

## **The making of a “bad” public: Ethnonational mobilization in post-communist Bulgaria**

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In recent years, an interesting body of literature in the social sciences has suggested an intimate connection between the institutions and process of the public sphere, on the one hand, and modern nationalism, on the other. My aim in this article is to contribute to this growing literature by considering one case of nationalist mobilization in post-communist Bulgaria. My goals are twofold. First, I aim to summarize the development of an empirically-grounded sociological perspective on the public sphere and to demonstrate the usefulness of this perspective for the study of nationalism. Beyond that, however, my goal in this case study is to specify the conditions under which national rhetoric is an effective strategy in the modern public sphere. I argue that my case study contributes to a more adequate understanding of the dynamic relationship between nationalism and the public sphere by indicating that the success of nationalist mobilization is contingent upon the ability of a nationalist public to link persuasively its claims to the universalist and democratic ideals that lay at the foundation of the public sphere.

Theoretically, my starting point is the concept of the “public sphere” as elaborated by Jürgen Habermas. However, I emphasize two important revisions of his theory by historically informed research: first, the existence of multiple particularist publics instead of a unitary civic public space, and second, the embeddedness of publics in historically crystallized symbolic and discursive configurations. Within this neo-Habermasian framework I analyze the ethnonational mobilization in Bulgarian transition. I argue that this mobilization must be understood as organically connected with the processes of reconstituting the public sphere after the demise of Leninist state socialism. I view it as the emergence of a post-communist nationalist public the making of which was the result of two developments. The first was itself the result of historically structured social cleavages in post-communist Bulgaria,

which made possible the emergence of a coalition of local elites and non-elites predisposed to adopt a nationalist stance. The second development was the construction by this coalition of a particular political language that it espoused so that the public identified it as a legitimate political actor in the political space of post-communist Bulgaria.

### **Nationalism and the public sphere**

Jürgen Habermas's conceptualization of the "public sphere" (*Öffentlichkeit*)<sup>1</sup> has given major impetus to subsequent theoretical developments. In most general terms, the public sphere may be defined as a distinctly modern institution and culture of interaction where "public" issues are discussed by "private" persons in the context of reasoned deliberation.<sup>2</sup> Yet the idealization of reasoning and rational argumentation in Habermas's account of the public sphere has been criticized forcefully. Indeed, the dissemination of "discursive literacy," which Michael Mann defines as "the ability to read and write texts that are not mere formulas or lists but presupposes literate mastery of conversation and argument,"<sup>3</sup> was a major innovation of early European modernity – the historical period where Habermas locates the emergence and the unsurpassed initial flourishing of the public sphere. This discursive literacy, however, is qualitatively different from Habermas's idealized concept of "reasoned argumentation" (*Räsonnement*), which is at the heart of his "public sphere." Historically speaking, it is not "disembodied reason" as such but specific ideologies of "embodied reasonableness" that have oriented social action in particular public spheres.<sup>4</sup> These ideologies articulate values of universalism and inclusion "in concrete rather than abstract language."<sup>5</sup> Private personal identifications are thematized in the public sphere in concrete idioms of publicness instead of being purely transcended into public activities of ideal civic virtue.<sup>6</sup> A corollary of this is that despite their professed inclusiveness, particular public spheres have excluded to a lesser or a greater degree particular segments of the larger "society" within which they are inserted. Exclusion from the "central" public sphere of the state, however, may be inclusion in a subaltern public – as we are reminded by those who criticize Habermas's vision of the public sphere as a unitary social space. Instead, these critics argue, there are several separate public spheres.<sup>7</sup> These are manned by distinct publics and saturated with different discourses.

Subsequent critical engagements have preserved the greatest merit of Habermas's notion of the "public sphere": his emphasis on reasoned

communication. But critics and contributors have also shown convincingly that communication in the modern public realm is based on principles of rationality and reasoning that are always historical, contextual, and therefore never perfectly rational in an ideal typical fashion. This is a useful corrective to a widespread ahistorical view of the public sphere as endowed with the teleological power to guarantee the ultimate triumph of democratic and universalist values.<sup>8</sup> Sustained historical research has shown convincingly that under concrete circumstances the limited rationality of the public sphere can contribute to the spread of non-democratic and exclusionary ideologies. To mention only two extreme cases: civil society in Weimar Germany was conducive to the rise of Nazism<sup>9</sup> and pre-existing civil associations were conveniently coopted by the Italian fascist regime.<sup>10</sup>

This recasting of the notion of the public sphere in more concrete historical terms has contributed to the study of nationalism by pointing out the intricate connection between nationalist movements and discourses of nationhood, on the one hand, and the institutions and culture of the public sphere, on the other. As Geoff Eley has observed, in pre-WWII East Central Europe “a broadly disseminated sense of political nationality could be properly constituted in the chosen national territory only by organized interaction with some kind of popular social coalition, with or without the benefit of a sympathetic state apparatus (usually without), but certainly with the benefit of a ramified and legally protected civil society.”<sup>11</sup> Jeremy King has shown how civil associations were a major institutional framework for the multiple struggles of “nationalities” in the last century of the Habsburg empire.<sup>12</sup> In Spain, civil associations helped the spread of Basque terrorism.<sup>13</sup> In the context of post-communist transition, Ronald Suny has shown how Armenian nationalism exploited, among others, ecological concerns and Chris Hann has shown how ideas of democracy and civil society are exploited by nationalist organizations.<sup>14</sup>

Within the context of a general resurgence of interest in the empirical and historical study of the public sphere, these contributions warn us that social scientists should be careful not to confuse analytical concepts with political catchwords. The common wisdom of our day has it that the public sphere and civil society contribute to social integration and democratization. Nationalism – especially its ethnically motivated variety – is thought to lead to processes of exclusion and violence. What these recent works demonstrate is that the relationship between nationalism and the public sphere is more complicated than our pre-conceived notions about it.

In what follows, I draw on the insights of this empirically and historically grounded research on the public sphere and nationalism to explore the case of ethnonational mobilization in the first months of transition from state socialism in contemporary Bulgaria. The larger goal that I pursue in presenting this case in some details is to contribute to our knowledge about the dynamics of nationalist mobilization in the public sphere by specifying some conditions under which exclusionary nationalism is a winning strategy within the public sphere. As Jeffrey Alexander has argued, “social movements are practical and historical, yet at the same time they can succeed only if they can employ the civil meta-language to relate these practical problems to the symbolic centre of society and its utopian premises.”<sup>15</sup> In a sense, the case of post-communist ethnonational mobilization in Bulgaria is a good illustration of this observation. As my analysis of the discursive practices of the nationalist protests in post-communist Bulgaria suggests, they were successful exactly because they were able to connect their national claims with the values considered as the basis of the public sphere. In other words, this case study indicates that the success of nationalist mobilization is conditional upon the ability of its proponents to link their national rhetoric to shared democratic values.

The analysis in the following sections is guided by two of the critical reformulations of Habermas’s vision of the public sphere that I believe offer us good analytical tools to explain the relationship between nationalism and the public sphere. One is the emphasis on particularist segmented publics. This notion refocuses the attention on the critical issue of what particular sets of actors – and for what reasons – engage in processes of reasoned communication. The analytical question then is who, and with what motivations and dispositions, forms a segmented public.<sup>16</sup> Another useful post-Habermasian reformulation is the insistence on the inevitable particularity and historicity of reasoned and reasonable discourse that forms the patterns of interaction of really existing publics. The question to ask is then: what discursive strategies and what rhetorical moves are employed in particular instances? How do these particular idioms produce socially significant outcomes and how are they anchored in particular embodied reasoning publics?<sup>17</sup> I ask these two related sets of questions in an effort to understand the ethnonationalist mobilization in the early period of post-communist transformation in Bulgaria. In the next section, however, I introduce in some detail the larger context in which this ethnonational mobilization occurred.

### **The pre-history of post-communist ethnonational mobilization**

In 1878, after a successful war waged by the Russian Empire, a new Bulgarian principality was carved out from the Ottoman Empire. A sizable Muslim population comprising settlers from Asia or indigenous converts to Islam remained in the territory of this newly-formed state, which was regarded as legitimately belonging to the Bulgarian nation.<sup>18</sup> In late 1984 the Bulgarian state socialist regime launched a large-scale campaign to replace the names of Turks in the country. People with names that sounded “Turkish” were forced to adopt a “Bulgarian” name.<sup>19</sup> Most typically, ethnic Turks were approached by local authorities – local government officials, factory managers, and police officers – with demands to sign a “voluntary” declaration in which they expressed their alleged wish to change their names to “Bulgarian” names. If they refused to do so they faced various penalties ranging from serious economic disincentives (people with Turkish names simply could not get their paycheck since their name was effaced from the payroll and replaced with a Bulgarian one) to sheer violence (in many localities the campaign was implemented in the presence or even under the orders of armed forces).<sup>20</sup>

Similar campaigns of forced conversion had been undertaken earlier, both before and after the Communist takeover in 1945.<sup>21</sup> Some of the ethnic Turks responded to the new campaign with the same resignation that had characterized their reaction to earlier waves of forced assimilation. Yet as time passed many of them started strikes and demonstrations – something unheard of in the history of Bulgarian state socialism since 1945. The history of this protest movement remains largely uncharted, but available records reveal several attempts to organize mass resistance against the campaign, as well as a few terrorist bombings.<sup>22</sup> As the tension in the country rose, in May 1989 the government decided to open the borders for Turks who wanted to emigrate to Turkey. An estimated total of 350,000 Turks rushed to the borders.<sup>23</sup> By the fall of 1989, when radical changes occurred in the political regime of the country, cleavages along ethnic lines between Turks and Bulgarians had solidified to a degree unprecedented in previous years.

The change of the state-socialist regime in Bulgaria was formally initiated at a meeting of the Central Committee of the Communist Party in 1989. At this meeting Secretary General of the Party Todor Zhivkov was forced to resign by a group of reform-minded high appa-

ratchiks.<sup>24</sup> These formed a new party-cum-state leadership that saw the necessity to reverse the assimilatory policies toward Turks. One reason for the change in policies was the need to gain some legitimacy in the international arena. Before that, the official foreign policy of Zhivkov's regime had been stubbornly to deny before international organizations and media that such assimilationist policies were being implemented by force. The cover story elaborated by Bulgarian authorities claimed that it was the Turks' own decision to demand the "restoration" of their "Bulgarian" names as they discovered that they were actually ethnationally Bulgarians. With time, the denial and the official version of the events seemed all the more implausible, as first-hand accounts of what was actually happening reached various international political and human rights organizations and were disseminated by the mass media. Turkey, the West, and even Bulgaria's ideological partners from the Soviet blocs several times gave clear indications that they disapproved of the assimilation policies. These warnings, however, remained unheeded by Zhivkov's administration. The situation changed with his resignation. The new leadership had to revise the assimilatory policies in order to gain trust in the domestic and international context. This was precisely one of the priorities of the new government, for whom a critical task was to improve the general political and economic situation in the country.<sup>25</sup> The new leadership finally conceded publicly that an assimilation campaign had indeed taken place and – after several years of serious deterioration of bilateral relations – started seeking more intensive contacts with Turkey especially for the solution of the migrants' problem.

Apart from international pressure, the government and party leadership had to react to the demands and expectations of domestic actors. The renaming campaign had been unpopular with several segments of Bulgarian society: non-nationalist intellectuals and, in general, those who saw in it another manifestation of the corrupt character of the state socialist regime. Even nationalists would concede that the violence of the campaign had been a grave error although its emphasis of "restoring" the national consciousness of Muslims had been appropriate. Demands were put forth by incipient organizations of ethnic Turks, too. Their representatives requested the reversal of assimilatory policies and indemnification for the harms inflicted upon ethnic Turks in the course of the renaming campaign. All this happened in a climate of heightened political organization in general, where myriads of newly organized groups initiated mass protests.<sup>26</sup>

In a context where both international and domestic pressures exacted reevaluation of the assimilatory policies, the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist party held a plenary meeting on December 29 at which the campaign was discussed.<sup>27</sup> After the meeting, a statement condemning the assimilation campaign of 1984–1989 was issued promising that the persons whose names had been changed would receive back their Turkish names. The measures proposed also included the amnesty of people imprisoned for their resistance. Yet the statement did not take a clear stand on the issue of the responsibility of the initiators of the assimilationist campaign. Many of them still occupied high positions of authority in the hierarchy of the party-state.<sup>28</sup>

The decision of the Central Committee was met with a wave of nationalist mobilization in several parts of the country in the first weeks of January 1990. Already on December 30, a day after the meeting of the Central Committee, several local governments staffed by ethnic Bulgarians in regions where Turks live reportedly ignored the central government's orders. They opposed the party center's orders to restore the Turks' pre-assimilation religious freedoms, traditional names, and property that had been sold at low prices in the course of their exodus to Turkey. A day later in Kârdzhali – a district center in South Eastern Bulgaria with a substantial Turkish population – a Committee for the Defense of National Interests was founded by ethnic Bulgarians. The Committee was to play a prominent role in the radical nationalist edge of the political space of post-communist Bulgaria, even though its real influence remained limited to spectacular public displays of nationalist rhetoric.<sup>29</sup> Its founding coincided with the start of a mass demonstration of Bulgarians in the city of Kârdzhali against the recent decision of the Central Committee of the Communist Party. The demonstration continued in the following days when it was joined by similar demonstrations and strikes in several towns across the country, mainly in regions with mixed Bulgarian-Turkish population.

Eventually, many demonstrators from different towns went on to protest in the main square of the capital Sofia, which had turned into the agora of post-communist mass mobilization in Bulgaria.<sup>30</sup> The demands of the nationalists had crystallized in the course of almost two weeks of protests that sought the annulment of the decision from December 29. The nationalists argued that the decision had been taken by the central party authorities without due regard for the opinion of the Bulgarian population and was therefore not democratic. They urged for a referendum on the “national question.”<sup>31</sup>

The nationalist mobilization of ethnic Bulgarians in regions with mixed populations evoked the counter-mobilization of organizations and groups that opposed it. Prominent among them were human rights groups organized by non-nationalist intellectuals. Moreover, the mass mobilization of ethnic Turks escalated to confront the demonstrations of Bulgarian nationalists. The “Turkish” counter-demonstrations were reported on several occasions to outnumber the “Bulgarian” rallies. This feverish series of mobilizations and counter-mobilizations lasted two weeks: from December 30, 1989 to January 12, 1990 when an *ad hoc* political body called the Council for the Discussion of the National Question drafted a declaration that was eventually endorsed by the Parliament. The Council consisted of representatives of sixty-five organizations deemed to have a legitimate say on the “national question” in the country. The ethnonational mobilization had succeeded in imposing its agenda on the reforming political structures in the country.

### **Understanding ethnonational mobilization**

In the “classical” period of Leninist state socialism, nationalist sentiments and dispositions among subjects were co-opted and even actively inculcated by the party-state.<sup>32</sup> The ethnonational mobilization in the Bulgarian transition, however, was not sponsored directly by the central state. Sure, the local representatives of the state in mixed regions were prominent and instrumental in the processes of ethnic mobilization. Yet this mobilization occurred in the very same moment when the central state dominated by the central Communist Party apparatus decided to abandon its previous strong nationalizing priorities. Paradoxically, a certain portion of the subject population disagreed strongly with their “rulers” precisely when the latter decided to make their domination more humane. The mobilization was the work of a broad coalition that was constituted, as Eley writes, without the direct “benefit of a sympathetic state apparatus.” Or, more precisely, a changing and disintegrating state apparatus was not strong or willing enough to offer any significant support to nationalist action as it had done before.

The discrepancy between the strategies and goals of nationalist protesters and a usually nationalizing state makes this instance of ethnonational mobilization a good case for investigating the dynamics of the relationship between nationalist social action and the institutional context of this public sphere. In the following sections, I discuss in more detail the social composition of the protests and their discursive

practices. The “success” of ethnonational mobilization, I argue, was to a great extent assisted by the particular political idiom it espoused. This idiom performed two contradictory tasks. It resonated with the dispositions and experiences of actual people situated at the exit of a long period of state-socialist domination. At the same time it was complementary to the new discursive priorities of democratization and human rights that gained ascendancy in the first months of Bulgarian transition. The idiom of post-communist Bulgarian nationalism was thus integrated into the particular “discursive ideology” of public reasoning that was dominant at that particular period of time.

### *Local elites*<sup>33</sup>

The post-communist nationalist public in Bulgaria emerged as a coalition of local Communist Party elites with what for the want of a better term can be named “non-elite” ethnic Bulgarians in the regions with mixed Bulgarian-Turkish populations. Prominent among the people who participated in the protests in the winter of 1989/1990 were apparatchiks from the local chapters of the Bulgarian Communist Party, from local administration, and from mass organizations in the regions with mixed Bulgarian-Turkish populations.<sup>34</sup> They were able to take advantage of the local organizational resources and networks that were accessible to them by virtue of their position in the power structure of the state-socialist regime. The bulk of the demonstrations were a bit too well organized to be simply the spontaneous expression of the political will of ordinary people as they were represented in the rhetoric of their leaders. Everywhere, there was transportation to take participants from the countryside to the capital and food and drinks were distributed. In the context of a centralized state-socialist economy where no accumulation of significant private or organizational resources was possible outside the channels of official planned distribution, any mass political mobilization was impossible without the resources of the Communist Party and its satellite organizations.

A crucial point here is that by mobilizing ethnonational protest the local cadres of the Communist Party opposed the decision of the Party Center in the capital.<sup>35</sup> This refractory position of the local nomenclatura was conditioned by previous policies of the state-socialist leadership. On the one hand, local party functionaries had been alienated from the Center in the course of several reforms in the administration of the country in 1986 and 1987. The reforms were designed by Zhivkov’s

regime as a crusade against “bureaucracy” in local administration. The ultimate goal of this crusade was to strengthen the power of central authorities by pleasing popular dislike for the wide discretionary power of local lords.<sup>36</sup> Another aspect of the reform was significant changes in the administrative division of the country. These changes amounted to an ethnically motivated gerrymandering. Larger districts were created into which existing smaller districts with mostly Muslim population were submerged so that ethnic Bulgarians dominated numerically.<sup>37</sup> In practice, the reform amounted to much less than the advertised blow to bureaucracy. In most cases local cadres were relocated from positions that were remunerative and influential to positions that were slightly less so. Yet the survival rates of high local officials were strikingly low compared to previous changes in the administrative apparatus.<sup>38</sup> A total of 19,000 “bureaucrats” from the Party apparatus, local governments and mass organizations were dislocated and assigned a relatively lower living standard.<sup>39</sup> There was thus by 1989 a dormant cleavage between the center and the periphery of the Communist Party. In the context of state socialism, such a cleavage would have been negotiated in non-public ways for at least two reasons: the ruling ideology of the unity of the Communist Party did not allow for open discussion of such issues and, in a climate of constant uncertainty, passivity was the best strategy for dependent power holders on the local level.<sup>40</sup> With the changes initiated in late 1989, however, it was possible to act out the conflict in public.

The resentment against the Party Center as such was combined with a dislike for the eventual reversal of nationalist policies. In the course of the renaming campaign, local functionaries had been assigned the prominent task of implementing the assimilatory measures, which went together with a series of economic and symbolic profits. First of all, local positions of power allowed their holders to profit from the sales of property belonging to Turks who were forced to immigrate to Turkey. The degree of profiteering from property sales was great enough to prompt the state-socialist government to issue a decree in June 1989 that ordered the local governments not to allow speculation with the prices of sold property. Second, since the renaming campaign was an official national priority, the purely symbolic value of local power in mixed regions increased. Due to the heightened attention of the Party Center toward the implementation of its assimilatory policies, new channels of more intense and direct communication with central authorities were made accessible to local functionaries in mixed regions.<sup>41</sup> They suddenly had an advantage in the struggle for scarce resources traditionally distributed by the Center.

With the reversal of the assimilatory policies, however, these local cadres were cut off from the symbolic and economic profits they enjoyed during the course of the renaming campaign, and this led to increased alienation from the new reforming Party Center. This alienation predisposed local cadres to adopt a nationalist stance against the recognition and restoration of the rights of the Muslims in their regions. What is more, now the cadres' nationalizing activities in the immediate past were turning from a symbolic asset into a serious liability. The reversal and condemnation of previous nationalizing policies by the Party Center implied that responsibility would be attributed to those who had been involved in their implementation. Local cadres had been especially zealous in infringing upon legal norms and human rights. Even when they had not been excessively ardent in implementing the assimilationist policies, the very fact that they had been the actual persons carrying out work on the local level made them much more visible than the impersonal Center.<sup>42</sup>

As the issue of responsibility for the renaming campaign started looming large, the rationale to oppose the Party Center was strengthened. Since many of the people in the national government and the Central Committee of the Communist Party after November 1989 were themselves implicated in the renaming campaign, the agenda of the party leadership was to reach exoneration by transferring the burden of responsibility onto two scapegoats: Zhivkov (along with his immediate associates) and local cadres.<sup>43</sup>

Thus the prominent role of local nomenclatura in organizing the ethno-national mobilization in 1989/90 was determined by their particular social position. They were alienated from the Party Center and in the conditions of political liberalization they were able to articulate a refractory stance. Also, they had economic and symbolic interests vested in preserving the ethnic status quo created by the assimilatory policies of the previous regime.

### *The "average" Bulgarian in mixed regions*

Prominent as they were, nomenclatura and their mobilization potential cannot account for the scope of the protests. The scope was indeed impressive: several thousand people were involved in demonstrations and strikes that went on for two weeks. The public sensitive to ethno-national mobilization was broader than the stratum of people involved

directly in local power. Why and how were non-elite Bulgarians involved in ethnonational mobilization? It does not suffice to say that they were manipulated by powerful elites. The “average” Bulgarian from the mixed regions adopted the nationalist stance partly for the same reasons as the local nomenclatura. In the Bulgarian nation state, ethnic Bulgarians have tended to occupy privileged socioeconomic positions in mixed regions.<sup>44</sup> This status gap between Turks and Bulgarians deepened in the course of the renaming campaign when ethnic Bulgarians from “non-Turkish” areas were given financial incentives to settle in mixed population regions.<sup>45</sup> In this context, “Bulgarianness” was a valuable source of symbolic capital. Additionally, many ethnic Bulgarians had gained economic profits by purchasing the property of departing Turks. The reversal of the government policies thus meant both for local elites and non-elites a general loss in economic standing and in prestige. Engagement in collective action to protest this reversal of policies was one way of minimizing and possibly repairing this economic and symbolic loss.<sup>46</sup>

There are, however, additional factors that account for the emergence of an ethnonationalist elite-mass coalition in the winter of 1989/90. One of them is the symbolic geography of the regions with mixed Bulgarian and Turkish population. It had been a consistent policy of different political regimes to settle ethnic Bulgarians in such regions. In the course of a series of post-war “population exchanges” or less formal ethnic migrations, ethnic Bulgarian immigrants from territories that had been ceded to victorious neighboring countries were redirected to regions previously populated by Turks.<sup>47</sup> Even though by the 1980s few of these migrants were alive, the memories of their persecution by foreign (most notably, Turkish) authorities were kept alive by associations and semi-official institutions and commemorations.<sup>48</sup> For the descendants of ethnic Bulgarian migrants to mixed regions, their Bulgarian nationality was a matter of relatively bigger emotional investment than for ethnic Bulgarians in the rest of the country. They formed an audience susceptible to the national message.

### *The discourse of ethnonational mobilization*

After the end of the renaming campaign, a nationalist public emerged that comprised both local elites and masses. It was this public that made itself visible in the two weeks of nationalist protests. The social composition of this public, however, only partially explains its relative success in

gaining recognition in the public sphere. This success was also achieved through the elaboration and deployment of a particular political idiom.

On a very general level, languages of nationalism are fairly uniform. Almost by definition, they are preoccupied with the outcome of a national project that is seen as imperiled in some way. A positive program of “national development” is always posed against a negative vision of purported pollution and decay that must be resisted.<sup>49</sup> Yet, since nationalist practices are inevitably embedded in larger political and cultural interactive contexts, there are significant variances in the ways nationalist demands and programs are phrased.

How exactly were the demands of the post-communist nationalism in Bulgaria articulated? The protests of Bulgarian nationalists in 1989/90 opposed the restoration of Turkish traditional names and property rights by the government. This opposition did not stem from abstract nationalist concerns, but was couched in a specific political idiom that was intended to make sense in the context of political transformation. The nationalists’ argument was that by trying to restore the rights of Muslims in the specific way envisaged in the resolution of the Central Committee of the Communist Party (that is, granting Muslims the possibility to use officially their “Turkish” names and to receive compensation for the property they had lost in the course of the renaming campaign and the mass exodus to Turkey) the government actually violated the rights of ethnic Bulgarians. In what was a typical instance of the zero sum game rhetoric of nationalism, they assumed in their public statements that any concession to ethnic minorities entails serious disadvantages to the ethnic majority. They claimed therefore that the reversal of the assimilatory policies codified in the resolution of the Central Committee of the Communist Party was against the interests of the Bulgarian nation.<sup>50</sup> In a declaration to the Parliament on January 2, 1990 the Committee for Defense of National Interests stated that the issue of the Muslims in the country was “a national problem of paramount importance.”<sup>51</sup> This “national” framing was radically different from the framing of the problem as a humanitarian issue by non-nationalist and Muslim organizations and even by the new Communist Party leadership. One consequence was that the solution to this “national problem of paramount importance” could only be arrived at after “an immediate investigation of how the national question is legally solved in other countries.” This investigation should be “the basis for ... a constructive dialogue conforming with the concrete historical reality on the Balkans.”<sup>52</sup>

If this insistence on the putatively adverse consequences of the government's new ethnic policies can be considered their "substantive" claim, the nationalists also had a "formal" claim. They objected to the particular manner in which the decision to recompense the Muslims for the previous infringements on their rights had been taken. The government had acted in an anti-democratic way, the ethnonationalist movement argued, by making this decision without consulting the many organizations and groups that had started to emerge after November 1989. In its declaration the Committee for Defense of National Interests accused the new state leadership of having "taken once again categorical and irreversible decisions" and "forced its dictates on popular opinion."<sup>53</sup> As one of the protest leaders put it, "We are worried by the fact that the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party has decided on an extremely sensitive and complicated issue without considering who the actual implementation of this decision would rest upon. They did the same thing ... when they decided on the implementation of [the renaming campaign in] 1984 and 1985."<sup>54</sup>

Why and how was the discourse of ethnonational mobilization recognized as legitimate by other political actors and by the thousands of people who participated in the nationalist rallies? Any conclusions can be only tentative given the notorious difficulty of empirically studying communication and reception by large audiences.<sup>55</sup> There seems to exist a consensus that exposure to and familiarity with a cultural product or piece of information facilitates reception.<sup>56</sup> It is therefore plausible to argue that the discourse of ethnonational mobilization was successful in gaining legitimacy because it drew on existing discursive practices that had already been recognized as legitimate in the public sphere of post-communist Bulgaria. One can identify analytically two "cultural idioms"<sup>57</sup> that were current and available in this particular historical setting. One of these cultural idioms was the "domestic" discourse of Bulgarian national unity as developed in the years of state socialism. This was the source of the "substantive" language of ethnonational mobilization. The other discursive practice was the "international" discourse of democracy, civil society, and human rights that had begun to gain hegemony with the progress of Gorbachev's reforms and the subsequent pluralization of the political field in the country. These were the sources from which the language of ethnonational mobilization drew for its "formal" claim.

The "domestic" discourse of Bulgarian national unity was conceived and disseminated in the early stage of "national awakening" among

Bulgarians within the Ottoman empire.<sup>58</sup> Subsequently it was powerfully institutionalized with the establishment by the Great Powers of an independent Bulgarian principality in 1878. Finally, the idiom of the Bulgarian nation was increasingly employed by the official socialist state in its quest for legitimacy. Thus the socialist state had instilled in its subjects a concern for national values. Yet for the subjects of state socialism, nationalism was not identical with communism. It referred only partially to the forty-five years of rule by the Communist Party. Its global referent was the Bulgarian “nation” and the Bulgarian state in its entire history, as this history was codified in discursive practices and cultural products. Therefore, the language of nationalism was appealing to those who otherwise opposed state socialism.<sup>59</sup> It could transcend social boundaries and appeal to both elites and non-elites. For elites it provided means for symbolic distancing from the now suspect apparatus of state socialism. In the context of radical changes after 1989, this strategy of distancing proved useful for preserving symbolic capitals amassed in the previous period. Claims on moral and political integrity could only be substantiated by a proof of non-involvement in the corrupt state-socialist regime. By defining and presenting themselves as “national,” elites and their organizations could downplay their “state-socialist” affiliations. For non-elites, on the other hand, the cultural idiom of the nation provided a sense of security and dignity in a rapidly and – from the actor’s point of view – unpredictably changing environment. Economic and social hardship and uncertainties people face are explained away: it is not the individual but the “nation” that suffers.<sup>60</sup>

The currency of the “international” discourse of democracy and human rights, on the other hand, had started in Bulgaria with Gorbachev’s reforms in the 1980s. As radical political changes occurred in Bulgaria and the rest of the former Soviet bloc, the idea of “democracy” became increasingly dominant and ruled out other projects for the reform of existing power structures. Even the *ancien regime* was forced to act according to the prescription of this cultural idiom in the hope that these strategic concessions would guarantee its survival.<sup>61</sup>

The discursive practices of ethnonational mobilization in Bulgaria in 1989/90 drew on both of these cultural idioms. These discursive practices produced a bricolage from existing hegemonic discourses to give the protests legitimacy in the public sphere of the nation state. The claims of the ethnonationalist protest were firmly grounded in two cultural idioms that had found resonance with the larger Bulgarian public.

David Stark discovered an analytically similar logic of action in his study of transforming post-socialist economies. He calls the strategies of economic actors “organizational hedging”: “an attempt to have a resource that can be justified or assessed by more than one standard of measure.”<sup>62</sup> Whereas the economic realm and the realm of public politics are clearly differentiated in post-socialist countries, one may speculate that the general context of organizational uncertainty generated by the transformation of the political regime prompted actors in both spheres to pursue a similar logic of action. In both cases the discursive reasoning behind action takes into account, and tries to conform to, multiple ideological standards. To return to my case, the discursive practices of the ethnonational protests in Bulgaria in 1989/90 are an example of Stark’s organizational hedging, because the resources from which this discourse was constructed came from two distinct and not necessarily complementary discursive traditions: the cultural idiom of the nation and the cultural idiom of democratization and human rights. It is exactly this strategy of double accounting – investing in *both* preexisting national and democratic sentiments and dispositions – that helps us explain the rhetorical power of Bulgarian ethnic nationalism in the post-communist public sphere.

Why was it possible to “meld” these two distinct cultural idioms in this particular context given that they are not necessarily logically deductible from each other? I have inserted the qualification of the two idioms in quotation marks to indicate that their embeddedness in domestic or particularist or, respectively, international or universalist interpretive contexts was highly relative. The “domestic” idiom of national unity is only comprehensible for somebody with practical mastery of “being Bulgarian,” that is, for all those who are institutionally identified as, and consider themselves to be, citizens of the Bulgarian nation state. At the same time it has been internationally backed up by hegemonic conceptions of the nation state as the fundamental organizing principle of polities.<sup>63</sup> The “international discourse of democracy and human rights, on the other hand, was a universally dominant *Zeitgeist* that happened to accompany and indeed in a sense “cause” the post-communist transformations in East Central Europe.<sup>64</sup> Yet, for actual actors it had a very concrete meaning as it was interpreted, mediated, and transplanted in public discussions by local elites that had preferential access to international discourses.<sup>65</sup>

In other words, the language of the ethnonational mobilization in post-Communist Bulgaria was doubly embedded in the nation-state

and the transnational cultural context. This language conformed to the standards of both domestic national and transnational democratic ideologies. From a detached perspective of ideal typical rationality, this language was undoubtedly exclusionary. Yet in the context of practical and less than perfect rationality on which the institutions of the public sphere are based, this language made perfect sense to people who, because of their social position and material interests, believed in the justice of their claims.

### **Conclusion**

I have outlined in this article the dynamics of the emergence of a post-communist public in Bulgaria. In particular, I have examined two aspects of this process: the social composition and the discursive practices of the protests. What conclusions can be drawn from this case study? On a most general level one can see that employing the idiom of ethnic nationalism in this case, too, was a useful discursive strategy in public struggles for material and symbolic resources. In this sense, ethnonational protest in post-Communist Bulgaria is not unique analytically. It bears a striking resemblance to other cases of post-communist ethnonational mobilization. Neither is it unique from a broader perspective: at least not in the European context where, since the early nineteenth century, claims and demands by political actors quite often have been framed in the language of the nation. The institutional framework and cultural logic of the modern public sphere – as embedded within the nation state and the international context of nation states – provides ample space for the articulation of these national demands.

What makes the public sphere a good place to articulate nationalist claims is the fact that human reasoning and argumentation – the ideals on which our modern idea of public sphere is based – are never perfectly rational and universalist. In more concrete terms, my analysis of the discursive practices of Bulgarian post-communist nationalists suggests that the rhetorical power of non-universalist national claims in the public sphere is conditional also on the ability of their proponents to explore the less-than-perfect rationality of public discourse to demonstrate and argue convincingly the connection between these particularist claims and the universalist premises on which our idea of the public sphere is based. In my case the connection was argued successfully by actors who pointed out the non-democratic way in

which an otherwise legitimately democratic decision had been made. In doing this, they relied on the activation of cultural idioms that had been available and familiar to the larger public.

What can be distilled from this finding is an empirically testable hypothesis: the success of national mobilization is conditional upon the ability of leaders and adherents to link their claims to the democratic values underlying the modern public sphere. Whereas the recent critical literature on the public sphere and civil society has alerted us usefully to the connection between the public sphere and modern nationalism, the particular social and rhetorical mechanisms that have been at play in this connection still remain largely unexplored. It is my aim in this article to suggest a possible direction in which the empirical specification of these mechanisms may proceed. For example, one way to work toward such a specification is to develop a series of sustained comparisons of different cases of nationalist mobilization. The aim of these comparisons would be to establish whether nationalist movements systematically link their discourse to the ideals of the public sphere and, most importantly, whether the success of these movements is contingent upon this ideological framing of their discourses.

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## Notes

1. Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1989). It should be noted that the German concept of *Öffentlichkeit* has a more general meaning than the standard English translation “public sphere” in that it denotes both the institution and the condition of “publicness.”
2. See the excellent discussion in Craig Calhoun, “Introduction: Habermas and the Public Sphere,” in Calhoun, editor, *Habermas and the Public Sphere* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1996).
3. Michael Mann, *The Sources of Social Power*, Vol. 2: *The Rise of Classes and Nation-States, 1760–1914* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 36.
4. Dmitri N. Shalin, “Critical Theory and the Pragmatist Challenge,” *American Journal of Sociology* 98 (1992): 254–256.
5. Jeffrey Alexander, “The Paradoxes of Civil Society,” *Occasional Paper* 16, Social Research Centre, The University of Hong Kong, 1994, 12.
6. For a critique of Habermas’s view that does not theorize the link between private and public identities and thus tends to reify them, see Craig Calhoun, “The Politics of Identity and Recognition,” in *Critical Social Theory: Culture, History and the Challenge of Difference* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), esp. 217, and Margaret R. Somers, “Narrating and Naturalizing Civil Society and Citizenship Theory: The Place of Political Culture and the Public Sphere,” *Sociological Theory* 13 (1995): 229–273. Additionally, the public sphere has the performative and normative power to decide what issues are of proper public concern and thus subtly to exclude themes and identities by relegating them to the “private” domain. See John Dewey, *The Public and Its Problem: An Essay in Political Inquiry* (Chicago: Gateway Books, 1946), and Nancy Fraser, “Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy,” in Calhoun, editor, *Habermas and the Public Sphere*.
7. See for example, Calhoun, “Introduction,” 37–38 and Geoff Eley, “Nations, Publics, and Political Cultures.” Habermas himself concedes that his initial formulation was premised on an overly holistic conception of “society” (“Further Reflections on the Public Sphere,” in Calhoun, editor, *Habermas and the Public Sphere*). Yet he does not engage in a discussion of the importance of particularist identities in the public sphere.
8. Philip Smith has captured well the analytical shortcomings of this mode of thinking in his “Barbarism and Civility in the Discourses of Fascism, Communism, and Democracy: Variations on a Set of Themes,” in Jeffrey C. Alexander, editor, *Real Civil Societies: Dilemmas of Institutionalisation* (London: Sage, 1998), 116: “In a *Weltanschauung* of utopian theorizing, where a ‘good’ civil society was conceptually juxtaposed to an ‘evil’ totalitarianism there could be little room for a more analytical and relativistic but less Manichean approach.”
9. Sheri Berman, “Civil Society and the Collapse of the Weimar Republic,” *World Politics* 49 (1997): 401–429.
10. Mabel Berezin, *Making the Fascist Self: The Political Culture of Interwar Italy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997).
11. Geoff Eley, “Remapping the Nation: War, Revolutionary Upheaval and State Formation in Eastern Europe, 1914–1923,” in Howard Aster and Peter Potichnyi, editors, *Ukrainian-Jewish Relations in Historical Perspective* (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, 1990), 226. See also his “Nations, Publics, and

- Political Cultures: Placing Habermas in the Nineteenth Century,” in Craig Calhoun, editor, *Habermas and the Public Sphere* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1992), as well as Geoff Eley and Ronald Grigor Suny, “Introduction: From the Moment of Social History to the Work of Cultural Studies,” in Eley and Suny, editors, *Becoming National: A Reader* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).
12. Jeremy King, “Loyalty and Polity, Nation and State: A Town in Habsburg Central Europe, 1848–1948.” Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1998.
  13. David Laitin, “National Revivals and Violence,” *Archives Europeennes de Sociologie* 36 (1995): 3–43.
  14. Ronald Grigor Suny, *The Revenge of the Past: Nationalism, Revolution, and the Collapse of the Soviet Union* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), Chris Hann, “Nationalism and Civil Society in Central Europe: From Ruritania to the Carpathian Euroregion,” in John A. Hall, editor, *The State of the Nation: Ernest Gellner and the Theory of Nationalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).
  15. Jeffrey Alexander, “Collective Action, Culture and Civil Society: Secularizing, Updating, Inverting, Revising and Displacing the Classical Model of Social Movements,” in Jon Clark and Mario Diani, editors, *Alain Touraine* (London: Palmer, 1996), 229.
  16. Cf. Calhoun, “Introduction,” 37–38, and Eley, “Nations, Publics, and Political Culture,” 306.
  17. An impressive treatment of discursive practices from a similar perspective is Robert Wuthnow, *Communities of Discourse: Ideology and Social Structure in the Reformation, the Enlightenment, and European Socialism* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989).
  18. A good overall scholarly treatment of the history and culture of Turks and other Muslim communities in Bulgaria is not available. The views of Turkish national historiography are best represented by Bilâl N. Simsir, *The Turks of Bulgaria (1878–1985)* (Nicosia: Rustem, 1988), those of its Bulgarian counterpart by Valeri Stoianov, *Turското naselenie v Bălgariia mezhdū poliusite na etnicheskata politika* (Sofia: LIK, 1998). For a brief overview, see Wolfgang Höpken, “Türken und Pomaken in Bulgarien,” in Georg Brunner and Hans Lemberg, editors, *Volksgruppen in Ostmittel- und Südosteuropa* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 1994).
  19. The relatively sharp distinction between “Turkish” and “Bulgarian” names is deeply embedded in the patterns of the hegemonic Bulgarian national culture as it crystallized with the process of nation- and state-building. A good example of the nationalist “scholarly” ideology of what proper “Bulgarian” names are, is Nikolai Mizov, *Tainata na lichnoto ime* (Sofia: Partizdat, 1978). Several personal names of old pre-Ottoman Turkish origin, for example, are considered “Bulgarian” because they were the names of legendary old Bulgarian rulers, the old Bulgarians themselves being one of the pre-Ottoman Turkish tribes. In general, the allegedly pure reservoir of real “Bulgarian” names in fact consists of borrowing from various ethnocultural traditions. Nor is the nomenclature of “Turkish” names less heterogeneous. It contains layers of traditional Turkish names, post-Ottoman modern Turkish names, traditional Muslim names, etc. See İlhan Başgöz, “The Meaning and Dimension of Change of Personal Names in Turkey,” *Turcica* 15 (1983): 201–429.
  20. Stoianov, *Turското naselenie*, 160–124. It is not clear what the exact reasons for the authorities to start this unprecedentedly violent campaign were. It is beyond doubt that they wanted to mobilize public opinion by an appeal to nationalism, as one of

- the reviewers suggested. Why they were determined to use violence, however, remains a mystery.
21. Yulian Konstantinov, "An Account of Pomak Conversions in Bulgaria (1912–1990)," in Gerhard Seewann, editor, *Minderheitensfragen in Südosteuropa* (München: R. Oldenbourg, 1992).
  22. Stoianov, *Turското naselenie*, Krástio Petkov and Georgi Fotev, editors, *Ethnicheskiiat konflikt v Bãlgariia 1989: Sotsiologicheski arkhiv* (Sofia: Institut po sotsiologiia pri BAN, 1990).
  23. Ibid. The stream of Turks emigrating to Turkey has never ceased since the creation of the modern Bulgarian state. Immediately after the installation of the state-socialist regime in 1945–1948, a peak was reached in 1949–1951 when more than 150,000 Turks were basically expelled by the Bulgarian government. In the following years, the flow dwindled, but the paths of emigration remained well trodden: around 130,000 Turks left Bulgaria between 1968 and 1978. Another peak was reached with the mass exodus of 1989. See Wolfgang Höpken, "Emigration and Integration von Bulgarien-Türken seit dem Zweiten Weltkrieg: Ein Vergleich der Auswanderungswellen von 1950/1 und 1989," in Gerhard Seewann, editor, *Minderheitensfragen in Südosteuropa* (München: R. Oldenbourg, 1992) and Huey Louis Kostanick, *Turkish Resettlement of Bulgarian Turks, 1950–1953* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1957).
  24. "10 November 1989: A Coup or a Resignation," *The Insider* (1990): 39–42.
  25. In 1985 the country had reached the lowest level of economic growth after WWII. The trend had not been reversed by late 1989 despite half-hearted attempts at radical economic and political reforms in the atmosphere of Gorbachev's *glasnost*. See Wolfgang Höpken, "Perestrojka oder potemkinsche Dörfer? Zum Stand der Umgestaltung in Bulgarien," *Südosteuropa* 38 (1989): 277.
  26. Radost Ivanova, *Sbogom, dinozavri, dobre doshli, krokodili! Ethnologiiia na promianata* (Sofia: Akademichno izdatelstvo "Prof. Marin Drinov," 1997).
  27. Petãr Mladenov, who replaced Zhivkov, confronted the issue of the ethnic Turks four days after his ascension to power. On November 14, 1989 he had a meeting with intellectuals where he sought their support for the political reform his team wished to introduce. He stated then that the assimilatory policies must be discontinued, but that the government needed to act with caution. These considerations seem to account for the relatively late date on which the Party leadership tackled the issue: almost two months after Zhivkov's resignation.
  28. The officials' statement was reported by the national news agency BTA, the national news agency on December 30, 1989.
  29. There are no reliable data on the number of members in this organization. Subsequently, the Committee and the avowedly nationalist parties that sprang from it failed to rally more than marginal mass support.
  30. Ivanova, *Sbogom dinozavri*.
  31. There are no exact data available on the precise numerical strength of these protests. In the district center of Kãrdzhali (with around 50,000 inhabitants) 10,000 were reported by Reuters to have demonstrated on the main square on January 2, 1990. In Shumen, the capital of another district with mixed Bulgarian and Turkish population, the Bulgarian national radio reported 2,000 demonstrators five days later. These figures are most probably exaggerated given that at this point in time the news media were able, for the first time in decades, to "make" news without censorship and direction by party-state authorities. This possible amplification of the scope of ethnonational mobilization by the media, however, is important by

itself. The heightened attention of hungry media made the salience and impact of the nationalist protests disproportionately high relative to the numeric strength of the demonstrations.

32. Katherine Verdery, *National Ideology under Socialism: Identity and Cultural Politics in Ceaușescu's Romania* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), Mihály Vajda, *Orosz szocializmus Közép-Európában* (Budapest: Századvég, 1994), and, less ambitiously, Marin V. Pundeff, "Nationalism and Communism in Bulgaria," in *Bulgaria in American Perspective: Political and Cultural Issues* (Boulder: East European Monographs, 1994).
33. Many of the arguments in this and the following subsections are elaborations on the succinct formulations in Gerald W. Creed, "The Bases of Bulgaria's Ethnic Policies," *The Anthropology of East Europe Review* 9 (1990): 12–17.
34. On the frequently neglected crucial role of lower ranking Communist officials in the disintegration of state-socialist regimes, see Daniel V. Friedheim, "Regime Collapse in the Peaceful East German Revolution: The Role of Middle-Level Officials," *German Politics* 2 (1993): 97–112.
35. In a survey taken between December 25 and 28, 1989, 75 percent of 713 Communist Party officials at the local level expressed distrust in the central party leadership. See Petkov and Fotev, editors, *Etnicheskiat Konflikt*, 208.
36. Stephen Ashley, "Territorial Feudalism Attacked," *RFE Bulgarian Situation Report* (1987): 9–14. A similar crusade against bureaucracy was the initial inspiration for Milosevic's populist nationalism in Serbia. See Veljko Vujacic, "Communism and Nationalism in Russia and Serbia," Ph.D. dissertation. University of California, 1995.
37. Stephen Ashley, "Problems and Controversies over the New Regional System," *RFE Bulgarian Situation Report* (1987): 3–7.
38. Of the leading district officials, 29 percent were replaced in the first round of reform in 1986. Two of the four district secretaries in the "Muslim" region of Shumen were replaced. In addition, the district leadership there, as well as the leadership in another mixed region, the Kârdzhali district, was severely criticized by central authorities for not performing the right "ideological work" among the Muslim population. In the course of the administrative reform in 1987, only 16 percent of the District Committee Secretaries of the Communist Parties preserved their top positions. See Ashley, "Problems and Controversies," 13, and "Major Changes in the Districts Prior to the BCP Congress," *RFE Bulgarian Situation Report* (1986), 15.
39. Stephen Ashley, "New Regional System Introduced," 6. Höpken, "Perestroika," 288, gives a higher total of 28,000 people.
40. Michael D. Kennedy and Ireneusz Bialecki, "Power and the Logic of Distribution in Poland," *East European Politics and Societies* 3 (1989): 300–328.
41. On the numerous visits of highly placed central officials to these regions, see G. S., "Officials Say There Are No Turks in Bulgaria," *RFE Bulgarian Situation Report* (1985): 4–7.
42. Turkish protests were guided quite often by the assumption that the renaming campaign had been the project of local authorities acting without the knowledge of the central government. See Petkov and Fotev, editors, *Etnicheskiat Konflikt*, 267.
43. Stephen Ashley, "Ethnic Unrest during January," *RFE Report on Eastern Europe* (1990): 4–11. The meeting of the Central Committee of the Communist Party on which the reversal of policies was discussed had a duplicitous agenda. On the one

hand, there was the need to reverse the policies of the regime. On the other hand, the record of those who had been involved in their design and implementation and who still occupied high positions in the Communist hierarchy had to be cleansed. The Communist establishment in East Central Europe had developed a ritual of denouncing its “errors” without undermining the strong bases of its power. For the first time, this ritual was practiced after Stalin’s death when in the Soviet Union and its East European satellites Stalin and his associates were criticized for their abuse of power. Yet this critique did not bring about any radical changes in the priorities or the power base of the Communist Party. Since then the ritual had been repeated in different countries in periods of crisis or intra-party elite shifts. It was the same ritual practice that the Central Committee followed at its meeting on December 29, 1989.

44. Stefan Troebst, “Nationalismus als Demokratisierungshemmnis in Bulgarien: Von der Verfassungsdiskussion zur Präsidentschaftswahl (Mai 1991–Januar 1992),” *Südosteuropa* 101 (1992), 194.
45. Thus, in the fall of 1986 alone, a total of 1,300 school teachers were settled to work in the district of Kârdzhali (Stephen Ashley, “‘Territorial Feudalism’ Attacked,” 13).
46. This is what an ethnographer reports on the attitude of ethnic Bulgarian workers in a factory in a mixed region after the Turks’ exodus: “All [workers] believe that they [the Turks] should not be admitted back to Bulgaria, mainly because they will bring many diseases with them. Yet from our conversations . . . we believe that the main argument behind the Bulgarians’ unwillingness to see those who left for Turkey come back is the *fear* that many property problems will arise. There was hardly anyone who had not benefited in some way from the situation by buying a house, selling a car, taking over cattle or an abandoned plot of land. Everybody’s material interests would be hurt if a mass return started.” (Petkov and Fotev, editors, *Etnicheskiat Konflikt*, 267, emphasis in the original). This negative attitude toward a possible return of the Turks is all the more startling since workers experienced many difficulties after the exodus. For example, they had to work long shifts in order to make up for the absent Turkish workers. (Ibid.)
47. After the signing of the Neuilly convention between Bulgaria and Greece in 1919 about 123,000 Bulgarian immigrants from Greece were settled in areas where Turkish communities live. (Kostanick, *Turkish Resettlement*, 90). Between 1920 and 1934 forty-five newly formed settlements inhabited mainly by ethnic Bulgarian refugees were given the official status of *selo* (village) and *makhala* (neighborhood). See Petâr Koledarov, *Promeni v imenata i statuta na selishtata v Bâlgariia* (Sofia: Nauka i izkustvo, 1973).
48. For the case of Kârdzhali, see Rumian Slavov, “Sindromât na nedoverieto,” *Pogled*, January 15, 1990.
49. Richard Handler, *Nationalism and the Politics of Culture in Quebec* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988).
50. Beside the many national flags the protesters waved at a rally in front of the Parliament building in Sofia on January 6, 1990 there were placards with slogans such as “Bulgaria is not Cyprus” (referring to the long-standing conflict between Turks and Greeks on the island) and “Bulgaria united and indivisible.” These statements were based on the typical nationalist assumption of an ethnic “slippery slope”: once rights are granted to non-titular minorities, conflict and secession will be the inevitable outcomes. At the same rally “many speakers spoke about sabotage and provocations committed by Islamic fundamentalists: drawing crosses on the doors

- of Bulgarian homes, waving Turkish flags in Bulgarian territory, [and] deliberately destroying valuable products.” (BTA, January 6, 1990).
51. As reported by BTA on the same day.
  52. *Ibid.*
  53. *Ibid.*
  54. Valentin Georgiev of Razgrad on Radio Sofia, January 4, 6: 30 pm.
  55. Cf. Andrea L. Press, “The Sociology of Cultural Reception: Notes toward an Emerging Paradigm,” in Diana Crane, editor, *The Sociology of Culture: Emerging Theoretical Perspectives* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994).
  56. Gary Alan Fine, “Small Groups and Culture Creation: The Idioculture of Little League Baseball Teams,” *American Sociological Review* 44 (1979): 733–745, and Wilbur Schramm, *Men, Messages, and Media: A Look at Human Communication* (New York: Harper and Row, 1973), 206. See also Michael Schudson, “How Culture Works: Perspectives from Media Studies on the Efficacy of Symbols,” *Theory and Society* 18 (1989): 153–180, on the importance of “resonance” of symbols with the presuppositions of the audience.
  57. Theda Skocpol, “Cultural Idioms and Political Ideologies in the Revolutionary Reconstruction of State Power: A Rejoinder to Sewell,” *Journal of Modern History* 57 (1985): 86–96.
  58. Radina Springborn, “Die bulgarische Nationalbewegung,” in Norbert Reiter, editor, *Nationalbewegungen auf dem Balkan* (Berlin: Otto Harrassowitz, 1983), Marin V. Pundeff “Bulgarian Nationalism,” and “Les racines du nationalisme Bulgare,” in *Bulgaria in American Perspective*.
  59. See Mark Baskin, “Bulgaria: From Critique to Civil Society?” in Raymond Taras, editor, *The Road of Disillusionment: From Critical Marxism to Postcommunism in Eastern Europe* (Armonk: M. E. Sharpe, 1992), for the mild nationalist critique articulated by Bulgarian intellectuals in the 1980s and Iliia Iliev, “The Proper Use of Ancestors,” unpublished manuscript, for their historiographic strategies.
  60. Katherine Verdery, “Nationalism and National Sentiment in Postsocialist Romania,” in *What was Socialism*.
  61. In 1988 Zhivkov’s government established a Committee on Human Rights as a proof for its concern with these matters. See Duncan Perry, “From Opposition to Government: Bulgaria’s ‘Union of Democratic Forces’ and its Antecedents,” in Wolfgang Höpken, editor, *Revolution auf Raten: Bulgariens Weg zur Demokratie* (München: R. Oldenbourg, 1996), 28.
  62. David Stark, “Recombinant Property in East European Capitalism,” *American Journal of Sociology* 101 (1996): 993–1027.
  63. Craig Calhoun, *Nationalism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997).
  64. Juan J. Linz, and Alfred Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996).
  65. On the role of gatekeepers and interpreters in transnational cultural flows, see Ulf Hannerz, *Cultural Complexity: Studies in the Social Organization of Meaning* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992).