "V osmanskata imperiia ne sŭshstestvuva ni pravosŭdie, ni spravedlivost", 182; KARAVELOV, L. "Mnozhestvo vestnitsi govoriat, che vostochniia vŭpros shite se reshi tvŭrde skoro", *Nezavisimost*, 3, 46 (August 4, 1873), reprinted in: KARAVELOV, L. *Sŭbrani Sŭchineniia*. Vol. 9, Sofia, 1986,

The "image" of Europe during the (national) Revival epoch was formed by a number of topoi. It was known in Bulgarian society (at least by its literate strata) as the birthplace of advanced technology and industry, of education and enlightenment, of industry and commerce, of material well-being and rational social organisation, of civil and political rights and freedoms.

The more or less differentiated knowledge of particular European countries coexisted with an overall (unified) image of Europe. An important question to be asked is what generated the unity of Europe for the Bulgarians in this epoch? The more obvious political reasons will be listed first. What is decisive here are the expectations and calculations of the Bulgarian revival activists for "solving the Eastern question". Those Bulgarian national activists in particular who relied on help from the "outside" conceived of the situation in the following way: "we" (the Bulgarians) have to attract the attention of "Europe" and to demonstrate to it that we are ripe for freedom, so that it may intervene in our defence. Europe is thus a sort of collective entity and it is referred to as an instance of appeal, a kind of international court of justice. The disappointment which derived from the politics of the European "great powers" and the clashes between Russia and Turkey eventually redirected the expectations and hopes for liberation towards Russia and strengthened the attraction of its image (creating the "Grandfather Ivan" mythology).

There are further Enlightenment ideas and assumptions in viewing Europe as a totality, as a distinctive and self-sufficient civilisation.⁴¹ The prestige of Europe as the engine of "development" and "progress" in the most general sense, "the" carrier and pacemaker of "civilisation" was anchored in a firm belief in Enlightenment notions such as "Reason", "progress", "education" "knowledge", etc. There is the evolutionary

354; KARAVELOV, L. "Chestnite rusi misliat ne da pokoriavat, a da osvobodiat slavianskite plemena", *Svoboda*, 3, 20 (November 11, 1872), reprinted in: KARAVELOV, L. *Sŭbrani Sŭchineniia*. Vol. 9, 272-274; KARAVELOV, L. "Prestonasledieto i turskite partii", *Nezavisimost*, 3, 24 (March 3, 1873), reprinted in: KARAVELOV, L. *Sŭbrani Sŭchineniia*. Vol. 9, 285.

⁴¹ "Osnovite na dneshnata tsivilisatsia"; "Novata tsivilizatsia", *Turtsia*, 5, 2 (March 1, 1869); "Za tsivilizatsiata", *Turtsia*, 7 (May 8, May 15, June 26 and July 17, 1871); "Pogled vŭrkhu istoricheskoto razvitie na chelovechestvoto".

vision of a single path of "progress" with all nations marching along it and finding themselves at different points, the (West) European nations at the head of this development.

It is vain to speculate on exactly how accurate any understanding of Europe was at that time, although at least the eminent Bulgarian national activists and political elites of the Revival period seem to have kept a close watch on the situation in Europe and had fairly good knowledge of it. They in fact had to do this because of their political expectations and hopes. But it is not the clarity of their vision or the correctness of their understanding of Europe that matter most of all. The way of seeing it, and the peculiarities of the emerging image, seem to be more significant. The descriptions of European civilisation and of the separate European countries sound in the Bulgarian press like news coming from far away not so much in the sense of geographical (spatial) distance, as due to differences and dissimilarities. The "reports" on Europe aim at presenting (and popularising) curious things and ways of life. This feeling of difference and strangeness was no doubt due to the rather different conditions of life in the Ottoman empire, compared to the economically advanced European countries; it was also due to the rather weak economic and cultural relations with Europe at that time, to the technical deficiencies of communications, etc. The descriptions of Europe read like attempts at bridging different civilisations (Orient and Occident) - a kind of "acculturation" by making known the achievements of the more advanced West.⁴²

By a kind of paradox the unity of (the image of) Europe seems more problematic from the inside, where national and regional differentiation and diversity prevail, than from the outside. This may be partly attributed to the perspectivist effect: observing from far away makes things look rather indistinct and blurred. It may also be due to the specific interests of the outside observer, who is inevitably projecting his expectations and wishes in producing the image. The conclusion I wish to draw from this "perspectivism" is that whoever is asking about the "meaning" of Europe or wants to reconstitute its symbolic unity should take the answers of the

⁴² The very language used in the descriptions of Europe is rather peculiar: appropriate words have to be invented and naive analogies used in the attempt to make distant things and experiences nearer to the everyday life of the reading public.

European “peripheries” seriously. An unity may be more “visible” from a distant point, than from inside.

The “influences” of Europe upon Bulgarian society have been studied at length, subsumed under the term “*Europeanisation*”. Contemporaries have seen the European influence mainly as an intrusion of new “vogues” into the domestic sphere and the traditional ways of life. As the innovations came most frequently from France - a leading civilising force in Europe of the nineteenth century - the “Europeanisation” of Bulgarian society came to be known as “*alla franga*” vogue, notwithstanding their original source, meaning “on the French” (model). Thus all sorts of borrowings and adaptations in the domestic sphere - clothes, utensils, furniture and the arrangement of the interior of the houses, hygiene, but also changes in mentality and behaviour, such as new habits, new ways of thinking, and especially some mundane manners and styles, and corresponding forms and ceremonies of social life, e. g. public lectures, receptions, parties, balls, music and dances different from the typical folk ones, theatre-going, etc., came to be known as “*alla franga*”.⁴³ The primary interest in the present context lies not so much in the influences themselves, as in the reactions provoked by them, the attitudes towards the Europeanisation.

One can detect a strong traditionalist (“conservative”) trend, which assumes the form of a “critique of the vogues”. It interprets the intrusion of the “vogues” and their “monkish” imitation as a corruption of the moeurs and a threat to the morals. Authors of this persuasion make use of a moralistic, edifying tone, as in the following passage, written by P. R. Slaveikov:

The more we advance in our so-called civilising and tinting in the same hue as Europe and the more we also learn together with the study of the foreign languages, the specific life of the older nations, the more we can see how the

⁴³ This genuine “revolution in the vogues” is attested, rather ironically, and in a manner that is difficult to translate, by contemporaries like D. VOINIKOV, “Predgovor”, in: VOINIKOV, D., *Krivorazbranata tsivilizatsia*, Bukurest, 1871, I; See also MIKHAILOVSKI, N. Article in: *Tsarigradski vestnik*, N 313, 1857. An excellent description of the various expressions of the “*alla franga*” vogue (dated since the fifties of the nineteenth century) is provided by GENCHEV, N. *Frantsia v búlgarskoto duhovno vúzrazhdane*. Sofia, 1989, 384-412; GENCHEV, N. *Búlgarskata kultura XV-XIX v.*, Sofia, 1988, 256, 271-273.

simplicity and the sobriety that characterised our private life before, are vanishing around us. The blind striving to resemble the foreigners and to become exactly as they are, has made us dislike everything ours, and contemptuous of our own ways. The more we, presumably, advance, the further we move away from the life of our fathers and forefathers, and the nearer we come to a catastrophe without being aware of this and even in the false belief that we are reaching those that we see ahead of us on the path of life... The wish and the diligence of our nation to educate itself, its love for everything new, when unaccompanied as this is by a necessary strict religious and moral instruction, are becoming primarily tools of dissolution and corruption, instead of moral improvement...⁴⁴

P. Slaveikov then ridicules the "monkish imitation" of more civilised peoples by the younger generation and notes that people of even "the lowest rank" have been misled into aping those whom they consider to stand higher and be better than themselves.

Edifying moralistic statements like the one cited above seem at first glance to reveal a merely conservative, retrograde and nostalgic attitude idealising the past. Yet they are provoked by a real social problem sudden and intense exposure to foreign influences destroys the continuity in the life of people, and may lead to desorientation. The changes in habits and customs and the undermining of the very foundations of the (traditional) way of life through the process of Europeanisation would not have been felt as so dangerous if they were not seen as a threat to the national consciousness, in precisely the period when this was being created and consolidated. This preoccupation seems to be at the root of all cultural criticism against the "Europeanisation". Little wonder that the criticism was loudest among those Bulgarian revivalist activists, who had undertaken the task of "awakening" and strengthening the national "consciousness". One should note the peculiar ambiguity and inner inconsistency in the position of many Bulgarian

⁴⁴ SLAVEIKOV, P. R. "Dneshnoto sŭstoianie", *Chitalishte*, 3, 1 (1872), 31-32 (reprinted in: SLAVEIKOV, P. R. *Sŭchineniia*. Vol. 7, Sofia 1981, 330-332. One can point to analogous warnings by D. Voinikov, who refers to some more advanced neighbouring peoples as negative examples: "the demoralisation, spread by pseudo-educated persons among the common people contaminates every noble feeling, inspired by the respectable folk tradition and wipes out every moral precept and instruction that has been inculcated either in the school or the church." - VOINIKOV, D. "Predgovor", II.

"enlighteners" who were at once admiring of European culture (they were often themselves educated in Western Europe) as well as being worried by the "contamination" of the people by it, sensing in it a threat to the "morals" and the national "consciousness". The situation was the more ambiguous due to the fact that any kind of "progress" was expected to come precisely from Europe.⁴⁵

This ambiguous attitude is further revealed in the fact that it is seldom or never the European influence itself that is criticised, but rather its superficial and "deformed" adaptation, the implementation of only the appearances, with no absorption of the contents. In the very term "alla franga" (in the French manner), one can perceive the implication that the copying of foreign vogues is awkward and superficial, a mere caricature of the imitated pattern. Thus in the theatre play "Krivorasbranata tsivilizatsia" (in translation: The Misappropriated Civilisation) Dobri Voinikov aims at satirising exactly such an overturned concept of the "Europeanness", where "the consequence is mistakenly taken to be the cause, the reflection to be the light itself, and the appearance to be the essence", "the vogue is substituted for the civilisation".⁴⁶ There are numerous other examples of satirising the misunderstanding of European civilisation by assuming manners and fashions only.⁴⁷ One may ask oneself whether the critique really targeted merely the "deformities" of the civilising influence, or whether it feared that any influence might shatter the growing national self-consciousness. Given the high and unquestionable prestige of Europe, the only way to express their concern

⁴⁵ As Raymond Crew rightly points out, it is because nationalism has contained "a promise of modernisation" that the ideology of national identity had to define its relationship to the cosmopolitan claims of the Enlightenment, liberalism, etc. The relationship of national identity to the larger unity of European culture could thus become a vital practical as well as intellectual concern in Central (and Eastern) Europe. See CREW, R. "The Construction of National Identity", in: Boerner, P. (ed.) *Concepts of National Identity*. Baden-Baden: Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, 1986, 37-38.

⁴⁶ VOINIKOV, D. "Predgovor", I-II. The play itself though is somewhat shallow, ridiculing things like the wearing of fashionable clothes, paying mundane compliments to women, the use of French words and phrases in the conversations, dancing modern dances, etc. as a deformed understanding of the European civilisation.

⁴⁷ KARAVELOV, L. "Otvat pateta, a se vrūshat gūski", *Nezavisimost*, 4,13 (January 12, 1874), reprinted in: KARAVELOV, L. *Sūbrani Sūchinenia*. Vol. 5, Sofia, 1985. Slaveikov's poem "Konteto" and his comedy "Malakov" as well as R. Zhinzifov's poem "Na Inozemetsa" were written with the same satirical intention.

with the European influence was to lament its deficient implementation. Again, we find an inner split and uneasiness in attitudes, arising from the fact that "Europeanness" is desirable and feared all at once, desirable for some reasons, while feared for others.

Not only the "aping" of the foreign at the expense of the native but even the striving towards some sort of universal consciousness ("cosmopolitanism") is sometimes felt to be incompatible with the national feeling and identity. A somewhat casuistic compromise was attempted between the "values" of the national and the universal, and also between the national goals and the liberal democratic ones, by affirming however the priority of the national. Here is a very characteristic statement of this kind:

The so-called cosmopolitans, that is those who are aspiring to an equal civil rule for all the world, have lately proclaimed themselves against the love of the fatherland. Every good man cannot but wish for the prosperity of an equal civil rule, but isn't it too early yet for mankind to attempt this leap and why do we have to wait for the outcome of the efforts undertaken to that purpose. Besides we think that in order to go that far, one has to pass first through love for the fatherland and for one's own people, not the other way round; and for sure, then how may he experience love for the whole world and for all men, who has not learned to love his fatherland and his own people in the first place?⁴⁸

Characteristic of this statement is not only the affirmation of the priority of the national over the civil and universal, but the fact that these are experienced as opposing and scarcely compatible values. The statement is revealing therefore of a specific situation and climate of opinion, where national liberation is a priority task.

The gap between the "consumerist" aspirations and the economic capacities of the Bulgarian society has also been noted a long time ago. There is an awareness that in the lack of a stable economic base for the satisfaction of consumerist desires, their pursuit may have ruinous effects:

Because the Europeans have this all and live that way, so we should, in order to be civilised people like them, have the same and live in the same manner. But

⁴⁸ "Dlúzhnostta i grazhdaninúť", *Chitalishte*, 3, 3, (1872), 335-336.

the Europeans know how to build factories and produce various nice, shiny, beautiful things. What remains for us is just to buy them at a very high price and to wear them. And then they also know how to build steam-propelled ships and railroads; for us, on the contrary, it only remains to pay to them.⁴⁹

Bulgaria was *liberated* from the Ottoman domination as a result of the Russian-Turkish war in 1877-1878. This fact increased the prestige of Russia among broad strata of the Bulgarian society in the years immediately following the liberation. The building of the independent Bulgarian state and the whole subsequent history of Bulgaria are marked by the competition between several preferences and orientations in the foreign policy. The pro-Russian orientation was soon counteracted by a pro-European one. Decisive for the prevalence of one orientation or another at a most general level were such factors and considerations as the move towards industrialism and modernisation: the European states had much more to offer in this respect than Russia, the strategies for the solution of the "national question" (especially concerning Macedonia), etc. The competition between the European "great powers" for influence over the Balkans had as its counterpart the split in the preferences of the Bulgarian political elites as to which was the most suitable ally.⁵⁰ In order to gain the support of the Bulgarian political elites in their favour, the various "great powers" pursued such strategies as offering them educational opportunities abroad, the "propaganda" of their respective "cultures" in Bulgaria; they also exerted an economic influence or direct political pressure at certain moments (e. g. on the eve of the World Wars). The pro-European orientation of Bulgaria reached its first peak during the rule of Stambolov (prime minister from 1887 to 1893) who catalysed the modernisation processes in the country. Within the European

49 VOINIKOV, D. "Predgovor", I; Also SLAVEIKOV, P. R. "De sme i kak sme?", *Gaida*, 3, 7 (April 1, 1866), reprinted in: Slaveikov, P. R. *Sŭchinenia v 8 toma*. Vol. 5, Sofia, 1980, 229.

50 In a small and comparatively weak state such as Bulgaria, the orientation towards one "great power" or another has always been of primary importance, an issue that has strongly divided the political elites and sometimes served as a decisive demarcation line between the parties. Almost every "great power" had among the Bulgarian political parties and politicians its advocates ("phili", e. g. francophili, germanophili, anglophili, russophili) and its opponents ("phobi"). It is interesting to what extent the political life in a small state can constitute itself in orientation towards outside factors. The room for independent national policies was rather restricted under these conditions, and at times it consisted in simply choosing the "right" ally. All this is quite typical for an international situation of competition between nationalistic "great powers", each aspiring to build its own colonies and "zones of interest".

orientation itself, there were the preferences for one "great power" or another, with the tendency of Germany to prevail over the others.

Quite understandably after what has been said above, the more or less unified image of Europe receded and was eclipsed by notions about particular European countries, the "great powers" in particular.⁵¹ One can make more or less justified assertions about the presence of particular countries in popular representations, and about the changes in the course of time. One may seek for indirect confirmation in the number of Bulgarians who studied or specialised abroad, the activities of the foreign cultural missions, centres and foundations, or in the spread of the respective languages in Bulgarian society. It should be noted that in the absence of institutions of higher learning in Bulgaria until the end of the nineteenth century, the first generations of the "intelligentsia" (which formed the political and cultural elites) studied abroad, mainly in Germany, France and Russia. It seems quite natural that on their return they should preserve contacts abroad and sympathies with the countries where they were educated, the more so as this was an important source of prestige for them. In an interesting essay the literary historian and critic Boian Penev compares the intellectual styles and manners developed by Bulgarian graduates of scholarly institutions in major European countries, recognising thus the strength of the formative influence of the various European cultural and educational traditions.⁵²

In considering the "images" of the various European states in Bulgaria, one should not underestimate the importance of the existing economic or political ties. Thus the growing economic and political dependence on Germany in the interwar period accounts for its cultural presence in Bulgaria as well.⁵³ However such a correlation should be accepted with

⁵¹ One may ask in this context the question about what happened to the image of the "East" from the Revivalist contrast. The Turkish Orient was pushed to Asia Minor, especially after the Balkan wars of 1912-1913, although not entirely chased away from Europe. After the establishment of the Bulgarian state the attitude towards the "Orient" lost some of its negative loading, and it became even possible for the "Oriental" to return to Bulgaria as an intellectual vogue - fairy tales from the East, philosophy from the East, Eastern art, etc.

⁵² PENEV, B. "Nashata inteligentsia", *Zlatorog*, 5, 1 (1924), 6-9; PENEV, B. "Uvod v bulgarskata literatura sled osvobozhdenieto", *Godishnik na Universitetata Sv. Kliment Ohridski - Sofia (Istoriko-Filologicheski Fakultet)*. Vol. 38, 42-43.

⁵³ N. Genchev dates the increase of the German influence in Bulgaria from the end of the nineteenth century onwards - see GENCHEV, N. *Bŭlgarskata kultura XV-XIX v.*, 272.

qualifications. The notions and stereotypes, once created in the cultural "consciousness" and introduced in the public discourses, tend to develop their own "logic" and to possess a certain inertia. And the existence of a certain "image" of a state is not necessarily connected with strong economic or cultural relations - it may be due to its high international prestige, as in the case with the U. S. A. It is not only the "presence" of one country or another in the Bulgarian cultural space that matters, but what exactly it was known for. Thus the prestige of Germany in Bulgaria was based primarily on its technical and organisational achievements, while France was famous for its artistic and cultural life. As for the time dimension, one may say in general (although this needs specific research) that the French influence over the Bulgarian cultural elites preceded all other influences and had its roots in the Revival period.⁵⁴ Since the turn of the century it has been gradually replaced by a German predominance.

The various European nations came to be known in Bulgaria for peculiar traits and mentalities, for certain characteristics of their social life, etc. While most of these seem to represent stereotyped, mutual representations of the European nations in currency between them, they were transported to Bulgaria and enriched by Bulgarian experiences.⁵⁵ Boian Penev is again the author of an interesting attempt - although quite dubious as the undertaking itself - to characterise the Russian, German, French and English mentality and culture. I will render at some length this description which also shows some evidence of a pro-French bias. The Germans are characterised as having a strong will, a singular capacity for organisation and order; they are endowed with purposefulness and discipline of the mind, endurance and patience, stubbornness in work. This will, as is pointed out, is sometimes transformed into a blind mechanical force. The German nation does not possess a live temperament or sense of humour; it has a sluggish psyche, slow reactions and a clumsy way of talking. "The German" mechanises and programs his life to the smallest details, has a time schedule for everything, and accomplishes his tasks in a conscientious manner. He is rather

⁵⁴ GENCHEV, N. *Frantsia v bŭlgarskoto dukhovno vŭzrazhdane*.

⁵⁵ The mainly negative representations that every nation is forming of others, especially of its neighbours, are termed by Orest Ranum "counter identities". See RANUM, O. "Counter-Identities of Western European Nations in the Early-Modern Period: Definitions and Points of Departure", in: Boerner, P. (ed.) *Concepts of National Identity*, 63-78.

uncommunicative, asocial and apolitical, and feels most comfortable in the sphere of his personal and domestic life. As a scholar, "the German" demonstrates thoroughness, he is didactic and systematic and writes in a dry and arid manner, using a lot of citations and references. This limits the imagination and poetic feeling, restrains liberty and the immediacy of the language, and hinders the author's originality. The German "spirit" is particularly productive in the realm of dialectics and speculative philosophy, with their characteristic abstractness and conceptual "purity". But it is the inclination towards mysticism and metaphysics that lies at the base of deep German music.

"The Frenchman", in Boian Penev's description, possesses a strongly developed feeling of social solidarity and is very communicative. The French "spirit" is cosmopolitan and universal, there is no feeling of superiority towards lower social strata or other nations. The French temperament is live, receptive, open to the world and easily excitable. Frenchmen are especially well-known for their sense of humour, for irony and self-irony, for their perceptiveness and refined tastes, the noblesse of their moeurs, their elegance and distinction, and also for their creative imagination and resourcefulness, talents and originality. Without being as methodical as the German, "the Frenchman" is capable of making lucky guesses and intuitions in science and philosophy. There is furthermore, the well-known French rationalism and practical sense, which may result in a self-conceited sobriety, in a cult of the ratio and assertion of the priority of the useful and reasonable over the transcendent. French intellectualism values simple and clear way of reasoning most highly and prefers clarity to depth; it aims to reduce the most complicated issues to simple explanations, removes the superfluous and is able to express itself with economy, by hinting, especially in poetry. All this is possible due to the qualities of the French language, which is a paragon of clarity and concreteness and is contemporaneously subtle and strong, concise and colourful. The Frenchman does not experience a need for metaphysics and for mysticism, and he did not create music comparable in depth with that of the Germans. The ratio is more important to him than morality. But French witticism may change into frivolity and the inconstancy of the Frenchmen, their pursuit of diversions, their self-conceit and proneness to adventure are somewhat excessive.

Characteristic of England is the spirit of freedom, practical activism and entrepreneurship. "The Englishman" is frank and independent; he consults only his own commitments and morals; he is pragmatic and adapts easily to the surrounding world. As a scholar he refuses dogmatism and places empirical knowledge above everything else; he does not like excessive theorising, abstract ideas and preconceived schemes, and has no taste for metaphysics; as a philosopher he is pragmatic, relativist and pluralist.⁵⁶

Quite understandably, it was mainly the intellectuals that reflected on the mentalities of the different European nations (dubious as these generalisations were) and on the peculiarities of the respective cultures. While it can in no way be verified whether they took over and elaborated widely shared popular representations about various European nations and cultures, it can be assumed that at least some stereotyped images were current and widely shared. There were thus the popular notions about German punctuality, discipline and organisational abilities, French humour and imagination, English pragmatism and entrepreneurial spirit, etc.

One may perhaps differentiate further between "perceptions" of Europe among different social strata in the Bulgarian society. In a very hypothetical manner one may assume that before the T.V., Europe was much more accessible to members of the richer classes who could afford to study or travel there as tourists, while the experience of the wide peasant strata hardly went beyond the admiration for some tool or machinery, imported from Europe (Germany, Austro-Hungary or England, etc.) that they happened to see. Any knowledge of Europe depended of course on the intensity of the contact and on the particular interest or perspective of the person experiencing it. Tourist impressions or the interest in buying fashionable clothes or furniture in some of the larger European cities is one thing, obtaining one's education in Europe and maintaining personal contacts afterwards is something else. The European states appear in a very different way when looked through the lenses of economic, political or military collaboration or competition.

⁵⁶ PENEV, B. "Nashata inteligentsia", 11-19; For another attempt to pinpoint some national particularities of scientific thinking, see also: ILIEV, A. "Narodnost i kultura", *Bŭlgarska misŭl*, 10, 7-8 (1935), 449-450.

The enrichment of the notions about particular European countries in the period between 1878-1944 did not exclude the coexistence of notions and "images" of Europe as a whole. In this "totalising" tendency Europe stood for modernity in its various dimensions. There again appeared the topic of the technological and industrial progress of Europe, which was treated with admiration on the one hand, and fears about the fate of the traditional Bulgarian crafts and about the possibilities for development of national industries on the other. Europe now appeared in the role of a very dangerous competitor, which was to be kept away by various protectionist measures. The various European inventions and achievements were now followed very closely. There was a strong interest in new technologies, in law and social institutions, in political and philosophical ideas, in art trends, etc. The functioning of various institutions and ideas in the European countries was described and compared, in order to choose and borrow what seemed to be most suitable for the Bulgarian conditions and traditions.⁵⁷

The already-mentioned "*Europeanisation*" of the Bulgarian society received a further impetus during the period 1878-1944. As Boris Trichkov testified about the first years after the restoration of the independent state:

...it (that is, the European influence) reached the strength of a hurricane, which shattered all the foundations of our peculiar way of life. This was the epoch when the foreign was a master and a cult for us, with zero activity on our part. ... This was the epoch of the caricature in our country, an epoch which made Aleko give up his pleasant "fare niente", in order to create the great caricature of the Bulgarian in an European light; an epoch which later provided so rich a food for the talent of Alexandŕ Bozhinov; an epoch which continuously aroused the indignation and the satire of Stoian Michailovski...⁵⁸

⁵⁷ The experience of Europe with various issues such as the organisation of elections, local administration, social laws (insurance, working hours, women's and children's labour, etc.), pensions, the functioning of the courts and justice, the system of taxes and tax-collection, medical assistance and "social hygiene", etc., were treated extensively in numerous articles in the influential Bulgarian journals: "*Archiv za stopanska i sotsialna politika*", "*Spisanie na bŭlgarskoto ikonomicheskoto druzhestvo*", "*Demokraticheski pregled*", "*Iuridicheski Pregled*", "*Spisanie na iuridicheskoto druzhestvo v Sofia*", etc.

⁵⁸ TRICHKOV, B. "Pred istinski natsionalen izgreŕ", *Zlatorog*, 2, 1 and 2 (1921), 53-54.

The complete surrender to the European influences constituted, as pointed out by N. Agŭnski, the characteristic trait of the second active generation after the liberation, that is of people born a little before or a little after the liberation.⁵⁹ "Europeanisation" assumed various forms. Fashion, perfumes, furniture (and later automobiles) were all imported from Europe. The houses were furnished in a European manner, with cupboards, sofas and cutlery replacing the Oriental style of home-made carpets, pillows, low tables, etc., and often bought with ruinous loans. Indigenous products were at the same time culturally debased as "paysan", "unrefined" and "vulgar".⁶⁰ What was coming from Europe became on the contrary a sign of distinguished taste and high culture.⁶¹

Besides borrowing objects, there was a "Europeanisation" of the style of life. The rich and the educated, the newly formed Bulgarian bourgeois classes, were learning mundane manners from Europe.⁶² Words and expressions from some European languages, especially from French, were introduced in the social discourse of the educated and the higher classes,

59 AGŪNSKI, N. "Trite pokoleniia", *Arhiv za stopanska i sotsialna politika*, 12, 4 (1937) 236-244. Here are some typical citations from it: "Suddenly confronted with the glamour of Europe, after the drawing of the black curtain of serfdom, the sons of shepherds and craftsmen could not but be charmed and dazzled." (p. 241). "The West was the idol of the leading part of the second active Bulgarian generation. It was a paragon for blind imitation and endless copying to an extent of rejecting everything Bulgarian and feeling ashamed of it." (p. 242).

60 PETKANOV, K. "Bŭlgarskata inteligentsia kato rozhba i otritsanie na bŭlgarskoto selo", *Filosofski pregled*, 4, 2 (1932), 132. The situation was just the same even before the liberation, as attested by P. Slaveikov's words: "We seem to be adorers of everything foreign and consider what has been produced at home to be low and unsuitable. Our customs and habits are being discarded and replaced by things foreign. Our clothes and costumes seem to us ugly and we are replacing them by European objects. Our furniture seems unsuitable and we are ordering everything we need from Europe - SLAVEIKOV, P. R. "Bŭlgarska narodna izlozha", *Chitalishte*, 4, 10 (1874), reprinted in: SLAVEIKOV, P. R. *Sŭchineniia v 8 toma*. Vol. 7. Sofia. 1981. 362.

61 KARIMA, A. *Spomeni ot stara Sofia*. Sofia, 1943, 17 and 27. There are numerous scattered testimonies, often ironically treated, of this perception holding in high esteem what is coming from Europe, as in MARS, E. *Greshnitsa*., 24 and 25.

62 The famous Bulgarian satirist Aleko Konstantinov gives an ironic account of a provincial ball: KONSTANTINOV, A. "Na edin provintsialen bal (pŭtni belezhki)", in: Konstantinov, A. *Sŭbrani sŭchineniia*. Vol. 4, Sofia, 1981, 194 and 196 in particular. The more or less successful imitation of mundane manners is an object of satirical remarks in numerous Bulgarian comedies, starting with the already-mentioned play "Krivorazbranata tsilivizatsia" by Voinikov. It should be noted that European manners usually appeared as rather strange due to the substantial difference between them and the traditional Bulgarian culture, which was strongly "Orientalised" during the times of the Turkish domination.

and their use began to count as a sign of distinction.⁶³ Following the growing economic and social differentiation of the Bulgarian society, the "European" culture (objects, manners, words, etc.) acquired an eminently mundane meaning, serving as a marker of social distance, a vehicle of social claims and pretences.

During this period as in the preceding one, the distorted way in which the European civilisation was understood and appropriated, was again a target of satirical depiction. Aleko Konstantinov's famous work of fiction "Bai Ganio" (especially its first part: Bai Ganio travels through Europe) presents an unsurpassed satire of a superficial (and deformed) way of perceiving Europe and of the inability to genuinely assimilate its culture. In the first part of this book the main protagonist - Ganio, a petty Bulgarian trader, is travelling through Europe. He finds himself in various situations where he acts in an inadequate (and funny) way, bypassing civilised European conventions and deceiving expectations while - it should be noted - acting on his own cultural assumptions and pursuing quite consistently his own self-interests.⁶⁴ A surprising fact that goes contrary to the no doubt satirical intentions of the author is that the character and his conduct have sometimes been reinterpreted in the popular perception as "positive" - wise and inventive, frank and outspoken, etc. This may not be the right place for presenting my own views on this literary character but one source of its never diminishing freshness in the Bulgarian perception seems to lie in the ambiguity of the attitude towards Europe itself, ranging from adoration to refusal, with the possibility for an abrupt transformation. It is because of this uncertainty towards what is taken as a highest ideal and an ultimate measure of civilisation, that Bai Ganio - the transgressor of this standard - may appear to the Bulgarians as both a negative and a positive "hero" and the

⁶³ One can find a lot of foreign words and phrases in fiction and drama, and also in the correspondence between highly educated people. In one of Evgenia Mars's dramas a protagonist says: "As you know, to use foreign words is fashionable nowadays, otherwise you will be considered ignorant" - MARS, E. *Magda*. Sofia, 1919, 29. This reminds us of the functioning of the French language in Russia in the nineteenth century.

⁶⁴ A famous controversy between Bulgarian literary critics arose as to whether the main protagonist of the book was meant as a "social character", that is a representative of a certain social class (that of the rising bourgeoisie, rather rough and uncivilised in the initial period) or as a "national character", that is "the Bulgarian" as such. While in retrospect this seems to be an ill-posed question, the protagonist has become a kind of "national symbol", often referred to in deprecatory identifications.

attitude towards him is never univocal; here lies the possibility of (social or cultural) revaluation. There are numerous modes of self-identification with this "caricature" of the process of Europeanisation, and shame is simply the most straightforward of these; what is more, shame is not easily supported and may turn (in self-defense) into its opposite. In identifying oneself with the protagonist, one may not accept the author's intention and attitude because what is involved in such self-identifications are deep feelings of national pride and resentment, capable of producing ambiguous attitudes, continuous reinterpretations, and a movement between the extremes.

Besides becoming an object of literary satire, the imperfections of "Europeanisation" did not go unnoticed by the social essayists and emerging social science in Bulgaria. One of the first Bulgarian sociologists - Ivan Hadzhiiski - criticises the use of the signs of "Europeanness" for the purpose of showing off, snobbism, false pretences, etc., especially among the higher classes and the educated.⁶⁵ A strong value element is of course contained in all social judgements of this sort. While it is true that what was conceived as "European" fulfilled social functions of prestige, the whole period after the establishment of the independent state can be understood in a more neutral manner as an effort on the part of the elites to depart from traditional ways and from the Turkish-"Oriental" influence in order to approach European culture, an effort ranging from superficial imitation to deeper and more serious attempts towards the appropriation of European values and cultural trends.

As during the Revival period, the disparity between the copying of foreign consumption styles without, however, developing the foreign organisation of production is noted, as in the following passage, by I. Hadzhiiski:

When coming home from abroad we bring with us something of science and technology, without however being able to take with us the industrial secrets, capitals and markets of the others. One thing we certainly bring back with us, namely European tastes in life, and the European patterns of spending: luxury, fashion, jewellery, decorative glamour and various means to show off. The higher

⁶⁵ HADZHIISKI, I. "Avtoritët, dostoinstvo i maska", in: Hadzhiiski, I. *Súchinenia v dva toma*. Vol. 1, Sofia, 1974, 452-464.

strata in our country can no doubt have all this on a small scale. The tragedy began when the intelligentsia of the middle classes began to imitate them.⁶⁶

A number of authors point to the adverse social consequences of the aspirations for a European style of life in the absence of comparable resources. It is, as the argument goes, the pursuit of the higher European standards of living that leads to the degradation of public morals, to rendering public life rough and uncivilised; it is at least partly to blame for the unscrupulous political partisanship and the corruption of the public officials, etc.⁶⁷ The blame for all this was attributed particularly to the rather wide stratum of presumably educated people ("quasi-intelligentsia") who were striving for a post in the state apparatus by all means and at any price, usually by becoming adherents of some political party.⁶⁸

Following the already-mentioned initial period of a strong exposure to European influences and their uncritical reception, there arose some scepticism as regarded all things "foreign". The "Europeanised" intelligentsia was the main carrier of European influences, and it even perceived itself as a "Kulturtraeger", having a special mission in "Europeanising" the Bulgarian society. Small wonder then that the accusations were directed primarily against it, issuing from the more nationalist-minded representatives of this same intelligentsia. The widening gap between the Europeanised Bulgarian intelligentsia on the one hand, the "common people", strongly attached to their traditions on the other, and the growing "alienation" of the intelligentsia from the predominantly peasant society engendered much concern.⁶⁹ The

⁶⁶ HADŽHIISKI, I. "Optimistichna teoriia za nashiia narod", in: Hadzhiiski, I. *Sŭchineniia v dva toma*. Vol. 1, 43.

⁶⁷ *ibid*; GŪLŪBOV, K. *Ornamenti (Filosofski i literaturni eseta)*. Sofia, 1934 (cited from: Draganov, M. (ed.) *Narodopsikhologija na bŭlgarite. Antologija*. Sofia, 1984, 567-569).

⁶⁸ The disproportionately numerous "intelligentsia", that is a predominantly proletarian stratum of somewhat educated people, found it difficult to find an application of its qualifications, because of the restricted number of state posts on the one hand, and the insignificant market for intellectual products on the other. In the hope of obtaining a job, a lot of these people formed the clientele of the political parties and contributed to the degradation of public morals. This state of affairs is reflected in the negative image of the "quasi-intelligentsia" or the "superfluous intelligentsia" in the public discourse of the time. For a number of reasons, post-communist Bulgaria seems to be confronting a similar problem.

⁶⁹ AGŪNSKI, N. "Trite pokoleniia", 242-243. Divorce between "higher" (or "universal") and popular culture, and the ensuing isolation of the elites from

"Europeanised" intelligentsia has been accused of attacking religion and undermining in this way the folk morality but most of all of subverting the national consciousness and the national ideals.⁷⁰

In some extreme cases the European influence was totally rejected as unconditionally harmful for Bulgarian society. This point of view stressed its disastrous effects upon the authentic national culture, constructed differently by various authors - as "folk"-ethnographic, Slav, orthodox or mystical, or as pagan. Such an attitude is usually expressed from a strongly nationalistic or Slav-racist standpoint. In a paper dated 1933, Ianko Ianev wrote that although the Bulgarians owe quite a lot to Western culture, it is precisely the Western influence (and the Russian as well) that has prevented the Bulgarian "spirit" "from stepping on firm ground and embarking upon its own authentic and self-responsible path".⁷¹ Europe is in his view a decadent civilisation that has nothing positive to offer. In a strongly nationalistic spirit the same author draws a "program of the Bulgarian spirit", "an absolute policy of the purely Bulgarian racial cultural consciousness". The reconstruction of the Bulgarian "spirit" must proceed according to this program from "the innermost peculiarity of the tribe, its cosmic pre-motherhood, which differs from both Slav mysticism and from the intellectualistic mechanicalism of Western man".⁷² The Bulgarian spirit is further defined as pagan, and the Bulgarian nation itself as primordial and virgin. In a similar highly pitched metaphorical style another author - Naiden Sheitanov - argues for, the authentic "folk culture", conceptualised again as pagan.⁷³ In phantasmagoric visions of this kind the advance of the Bulgarian nation is sometimes related to a pan-Slav take-off, where the Slavs are either accorded a mediating role between the East and Europe⁷⁴ or are contrasted in their presumed immediacy to life, a sense of the mystic and the sacred, etc. to the

their "roots" has constituted a problem for many emerging nations. See CREW, R. "The Construction of National Identity", 41-42.

⁷⁰ PETKANOV, K. "Bŭlgarskata inteligentsia kato rozhba i otritsanie na bŭlgarskoto selo", 124-135; ILIEV, A. "Problemata za psihologijata na sŭvremennite bŭlgari", *Prosveta*, 5, 7 (1940), 769-781, esp. 772 ff.

⁷¹ IANEV, IA. "Iztok ili Zapad", *Zlatorog*, 14, 4 (1933), 178.

⁷² *ibid*, 180. The influence of O. Spengler is easily discernible in this terminology of the Western decadence and the cosmic premordialism of a culture. It is mixed with racial elements.

⁷³ SHEITANOV, N. "Svetovna Bŭlgaria", *Zlatorog*, 7, 4 (1926), 168-176.

⁷⁴ SHEITANOV, N. "Sŭdbata na slavianstvoto", *Zlatorog*, 11, 2 (1930), 95 and 100.

European rationality, formalism, technicality and bureaucratism.⁷⁵ Such extremes apart, there seems to be lacking in modern Bulgarian history a radically anti-European intellectual trend and a social movement such as the Russian "slavophiles" and their radicalised heirs. This may be due to the fact that the social conditions in Bulgaria have been rather different - the attractiveness of Europe was felt much more strongly and immediately, and a self-extolling cultural messianism was missing.

The prevailing attitude towards the European influence is quite balanced and tries to mediate between the extreme positions. Being against closure to foreign influences and isolation within the "native", it is at the same time against the uncritical reception of those influences. The native (national) culture represents from this standpoint a supreme value, and the way to humanity as such necessarily passes through the authentic national creativity.⁷⁶ There is an awareness of the dangers for small and culturally belated nations as the Bulgarian in their contact with mature and mighty cultures as the European. The interaction with foreign cultures is asserted from this standpoint only on condition that what is borrowed is subjected to a creative refraction.⁷⁷

The attitude of the epoch towards Europe was thus divided between admiration and doubt, imitation and rejection, sincere efforts for participation and sharing the European culture and a bitter feeling of irreparable "provincialism", of economic and cultural "backwardness". The uneasiness in the attitude towards "Europe" was aggravated by nationalist fears of losing cultural identity in the encounter with the culturally dominant West. This is perhaps a typical attitude of the elites of a "developing country" vis-a-vis a "civilising force" in a world of nationalist self-assertion, colonial expansionism and semi-colonial

⁷⁵ IANEV, IA. "Probuzhdane", *Zlatorog*, 11, 5-6 (1930), 273-277, 282-283.

⁷⁶ Even the most pronounced Bulgarian "Europeists", e.g. Pencho Slaveikov, the son of the much cited Petko R. Slaveikov, were extolling the "spirit" of the people - a Romantic notion, standing for the creative forces of the nation. It is true that in the case of Pencho Slaveikov this notion functioned in opposition to the "mob" and to the low ethics of the Bulgarian public life. Still, it is noteworthy that a radical "zapadniachestvo" ("Westernisers") of a Russian type was lacking in Bulgaria, at least among intelligentsia circles.

⁷⁷ ILIEV, A. "Narodnostno obosobiavane na búlgarskata kultura", *Búlgarska misl*, 11, (1936); ILIEV, A. "Narodnost i kultura", *Búlgarska misl*, 10, 7-8 (1935), 453; PETKANOV, K. "Búlgarskata kultura i chuzhdentsite", *Izkustvo i kritika*, 1938, N 4,183.

exploitation of the weaker by the stronger nations. Such an uneasy attitude is hard to sustain and it happens that the resentment erupts in the tour-de-force of nationalist self-assertion and an outright rejection of the foreign influence. It is another question why national culture did (and still does) matter so much: an answer to this will have to take into account the various ways in which the nation state is linked to a national culture, and not least the fact that so many people, the intelligentsia in the first place, makes a living (both ideally and materially) from developing a national culture and from a national monopol of various sorts of opportunities.⁷⁸

The epoch of *state Socialism* brought about radical changes in notions about Europe. The world split into two opposing political and military "blocs" (or "camps"), designated as "socialism"/"capitalism" or "East"/"West".⁷⁹ The same division was sometimes expressed in a stronger language from the perspective of the "East" as "communism"/"imperialism" and from the perspective of the "West" as "the Soviet empire" (behind "the iron curtain") opposed to a "free world" (or the "open society"). Europe was partitioned; it fell apart into "Western" and "Eastern" Europe, meaning not only geographical designations but a different economic and socio-political "order". Thus contrary to the older delineation of the "Orient" (the Islamic world, Asia), the boundaries between the East and the West passed right through the middle of Europe. The "East" - so to say - pushed westwards into Europe. This ideological and geo-political notion of the "East" could not for obvious reasons include the "Far East" (Japan, etc.)

⁷⁸ These links were made explicit in a forceful manner by GELLNER, E. *Nations and nationalism*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983, esp. 35-52, 57-62, 110-122, 139-143.

⁷⁹ While technically the designation of the directions of the world is relative to the point where the observer is positioned, the areas meant by "East" and "West" are determined by the socio-political realities (as is the division "South" and "North" by economic realities). These are therefore geo-political or geo-economic definitions. An often ignored corollary of this is that designations like "East" or "West", or even some seemingly pure geographical terms (especially "Europe" and "Asia", between which there is no clear cut geographical boundary) have a different range and cover different territories in different historical epochs, and change with the change of the geo-political realities. The uses of "imaginative geography" (and "imaginative history") of the "Other" and of the Orient in particular in shaping the identity of the West are considered by SAID, E. *Orientalism*. London and Henley: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978, 5 and 54-55.

From the perspective of the Socialist "camp" of which Bulgaria was a part, there was Western Europe. While it was once again totalised in a relatively unified image in itself, it also formed a part of a larger unit - the "capitalist West".⁸⁰ Besides the sharper contrasting effect of a militant ideology, the weakening and even suspension of the educational and cultural contacts and exchanges with (Western) Europe contributed in their turn to the homogenisation of its image in the "collective representations". These contacts were soon resumed, but they were reserved for the nomenclature elites (and their offspring). Europe remained a forbidden zone for society at large and for the greater part of its scholars and intellectuals in particular.

The official taboos and mysteries, surrounding the "West", enhanced its attractiveness. However one had to guard himself from showing a positive attitude, otherwise one risked being accused of "adoration" of the West and acquiring the stigma of political "unreliability" with all possible consequences.⁸¹ There were in fact two different "images" of the West - the official and the non-official, which could not be openly professed without provoking persecution. It is quite understandable that under these conditions of ideological confrontation, the image of (Western) Europe was subject to strong mystification. If the official image of the West, created by the Communist propaganda machine in accordance with the ideology and the Party politics, was completely false, no less falsified (in accordance with other assumptions) was the opposing "dissident" image of Europe.⁸²

⁸⁰ Curiously enough, under the Communist regime Bulgaria was (symbolically) liberated from its peripheral position in respect to the European civilisation because of the very ideological and political confrontation which seemed to create a symmetrical, and for that reason, an equal relationship, namely between "Communism" and "capitalism" or in other terms between the "first" and the "second" world. This is no more valid after the collapse of the socialist "bloc". Bulgaria is slipping again into the position of a European periphery and even tends to drift in the direction the "third world".

⁸¹ It should be noted that in the fifties and sixties many people suffered persecution (ranging from being fired from a job to imprisonment or being sent to forced labour camps) because they had or were supposed to have some contacts with the "West" - relatives, friends, or just because they studied or specialised in Western Europe. Even the preference for "Western music" (jazz in particular) or a Western style of dress could have very serious consequences for the individual involved.

⁸² I am well aware of the epistemological difficulties involved in criticising a representation for its incorrectness or lack of veracity as measured against reality, but in case of propaganda manipulation there seems no way of evading the problem of the "falsification" of reality.

The period of state socialism brought about changes in the *content* of the notions about Europe (inseparable from the "capitalist West" in general) by introducing some new topics and discourses. It was the goal of the official propaganda to demonstrate the "advantages" of the socialist order, by employing various comparisons between the two systems. The affirmation of the superiority of Soviet science and technology was one case among others. In the megalomaniac discourses of the initial years of the socialist transformation, Bulgaria had to "achieve for some 15-20 years what it took a whole century for other countries under different conditions to achieve".⁸³ After it became obvious to most people that it would be very difficult to "reach and overtake" the West in the technical-scientific and economic spheres, the official propaganda was redirected towards a social and cultural criticism of the West and it had to "reveal" the advantages of life under socialism. Thus while the socialist world was presented as a realisation of social justice and equality, full employment, high level of social security, lack of criminality, equality between men and women, etc., the world of capitalism featured as a place of social inequality and injustice, of extreme poverty of certain strata, of unemployment and insecurity of life, of subjugation of women, suppression of peoples and minorities, high criminality, drug-abuse and prostitution (presumably not existing under socialism), decadent forms of art and culture, etc.⁸⁴ All this could hardly compensate for the great failure of the Soviet system, namely its failure to assure a material prosperity and high living standards for the population in a society already "infected" with consumerist aspirations and ideals, which are in fact contained in the "socialist ideal" itself.

The official notions and images of the "West" were devaluated and subjected to an "overturning" both by critically-minded individuals and

⁸³ DIMITROV, G. *Otchetet doklad pred V kongres na BRP (k) Sofita 1948*, Sofia, 1950, 91.

⁸⁴ The main reports and the supporting reports at the Party Congresses and the Central Committee "plenums" of the Bulgarian Communist Party (as well as those of the official trade unions and the unions of the "creative intelligentsia") are full of descriptions, qualifications, assessments and judgements of both the socialist and capitalist society and its culture. All these labels and qualifications can also be found in a vast body of texts, accumulated for the period of the regime - newspapers, propaganda brochures, journals, books that attempt to build the "theory" of the socialist "order" and way of life; also in the recordings of the radio and T.V. programs.

(increasingly) by the common people. Among the dissidents in particular the West was present in the strongly idealised images of political democracy, strict adherence to civil and human rights, advocacy of democrats and human rights activists all over the world, and as a guarantor for the international peace and security. From these and the similar notions about the "free world" outside, they drew courage and hope to oppose the regime inside.⁸⁵ On a popular level the West was strongly mythologised but in a different manner. This was a place of material prosperity and well-being, a consumer's paradise, an imaginative locus of "dolce vita" without hard work, troubles or problems.⁸⁶ Western consumer goods of all sorts, starting with whisky and cigarettes, clothes, tape-recorders and television sets, and especially cars (and also Western mass culture in music and cinema) reached the status of symbols and fetishes in the mass consciousness, as expressed in the popular discourses. The image of the West which was associated with such products was extremely attractive for most people. This attitude was only reinforced by their difficulty of access and by the much resented (and envied) advancing Westernisation of the Communist elites.

The collapse of the Socialist system was a global event of enormous significance, which radically changed the geopolitical situation. The long-standing ideological, political, and military confrontation between the two superpowers, the "East" and the "West", came to an end. The world appears now as unipolar (according to others as multipolar). The East-West division is still meaningful, but now it has acquired a different meaning, increasingly signalling the development/underdevelopment divide and thus beginning to resemble the North/South division. The West (and Western Europe) is now the technologically and economically advanced and prosperous area, while the East is the devastated area left after the breakdown of Communist rule. After a brief initial wave of enthusiasm and triumph over the break of Communism and the end of the Cold War, the East is now once again perceived by the West as a

⁸⁵ Not all critics of "actually existing" socialism took Western democracy as their ideal. Some revolted against the "deformity" and misuse of the socialist "idea" by a particular group (or clique) of rulers, in the name of an authentic, "pure" socialism.

⁸⁶ There are, it was said in pun, two types of life - "zhizn" (the Russian word for "life") and "laif" (that is, the English word), meaning that the Russian word stands for qualities of life such as scantiness and hardships, while the English word implies a sweet and easy style of life.

threat, this time because of the massive migration wave in westward direction and the regional conflicts and civil wars that have accompanied the dissolution of the previous order, especially in the former Soviet Union and former Yugoslavia. Now that the East/West division has lost its former meaning (related to a past geopolitical reality) Europe emerges in another light. It acquires (or restores) its own separate profile and comes to be seen as an entity in itself, different from and sometimes even opposed to the "rest" of the West, and to the U. S. A. in particular. No doubt this is to a large extent a result from the process of unification of (Western) Europe and the prospects of extending the Union to the Eastern areas.

Due to the competing and to that extent conflicting aspirations of the former Socialist states in Europe to be "integrated" in the emerging European Union, the East/West terminology (and division) acquires a new (secondary) meaning and vitality in the post-communist world and becomes an issue of intense symbolic fights. Hungary and the Czech Republic remembered all of a sudden their "glorious past" as part of the Austro-Hungarian (Habsburg) empire and declared themselves to be Central European states and so did Poland also.⁸⁷ They even formed a kind of short-lived alliance, the so-called "Three states of Vishegrad", in order to demonstrate their distinctiveness from "the rest" of Eastern Europe, to invite a different treatment and a faster "integration" in particular. The magic word "Central" (Europe) was promoted as a new divide that sets apart the first pretenders for "integration" from the rest, symbolically moving them closer to the West, while pushing the remaining former Socialist countries to a kind of new (inferior) East. Eastern Europe remains under these conditions a "residual" category to designate those parts of Europe which are supposed to remain outside the European unification for an unclear period of time. The war in former Yugoslavia has made at the same time the ascription to "Europe" of the Balkans - except for its southern parts - more problematic than before, at least as far as its prospects of "integration" in the European Union are

⁸⁷ There was a time - it should be remembered - when Central Europe was defined as to comprise Germany and Italy. Both became part of the European West in the Cold War geo-political realities.

concerned.⁸⁸ In its political, social and cultural (and also security) aspirations, Europe becomes coexistent with the European Union. A good deal of confusion and "elasticity" of the present day concept of "Europe" is thus due to the still uncertain future and the unfolding dynamics of the unification itself. Needless to say, it is the geopolitical - not purely geographical - concept of Europe which is at stake here.

To return to Bulgaria, the post-Communist period plunged the notion of Europe right into the centre of severe political confrontations and heated ideological debates. While the changes in Bulgaria began under the sign of the Soviet "perestroika", and were conceived accordingly as a reform of the Socialist system, they were soon reformulated by the new political elites in terms of liberal democracy (of the Western type) and a market economy. An orientation to the West versus an orientation to the Soviet Union (res. Russia) were presented by political opponents as mutually exclusive alternatives and came to serve as badges of political identification in the politically polarised Bulgarian society. While some anti-Communist political forces expressed at the very beginning certain preferences towards the U. S. A.⁸⁹ (in both political and symbolic orientation), there followed very soon under the impact of better conceived political and economic interests a resolute turning towards Europe. All this was metaphorically expressed as a "road to Europe" and even a "return to Europe". The "return" terminology in particular implies that Bulgaria was part of Europe before it became part of the Soviet empire, and that consequently it had been separated only temporarily from its "natural" place. The geographical location of Bulgaria is thus played out in this case of symbolic reappropriation.

⁸⁸ Bulgaria is also making efforts to be considered within the boundaries of Europe, but for a number of reasons - both internal and international - it is not as successful in imposing its symbolic (geopolitical) definition.

⁸⁹ From the Revival period onwards the "image" of the U. S. A. has a definite and growing presence in the Bulgarian society, that is in its "collective representations" as expressed in the public discourses and texts. This is another topic for research, which does not concern me here. I would only like to note that for a long time the United States were considered as an extension of European civilisation and were often treated together with it. Even when the "image" of the U. S. A. overshadowed in importance that of Europe, in proportion to their outstanding role in the international economy and politics, it contained and sometimes reinforced the common "image" of the Western civilisation, and was thus in a sense referred back to its European roots.

The heated political and ideological debates during this initial post-Communist period contributed to viewing Europe as a unified entity, ignoring its inner differences, and resembling the preceding period in that respect.⁹⁰ The homogenisation and totalisation of Europe in the collective imagination is at the same time strengthened by the changes of the European political realities themselves - Europe is now no more an arena for rivalries between nationalist "great powers" (as in the interwar period) but a "community" (or "union") composed of closely cooperating states. While this is true, there are also clear signs that even now, when the European Union is supposedly moving in the direction of a common and concerted foreign policy, the traditional rivalry between France and Germany (and Austria) for influence in Bulgaria has been resumed. The German cultural "propaganda" (to use the old term) is pursued by means of various scholarly grants and awards (which did not stop even during the Communist period) and by various activities in the country itself in cultural centres and foundations, while the French are doing the same with somewhat more spectacularity but with less money, the last episode of this being the declaration of Bulgaria as a "francophone" country.

The notions about Europe were subjected to changes in *content* as well. The image created by the official Socialist propaganda totally collapsed. It found some kind of prolongation in the Euro-scepticism of the Socialist (former Communist) party, but in a rather subdued and low-pitched tone.⁹¹ However the political idealisations of the former dissidents are also hard to sustain in the face of the rather harsh post-Communist Balkan realities. Especially from a Bulgarian (and a Balkan) perspective it seems undeniable that the attitudes and behaviour of the (West) European countries are guided primarily by pragmatic calculations of their self-interests and concern with their own well-being, peace and security and not by some abstract humanistic principles.⁹² It is also obvious that the

⁹⁰ One may plausibly assert that ideological confrontations often "compound" and simplify the representations into more or less unitary "images" or "visions". The invocation of "Europe" is becoming a regular part of the demagogy of most political parties. These are claiming to have "Europe" on their side, and are interpreting every gesture of diplomatic politeness of some visiting European politician as a demonstration that "Europe" is favouring them and their policies.

⁹¹ Indirect and so to say implicit Euro-criticism is contained in some nationalistic exaltations and self-glorification.

⁹² The events in Yugoslavia have revealed among other things the inability of Western Europe to stop the spread of the war, and its reluctance to undertake energetic measures and involve itself in problems outside its own territory. All

West is not at all eager to extend its boundaries (and citizenship) eastwards or even to admit free trade⁹³ or the free movement of people across its borders - a kind of new Berlin Wall has been erected again by restrictive visa regimes, this time by the European West, to protect itself from the East.⁹⁴ The concern of each state with its internal problems is quite understandable and even more so for democracies, where the election of the politicians depends on whether the majority is content with them or not. (To admit immigrants, to let cheap foreign products onto the inner market, to send soldiers abroad on a peace-keeping mission, etc. are all quite unpopular measures in this respect.) While this should always have been clear, it was obscured in the hopes (and the wishful thinking) of the critically minded people under Communism, hence their disappointment in experiencing the hard facts today.

Only the image of the prosperous and self-indulgent West survived and managed to jump into the post-Socialist epoch, together with aspirations to take part in the paradise of consumerism. There are a variety of cheap (and some more expensive) forms of "participation" in the West, among them the now free imports of Western liquors and cigarettes, Western films and T.V. programs, and the one major sign of material well-being and social prestige - the possession of a Western car, devaluated as this might be with propagation. There is a certain irony in that many styles of life, reputed as Western, and enjoying for that reason a high prestige in the former state socialist countries, have been largely discarded as "unhealthy" or "dangerous" in the West. The possibilities for direct reception of "images" from the West (I mean this here literally) are infinitely enlarged in the present times of audio-visual translation, of reproduction possibilities, etc. Thanks to the freedom of the mass-media after the fall of the ideological "screening" of the Socialist era, and to the somewhat greater possibilities for tourism, acquaintance with the West is now much more extensive and "first hand", compared to the previous epoch. And it is not limited to elites but has extended one way or another

this was understood very well by the Serbs and strategically exploited to their advantage.

⁹³ Especially in those kinds of goods (e.g. agricultural products) in which the former Socialist countries are competitive.

⁹⁴ In a somewhat ex post interpretation, which seems nevertheless to be true, the Berlin wall, this symbol of the division between the East and West, served as much (and may be even more) to protect the West from the East, as the East from the West.

to the "common" people. Today it is not necessary for someone to travel to the West in order to know something about European (or American) culture, although it is only some of its forms that come through various "channels" and rapidly to the East. Openness towards "the West", at least at the level of "mass" culture, has never been so great; successful commercial films, second-rate fiction, never-ending T.V. serials, shiny goods all contribute in affirming the image of the prosperous West, of the West with its easy life and diversions, without of course providing the key to success. As far as mass culture is concerned, Europe is inseparable from, and in fact overshadowed by the all pervasive American impact. It is now time to ask the question: what are the "functions" of the image of Europe for the Bulgarian society, what does it serve?⁹⁵

From at least the Revival period onwards Europe has been regularly referred to by the Bulgarians. Comparison to Europe, aspirations towards it, competition with it (as in the five-year Socialist plans to "reach and overtake" the developed European countries), the wish to be part of it - economically and culturally - are ever present. In the never-ending race towards Europe, at every stage of it, one hears pessimistic judgements on the point reached.⁹⁶ While it is quite understandable that Europe set for Bulgaria the vector of "progress" and the scale for measuring development, it is not so evident that there should be a direct comparison with (West) European states. A number of economic, social and political similarities let us suppose that the comparison with certain "developing" areas (Latin America, for example) might be much more meaningful. One should also wonder why the comparison to the rest of the Balkan countries, which should constitute "natural" referents for Bulgaria, is almost completely missing. The answer to this probably has to do with the rivalries between the Balkan neighbours in their rather tumultuous history. Although unequal, the choice of Western Europe as a reference and as a measuring rod for comparison can easily be accounted for. Bulgaria has a peculiar geo-political location - at the "crossroads" between Europe and Asia, and it forms a disputed meeting ground

⁹⁵ That is, leaving aside the already mentioned uses and misuses of the attitudes towards Europe for the purposes of social prestige or political demagogy.

⁹⁶ SLAVEIKOV, P. R. "De sme e kak sme?", 229; SLAVEIKOV, P. R. "Za obrazovanieto na naroda", *Makedonia*, 2, 14 (March 2, 1868) and 2, 15 (March 9, 1868), reprinted in: Slaveikov, P. R. *Súchinenita v 8 toma*. Vol. 6, 100.

(sometimes a front line) between civilisations. European civilisation emerged in the modern times and especially after the industrial revolution as a major dynamic force in the world - "the" carrier of "progress". Its appeal for the peoples and nations on its periphery was simply irresistible - little wonder that the Bulgarians turned their aspirations towards this dynamic civilisation.

Comparison to Europe has a salient value aspect. Europe is not only a technical measure for defining the point reached along the path of "development"; it is also a positive "model" to be imitated, and an "ideal" to be emulated or at least aspired to. Inversely, what is not approved of by the Bulgarians is often labelled as "Balkan" or "Oriental" (in a pejorative sense). This was so during the Revival epoch, and later in the efforts of the cultural elites of independent Bulgaria to introduce and appropriate European values and culture on behalf of the nation, the same ideal animated the resistance against the Communist regime. Again, today's political slogans attest to an unmistakably normative and value function of Europe when calling for "integration" into Europe, a "return" to it, a "normalisation" according to the European standards, etc.

Understood as a positive value standard, the image of Europe serves the needs for self-criticism. It is an inwardly turned critical glance, searching for one's own faults and defects. In this sense Europe is precisely this, which Bulgaria has not yet become, but which it (at any rate the strongly Europeanised elites) aims towards strongly. Or again it symbolises the "opposite" of the Bulgarian reality or to be more precise, of those traits in it which are disliked, whichever historical moments this might refer to. I do not mean to imply that the image of Europe is a pure fantasy but it is not reality and veracity that matter here. The way Europe is "seen" at a particular moment, and stressing one of its traits rather than another, is determined by a painful perception of what is missing or insufficient in the surrounding Bulgarian society.⁹⁷ Thus while accentuating traits of the reality of Europe, images such as the "enlightened Europe", Europe of the freedom of nations and of citizens rights, Europe of industrial progress,

⁹⁷Following R. Johnson one may term the function of the "Other" in constituting one's own identity a case of "internal Other" - JOHNSON, R. "Towards a Cultural Theory of the Nation", 199-204. E. Said points out in his study of "Orientalism" that concerns of the West about its own identities were active in shaping the knowledge of "the Orient" - see SAID, E. *Orientalism.*, 54-55.

Europe as an advocate of the human rights, Europe as a paradise of social welfare, etc. - are nonetheless all pictures in "negative" of what the Bulgarian historical reality has been; they appear as projections of most cherished wishes but also as projects for "modernisation".

As pointed out on a number of occasions, the attitude towards Europe and the "European" has never been completely unambiguous. There were times when the European influence was experienced as a threat to the "national consciousness" and intellectuals asked themselves whether and how the national culture could be preserved and reproduced in the rather asymmetrical cultural exchanges with Europe. There may be two different (though not unrelated) ways to account for this ambivalence. One should *first of all* be aware of the efforts to build a national consciousness. There is no "us" without "them" ("familiar" without "alien", "close" without "distant") and the perception of differences is at the foundation of the national "consciousness".⁹⁸ In the history of Bulgaria there have been various forms of "otherness", and they called forth different responses. When the Ottoman rulers or the Greek clergy were in the position of "alien", their rejection was unambiguous. Things were different when the "Other" was Europe. This "Other" not only possessed the appeal of a high civilisation but it did not present an ethnic or a directly political threat. No wonder that despite the doubts and the criticism of "Europeanisation", the positive reaction has prevailed, even if it has sometimes taken the form of imitation.

As demonstrated, in the position of an "Other" Europe stimulates a reflection on the question who one is and where one stands. It poses for the Bulgarians (and for other nations as well) the question of what they would like to become. Thus it contributes to the (national) awareness in a self-asserting or a self-critical manner as the case might be. Rather than allow an encapsulation in a national (cultural) identity, this questioning may initiate a process of de-centring, a moving away from traditional identities that - provided that a measure of continuity is preserved - may

⁹⁸ "Othering" may result from conquest or it may be a means to maintain social or ideological distance. But a deeply rooted psychological need of constituting one's identity would produce "Others" even where such circumstances are absent. About that see JOHNSON, R. "Towards a Cultural Theory of the Nation", 199-204.

be enriching for the (collective) self. May be this precisely is the sense in which one may speak of "productive" cultural exchanges.

Nationalist concerns are not as pressing now that the great age of (European) nationalism seems to be receding and the bigger nations are willing to submit some of their sovereignty to the European Union. Also to Bulgarians it now seems easier to complement national identity (without giving it up) with a wider European identity in a way that will not force the individual to experience a dramatic tension. The "quality" of Europeanness, of being "European" is desperately sought by many in the Bulgarian society nowadays, at this important turn of its historical development. It is not quite clear what this quality (of mentality, of social and political life, of manners and personal styles of life, etc.) means however. May be precisely this possibility of investing "Europeanness" with many different contents, ranging from social welfare, liberal democracy and human rights to cultural values and styles of life - is what makes it particularly attractive for Bulgarian society at this particular juncture of its development.

There is *another* way to account for the meaning of Europe for Bulgaria and especially for the ambivalence of the attitude, namely in terms of the modernisation processes. It should not be forgotten that for Bulgaria, as for the rest of the Balkans and other regions as well, modernity, whatever this might mean, came from Europe. Modernity was thus equivalent to "Europeanisation". Little wonder that the image of Europe became loaded with all the ambiguities of modernisation and the still greater ambiguities, reverse sides and negative effects of a belated and inconclusive modernisation. First came the shock of abandoning old ways of life, and all kinds of traditions. Then, and much more important, modernisation in the milieu of already industrialised countries inevitably leads to marginalisation; it propels the "developing" country into unretrievable backwardness without much chance or hope of ever reaching or overtaking the leaders. This situation is usually exploited by the more advanced: the vicissitudes of semi-colonialism, of being the "zone" of interest of a "great power", and of serving as an "instrument" to others may be mentioned in this context. This is why attractive (and irresistible) as it always seemed, Europe, that is, the modernisation it initiated, was also a source of uneasiness and concern. It certainly did not create the economic and political problems but it aggravated them and enhanced

the perception of "backwardness"; in the cultural and intellectual field it lead to the experience of a sort of "alienation", a sense of being pressed into "provincialism". Quite ambivalent feelings and frustrations are likely to arise in such a situation for those at a disadvantage, resulting at times in outright rejections. This is especially so if the same situation is being experienced over a protracted period of time and if one's efforts to get rid of "backwardness" are repeatedly doomed to failure. What Europe may mean for Bulgaria (and the Balkans) in the future seems to be dependent on whether it will choose to assist it more resolutely in its modernisation efforts, without marginalising it this time, or whether it will continue to regard it as a periphery to be either ignored or exploited in various ways.



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