

Vesalius College

Do Democratic Institutions Mean Democracy?
The Case of Post-Communist Bulgaria

Georgi Kirichkov
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Prof. Dr. Albena Azmanova
Thesis Director

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I would like to extend my gratitude to my grandmother without which none of this could have been possible.

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Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	i
Table of Contents	ii
I. Introduction	1
1. Topic Importance	1
2. Sources	3
3. Structure	4
4. Thesis Statement and Method	5
II. The Communist State	10
1. Brief History of Communist Bulgaria	10
a. Rulers of Bulgaria 1947-1989	10
b. Domestic policies	14
c. Economy	17
d. External affairs	20
e. Zhivkov's fall	22
f. Zhivkov's dictatorship	22
2. Analysis of the State Institutions	26
a. Multiparty system and parliament	29
b. Separation of powers	30
c. Freedoms and rights	34
d. Conclusion	37
3. Analysis of the Civil Society	38
4. Conclusion	45
III. The Post-Communist State	47
1. The Decline and Fall of the Communist State	47

a.	The “regenerative process”	47
b.	The ecological catastrophe in Ruse	51
c.	The palace coup and the National Round Table	53
d.	The Great National Assembly and the elections	59
e.	Conclusion.....	62
2.	Analysis of the Institutions Set Up by the New Constitution	63
a.	State institutions	63
b.	Multiparty system and popularly elected parliament	69
c.	Separation of powers	70
d.	Conclusion.....	72
3.	Analysis of the Civil Society.....	72
a.	The society in the late 1980s	72
b.	The opposition.....	75
c.	Voting behavior.....	78
d.	Conclusion.....	82
IV.	Conclusion.....	83
V.	Bibliography.....	86
VI.	Appendix	90

I. Introduction

1. *Topic Importance*

In my research I am going to study the fall of the communist dictatorship in Bulgaria and the institutionalization of democracy. The wars fought in Afghanistan (2001-2002) and Iraq (2003) were quick and decisive. Yet the fate of those states is still undetermined. The U.S.-led coalitions are in favor of placing democratically-elected governments in both states, which will ensure basic freedoms for its citizens and giving them the choice of how to run their own countries. Despite the best intentions, it is obvious that there are factions which would do just about anything to prevent the introduction of such practices in the aforementioned countries. This leads me to wonder whether democracy can be imposed as a form of government.

Many great philosophers have pondered over the meaning of democracy and it could be said that each one of them had a different vision in mind and that is why there are so many distinct variations of democracy – representative democracy, participatory democracy, liberal democracy, social democracy, etc. Yet democracy involves the demos – the people – to take part in the kratos – the rule. Is it possible to have a people who are in favor of a democratic government to be ruled by a non-democratic government, e.g. an oligarchy? Is it possible to have a democratic government without the people having a desire to be ruled in such a way?

One can argue that the former case can exist, but sooner or later the non-democratic regime will come to its demise from the discontent of the people, and the people will put in its place a democratic one. The latter case seems to be absurd. The 20th century is full of examples that show that even democratic societies¹ were enslaved by power-corrupt dictators.

¹ Societies which uphold democratic form of government and have through culture and tradition accepted the democratic values and the democratic form of government to be superior to any other government. When people have accepted democracy as the best way to govern their society they will not regard any regime that does not accept political input from the people as legitimate.

Given that the democratic Weimer Republic fell into Hitler's hands what could be expected from a post-communist Bulgaria whose population has been ruled with an iron fist for over 600 years and was rarely consulted upon any governmental policies? The 20th-century dictatorships and the cases of Afghanistan and Iraq may be cited to support the claim that a non-democratic society² cannot be ruled by a democratic government, but in my thesis I will prove that it is possible to have a democratic government and non-democratic society and yet that does not destine the government to return to its non-democratic practices, but rather that the society is to change and become a democratic one.

The period I am going to study in my thesis and the events that take place in Bulgaria are part of a greater wave of events that took place in Eastern and Central Europe during the end of the 1980s and 1990s, which brought a resolution to 150-year-old ideological debate between communism and capitalism. The failure of communism in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and its satellites, one of which was Bulgaria, put an end to the Cold War and the constant outstrip of both hemispheres – Eastern and Western – of proving their domination over the other. The coups d'état and the revolutions that took place in the Soviet bloc brought total change in the economic and political systems of the communist countries – from dictatorial governments, dominated by a single person or an oligarchy, to democratically elected governments; from a planned economy to a free market economy. All those radical changes were sudden and posed countless questions for political scientists, philosophers, economists and politicians to answer. Some of these questions I am going to address in this thesis.

² A society that is not accustomed to a democratic form of government and it also does not acknowledge it as a superior to other forms of government

2. Sources

The sources I have used I can roughly divide into three groups – primary sources in Bulgarian; secondary and tertiary sources written in Bulgarian by Bulgarian authors; and secondary and tertiary sources in English by Bulgarian and foreign authors.

The first group consists of governmentally issued documents – the constitutions, laws voted by the parliament and published in the *State Gazette*, as well as a chronology of events and meetings. I have analyzed and critically evaluated all primary sources. For those sources that are in question or are suspicious I have noted so.

The second group was acquired from personal and public libraries and Bulgaria. I have translated the Bulgarian titles and also included the original, non-translated, text for easier future references. I must note that this group of sources is the one that needs special attention, regarding its credibility. In order to avoid biased and corrupt literature, I have used authors who have published their works in other languages than Bulgarian (predominantly English) that have been reviewed by the wider academic community and also authors who are acknowledged experts in the field.

The third group of sources I acquired mainly through the Internet databases of numerous non-governmental organizations – to name a few – Freedom House, Institute for Market Economy, Center for Social Practices, Open Society, Centre for Liberal Strategies and last but not least – the NATO fellowship program. The NGOs whose publications I have used have proven to be by all means independent. The Bulgarian NGOs I have used mostly receive their funding from outside of the country – the United Nations and the European Union and for that reason I accept them as reliable, academic sources. I should note that the majority of the Bulgarian authors are prominent historians and political scientists.

3. Structure

Due to the fact that some of the terms I use are ambiguous or have a double meaning I am going to provide an explanation whenever the term is first encountered. My explanation will be in a footnote or in separate paragraphs depending on the length of the definition.

I've divided my research chronologically into two chapters – the communist state and the post-communist state. I am not going to use the term “democratic state” as democracy is in question in my research and is not taken for granted. Each chapter is divided into subchapters which address particular aspect of the respective time frame.

Chapter II analyses the dictatorial regime of Todor Zhivkov and the condition of Bulgarian society throughout the regime. The period of Zhivkov's government is important to show the type of regime. It is also going to portray the institutions of the communist state, their nature (totalitarian, democratic, etc) and the state's attitude towards personal liberty and the development of civil society. The research of the regime itself and its institutions would allow me to form a conclusion about the society itself. Society develops slowly and it takes several generations before certain political traditions become part of society. For that matter my study of the regime and its society will be an important point in defense of my thesis that the people were not sufficiently free to reach the conclusion that democracy would be better form of government.

Chapter III of this thesis will analyze the post-communist state of Bulgaria. I review the historical context as that, combined with the history of the communist regime, plays an important role in the fall of the government and the formation of some of the new institutions. In this chapter I also study the new Bulgarian constitution adopted in 1991. I used that in order to prove that the constitution guarantees democratic input and it also ensures that the power of the people is not monopolized or abused. My final research will be on the civil society at the time of the fall of the communist regime. I have researched the civil groups that were active in the dawn of Zhivkov's fall, their significance and influence on the regime. I

have also explored the voting behavior of the people and tried to interpret what it influenced it. In order to prove that my hypothesis is true (i.e. that the democratic institutions were set up before there was a coherent democratic civil society) I am going to use also sociological research that was conducted after 1992 when the democratic institutions were put in place. While the relevance of such research might be questioned since it was done after the period studied, I believe this depends greatly on the result of said research. For example, if the research results show that there was no democratic civil society at the time of the research, then that will also show that there was no democratic civil society at all until the moment the research was conducted, thus supporting my thesis. Democratic values are imbued into society during a lengthy period of time. Because of that it is impossible and also illogical to assume that a democratic civil society was built and destroyed from 1992 until the research was conducted due to the short period of time.

The evaluation of institutions and civil society is essential for proving my hypothesis. I, however, consider that the historical context is also quite important because political events do not happen in a vacuum and the historical events would further clarify the environment and the setting for the events that would build the democracy and bring the communist regime to its demise.

4. Thesis Statement and Method

My thesis is going to be a research within the overall framework of “Democratic transition.” History has labeled the changes in the regimes in Eastern and Central Europe in the 1990s as “velvet revolutions.” They were “velvet” because they did not involve any fighting and bloodshed, in contrast to the French revolution. They were also regarded as “revolutions” because they involved the people rebelling against the government. Was that the case? The transitions from dictatorial to democratic governments were indeed velvet, and

maybe some of them were “revolutions” but not all. Marx expected the workers to rise against the capitalists and to overthrow the regime, yet all communist revolutions involved a coup and not a revolution. Following Marx’ logic one can assume that people brought down communism as it degenerated from dictatorship of the proletariat to dictatorship over the proletariat. As part of my thesis I will address the above mentioned assumption – Did the Bulgarian people initiate the fall of dictatorship and communism because they preferred democracy and market economy? The core purpose of my thesis, however, is to find out whether the current democratic path of development of the Bulgarian state, characterized by separation of powers, respect for human and minority rights and universal suffrage was a desire of the Bulgarian people that was accumulated during the communist years or whether it was imposed by the communist leaders and/or other elites?

According to Michael Bernhard the former was the case in Poland. A civil society that desired change in the government was formed which ultimately led to the change of the form of government.³ The latter would seem unreasonable because the communist leaders had exclusive power over the state and as such they would be reluctant to have to share it and to have to earn it through democratic elections. Although it seems unreasonable for democracy to have been instituted by the dictatorial leaders of Bulgaria, the coup d’état of 1989 and the acceptance of a democratic constitution in 1991, long before the existence of a coherent, democratic civil society supports the latter assumption.

As my study is in the field of democratic transition I am going to use its terminology in order to rephrase my thesis question: “Was the Bulgarian democracy consolidated at the end of its democratic transition?” Linz and Stepan define democratic transition to be complete

when sufficient agreement has been reached about political procedures to produce an elected government, when a government comes to power that is the direct result of a free and popular vote, when this government *de facto* has the authority to generate new

³ Michael Bernhard, "Civil Society and Democratic Transition in East Central Europe," Political Science Quarterly 108.2 (Summer 1993): 314-17.

policies, and when the executive, legislative and judicial power generated by the new democracy does not have to share power with other bodies *de jure*.⁴

They also define democracy to be consolidated whenever it is “the only game in town.”⁵ I.e. the people, even facing a grave political and/or economic crisis would still desire further political changes to be carried out within a democratic framework.⁶ Thus the society of a Linz and Stepan’s consolidated democratic state would equate to my concept of a “democratic society.” A society of a non-consolidated democracy or of a non-democratic state would equate to my “non-democratic society.”

In order to answer the questions I have posed I am going to define several independent variables which I will study in the different chapters of the thesis and use to determine the state of my dependent variable – the desire for democracy of the Bulgarian citizens in the period from 1989 to 1992.

My independent variables are two types – exogenous and endogenous. The former is just one – the foreign relations and policies of Bulgaria while the latter include the type of the dictatorial regime; the type of the institutions of the dictatorial regime; the civil society of the regime; the historical background and the history of the transition; how democratic are the institutions of the constitution from 1991; what is the state of the civil society in the end of the communist regime and also what can be inferred from the political behavior of the post-communist society.

The study of the type of regime and its institutions is important in order to draw conclusions for the civil society and its support for democratic values. The history of communist Bulgaria is capable of providing me with information regarding the policies of the dictator towards the opposition and his practices. Constant purges and persecution, for

⁴ Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan, Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University press, 1996) 3.

⁵ Ibid. 5.

⁶ Ibid. 5.

example, would be successfully preventing the creation of a stable and coherent civil society that can act in favor of democracy. An aspect of my historical overview is also the economic policies of the state, as it is important factor of its fall. Together with economics I will also explore my exogenous independent variable – the foreign policy of the communist state. In the same chapter I also study and measure how democratic the institutions were and also the society.

As I am going to measure how democratic a society is. I need to define how I am going to measure democracy and the presence of democratic values in the people. Due to the fact that democracy is a way to find common ground for ruling the country between rivaling groups (political parties) the first thing I am going to assess is the right of the society to associate and form groups. I am going to also measure the interference of the state in the civil organizations. If the state interferes and forbids certain organizations or prevents them from conducting their desired activity then the people cannot associate freely and they also cannot reach the point of seeing the benefit of being represented by political parties. Another aspect of measuring democracy would be the plurality of parties and also the electorate activity provided that there are free elections, which is the basis of democracy.

In chapter III, I will review the process of Bulgarian transition from 1989 to 1992 when the new, democratic, constitution is a fact together with the first democratic elections for both executive and legislature. The history in this case is important as it reveals several possible reasons why the people withdrew their support from the former Communist Party and the newly assembled oppositional Union of Democratic Forces was the first democratically elected party to form a parliament. Due to the fact that the judiciary is appointed by the legislature I am going to consider that the democratic election of a parliament and presidency finalizes the institutionalization of democracy. In the final subchapter I will have a detailed look at the development of the post-communist civil society.

I argue, based on my research and the data presented in the subchapter, that the building of a democratic civil society in Bulgaria is by no means finished until present day (2006).

II. The Communist State

In this chapter I will explore 3 of my 7 independent variables: the type of the regime, the economics and also the international relations – in chapter II.1; the type of the institutions and their contribution or spurring of democracy – in chapter II.2; the type of the civil society – in chapter II.3.

1. *Brief History of Communist Bulgaria*

With my overview of Communist Bulgaria I try to determine the type of regime of Zhivkov and also to assess the economics and foreign relations of the regime. The first variable I am going to use to infer the capabilities for democracy of the civil society. The economic variable will be used in future to explain some of the political events at the time of the fall of the regime together with the third variable – the foreign relations.

a. **Rulers of Bulgaria 1947-1989**

The 9th of September 1944 is the date that the Bulgarian Communist Party regarded as its coming to power. That is the date that the Soviet Union occupied Bulgaria at the end of the Second World War. But communism did not arrive suddenly. The real date that the communist regime in Bulgaria comes to power is 23 September 1947 – the day the opposition leader Nikola Petkov was executed.⁷ During that time prime minister of Bulgaria was Georgi Dimitrov – a prominent communist leader, general secretary of the Communist International (Comintern), accused and acquitted for the Reichstag fire in 1933), a firm follower of Stalinism, and ideologist of the creation of a confederation of Slavic states on the Balkan Peninsula. He was succeeded by Vasil Kolarov and a year later, in January 1950, Vulko Chervenkov came to power.

⁷ Evgenii Dainov (Евгений Дайнов), *The Political Debate and the Transition in Bulgaria (Политическия Дебат И Прехода В България)* (Sofia: Bulgarian science and culture (Българска наука и култура), 2000) 287.

Chervenkov was a firm follower of Stalin and a promoter of Stalinization. Chervenkov's presiding over the Party was characterized by massive purges and repression. In 1949 and 1950 he purged the army and the security police and by the following year about 100 000 party members were purged as well, which accounts for about 20 per cent of the total constituency of the party. Chervenkov also broke off diplomatic relations with numerous western states, some of which due to the purges of the non-orthodox churches, and managed to isolate Bulgaria from the non-communist world.⁸ Chervenkov had also gained his supreme power by branding his rivals being Titoists, as there was a rift between the Yugoslav leader, Josip Broz Tito, and Stalin. Khrushchev, however, rehabilitated Tito and thus the victims of Chervenkov's purges had to be rehabilitated as well. The fatal blow to his presidency over the Party was delivered with Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin and Stalinization in 1956. Thus the party had to react quickly. The April Plenum was held from the second to sixth of April the same year, and two days later it proclaimed that "Chervenkov was denounced as having departed from the party's 'traditional and tried methods of work.'"⁹ On the eleventh of April Zhivkov made a speech to party activists, in which he discussed the fate of the purged people who were branded as Titoists and he suggested that they should be rehabilitated. Six days later, Chervenkov resigned and Yugov was appointed prime minister to be replaced in 1962 by Zhivkov.¹⁰ From the brief overview of Chervenkov's rule I can conclude that his policies were against the development of civil society due to his use of terror and violence. The forceful collectivization was accompanied by terror against the peasants. The fact that he isolated Bulgaria from the non-communist world tied Bulgaria to the USSR, a policy to be continued by Zhivkov, and in this way made the state dependent on the Soviet Union. This

⁸ R.J. Crampton, A Short History of Modern Bulgaria (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987) 173.

⁹ Ibid. 179.

¹⁰ Peter Konstantinov (Петър Константинов), History of Bulgaria 681-2001 (История На България 681-2001) (Sofia: Karina-M, 2002) 313.

dependence would be beneficial most of the time. Nevertheless, it will also play leading role in the fall of Zhivkov and also the last non-democratic communist government.

Todor Zhivkov was the *de facto* ruler of Bulgaria for almost half a century – from his election as a first secretary of the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party on March 4, 1954, he held the country in his iron grip until November 10, 1989, when he was ousted by fellow party members. Zhivkov was also head of state from July 7, 1971, to November 17, 1989, as well as Prime minister. The Bulgarian strongman was born in Pravets in a peasant family and joined the then-illegal Communist Party in 1928. He fought with the Bulgarian resistance in 1943 and took part in the coup d'état of September 9, 1944, that overthrew the pro-German government. He was elected in the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party (BCP) in 1948 and became one of the secretaries in 1950.¹¹

Even though Zhivkov managed to get Chervenkov removed from the post of prime minister, this was definitely not the end of Stalin's supporter. In 1957 a new wave of Bulgarian literature emerged that was not in line with the party guidelines and thus Chervenkov was appointed Minister of Education to restore law and order. As a result the union of the journalists was purged. This upheaval strengthened the positions of the conservative Yugov and Chervenkov. Nevertheless Yugov was a victim of Chervenkov's terror and as such did not cooperate with Chervenkov in removing Zhivkov, thus strengthening Zhivkov's positions.¹² Despite the fact that "Zhivkov was distinguished neither by political acumen nor unusual intelligence"¹³ he succeeded to take advantage of Khrushchev's devastating attack on Stalin at the XXII Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in October 1961. Zhivkov accused Chervenkov of "having played Stalin to

¹¹ Crampton, A Short History of Modern Bulgaria 177.

¹² Ibid. 181.

¹³ Ibid. 177.

Dimitrov's Lenin”¹⁴ and thus removed him from the Politburo and from the post of deputy prime minister.

Although Zhivkov had managed to secure more or less his position he still had to dispose of certain undesirable party elements. In March 1962 he removed Georgi Tsankov from the position of Minister of the Interior, which put him in charge of the security forces since 1951. The last obstacles in his way were the conservatives – Yugov, the prime minister, and Chervenkov, who was still a party member. On a Central Committee meeting that preceded the eighth Congress of the BCP Zhivkov took advantage of the absence of Yugov and a number of his supporters and removed him from the Politburo and from the post of prime minister. The eighth congress confirmed what he announced at the Central Committee meeting – expelled Chervenkov from the party and accused Yugov of number of crimes. Zhivkov, however, did not act on his own. For almost every action he asked Moscow for approval, a trend that is characteristic of all Bulgarian politics until the early 1990s. He even flew to see Khrushchev before announcing that Yugov is removed from the Politburo and the post of Minister of the Interior. Khrushchev also visited Bulgaria in May 1962 in order to boast support for his *protégé*.¹⁵

By the end of 1964 Zhivkov had already gained enough power to survive Khrushchev's fall. He did not kill his opponents as his predecessor did. He just deprived them of their rights within the party thus rendering them powerless. To keep himself in power he did not use mass purges of the party, he just shuffled party members from one post to other as if they were chess pieces in order to prevent them from entrenching themselves and gaining power that could allow them to challenge his supreme position. Nevertheless in 1977 the first party purge took place but it was still bloodless. Boris Velchev was dropped from the

¹⁴ Ibid. 183.

¹⁵ Konstantinov, History of Bulgaria 681-2001 (История На България 681-2001) 314.

Politburo and 38 000 other party members were expelled and their party membership cards were collected.

I am going to take a look at the policies of Zhivkov as he is the de facto leader of Bulgaria during the majority of its communist history. He is also the ruler in the 1980s, which is the period of importance in my study.

The politics conducted by Zhivkov until his ultimate grasp of power repeat part of Chervenkov's policies. The intellectuals and other pioneers of the embryo of civil society are repressed and persecuted. Zhivkov continues the tendency of extreme reliance on the USSR which was never a characteristic of the Romanian or Yugoslavian communist regimes. The purges of the party further show the dictatorial character of the regime and the fact that it does not tolerate opposition even within its circles. That has significant importance for the assessment of the regime's influence on civil society.

b. Domestic policies

The domestic policies of Zhivkov are an important measure of the type of the regime. The increase of living standards shows that the regime was not just exploitive but also realized the importance of the well-being of the subjects. The improvement of living standards was used as a venting mechanism for the frustration with the tight control of the regime over its populace and the banning of certain liberties. This way the people's discontent was controlled and was not allowed to escalate and to compel the regime to use force.

One of the first improvements that were felt was the increase in medical facilities. According to Crampton, the number of doctors per thousand persons increased from 0.87 in 1952 to 1.33 in 1958. Housing facilities were also on the increase, although the raise was much more significant in the villages than in the cities. In 1957 social welfare for those who

took part in collective farms was introduced.¹⁶ As a communist dictator and a firm follower of Sovietization, the first policies conducted by his regime were to collect the land and to foster the industrialization of the country. In 1948 there were 37 per cent of the population working in the industry; by 1969 the figure was 82 per cent. In 1963 the metallurgical factory in Kremikovtsi, a town close to Sofia, was opened. It ate one fifth of the investments spent in the last two years for the whole country and turned out to be a disaster. In 1965 Zhivkov introduced an economic reform. He allowed factories to decide for themselves what to produce after they have fulfilled the plan of the government. The wages of a factory were tied to its profitability and the directors had to consult with production committees, elected among the workers of the factory. In the same year, contracts for the assembly of Soviet and French cars were signed. The reform of 1965 was followed by another in 1968. This time minimal wages for agrarian workers were introduced. The agrarian workers were grouped into permanent sets that had some internal autonomy. This reform was shortly followed by another one, which grouped the collective farms (TKZSs) into agro-industrial complexes (AIC).¹⁷

Zhivkov's support for sovietization and continuation of the forceful collectivization further reinforce the idea of his intolerance towards the private property thus interest and groups within civil society. The regime's experiments of building enormous metallurgical factory proved unsuccessful and contribute to the financial uneasiness which will become financial failure at the end of the regime. The grouping of collective farming into agro-industrial complexes is a step towards the attempt to abolish the agrarians as a class so that the Bulgarian Agrarian National Union, with which BCP governed, would become unnecessary and thus ensure the legitimacy of the Communist Party over the complete power of the state.

In 1971 Zhivkov introduced a new constitution. It was based upon the 1944 socialist revolution and urged for the development of a socialist society and people's democracy.

¹⁶ Crampton, A Short History of Modern Bulgaria 178.

¹⁷ Ibid. 192-5.

According to it, the Bulgarian Communist Party became “leading force in the society and the state” (“ръководна сила в обществото и държавата”)¹⁸ which was quite different from the constitution drawn up by Georgi Dimitrov, which never mentioned the Communist Party. The new constitution also created the State Council, which replaced the National Assembly. The council had both legislative and executive functions. As Crampton notes: “It could initiate legislation, although all the laws, though not decrees or resolutions, had to be submitted to the Subranie for approval.”¹⁹ It consisted of a chairman, who was also the head of state, and 22 members from political organizations. Zhivkov assumed the chairman position, thus becoming Bulgaria’s president. This increased and concentrated the power in his hands even more and allowed the cult of his personality to reach that of Chervenkov.²⁰ I am going to take a closer and deeper look at that constitution in the following chapter.

The 1970s were marked with numerous experiments on behalf of Zhivkov most of which failed and worsened the economic situation of the country. In 1973 the AIC were incorporated into industrial complexes thus converting the agrarian workers into factory workers. This experiment aimed to destroy the agrarian party by making all of the population factory workers and render the agrarian party useless. For Zhivkov’s regret the experiment failed. Nevertheless the industry kept on developing; especially the transport industry, which by 1975 accounted for one third of the industrial production.²¹

One of the last issues that Zhivkov tried to tackle, while still in power, was the assimilation of the ethnic Turkish and Bulgarian-Muslim minorities. The Turks have always been a considerably big minority since the liberation of Bulgaria. Zhivkov concluded a five-year treaty in 1969 with Turkey that would allow the Bulgarian Turks to emigrate to their

¹⁸ Konstantinov, History of Bulgaria 681-2001 (История На България 681-2001) 314.

¹⁹ Crampton, A Short History of Modern Bulgaria 186.

²⁰ Konstantinov, History of Bulgaria 681-2001 (История На България 681-2001) 314.

²¹ Crampton, A Short History of Modern Bulgaria 192-5.

homeland. Nevertheless, the treaty was not renewed and only a small number of Turks left the country. The item “national identity” was erased from Bulgarian passports in 1981, but the ethnic Turks still had their Turkish names and in 1985 a massive campaign was started to Bulgarise their names. It is worth noting that similar campaigns were conducted as early as the 1950s. I am going to look much more in depth of that issue later on as it is quite important for the fall of the regime.

As a result of the forceful renaming about 50 ethnic Turks were killed. A possible explanation for this act is the desire to artificially increase the growth of the population, due to the positive growth in the areas populated with Turks and the negative growth in almost all other regions of the country. Whether this is the case is not known but this act drew very negative publicity to the Bulgarian state.²² This so-called “regenerative process” will be one of the first reasons that will turn the people against Zhivkov as we will see.

c. Economy

The Bulgarian economy has never flourished. During Zhivkov’s time, the imposition of planned economy only worsened the situation. The low prices paid for agricultural goods drove many people to the cities where the industry provided better living standards. The majority of the exports was made to the Soviet Union thus tying the economy to the Soviet market. A reason for the lack of foreign trade with other countries was the low quality of the goods produced. They were uncompetitive except for a small number of factories, among which were the chemical factory in Devnia and the pharmaceutical factory in Razgrad.²³ Nevertheless, the economy showed some progress at the end of the 1960s and during the 1970s. Tourism started to develop and very soon attracted tourists from the Soviet bloc as well as from Western Europe. Crude oil was imported at relatively low prices from the USSR, refined and then exported. The cheap oil generated large profits and by 1982 the national debt

²² Konstantinov, *History of Bulgaria 681-2001 (История На България 681-2001)* 317.

²³ *Ibid.* 316.

was halved from the 3.7 billion USD it amounted in 1979.²⁴ As we shall see later on the dependence on the USSR market for both supplies and for selling goods will prove detrimental to the Bulgarian economy as it will collapse together with its Soviet counterpart.

Besides the failure of the planned economy everywhere the Bulgarian economy was also burdened by the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA). The Council required Bulgaria to produce computers for the needs of the council's member states. Computers were illegally imported from western countries, disassembled and reproduced. Large numbers of the parts were also bought from western countries with hard currency and sold to the member states (predominantly the USSR) for rubles thus generating huge losses for Bulgaria. By the time the computers were reverse engineered and mass produced they were already out of date in comparison to the current western achievements.²⁵

At the end of 1979 the *New Economic Model* was introduced to revive the stagnated economy. It gave general guidelines to the factories but gave them the autonomy to choose the best way to fulfill the plan of the government. The profits of a factory were to be either reinvested or divided among the workers. The brigades, permanent groups of workers, were to elect their leader who would replace the old one, thus fostering competition among workers in productivity. The factories that could not adopt the newest production methods were going to be deprived of government funding.²⁶ The introduction of the *New Economic Model* is an attempt to create some form of a market economy that despite being controlled by the state will create value and efficiency. This attempt is one of the first signs that the regime feels the economy and thus the regime shaking. The introduction of more and more such principles would lead to a major problem in the future – how to disguise the resemblance to the market economy, which is worse, according to communist ideology.

²⁴ Ibid. 317.

²⁵ Ibid. 316.

²⁶ Crampton, *A Short History of Modern Bulgaria* 197-200.

Direct connection was allowed between both domestic and foreign markets. A number of government monopolies were also abolished. The *New Economic Model* was a serious divergence from the Soviet model allowing limited free market as well as the replacement of a leader through election instead of promotion. The model aimed at improving the standards of the consumer goods. It was supposed that the customers would tolerate only the best goods and that would drive the factories producing low quality goods out of business. Nevertheless, in May 1983, Zhivkov criticized the poor quality of all products and decided that the government would subsidize technological research and grant even more autonomy to the brigades which, however, did not solve the economic problems and attracted both legitimacy crisis for the regime and the USSR's disapproval.²⁷ The crisis and the disapproval were the two main reasons why Zhivkov was ousted from the Party and for the fall of the regime. I am going to explore them in more detail in another chapter.

The most important aspects of the economy for my study are two – the low quality of the goods and the continuous experiments with the economy. I've already stressed the detrimental effect of the reliance of the economy on the USSR economy, yet, as we can see this trend was never changed and communist Bulgaria was dependent for its entire existence for Soviet economic, ideological and military help. The more important aspect in this case, however, is the *New Economic Model*. Due to its close resemblance to market economy it had to be carefully disguised but it also brought other problems. Later on when the model did not bring the hoped results even more mechanisms were borrowed from market economy. That act incurred severe dissatisfaction with Bulgaria in the Kremlin due to this major deviation from socialist principles. This credibility blow would be one of the main reasons of Zhivkov's fall as we shall see.

²⁷ Ibid. 197-200.

d. External affairs

This chapter gives details on my exogenous variable – the foreign policy of the People's Republic of Bulgaria. Zhivkov's foreign policies had always had one goal – to please Moscow. He was the only head of state, who proposed his country to become the 16th Soviet republic.²⁸ Nevertheless, Crampton argues that this blind obedience to the Kremlin was not necessary for Bulgaria's survival. Its strategic position on the Balkan Peninsula was of interest to many countries. If Zhivkov had been more independent in his policies, as Romania and Yugoslavia were, the USSR would not have dared to engage a war against Bulgaria.²⁹

In terms of relations with foreign countries Zhivkov, before all, tried to improve the relations with the neighboring countries. In 1964 he concluded a treaty with Greece to settle Greek communist refugees along the common border. Relations with Romania had always been good despite Ceausescu's coolness towards the Soviet Union. The treaty with Turkey in 1969 revived the relations between the two countries, but the fact that it was not renewed shows that the diplomatic relations cooled down again. Zhivkov kept relations with Tito, despite the constant dispute over Macedonia, and was also present at Tito's funeral. The first country Zhivkov visited outside the Soviet bloc was de Gaulle's France in October 1966. In 1973 full diplomatic relations with the Federal Republic of Germany were established. In the 1980s there were already large numbers of engineers, doctors, nurses and technological advisers working in Asia, Latin America and Africa. In 1975 Zhivkov was also received by Pope Paul VI, a visit, which, unfortunately, was followed in 1982 by a unpleasant accident for which the Bulgarian secret service was blamed.³⁰

In September 1982 Mehmet Ali Agca and Bekir Celenk made an attempt on the life of Pope John Paul II. Later that day the Bulgarian embassy in Rome requested customs clearance

²⁸ Konstantinov, *History of Bulgaria 681-2001 (История На България 681-2001)* 314.

²⁹ Crampton, *A Short History of Modern Bulgaria* 197.

³⁰ *Ibid.* 190.

for a TIR lorry. It is supposed that the two assassins were recruited by the Bulgarian Secret Service, although they were Turkish citizens who had lived in Bulgaria some time before the accident. Crampton argues that the assassination might have been requested by the KGB, which is also suspected for the murder of dissident writer Georgi Markov in London in 1978. The outbursts of the accused in the dock also suggest that he would not be hired for such a task by any clandestine organization. Nevertheless, the relations between the Vatican and Bulgaria were cooler until the Pope's personal visit in Bulgaria in 2002.³¹

Another negative aspect of Zhivkov's foreign policy is the state-operated official agency Kintex. Kintex smuggled drugs into the West and used the earnings to buy weapons and sell them to right or left activists in countries "which Communist strategists wished to see destabilised."³² This led to the accusation by the United States that Bulgaria was "engaging in 'state-sponsored terrorism' and suspended cooperation with the Bulgarians on the control of narcotics."³³

The attempt on the life of the Pope brought extremely hostile reactions against the regime. The western countries were appalled of the deed. Whether this was a plot of the Bulgarian secret services is irrelevant as the people and the governors remembered the accusations towards Bulgaria not the lack of hard evidence. In any event, Bulgaria was further isolated from the western, predominantly catholic, world. The isolation was further deepened when the USA accused Bulgaria of drug trafficking and broke off its cooperation. This isolation will bring Bulgaria into a situation when it has no good relations with a country to apply for a loan in order to patch up its economy.

³¹ Ibid. 201-02.

³² Ibid. 202.

³³ Ibid. 202.

e. Zhivkov's fall

The various democratic events and movements throughout Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Poland in the beginning and the middle of the eighties destabilized greatly the foundations of the communist dictatorships all across Eastern Europe. In the middle of the 1980s the economic crisis in Bulgaria was deepening. The shops were lacking basic consumer goods and food. The electricity produced was not sufficient and the population had electricity restrictions – 3 “light and warm” hours were followed by 3 “dark and cold” hours.³⁴ Thus the discontent of the population grew and on November 10, 1989, Todor Zhivkov resigned under the pressure applied by Petur Mladenov and Andrey Lukanov. The day Zhivkov resigned is considered the day the dictatorship of the proletariat fell and Bulgaria became a democratic country, which, as we will see is, not quite the case.

f. Zhivkov's dictatorship

In this chapter I will analyze the type of Zhivkov's regime. As the constitution that was introduced in 1971 devoted special place of the Communist Party within the state it is clear that there is a dictatorial government. It derives its legitimacy from Marx's “dictatorship of the proletariat”. First I will examine the types of dictatorship that exist in order to which type the Bulgarian case can be attributed to.

Dictatorships can differ substantially from one another. Despite the word having a negative connotation, benevolent dictators existed in human history and their rule was by no means characterized by oppression of the governed. There are numerous characteristics by which a dictatorship can be divided, but for my case the most important division is regarding the way the society is treated – i.e. is only the political power monopolized and the regular citizens prevented from access to political discourse or is the state trying to interfere in the

³⁴ Konstantinov, History of Bulgaria 681-2001 (История На България 681-2001) 318.

citizens' lives and to build the society in the way the governor(s) desire? The former is called an "authoritarian" dictatorship, while the latter "totalitarian".

According to Andrew Haywood "authoritarianism" implies "government 'from above'"³⁵ – i.e. the ruler governs the state according to his/her own desires without any consultation from the governed. Yet, an authoritarian state attempts to retain monopoly only over the political power and does not attempt to have full control over the governed. Thus an authoritarian government forbids all political freedom but all other (i.e. religious, moral, economic, freedom of speech) are allowed and uncontested as long as they do not question the governor's dominant position.³⁶

Stephen J. Lee argues that authoritarian regimes wish to preserve the traditional social structure by just controlling it and preventing revolution and rousing of the masses by immobilizing the forces of society. Those regimes are reactionary in nature. They respond to incentives rather than creating them like a totalitarian regime does. The totalitarian regimes, in contrast to authoritarian, act pro-actively. They seek constant mobilization of society and they create events rather than reacting to them. Lee outlines four main points that characterize a totalitarian regime:

1. It possess a dominant ideology which covers all aspects of life
2. The political system is controlled by a leader who is invested with the cult of personality and who acts as executive power and also controls the legislative.
3. The individual is subordinated to the commands of the state by means of coercion (physical and psychological terror) and indoctrination which seeks destruction of cultural pluralism and its replacement by a single politically-dominated culture.
4. The regime has complete control over the economy³⁷

Heywood agrees with Lee's definition and adds two other characteristics – the totalitarian regime has full control over the media and the armed forces. He also adds that a

³⁵ Andrew Heywood, *Politics*, 2nd ed. (Bristol: Palgrave, 2002) 38.

³⁶ *Ibid.* 38.

³⁷ Stephen J. Lee, *European Dictatorships, 1918-1945*, 2nd ed. (London and New York: Routledge, 2000) 300.

totalitarian regime's desire for full control of the state, unlike an authoritarian regime's desire for control over the politics, implies that the former desires "abolition of civil society."³⁸

Lee notes that the ideology of a totalitarian regime is to recreate the state according to its guidelines, yet there is a debate and disagreement whether this is the case and for that reason he subdivides the totalitarian regimes into strong and weak. The strong totalitarian dictatorship has total control over the population through the media and propaganda. It is the one that desires a recreation of the state and the social structure, while a weak totalitarian dictatorship resembles an authoritarian dictatorship in that it reacts to changes, rather than initiating them; emphasizes on the actions of the ruler rather than their effects.³⁹

Given those definitions I accept "authoritarian dictatorship" to be a dictatorship whose sole purpose is to remain in power. Authoritarianism 'refers to "a political system that more or less suppresses freedom" [...] On the basis of those premises, all writers agree that authoritarianism is the negation of democracy.'⁴⁰ An authoritarian state prevents input from the citizens to the government, thus suppressing democracy.

I define "totalitarian dictatorship" as a form of government that desires total control over the state and its citizens – it not only has total political power, but also full control over social and economic power, thus as Heywood suggests, negating civil society. The totalitarian state seeks to become part of the civil society and thus gain control over it. It also implies, if we accept Lee's subdivisions, that there are strong and weak totalitarian dictatorships.

The presence of a centrally planned economy, a communist ideology, and a single party system with an ever-increasing personality cult, unquestionably accounts for the totalitarian type of Zhivkov's government. The economy was tightly regulated through

³⁸ Heywood, Politics 29.

³⁹ Lee, European Dictatorships, 1918-1945 298-99.

⁴⁰ Georgi Dimitrov, Petia Kabakchieva and Jeko Kijossev, "Tendencies Towards Authoritarianism in a Transitional Period - Comparative Analysis between Russia and Bulgaria," Individual Democratic Institutions Research Fellowships 1994-1996 (NATO, 1996)

numerous five-year plans, and, although some autonomy in the factories was introduced during the 1980s, it did not abolish the plans, neither relaxed the requirements of the plans. The communist ideology was uninterruptedly broadcasted through the party propaganda machine – constant announcements of the progress made in the agriculture and manufacture, the rallies on May 1, September 9, and other communist festivities aimed to boost the morale of the population and to increase its confidence in the “bright communist future”. Zhivkov expelled his predecessor from the party for increasing his personality cult but Zhivkov himself developed cult towards his personality even greater than that of Chervenkov. The party apparatus was held under firm control and the dictator’s continuous chess game of moving his subordinates from one position to another prevented them from accumulating power and reassured Zhivkov’s control over the party. The party created special pseudo-civil organizations – the communist youth groups (“Comsomol”, “Pioneers”, “Chavdars”)⁴¹, the “Fatherland Front”⁴² which aimed at assimilating the party and the population and thus allowing the Party full control over the population. From all this evidence we can conclude nothing but that Zhivkov’s rule was a totalitarian one.

Whether his totalitarian dictatorship was a strong or a weak one is disputable. In the beginning of his rule until the end of the 1970s, it can be characterized as a strong dictatorship. The economic plans were dictated from above and imposed without an approval from below. The terror although existent was only aimed against dissidents and enemies within the party. During the last 10 years Zhivkov lost his iron grip over the country and his totalitarian dictatorship became weak. Relative autonomy was granted to economic entities; the five-year plans became much milder than before and their goals were much more achievable. Last but not least the oppression against the Bulgarian Turks occurred in the last five years of his rule thus showing that his decisions were an attempt to reassert his control

⁴¹ In Bulgarian - „Комсомол”, „Пионери”, „Чавдари”

⁴² „Отечествен фронт” – translated and used by Crampton in Crampton, A Short History of Modern Bulgaria.

over the party and the party's control over the state. Yet, as we are going to see in further detail, there was a desperate attempt to prolong Zhivkov's stay in power. Despite those desires, the party's decisions to react by force to civilian protests were sporadic, as we will see and led to the fall of the regime.

From this chapter I can conclude that the economy, despite the initial progress, slowly deteriorated together with the quality of the manufactured goods. Taken together with the isolation caused by the regime's foreign policy, persecution on ethnic basis and criminal activity left Bulgaria to rely only on the USSR for supplies and for a market for its low quality goods. Zhivkov's nationalism and economic experiments will alienate the USSR as well and leave Bulgaria in complete isolation in the hardest moment for its economy in 1989.

In terms of domestic policy Zhivkov's regime did not resort to purges or violent persecution but people were thrown in jail often with no sentences or by set-up trials. The civil society during Zhivkov's time was appeased and not persecuted unless it tried to participate in an organization that could be seen as oppositional to the regime. Thus the Party-State managed through its terror and pseudo-civil organizations to gain full control over the population and to large extent to negate any civil society that was independent of the Party-state. I will further investigate the civil society in another chapter.

2. *Analysis of the State Institutions*⁴³

Before analyzing state institutions I will shortly define what I include in the term. For a brief overview of the institutions please see the Appendix. By "State institutions" I mean all the positions and organizations that are created by the state in a law, decree or constitution with the sole purpose of governing. Such institutions include the State Council, the presidency, the parliament, the constitutional court and many others. While I am reviewing

⁴³ This chapter uses the constitution introduced in 1971 as a means of assessing the basic institutions of Communist Bulgaria. All quotes and articles, unless noted otherwise in a footnote, refer to that constitution. The constitution is available in Bulgarian: The Constitution of People's Republic of Bulgaria (Конституция На Народна Република България), 1971, Legal Encyclopedia (Юридическа Енциклопедия), Available: <http://www.infotel.bg/juen/arh/kon1971.htm>, 15.12.2005.

the institutions, I am not going to take explore all governmental bodies, as that will require research on the entire Bulgarian legislation which is not feasible given the time and content constraints of my thesis. I am going to take review only the institutions which are defined in the constitution and which are responsible for the control over the three main powers – legislative, executive and judicial.

Before continuing with my analysis I will first define what “democratic” and “democracy” means.

“Democracy” is a loaded term with numerous differing meanings:

- a system of rule by the poor and disadvantaged
- a form of government in which the people rule themselves directly and continuously, without the need for professional politicians or public officials
- a society based on equal opportunity and individual merit, rather than hierarchy and privilege
- a system of welfare and redistribution aimed at narrowing social inequalities
- a system of decision-making based on the principle of majority rule
- a system of rule that secures the rights and interests of minorities by placing checks upon the power of majority
- a system of government that servers the interests of the people regardless of their participation in political life⁴⁴

The etymology of the word itself comes from greek δημοκρατία (demokratia), demos (demos) the common people + κρατειν (kratein) to rule + the suffix ία (ia), literally meaning "the common people rule". The Athenian democracy is not the first democracy, yet it is the best documented ancient democracy. During its time the people of Athens and other Greek city-states gathered to debate and decide via voting the policies of their polis. The Athenian democracy was not a universal one. The slaves, women and foreigners were exempted from the right to have a saying. Those who were in debt and their heirs were also prevented from participating.

⁴⁴ Heywood, Politics 68.

There are many ways to categorize democracy – classical (Athenian), protective, developmental, liberal, people’s democracy, etc.⁴⁵ Many of those classifications include notions which come from spheres other than politics. Liberal democracy, for example, indicates that besides political freedoms the citizens are also granted economic freedom as well. Dimitrov regards economic liberalism and democracy as two different concepts – the former focusing on state intervention in spheres other than the political while the latter focuses on who is in power. I am also going to separate democracy from economic liberalism and define democracy as “the state acting upon input received from its citizens.” I would also like to put another constraint on the term as I regard democracy in its most popular variant at present – representative democracy. With some small exceptions, Europe is populated by states with systems of governance characteristic of representative democracy, and despite Bulgaria’s being under dictatorial government it had elected institutions put in place throughout the entire dictatorial period. For those reasons I consider direct democracy impractical and also improbable to appear as a form of government.

In connection to that definition it is important to regard what creates democracy and how to ensure that the delegated power of the people will not be abused and their input will be taken into consideration by the their representatives. Establishing a persistent democratic process requires the limitations of the government to be institutionalized and those institutions should include at least a “multiparty system, a freely elected parliament, separation of powers.”⁴⁶ Multiparty system will guarantee the representation of the different citizens and the freely elected parliament will hold the elected accountable for their execution of the people’s will. The separation of powers is a concept developed by Montesquieu which divides political power between legislative, executive and judicial branch. Each of those branches has

⁴⁵ Ibid. 71-76.

⁴⁶ Dimitrov, Kabakchieva and Kijossev, "Tendencies Towards Authoritarianism in a Transitional Period - Comparative Analysis between Russia and Bulgaria"

independent power and field of responsibility. Each branch has the right to check the actions of the other branches and place certain limitations of their activity. The concept is widely used in democratic societies and effectively limits the abuse and the concentration of political power.

Besides the abovementioned three requirements for the division and prevention of abuse and accountability of political power, I am also going to review the rights and freedoms of the citizens to determine the liberalism of the state which will help me to measure the impact of the constitution on the civil society – i.e. were the persecution and interference of the state legitimized by the constitution.

a. Multiparty system and parliament

Multiparty system was explicitly forbidden in the constitution by the infamous article 1. The second paragraph, as noted in the previous subchapter, states that “leading force in the society and the state is the Bulgarian Communist Party.” The third paragraph states that “The Bulgarian Communist Party leads the construction of a developed socialist society in the People’s Republic of Bulgaria in close brotherly collaboration with the Bulgarian Agrarian National Union.”⁴⁷

Article one also states that Bulgaria is a socialist country. Article one of the constitution makes all parties who are not in favor of socialism unconstitutional. It also defines the BCP and BANU as the only two political parties who are working for the creation of a communist society and communist state and thus the only two parties which are allowed to rule. Article one also forces everyone to be either a factory worker, represented by the BCP, or a peasant worker, represented by the BANU.

⁴⁷ „Българската комунистическа партия ръководи изграждането на развито социалистическо общество в Народна република България в тясно братско сътрудничество с Българския земеделски народен съюз” – translated by me

Due to the exclusive legality of only two political parties, even if the parliament is freely elected it is not filled with people representing a wide political spectrum and views. The explicit allowance of only two parties is also infringing another widely-accepted human right – freedom of association. Forbidding the creation of other parties effectively limits the people from that basic freedom. The people, who are being allowed to determine themselves either as workers or peasants, are having their right of freedom of consciousness infringed.

b. Separation of powers

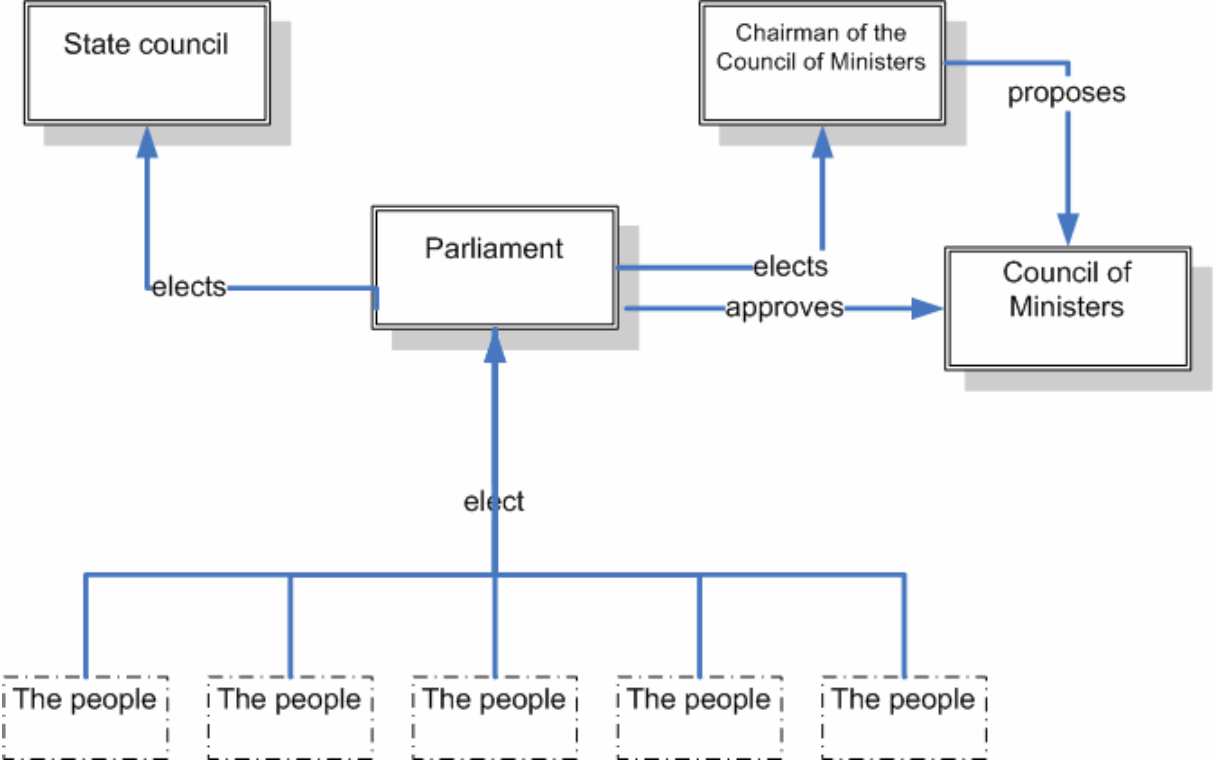
Article 5 of the constitution states that the principles the political system of People's Republic of Bulgaria adheres to are “unity of authority, democratic centralism, and socialist democratism.”⁴⁸ Further on it is explained that the “National Assembly unifies the legislative and executive function of the state and exerts supreme control”⁴⁹ and the State Council “as a supreme body of the National Assembly ensures the unification of the executive with the legislative function”⁵⁰ Given those statement and the underlying principle of the system it is impossible to talk about any sort of separation of powers. The purpose of the constitution is, indeed, to ensure the fusion of powers. Despite that we have seen that there is no desire to have a separation of powers implemented by the constitution, let us take a closer look at the election and the control process of the different institutions.

⁴⁸ „демократическият централизъм, социалистическият демократизъм” – translated by me

⁴⁹ “ Народното събрание съединява законодателната и изпълнителната дейност на държавата и осъществява върховен контрол” – translated by me – article 67

⁵⁰ „съвет като висш орган на Народното събрание осигурява съединяването на законодателната с изпълнителната дейност” – translated by me – article 90, paragraph 2

Figure 1: Election and appointment of governmental bodies



The figure above represents the way the different institutions are elected or appointed. At first look it is very similar to a parliamentary monarchy because there is no election of a president and only of a parliament. Yet, there is a second body being elected by the parliament besides the Council of Ministers – the State Council. As we saw before the State Council doubles the functions of the National Assembly, as well as many of those that belong to the Council of Ministers. The State Council is the institution which *de facto* monopolizes the power in the hands of the top Party *echelon*. It lacks democratic legitimacy because it is elected among the elected representatives. Even if it is elected in a purely democratic parliament without restrictions on political parties, the institution would still lack popular support and lead to democratic deficit being vested in it. The election of elite within ruling elite would lead to an oligarchy rule which replaces the choice of the people. The State Council also had extremely diverse rights and jurisdictions.

If we take a purely statistical look at the constitution's articles which define the jurisdictions of the National Assembly, the State Council and the Council of Ministers we get the following results:

National Assembly – 19 rights;⁵¹

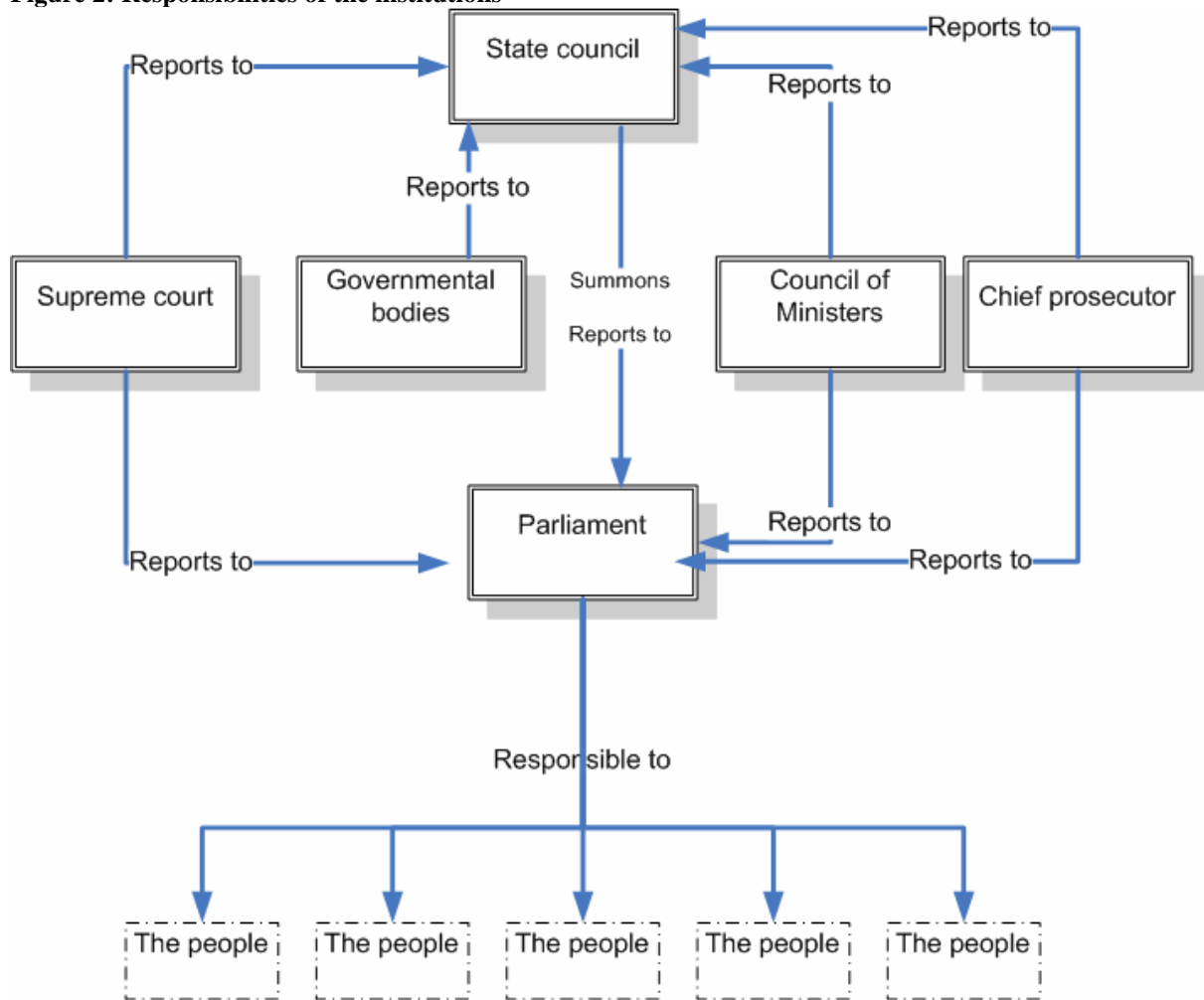
Council of Ministers – 16 rights;⁵²

State Council – 27 rights⁵³ which are valid at all times and further on article 94 adds another 10 jurisdictions which can be enforced in case the National Assembly is not in session. As I noted before, the State Council has the obligation and the right to summon the parliament at least three times a year, unless one fifth or more of the representatives request it. Let us take a look at another figure that visualizes the institutions' accountability.

⁵¹ Article 78

⁵² Article 103

⁵³ Article 93

Figure 2: Responsibilities of the institutions

It is evident that the State Council entirely duplicates the role of the parliament. The Supreme Court, the Prosecutor's Office, the Council of Ministers and all other governmental bodies report to the State Council. As the State Council has the right to summon the parliament it can technically decide when the parliament can convene and thus control what issues are controlled by the parliament and what by the State Council. Given those observations I can conclude that the State Council has one primary function – further concentrate the power in an oligarchy which is elected from a single-party elite. The latter combined with the fact the Bulgarian Communist Party was very disciplined, with distinguished ranks, all-powerful and that “the State Council [...] can delegate to the

chairman of the State Council the accomplishment of some of its jurisdiction”⁵⁴ leads to a total concentration into the hands of the State Council and particularly the hands of its chairman. The latter post was occupied by the General Secretary of the Bulgarian Communist Party – Todor Zhivkov – for the majority of the institution’s lifespan – from 1971 to 1989, when he was ousted from the Party and the State Council.

c. Freedoms and rights

The constitution of People’s Republic of Bulgaria gives equal rights to its people. One of the first rights guaranteed by the constitution can be found in article 3 – it guarantees that the state protects personal development, guarantees the person’s rights and protects his or her dignity. Everyone who is eighteen years or older is allowed to vote or run for a governing position, while explicitly being stated that this right is regardless of “sex, ethnicity, race, faith, education, profession, work or social standing”⁵⁵ The essential rights of the citizen are part of chapter III of the constitution. The first right is equality before the law⁵⁶, which is reiterated in Articles 129 and 130 which describe the judicial system of the state.

Articles 48 to 54 guarantee basic human rights – freedom and inviolability of the person and his home, inviolability of private and family life, privacy of correspondence and also “freedom of speech, press, meetings, rallies and manifestations”⁵⁷ Article 53 guarantees freedom of consciousness and free choice of religion. Citizens “can perform religious ceremonies and to carry out antireligious propaganda”⁵⁸ In the same article, however, are

⁵⁴ „Държавният [...] може да възлага на председателя на Държавния съвет осъществяването на някои от своите правомощия” – article 96, paragraph 2

⁵⁵ Article 6, paragraph 3

⁵⁶ Article 35

⁵⁷ „свобода на словото, печата, събранията, митингите и манифестациите“ – translated by me – Article 54

⁵⁸ „могат да извършват религиозни обреди и да водят антирелигиозна пропаганда” – translated by me – Article 53, paragraph 1

banned political parties and any other political organizations which are based on religion. Forbidden organizations are also those that have fascist and antidemocratic ideology and also organizations which are against the socialist structure of the People's Republic of Bulgaria. Article 27 explicitly states that men and women are equal.

The education is right of everyone. Primary and secondary education is free of charge and compulsory for everyone until the age of 16. People of "non-Bulgarian origin" are allowed to learn their mother tongue but are not exempt from learning Bulgarian. According to articles 38 and 39 parents are obliged to bring their up children and teach them communist values; teaching young man and women in the "communist spirit" is an obligation for the entire society.

The constitution describes labor as the fundamental economic factor of the state and it is based on the principle "from each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs."⁵⁹ Articles 40, 42 and 43 guarantee that people the right to work, the right to receive vacation and social security, respectively. The constitution also obliges everyone to work in favor of the community.⁶⁰

Article 14 determines 4 types of property – State-owned (belonging to the people), cooperative property, property of governmental organizations and personal property. Citizens have the right to own real estate and objects in order to satisfy their and their family's needs. The state protects legally acquired property but forbids the use of property against the interest of society.⁶¹ Copy rights are protected by the government, yet the authors are forbidden to use those rights against the public interest.⁶²

⁵⁹ Article 32

⁶⁰ Article 59

⁶¹ Article 21

⁶² Article 26

Article 29 gives the right to the state to make certain economic fields exclusive monopoly of the state. One of these fields is the foreign trade. Other monopolies are “factories, banks, underground resources, natural power sources, nuclear energy, the forests, the pastures, the water, the roads, the rail and air transport, the posts, the telegraphs, the telephones, the radio and the television are state (people's) property”⁶³

As we can see from the brief overview it seems that the constitution ensures all rights to the citizens. Yet, although that might seem to be the case, is not exactly true. There are certain contradictions in the constitution itself. People are guaranteed the right to speak and study their mother tongue, if different from Bulgarian, yet they are forbidden to form organizations based on ethnic bases. A truly democratic constitution would allow its citizens to form ethnic parties in order to represent and defend their interest determined by their ethnic values and norms in parliament – i.e. the right to study their mother tongue in public schools, the right of ethnic self-determination, etc.

Another interesting contradiction is the fact that people are allowed to study their mother tongue and yet by law people who spoke Turkish were fined if they did that in public. They were also fined if they were dressed with traditional Bulgarian-Muslim clothing which is clearly a contradiction of the right to freedom of consciousness.⁶⁴ The right to freedom of consciousness is also contradicted by articles 38 and 39 of the constitution which require the children to be educated in the “communist spirit” by their parents and the entire society.

⁶³ „Заводите и фабриките, банките, подземните богатства, естествените източници на енергия, ядрената енергия, горите, пасищата, водите, пътищата, железопътният, водният и въздушният транспорт, пощите, телеграфите, телефоните, радиото и телевизията, са държавна (общонародна) собственост” – Article 16, paragraph 1

⁶⁴ Margarita Karamikhova (Маргарита Карамикова), "The So-Called "Regenerative Processes" - Policies and Results 1987 - 1997 (Т.Нар "Възродителни Процеси" - Политика И Резултати 1987 - 1997 Г.)," On Transition (За Промените), ed. Lilyana Alexandrieva (Лиляна Александриева) (Sofia: Centre for liberal strategies and Center for social practices (Център за либерални стратегии и Център за социални практики), 1997) 371.

As a socialist state the majority of the rights are also in favor of the workers and also against the enemies of a socialist/communist structure of the society. Those anti-capitalist clauses, however, are in contradiction with the right of freedom of consciousness.

In terms of general human rights the constitution provides a good basis – freedom of thought, freedom of conscienceness, religious freedoms, equality before the law. In reality, however, the constitution meant little to those who are in power. Basic human rights were often violated. Some of those rights include, but are not limited, to violation of the personal privacy, privacy of correspondence and privacy of conversation. People were recruited by the secret service to spy on their neighbors and to report each and every word that might hint about dissident thinking. The secret police in Bulgaria had quite strong presence which instigated fear in almost every citizen. The ethnic minorities, as we shall see, were obliged to revoke their cultural, ethnic, and religious identities against their will.

d. Conclusion

The review of the constitution introduced in 1971 leads me to the conclusion that it was a legitimate constitution that guaranteed basic rights and freedoms of the people, without discrimination, except on ideological basis. There is a strong, explicit bias against citizens who do not embrace communism. Essentially the constitution's main purpose was to give legal codification to persecution against the enemies of the ideology.

In terms of party plurality the constitution enhances what is done in terms of rights – it outlaws all parties but the BCP and BANU. Plurality of opinion is not tolerated and those who are not supporters of the ideology have two choices – either to be assimilated or to be unrepresented. In either case the outcome is the same – the BCP/BANU is in power and in control of the state.

The representation of the aforementioned parties is further enhanced by the institution of the State Council. It suffers from democratic deficit and at the same time holds enormous power. The institutions that the constitutions create aim to fuse, rather than separate, power, thus aiding its abuse. The party that has majority in parliament – the BCP – has full control over the state. The BCP, as we saw was, was in the hands of one person – Todor Zhivkov, who in turn, had control over the state through the Party and the State apparatus.

The analysis of the institutions and freedoms leads me to the conclusion that the constitution is not anti-democratic *per se*. On the contrary, it does consider elections to be integral part of the government. Nevertheless, the fact that all other parties, with the exception of BCP and BANU are effectively unconstitutional, leads to very limited choice for the electorate and ultimately to democratic deficit. In practice the constitution ensures the monopolization of power in the hands of the General Secretary and the top Party *echelon*. The legalized prosecution against the enemies of communism effectively gives the Party the right to terrorize and imprison people. The latter, combined with the right to vote, which was also obligatory under the Communist regime, leads the people, as we shall see later, to believe that no matter whom they vote for their representatives, elections, and politics is bad in general. This, however, leads to democratic deficit and the creation of a non-democratic society.

3. Analysis of the Civil Society

Before I start my overview of civil society I will first define it and give it specific boundaries. The definition of “civil society” is one of the most controversial and hence the hardest to define. Civil society appeared in the writings of Cicero and other ancient Greek authors. The ancient concept, however, was used to denote the state. The modern day idea of civil society emerged in the 18th century from the Scottish and continental Enlightenment. Various philosophers, from Thomas Paine to Georg Hegel, developed the idea of a sphere that is parallel into existence with the state and citizens get together in order to further their private

interests.⁶⁵ According to Bernhard and Summer, the civil society sprung out of the age of absolutism. The groups that had some power before the age of absolutism managed to gain back their power through economic means and that allowed them to challenge the monarchs. As those groups became more and more independent from the state they acquired such a great power that they managed to influence the state to acquire exemption from the state's interference with the groups' matters.⁶⁶

An important question is what exactly does civil society represent and constitute? Civil society is a conglomerate of "all the organizations and associations that exist outside of the state (including political parties) and the market."⁶⁷ As it appears it is much easier to define what civil society is NOT rather than what it actually is. In order to incorporate the different definitions of civil society the London School of Economics' Centre for Civil Society developed a working definition, yet it is also defined by the CCS as not being all-encompassing and concrete:

Civil society refers to the arena of uncoerced collective action around shared interests, purposes and values. In theory, its institutional forms are distinct from those of the state, family and market, though in practice, the boundaries between state, civil society, family and market are often complex, blurred and negotiated. Civil society commonly embraces a diversity of spaces, actors and institutional forms, varying in their degree of formality, autonomy and power. Civil societies are often populated by organisations such as registered charities, development non-governmental organisations, community groups, women's organisations, faith-based organisations, professional associations, trades unions, self-help groups, social movements, business associations, coalitions and advocacy group.⁶⁸

Some of the most widespread misconceptions regarding civil society are that it is all about doing good for the society. Yet criminal organizations and racist rallies are also part of the civil society. It is important to note that strong civil society does not necessarily lead to

⁶⁵ Thomas Carothers and William Barndt, "Civil Society," *Foreign Policy* 117. Winter (1999-2000): 18.

⁶⁶ Bernhard, "Civil Society and Democratic Transition in East Central Europe," 308-09.

⁶⁷ Carothers and Barndt, "Civil Society," 19.

⁶⁸ Sue Roebuck, *What Is Civil Society?*, 2004, London School of Economics and Political Science, Available: http://www.lse.ac.uk/collections/CCS/what_is_civil_society.htm, 23 October 2005.

the enhancement of the democracy. Democracy also does not require a civil society in order to exist, but it does thrive when civil society is strong. As we are going to see in this thesis, there was no strong civil society in Bulgaria, yet democracy, in terms of political procedures, was established. The Weimar Republic had a strong civil society, yet that did not lead to flourishing of democracy but rather to dictatorship.⁶⁹ According to Kaviraj, civil society may flourish in wide variety of regimes and a liberal democracy is just one of them.⁷⁰

In order, however, to have a democratic society it is necessary to have a civil society. Civil society is the basis of all political parties. In the presence of a strong civil society that is aware of its group identity and interests the group is to form or support a party, which is going to protect the group's interest at state level. Thus in order to have democratic population a stimulus for a self, and group interest is needed. It is argued that the best way to create such a stimulus is through market economy. A market economy forces the individuals to behave in a way that is in their best interest thus creating self-interest, followed by a group interest countering the individual's marginalization in the face of the state. For that reason I am going to take a look at the market, i.e. particular aspects of the economy, in the parts where I review civil society in order to conclude whether the market itself was acting in favor or against the creation and the strengthening of the civil society.

As we saw from the historical overview of the Communist regime and the overview of the active constitution there is a totalitarian state that has total control over the population, or at least tries everything to have such control. Research of the civil society, or the embryo, there of, during the regime is impeded from the fact that no independent institutions existed that could conduct any research of the public opinion and the research that is available is practically Party propaganda and highly unreliable as data. Using interviews and public

⁶⁹ Carothers and Barndt, "Civil Society," 21-23.

⁷⁰ Sudipta Kaviraj and Sunil Khilnani, eds., Civil Society: History and Possibilities (Cambridge: University Press, 2003) 13-14.

opinion 15-20 years later is also highly unreliable. As several researches show, people are looking in a romantic way to the years before 1989 due to the hardship that fell upon them with the change of the political and economic system during the transitional period (1990 – 2000). A large number describe their life as being best in the ten year period from 1980 to 1990.⁷¹ In order to present a picture of the society in People's Republic of Bulgaria I am going to use my conclusion from the previous two chapters as well as sources by Bulgarian academics who have lived through and studied the period.

One of the tools of totalitarian control was the central mobilization of society by the creation of state-established institutions of "civil society." Such institutions were the communist youth ("Comsomol", "The pioneers", etc) and they to a large extent managed to replace and prevent the formation of a genuine grass-root type of societal organization. Those organizations were also effective in controlling the society and its close observation by the Party officials.

According to Joseph Femia, Karl Marx regarded civil society as an agent of capitalism which alienated the people.⁷² Within the civil society people acted in their best interest in order to achieve their goals. To achieve them they also used other people as tools.⁷³ Bernhard and Summer state that "civil society in those parts of Eastern Europe that came under Soviet control was suppressed by the imposition of Stalinist institutions. [...] Ultimately, the autonomous social organization that did emerge in the Balkans in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was destroyed, except in Greece, when the region fell within Stalin's sphere of influence."⁷⁴ Dimitrov argues that the Communist Party needed to mobilize

⁷¹ Воруана Димитрова (Боряна Димитрова), "Condition of the Society - Basic Conclusions (Състояние На Обществото - Основни Изводи)," Condition of the Society (Състояние На Обществото) ("Open Society" Foundation (Фондация "Отворено общество")) 13.

⁷² Marx's vision of civil society is the exact opposite to the liberal concept of civil society. In liberal democracies civil society is considered a stimulus for the development of democracy.

⁷³ Kaviraj and Khilnani, eds., Civil Society: History and Possibilities 136.

resources (i.e. the workers) in order to retain its control over the rule of the country. In order to achieve that, the workers were turned into “mass society” by fusing Party and state. Thus the state administration through the already established centralized power of the party had complete control over the social functions of the society. Dimitrov also adds that the procedure to create “mass society” was an easy one because of Bulgaria’s underdeveloped civil society at the time the Communists came into power. The legitimate desire to create a proletariat further facilitated the process.⁷⁵

Dainov quotes a report from 1958 by a British ambassador in Sofia which states that the five-century ottoman rule has taught the Bulgarian people to obey tyrants. Indeed the Bulgarian people were mistreated by the Ottoman Empire and all their attempts for a revolt were met with violent massacres and not only of those directly involved with the revolt but also of innocent people, regardless of age or sex, who happen to be in the area of the uprising. That, combined with the numerous hard-lined prime ministers and kings in the late 19th and early 20th century made the Bulgarians obedient people.⁷⁶

The rapid urbanization and industrialization in the early communist times brought many people into the cities from the smaller villages. In the 60s part of those youngsters were influenced by the behavioral patterns of the West, where everything was already industrial and urban. Their radical behavior and clothing made them stand out from the socialist crowd. The regime saw that as unfavorable and detrimental to the people influence and sent them to labor camps. After their imprisonment they were interned in different regions of the country – a measure that was one of Zhivkov’s favorite.⁷⁷ In the decade to follow the Prague Spring the

⁷⁴ Bernhard, "Civil Society and Democratic Transition in East Central Europe," 311.

⁷⁵ Dimitrov, Kabakchieva and Kijossev, "Tendencies Towards Authoritarianism in a Transitional Period - Comparative Analysis between Russia and Bulgaria."

⁷⁶ Dainov, The Political Debate and the Transition in Bulgaria (Политическия Дебат И Прехода В България) 288-9.

⁷⁷ Ibid. 301.

regime took protective measures against a similar revolt and took course of total control of everyday life.⁷⁸ The 1970s are also characterized by the banning of modern forms of art. Instead, artists are commissioned to paint simple and straightforward paintings. Writers are required to rewrite their books and to grant the Party leading role. These restrictions on creativity drove intellectuals into everydayness and as a result they stopped producing art which turned to be detrimental for the society as it lost many of its intellectual leaders – people who could explain events and direct opinion.⁷⁹ On top of that in the late 70s and early 80s several books were banned and even removed from bookstores, Zheliu Zhelev's "The Fascism" and Blaga Dimitrova's "Face" being two of the most prominent.⁸⁰

The repressions against the intellectuals were interrupted temporarily due to the rising of Zhivkov's daughter – Ljudmila. They were recruited in the preparations of two major national celebrations – in 1979 for the 35th anniversary of the Bulgarian communist revolution of 1944, and in 1981 for the 1300th anniversary of the Bulgarian State. Unfortunately her unexpected death ended all toleration and protection of the intellectuals and their artistic skills were again suppressed. The Party launched a new radio station named "Horizont" (Horizon) which broadcasted predominantly western music. Although that might seem as relaxing of state control it is exactly the opposite. The radio station's purpose was to broadcast supervised and approved by the Party content and in this way to attract the young people who were listening to "Radio of Luxembourg" and "The Voice of America". The station became soon quite popular and indeed made many people switch to listening "Horizont" rather than the western radios that were broadcasted.⁸¹ Thus the Party, via its censorship and propaganda apparatus, could publish content that could not provoke anti-Party activity and also to do

⁷⁸ Ibid. 303.

⁷⁹ Ibid. 296-300.

⁸⁰ Ibid. 311.

⁸¹ Ibid. 303-4.

some brainwashing. Boyadzhiev explains that the new station had been part of different institutions – Ministry of Culture, Committee of the Council of Ministers – but in reality it had always been dominated by the “Propaganda and agitation” department of the Central Committee of the BCP. Before 1990 the radio station had a long list of scenarios describing how its employees should act in general and particular cases. The information regarding the country had to undergo strict ideological and content censorship in order to be aired. The information regarding the rest of the world was not so severely filtered, yet it also had to conform to certain ideological guidelines.⁸²

The economic problems of the 80s and the bad quality of the produced goods forces Zhivkov to further implement market-economy-like mechanisms – election for directors, collective ownership of the work place, economic plans defining input from the government and the desired output from the factory, while the workers are to decide how to spend the financing.⁸³ Even those measures did not stop the economic recess or managed to increase the productivity of the factories or the quality of the goods, which is indicative that the limited market economy did not create economic self-interest and that economic self-interest was not existent before. The latter is vital for the creation of civil society.

Communist Bulgaria also lacked serious opposition or anti-communist factions until the dawn of its fall.⁸⁴ The extreme hostility and intolerance towards religious, cultural and other types of organizations and the banning of all access of the society to the political process, contrary to the civil society in Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia⁸⁵, led

⁸² Yásen Boyadzhiev (Ясен Бояджи́ев), "The Bulgarian State Radio - 1989-1995: Years of Change and Revenge (Българското Държавно Радио - 1989-1995 Година: Години На Промяна И Реванш)," On Transition (За Промените), ed. Lilyana Alexandrieva (Лиляна Александриева) (Sofia: Centre for liberal strategies and Center for social practices (Център за либерални стратегии и Център за социални практики), 1995) 269-70.

⁸³ Dainov, The Political Debate and the Transition in Bulgaria (Политическия Дебат И Прехода В България) 314-5,25.

⁸⁴ Liliana Alexandrieva (Лиляна Александриева), ed., On Transition (За Промените) (Sofia: Centre for Liberal Strategies and Center for Social Practices) 289.

“Bulgarians under Zhivkov [to live] [...] in a controlled, restrictive, authoritarian system”⁸⁶

Even coups are missing from the totalitarian scene. The first coup appeared in mid-60s and was plotted by several army officers, who, however, were quickly discovered by the secret police and taped by a microphone, hidden in a cap badge. The more involved were executed and hundreds were purged from the power ministries. Ever since “Zhivkov allowed no one but his most trusted acolytes to have a dominant influence in the police and the army.”⁸⁷

My research and analysis of the civil society leads me to believe that the civil society in Bulgaria was weak if existent at all during the communist regime. The leaders of a civil society – the intellectuals – were severely repressed by the state and some of their works were prevented from surfacing. The propaganda machine of the Party was effective and succeeded in controlling even those who dared to rebel against it by listening to foreign radio stations and admiring foreign performers. The civil society sphere was dominated by Party-indoctrinated organizations which further transformed the society into a branch of the party.

4. Conclusion

The preceding analyses leads to the conclusion that the Communist government with its pervasive secret police, strong propaganda machinery, and state-managed organization of activity of the civil society, successfully prevented the formation of a genuine civil society which was in its embryo when the communists came in power. The desire for total control was so strong that the Secretary of Ideology of the BCP criticized the regime in the late 80s and suggested that it should withdraw its control from the everyday life of the people – dress code, music, dancing, lift the unsaid persecution of political jokes and to allow the people to

⁸⁵ Atanas Gotchev, "NGOs and Promotion of Democracy and Civil Society in East-Central Europe," Individual Democratic Institutions Research Fellowships 1996-1998 (NATO, 1998), vol., 7.

⁸⁶ R.J. Crampton, The Balkans since the Second World War (London: Longman, 2002) 174.

⁸⁷ Ibid. 172.

have hobbies, despite that they could create new relations in this way. By doing so the Party could decrease the people's discontent and prevent a future revolt.⁸⁸ The latter, however, did not happen as the regime never lost the iron grip over the society. From institutional point of view the Party had secured legitimate prosecution for every opponent and thus it could crush by means of terror any anti-party, and consequently pro-democratic, urges. Thus the basis for a strong counter-power did not exist in Bulgarian society under the Communist regime, as all possible channels of societal organization were effectively blocked by the Communist party-state.

⁸⁸ Vasil Garnizov (Васил Гарнизов), "The Transition in the in the Civic Sense of the Bulgarians and the Challenges of the 90s (Образът На Прехода В Общественото Съзнание На Българите И Предизвикателствата На 90-Те)," On Transition (За Промените), ed. Lilyana Alexandrieva (Лиляна Александриева) (Sofia: Centre for liberal strategies and Center for social practices (Център за либерални стратегии и Център за социални практики), 1995) 421-3.

III. The Post-Communist State

Having demonstrated that no strong counter-power could have emerged during the years of Communist rule I am going to focus on the late 1980s when the foundations of Zhivkov's regime start to shake and it eventually falls. The majority of the events I will review are in the two-year period 1989 – 1991. I am going to review the "birth" of the opposition as well as its popular support. On that basis I can conclude whether the events in the last years of Zhivkov's rule have led in one way or another to the creation of a sizable democratic-minded group that could have carried out a democratic revolution and later on guarded a democratic state from an authoritarian counter-revolution or coup. In order to support my thesis I am going to review the civil activities that took place in the mentioned period, the political parties, their support bases, the voting behavior of the citizens, and the shifts of votes between elections. I will also take a look at the new constitution that was accepted in 1991 in order to assess its political nature.

1. *The Decline and Fall of the Communist State*

In this sub chapter I will address the crisis of the communist regime by reviewing two specific series of events that brought to existence the Bulgarian opposition. I will have a closer look at the ousting of Todor Zhivkov and the protests that followed shortly after and forced the communist party to create the Bulgarian Round Table. I will look into the discussion of the latter and its significance, followed by the elections for Great National Assembly (1990) and the following parliamentary (1991) and presidential elections (1992).

a. The "regenerative process"

One of the sources of the regime was the controversy created by the forced assimilation policies against the Muslim minority in the 1980s.

Bulgaria was under ottoman yoke for five centuries – from 1396 to 1878. After the Russo – Turkish war of 1876-78, the Bulgaria that emerged was a fraction of the old Bulgarian Kingdom. As a result of that many Bulgarians were outside of the borders even after the unification in 1885. Due to the five centuries of Ottoman rule the lands of the Third Bulgarian State had a substantial number of Turkish people living, as well as many Bulgarians who, for variety of reasons, changed their religion to Islam from the traditional Orthodox Christianity.

The so-called “regenerative process” was initiated as a way of bringing back the forcefully converted Bulgarians who have forgotten their culture. The Bulgarians who are Muslim are called “Pomaks” (singular – “Pomak”).⁸⁹ Yet there are many other Muslim practicing people who are Turkish, as well as gypsy (Roma) minority; they also became at a certain point target of the process, despite that they were never Bulgarians.

The assimilation and persecution of ethnic and religious minorities was not characteristic only for the late communist regime. The first waves of persecution appeared in the early 1950s during the collectivization of the arable land. This deed drove many people from the agrarian region of Dobrudzha (North-Eastern Bulgaria) to the bigger cities. This relocation was done on purpose – to create the proletariat class, which at the time was very small, and to decrease the numbers of the peasants, thus increasing official BCP support and decreasing official BANU support. The region at the time had a sizeable Turkish minority and many of its members decided to emigrate to Turkey rather than to relocate. The Bulgarian state announced that 250 000 people would be allowed to leave for Turkey. The latter, however, closed its borders accepting only 162 000 people.⁹⁰

⁸⁹ Translated and used by R.J. Crampton in Crampton, The Balkans since the Second World War, p. 178.; in Bulgarian: singular – Помак (Pomak), plural – Помаци (Pomatsi).

⁹⁰ Crampton, The Balkans since the Second World War 169.

The Roma and the Turkish minorities were given some rights – the former had textbooks and, renown through the Balkans, Gypsy Theater in Sofia, and the latter newspapers and journals in Turkish. By the late 1960s, however, all that has disappeared by the pressure from the state. From the diversity of publications in Turkish was left only one newspaper and one journal, the Gypsy Theater was closed. According to Crampton, Zhivkov wanted to be nationalistic, yet he pleaded his allegiance to the U.S.S.R. all the time and that prevented him from having more nationalistic foreign policy. He, however, was not prevented from having nationalistic domestic policies and that was the way he implemented them.⁹¹ The early 1970s saw the Bulgarisation of the names of the Pomaks and later on fines if they spoke Turkish in public place, which they did in order to preserve their culture. The first wave against Turkish and Pomak minorities was conducted in 1970-1972. The gypsies were renamed already in the 1960s. About 200 000 names were changed. Some accepted the change willingly, hoping to be better accepted by the Bulgarians. On 28 March 1973, however, those who did not accept the Party's decision rioted and the Party used force, bloodily repressing the upheaval. In 1978 the Party struck another blow at the Muslims – 127 mosques were closed and circumcision outside of hospitals was forbidden.⁹²

The changes carried out in the 1970s affected only regions with mixed population and until 1984 there were about 30 000 people from mixed marriages that had their names changed, as well. Children that were born from those marriages received Bulgarian citizenship, regardless of the father's citizenship.⁹³ In early 1980s Zhivkov, misled by some reports, approved a plan for the change of all non-Bulgarian names even in regions with predominant Turkish and Pomak minorities. The sole Turkish radio station and newspaper

⁹¹ Ibid. 177.

⁹² Karamikhova, "The So-Called "Regenerative Processes" - Policies and Results 1987 - 1997 (Т.Нап "Възродителни Процеси" - Политика И Резултати 1987 - 1997 Г.)," 381.

⁹³ Ibid. 381-3.

were closed.⁹⁴ By December 1984 another 233 310 people had to change their names. This repression started firing back around 1987 when there were several terrorist acts by ethnic Turks who wanted a safe passage to Turkey. In 1989 there was a wave of hunger strikes and confrontations with the police and even the military. The media reported several casualties from ricochets. The government called out for nationalistic rallies and constantly expelled the leaders of the opposition from the country.⁹⁵ That, however, did not stop the protests and severely destabilized the regime.

The disregard for human rights was severely critiqued not only by Turkey and its western NATO allies but also by Gorbachev. As we saw before Zhivkov's relations with the western world were almost inexistent. Both neighboring communist countries were on bad terms with the USSR and the relations with them were good but also limited. Because of the regenerative process Turkey was very hostile and was accusing Bulgaria of disregard for human rights. Thus Bulgaria was in complete diplomatic isolation in 1989. On top of that the economic problems were deepening – the aging installations in the USSR could not supply the same amounts of raw materials as before. The prices of petrol had dropped and the small amounts that were refined and re-exported also accounted for smaller profit than before. The trade with the third world countries deteriorated, because of economic problems, and because other, predominantly Muslim, states were artificially limiting their trade as a mean of punishment for the regenerative process. Thus, Bulgaria had no source of hard currency but it had long-term obligations to fulfill for the supply of petrol. To fulfill them the state had to import petrol from the Arab countries using hard currency which was scarce. Thus Bulgaria

⁹⁴ Crampton, The Balkans since the Second World War 178.

⁹⁵ Karamikhova, "The So-Called "Regenerative Processes" - Policies and Results 1987 - 1997 (Т.Нап "Възродителни Процеси" - Политика И Резултати 1987 - 1997 Г.)," 386.

was forced to take loans from western banks.⁹⁶ The economic hardship coincided with the regenerative process. The western countries wanted Bulgaria to stop the abuse of human rights and political persecution in exchange for the loans. Thus the regenerative process became the first reason for relaxation of the Party's terror over the people.⁹⁷ However, the reason is exogenous and in no way can be attributed to civil society as the protests were localized and never really had any impact outside of their ethnic circles.⁹⁸ The abuse of human rights, however, became the reason for the creation of several civilian groups which campaigned for their protection. I am taking a more detailed look at those groups and their support below.

b. The ecological catastrophe in Ruse⁹⁹

The city of Ruse is located in northern Bulgaria along the Danube River, which at that point is also natural boundary between Bulgaria and Romania. In the 1980s the town of Ruse suffers extensively from the often malfunctioning of a chemical plant that is built on the other side of the river – in the Romanian city of Giurgiu. The malfunctioning caused excessive amounts of chlorine to be released in the air and to poison the inhabitants of both cities. Despite that the Romanian authorities did not undertake any measures in order to stop the ecological catastrophe. Thus in 1987 the city of Ruse tried to do something. An art exhibition

⁹⁶ Zdravko Batsarov (Здравко Бацаров), "Bulgaria's Position in the World (Economy and Politics) (Позицията На България В Света (Икономика И Политика)," *On Transition (За Промените)*, ed. Liliana (Лиляна Александриева) Alexandrieva (Sofia: Centre for liberal strategies and Center for social practices (Център за либерални практики и Център за социални практики), 1995) 297-9.

⁹⁷ Ralitsa Peeva (Ралица Пеева), "The Round Table (Кръглата Маса)," *On Transition (За Промените)*, ed. Lilyana Alexandrieva (Лиляна Александриева) (Sofia: Centre for liberal strategies and Center for social practices (Център за либерални стратегии и Център за социални практики), 1997) 44.

⁹⁸ Dmitrii Varzonovtsev (Дмитрий Варзоновцев), "'The Street' And 'The Square' - the Semiotics of the Civil Protest in the Transitional Period ('Улицата' И 'Площадът' - Семиотика На Гражданския Протест През Преходния Период)," *On Transition (За Промените)*, ed. Lilyana Alexandrieva (Лиляна Александриева) (Sofia: Centre for liberal strategies and Center for social practices (Център за либерални стратегии и Център за социални практики), 1997) 477.

⁹⁹ In Bulgarian: Русе. Other commonly met spellings are: Rousse, Russe, Rusé

was allowed by the Party but its purpose is not that much to hold an exhibition of art, as it was a way to protest against the grave condition of the city and its inhabitants. One of the exhibits had nothing but a simple message – the number of lung diseases in the city in 1975 (969 per 100 000 people) and in 1985 (17 386 per 100 000 people).¹⁰⁰

The citizens, however, do not stop there. On 27/28 September around 200 people, the majority of which were female, held a peaceful demonstration in front of the regional committee of BCP with their sole purpose being to show their disappointment with the states' failure to help its citizens. There is no repression from the state of the demonstration. On the 6th of February, 1988, an even larger demonstration was organized. Two days later another 100 people go and just stand in front of an office of the Party. On 10th of February around 3000 people gather again in front of the regional committee of BCP. Again the demonstration was peaceful, but this time the protestors cried out “dismantling”¹⁰¹ As a result of this event the documentary “Breathe”¹⁰² was shot, which showed the struggle of the citizens of Ruse.¹⁰³

A few weeks later the movie was shown in Sofia twice – on the 25th of February and the 8th of March, 1988. The Party banned the movie. Nevertheless, on the 3rd of March a group of intellectuals gathered to discuss the semi-legal movie. That same day they formed “Committee for Ecological Protection of the City of Ruse.”¹⁰⁴ The purpose of the committee was to take measures against the toxic emissions from the malfunctioning factory. The club had 575 founding members. About 70 per cent of them were members of the Party. The board of directors consisted of 30 people. Some of them had high status in the Party, while others

¹⁰⁰ Crampton, The Balkans since the Second World War 180.

¹⁰¹ „демонтаж” – translated by me

¹⁰² „Дишай” – translated by me

¹⁰³ Деян Киранов (Деян Кюранов), "The Bulgarian Unofficial Political Opposition before 10th November, 1989 (Българските Неформали (До 10.Хи.1989))," On Transition (За Промените), ed. Lilyana Alexandrieva (Лиляна Александриева) (Sofia: Centre for liberal strategies and Center for social practices (Център за либерални стратегии и Център за социални практики), 1997) 340.

¹⁰⁴ „Комитет за екологична защита на град Русе” – translated by me.

were active. The idea was that the Party members were to provide protection for the rest who would do the majority of the work for the committee. The Party, which became aware of the committee, instead of gaining popularity from its citizens by discussing the problem with the Romanians it decided to crush the organization. A majority of the Party members were expelled from the Party, the problem was silenced and forbidden from being mentioned on the media. Those who were not expelled had to endure a decrease of their Party status. In order to crush the committee completely the court was ordered to reject the registration. The second meeting of the club was its last one as well. The attempts to register the club, however, continued for a year until February 1989.¹⁰⁵

The importance of the committee was not so much its work (or the lack there of) but it was the first group that had such a large support. While trying to get registration from the court its core members took part in almost all other oppositional activities for the time being as private individuals. The Committee on Ruse is important for another reason as well – it shows that even in 1988 the state prefers to crush the groups, seen as opposition, rather than to fulfill their desires, even if they were for the good of the Party's supporters. The Party saw, and would see until its fall in the early 1990, every civil organization as a rival and a threat to its political power. As we shall see when I go over other civil organizations of that period they were also short-lived and heavily oppressed by the BCP. Thus, I can draw the conclusion that the Party did not relax its regime and its collapse was surprising, yet it did not happen under the pressure of the civil groups.

c. The palace coup and the National Round Table

As I mentioned before, in Bulgaria, the date, 10th of November, 1989, when Todor Zhivkov was ousted from the leadership of the party and the state council is regarded as the first day of democracy. That, as we shall see here, is far away from the truth but it did mark

¹⁰⁵ Dainov, The Political Debate and the Transition in Bulgaria (Политическия Дебат И Прехода В България) 321-3.

the beginning of the end of the totalitarian regime. That period saw a number of large demonstrations take place without persecution, thereby pressuring the governing elite to relax the regime.

Zhivkov was ousted from the party for two reasons – he alienated almost everyone, thus losing his local support, and because the Kremlin disapproved of his economic policies and saw him unfit to govern. The former he did at the end of 1988. During a Politburo conference from 28 to 31 October, 1988, Zhivkov severely critiqued almost every aspect of the state and the organizations that ran it. He put forth the idea international trade to become part of the government, rather than being dominated by trade organizations, which were in reality the secret service. He requested numerous lay-offs of diplomats due to poor performance. In that way he alienated the groups who controlled the external relations of Bulgaria. At that time, for almost two decades, foreign minister was Petur Mladenov, who managed to take advantage of the situation and to consolidate those groups around him. Zhivkov also proposed that the Bulgarian factories should open up for foreign competition in order to improve their production. The directors knew that they could not withstand an open market for that same reason the market was being opened. Andrey Lukanov, a minister of foreign economic affairs at the time, promised the directors the protectionism of the state. Zhivkov also hinted of budget cuts for the military factories, decentralization of numerous financial funds and also cuts in the administration. That dissatisfied the military and also the bureaucracy.¹⁰⁶ On that congress he lost the support of those below him, it would take an entire year, however, before he is taken down. Something that big needed the approval of the Kremlin.

In terms of legitimacy, it can be argued that Zhivkov became unfit to rule in the beginning of the 1980s when he introduced his *New Economic Model*. As we saw, the model

¹⁰⁶ Ibid. 328-29.

resembled very much market economy, which undermined the entire ideology of the regime itself. The communists legitimized their regime by creating planned economy and banning market economy, as it, according to Karl Marx, creates alienation among the people. The communists' basic method for removing of the exploitation of a person by a person was removed, thus discrediting the theory that allowed them to rule. As a result of those deviations from socialism Gorbachev critiqued severely the innovations in the economy. It is important to note that Gorbachev's loss of faith in 1989 at the peak of the regenerative process was the end of Zhivkov's support in the Kremlin. When Petur Mladenov dropped by Moscow, on his return from a visit in China, he got the blessing from Gorbachev to carry on the coup.¹⁰⁷ Thus on 10th of November, 1989, Zhivkov resigned from the post of General Secretary of the Bulgarian Communist Party. It is not well known what indeed happened but the publications of Zhivkov's speeches in the party newspaper hint that the coup was a surprise for all but very few members.¹⁰⁸ The fact that Mladenov took over the posts of Zhivkov and Lukanov was soon to become a prime minister hint that the two were the leaders of the coup. One of the few documents that is available to the public regarding the coup is Mladenov's letter to the Central Committee of the Party from 24th November. Mladenov discredited Zhivkov and accused him of abusing the state power in order to provide better life for his close circle of relatives and friends.¹⁰⁹

Petur Mladenov, at the same Party plenum he is pronounced General Secretary, says that the future of Bulgaria was not multiparty system but rather restructuring of the system along the guidelines of socialism. He saw the future of Bulgaria in a "self-governing civil

¹⁰⁷ Crampton, The Balkans since the Second World War 181.

¹⁰⁸ Dainov, The Political Debate and the Transition in Bulgaria (Политическия Дебат И Прехода В България) 340.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.* 342.

society”¹¹⁰ From those events we can conclude that what happened on 10th of November was not a revolution or anything that looks like one – Zhivkov “had been toppled by a palace coup, not people power”¹¹¹ What indeed happens was just the first change of the leader of the Party in more than 30 years. The new leaders were in no favor to liberalize the political and economical sphere but rather to continue with the economic experiments that began ten years ago. The tremors on the top, however, allowed the small part of the organized civil society to take advantage and to organize protests in favor of liberalization.

These events, however, were preceded by two other which had some impact and probably made Gorbachev give carte blanche to Mladenov and Lukanov to act. Unfortunately, there is no hard evidence of that, as large number of the BCP archives were either hidden or destroyed in 1990. The regime allowed the “oppositional”¹¹² civil groups to have meetings at only two places. The most active group of ecologists was gathering signature, however, at a place that is in the city center and was not approved by the Party. Thus after several requests to move, the police manhandled the ecological activists. The subscription they prepared received the record for the time 11 000 signatures. At that same time, however, in Sofia took place an international ecological forum. The beating and arresting of the activists happened in front of the eyes of international media. By the end of the day several of the delegations, including that of the USSR, requested the authorities to explain their actions.¹¹³ That event is supposed to have influenced the Kremlin to give its support to for the organizers of the coup.

¹¹⁰ „самоуправляващо се гражданско общество” – translated by me and quoted in Ibid. 344.

¹¹¹ Crampton, The Balkans since the Second World War 181.

¹¹² The groups who are considered by the regime as having ideologies against the regime have no political agenda on their platform, as we shall see further on, they have two agendas – human rights and ecology. For that reason they are not purely oppositional, despite being seen as such by the regime

¹¹³ Dainov, The Political Debate and the Transition in Bulgaria (Политическия Дебат И Прехода В България) 338-9.

It is also suspected that this same event was provoked and ordered by plotters to discredit Zhivkov in front of the international community.

On 3rd of November around 2000 people made a peaceful march to the parliament to hand in the subscription on which the beaten activists were working and the petition itself. That petition had no political or any other content that is against the regime – it was requesting the government not to interfere and change the way a river is flowing in a mountain in southern Bulgaria. At that particular demonstration gathered around 3000 people and 2000 agents of the state. There were cries “democracy” and “freedom”. Despite that the Party did not take any measures and the protestors disbanded peacefully.¹¹⁴ This event is a milestone in the civil actions. So far there had been no civil action with such great participation. It is important for another reason as well. Despite the anti-totalitarian cries there was no repression. That shows that at that point the state was either unable or prevented in some way of having full control over at least part of the population. That event could also be regarded as a reason for Zhivkov’s ousting.

The plotters did have some form of a program as we saw from Mladenov’s speech, but they did not succeed to put it forth for several reasons – the USSR, also coming under pressure, is not interested in Bulgaria, as its interests in Asia were far more important. The Bulgarians failed to secure guarantees for their regime in the form of economic and military support from Russia if needed. The removal of Zhivkov is the first change since the mid-1950s. That was regarded by many as the end of the era of communism and hence the misconception that this is the day Bulgarian democracy is born. What happened as a result is that almost every day after November 1989 there were protests which were in favor of political changes in the state. There were several rallies, with ever-increasing audience, which at one point count as much as 10 000 people. The people wanted changes – they wanted the

¹¹⁴ Ibid. 339.

removal of article 1 and the BCP to waive its monopolistic position. Thus in December 7th the Union of Democratic Forces (UDF) was founded.¹¹⁵

The protests of the people forced the Party to initiate talks with the leaders of the UDF in order to appease the populace and to prevent possible clashes of civilians and police or military. In order to achieve that, the National Round Table was formed. Round tables occurred in that period in almost all transitional post-communist countries. Their purpose was to achieve a consensus between the governing and the opposition in a peaceful manner and thus to prevent bloodsheds.¹¹⁶

The Bulgarian National Round Table started on 22nd of January, 1990.¹¹⁷ The participants agreed that its decisions will be rubberstamped by the existing parliament and thus turned into legislation. One of the first things to be changed was the constitution – it was amended in order to legitimize the presence of more than two parties and also removed the State Council and created the institution of the president which was taken over by the former chairman of the State Council.¹¹⁸ The removal of the monopoly clause in the constitution and creating the institution of the president designated the change in the status quo of the state.

The National Round Table was also important because it does bring legitimacy to the opponents. The agreement of the ruling party to participate in talks with the UDF meant that the UDF was seen as representing at least some portion of the population.

The National Round Table had broad discussions on the political and economic system to be used for governing Bulgaria. One of the more important debates was whether to have

¹¹⁵ Ibid. 345.; For more information on the UDF please see section 3.c from this chapter.

¹¹⁶ Peeva, "The Round Table (Кръглата Маса)," 42.

¹¹⁷ Ibid. 45.

¹¹⁸ Krasen Stanchev (Красен Станчев), "The Choice of the Political Model: The Role of the Constitution, the Private Property Rights and the Institutions (Изборът На Политическия Модел: Ролята На Конституцията, Правата На Собственост И Институциите)," *Anatomy of the Transition: Economic Policy of Bulgaria from 1989 to 2004 (Анатомия На Прехода: Стопанската Политика На България От 1989 До 2004)* (Sofia: Siela - Soft end publishing (Сиела - софт енд пбблишинг), 2004) 43.

first a new constitution coined, by electing a Great National Assembly, or is it first needed a regular parliament to be convened.

From this historical overview I can draw the conclusion that the change of the top Party official was not caused by any form of civilian protest, but rather by Zhivkov's loss of support in the Kremlin. This change itself did not bring down communism, but the pressure applied by the protests forced the new leaders to initiate talks with the only oppositional formation – the UDF. Therefore my independent variable supports the thesis that the people did not evoke a revolution, and they were, probably, not capable of supporting a democratic regime. In order to remove the probability from my conclusion, further on I will investigate the strength and impact of the civil organizations.

d. The Great National Assembly and the elections

The Great National Assembly is an institution that has been called upon only to revise peace treaties that concern Bulgaria's territory or to vote a new constitution. Although the creation of a new constitution was necessary the amendments of the constitution from 1971 were sufficient not to force the immediate acceptance of a new one. In the countries where the push for democracy came from a majority of the people the opposition provoked free elections for regular parliament. They were won by the opposition and the necessary first steps were taken to remove the Party presence as a part of the state. Constitutions were coined after the opposition had secured some positions to prevent the Party from launching a counter-coup.¹¹⁹ What happened in Bulgaria was the opposite. The National Round Table decided that Bulgaria needed first a new Constitution and laws regulating the elections approved by a Great National Assembly, and then the regular elections were to follow. This decision was pushed forward by the opposition which wanted "trial" elections. The UDF was afraid that it would lose the elections and thus the real power – the UDF wanted in this manner to "poll"

¹¹⁹ Dainov, The Political Debate and the Transition in Bulgaria (Политическия Дебат И Прехода В България) 377.

the people's party preference.¹²⁰ The UDF, in confirmation with its fear, lost the elections for the Great National Assembly with 53 to 36 per cent in favor of the former Bulgarian Communist Party, which in April, 1990, changed its name to Bulgarian Socialist Party.¹²¹ The importance of this is that the opposition was not supported by a great majority of the Bulgarians, thus leading to the conclusion, that Bulgarians themselves were more in favor of the BSP's proposition, which was reforms along socialist lines, than of the UDF, which wanted abolition of socialism and liberalization and privatization of the market.

The Great National Assembly also became a reason for the split in the UDF, showing that it lacked party discipline and that the elements that composed it were not united by common goals and policy but rather by their anti-communist views. In April 1991 the UDF received a note from the Former GDR that the communist secret services had developed a plan named "Wedge"¹²² which aimed to control the revolution and to prevent the privatization of private property and in that way to keeping the power in the hands of the state. The "velvet revolutions" that took place aimed to prevent the people from satisfying their desire for change and thus stop the transition and retain power. As the GNA's process went slowly and little legislation was accepted. The UDF saw the plan "Wedge" in action in the GNA's work. In order to prevent the execution of the plan the central committee requested all representatives to leave and thus to provoke new elections. This, however, did not happen. Only 39 out of the 400 deputies and the 144 UDF representatives left the GNA. Seeing that their absence won't prevent acceptance of constitution and the plan of the secret services they went on a hunger strike in front of the building of the parliament but to no avail¹²³ – the

¹²⁰ Stanchev, "The Choice of the Political Model: The Role of the Constitution, the Private Property Rights and the Institutions (Изборът На Политическия Модел: Ролята На Конституцията, Правата На Собственост И Институциите)," 42.

¹²¹ The party transformation and the elections are discussed in further detail in section 3

¹²² План „Клин” – translated by me.

Constitution was signed by more than the required two thirds of the representatives by 12th of June and by 9th of July the debates are over.¹²⁴

National Elections for a parliament were scheduled by the GNA for the 13th of October 1991. The presidential elections were held in 12th and 19th January, 1992. Zhelyu Zhelev and Blaga Dimitrova were elected for president and vice-president, respectively, with 44.66% at the first round and 52.85% on the second.¹²⁵ Thus by the end of January, 1992, the Bulgarian people had elected in free elections their first truly democratic government and president.

The conclusion can be drawn that the UDF lacked popular support during 1990 and for that reason opted for elections of Great National Assembly. In 1990, however, the government of Andrey Lukanov fell upon economic hardship. The reformed former communist party was leading the state to bankruptcy. The appointed in February, 1990, one-party government of Andrey Lukanov suspended the payment of the external debt in the end of March and Bulgaria fell into economic isolation. The economy, due to the decreasing support of the USSR continued to decay. All kind of fuels were rationed and electricity was available only a few hours a day during the winter of 1990. The shops were empty as there was no food to be sold. At the end of the summer, the polls showed decrease in the support for the BSP, due to that significant change of the lifestyle of the people.¹²⁶

Another event that further dropped the support for the BSP in favor of the UDF is the resignation, shortly after the elections for GNA, of Petur Mladenov from the post of President.

¹²³ Ibid. 451-3.

¹²⁴ Yonko Grozev (Йонко Грозев), "Changes in the Institutional Framework: The Costitution (Промени В Институционалната Уредба - Конституцията)," On Transtion (За Промените), ed. Lilyana Alexandrieva (Лиляна Александриева) (Sofia: Centre for liberal strategies and Center for social practices(Център за либерални стратегии и Център за социални практики), 1995) 93.

¹²⁵ Boryana Dimitrova (Боряна Димитрова), "The Union of Democratic Forces - a Travel to Itself (Съюзът На Демократичните Сили - Пътуване Към Себе Си)," The Bulgarian Elections 1990-1996 (Българските Избори 1990-1996) (Sofia: Demokraticzni Traditsii - Demetra (Демократични традиции - Деметра), 1997) 38.

¹²⁶ Dainov, The Political Debate and the Transition in Bulgaria (Политическия Дебат И Прехода В България) 407.

People continuously protested and require Mladenov to step down, because a tape surfaced that had him saying “It is best the tanks to come”¹²⁷ to the Minister of Defense during one of the massive protests in December, 1989. Thus Zhelyu Zhelev was appointed president. As a result of the economic catastrophe Lukanov’s government resigned on 29 November 1990. There was a disagreement about who should head the next government. Zhelev proposed an unaffiliated judge – Dimiter Popov, to head a caretaker government, whose goals were to bring the economy to its feet; to commence economic reforms; and to prepare and convene elections for a regular parliament after the GNA has written and ratified a new constitution.¹²⁸

The first parliamentary, democratic, elections take place on the 13th of October, 1991. They were won by the UDF with less than 1 per cent lead of the popular vote.

The events that took place during the time of the Great National Assembly show that the opposition was not unified and well-organized, being a loose union of multiple anti-communist organizations. It also shows that the electorate had sympathy for the old and reformed BCP, rather than the new UDF. The economic hardship in 1990 was a significant reason for the electorate’s support for the UDF a year later. The numerous political gaffes on behalf of the BCP’s leaders alienated further votes. Thus I can state that the economic crisis heavily influenced the elections.

e. Conclusion

From this chapter I can conclude that due to the regenerative process Bulgaria became completely isolated in 1989. Taken together with the economical hardship Zhivkov lost his support in the Party and through his disregard for human rights he lost his support in the Kremlin, as well. Thus, taking advantage of the situation several party members ousted him. The coup cannot be regarded as a revolution or abolishment of communism. It is a change in the

¹²⁷ „Най-добре е танковете да дойдат” – translated by me, quoted in Ibid. 406.

¹²⁸ Ibid. 442-3.

command of the Party, which seemed as a change of the regime due to the regime's identification for over 30 years with Zhivkov's personality.

The regime's intolerance towards the civil organizations further supports the idea that the regime regarded all civil organizations as oppositional. It also reinforces my hypothesis that the civil society was not strong enough due to the persistent repressions against it. The civil actions also prove that they were limited in their respective geographical regions – the protests that concern Ruse took place only in Ruse, those that concern the ethnic Turks did not appear in predominantly Bulgarian cities. Thus it can be concluded that in the dawn of the fall of the communist regime, there was a lack of organized and sufficiently large civil society that could have brought to the demise of the regime by itself.

2. *Analysis of the Institutions Set Up by the New Constitution*¹²⁹

I am going to take a detailed look of the constitution that was drafted by the Great National Assembly and was adopted in 1991 in order to analyze and assess its democratic nature. First of all, I am going to describe briefly the most important state institutions and outline their main tasks. I will assess the implementation of the multiparty system and the election process of the governmental bodies. I will also assess the use of separation of powers as a method preventing the abuse of political power.

a. State institutions

The constitution of 1991 creates five main institutions: the National Assembly (parliament), the Council of Ministers (government), the Judiciary, the Presidency and the Constitutional Court. Each of them has a separate field of jurisdiction. The parliament consists of 240 members which are elected for 4 years.¹³⁰ In case that there is a suspicion of

¹²⁹ This chapter uses the constitution introduced in 1991. All quotations and articles, unless noted otherwise in a footnote, refer to that constitution. *Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria*, National Assembly of the Republic of Bulgaria, Available: <http://www.parliament.bg/?page=const&lng=en>, 14.12.2005.

¹³⁰ Article 63,64

falsification or other manipulation of the elections they can be contested in front of the new institution of the Constitutional Court.¹³¹

The parliament is the legislative organ and legislation can be introduced by any member of parliament and any member of the Council of Ministers.¹³² Legislation can be accepted only if at least 50 per cent of the representatives are present and voting and more than the half of the present give their support for the bill.¹³³ The constitution, in article 82, explicitly requests the sessions of the parliament to be public, unless the representatives vote otherwise. This is done to provide the people with the necessary information and to prevent suspicion of conspiracies from the population. The National Assembly, unlike its predecessor, is free to determine by itself its recesses. It is permanently acting, and no other body is responsible for its convention. After the legislature is elected it has to be summoned within one month of its election by the president. If he or she fails to do so one fifth of the newly elected representatives should convene the assembly.¹³⁴ In this way the assembly cannot be suspended on the whim of the president, which was the case with the National Assembly and the State Council in the constitution from 1971. Worth noting, although not officially part of the constitution, is the method of election of the representatives – it is popular representation, based on party lists, with a 4% threshold. This method became the norm through a law, after the elections for Great National Assembly used popular representation and first-past-the-post to select the representatives.¹³⁵ The 4% barrier prevents just about any small party from

¹³¹ Article 66

¹³² Article 87

¹³³ Article 81

¹³⁴ Article 74 and 75

¹³⁵ Jan Zielonka, ed., *Democratic Consolidation in Eastern Europe Volume 1: Institutional Engineering* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001) 190-1.

entering the parliament, fragmenting it and thus to stall the work of the parliament.¹³⁶ It is suspected that this barrier was to prevent the Movement for Rights and Freedoms to enter into parliament; however, since 1991 it has always secured enough votes to pass the barrier and even to act as a balancer between the two main fractions – the BSP and the UDF – by forming a parliament with either one.

The National Assembly is also responsible for the election, removal and accountability of the Council of Ministers.¹³⁷ The Council of Ministers is responsible for implementing the laws, voted by parliament, and to implement the domestic and the foreign policy. It should also ensure public order and overall guidance of the state administration.¹³⁸ It also “shall manage the implementation of the state budget; organize the management of the state's assets; conclude, confirm or denounce international treaties when authorized to do so by law.”¹³⁹ The Council of Ministers is the *de facto* executive power in the Bulgarian constitutional framework.

The constitution creates an entirely new institution that has no equivalent in any other constitution – the Constitutional Court.¹⁴⁰ Its primary function is to interpret the constitution and decide whether the acts introduced by parliament or government are constitutional. It has to also resolve conflicts to which competence a certain issue belongs between local government, government, parliament and president. It has jurisdiction over the constitutionality of treaties, parties and organizations, impeachments of the National

¹³⁶ Georgi Karasimeonov (Георги Карасимеонов), "Formng of the Party Structures in Post-Communist Bulgaria (Формиране На Партиини Структури В Посткомунистическа България)," *On Transition (За Промените)*, ed. Lilyana Alexandrieva (Лиляна Александриева) (Sofia: Centre for liberal strategies and center for social practices (Център за либерални стратегии и Център за социални практики), 1995) 110-1.

¹³⁷ Article 89 and 90

¹³⁸ Article 105

¹³⁹ Article 106

¹⁴⁰ Grozev, "Changes in the Institutional Framework: The Costitution (Промени В Институционалната Уредба - Конституцията)," 81-2.

Assembly against the president and the legality of election disputes regarding the National Assembly and the institution of the president. The constitution also forbids the suspension of the constitutional council by law.¹⁴¹ The last clause ensures the independence of the Constitutional Court from the National Assembly, which is forbidden to suspend the Constitutional Court with legislature.

In order for the Constitutional Court to take action it has to be approached by either at least one fifth of the representatives, the president, the Council of Ministers, either of both Supreme Courts, or the Chief Prosecutor.¹⁴² In this way it is ensured that any of the executive, judiciary, or the legislative power can check on the legislature through the Constitutional Court. The court consists of 12 judges. The National Assembly, the President, and the Supreme courts have the right to appoint or elect 4 judges. Each of them is appointed for 9 years and it is not possible to be re-appointed or re-elected. Four new judges are introduced each 3 years by one of the institutions, on a rotary principle.¹⁴³ This clause effectively prevents the influencing of the judges, as they cannot be promised re-election or threatened by firing, as they also have immunity by constitution which defines the cases under which a judge can be dismissed. The rotary principle also makes it extremely hard one single party to appoint more than 4 judges, as they will be elected in different years, and it is assumed that there is a great chance that a different party or a coalition will be in power in the next institution to have right to appoint or elect judges.

The judiciary is explicitly made independent by article 117 through the guaranteeing of a separate budget by the constitution. The courts should supervise the legality of the actions

¹⁴¹ Article 149

¹⁴² Article 150

¹⁴³ Article 147

of the other governmental bodies.¹⁴⁴ Through the independent budget the court becomes less susceptible to external influence from the legislature and the executive. The Supreme Court of Cassation exercises supreme judicial oversight over the ruling of the district courts. It is responsible for the interpretation of the law and ensuring that the law has been applied correctly.¹⁴⁵ The Supreme Administrative Court has similar tasks but it oversees the application of the law in the administrative justice. It is responsible for checking the legality of the action of the executive – the Council of Ministers.¹⁴⁶ Here it is evident why the independent budget is a must. If the budget was not independent the Council could influence in that manner the actions of the courts.

The Supreme Judicial Council (SJC) consists of 25 members – eleven are elected by the parliament, and eleven by the bodies of the judiciary. The Chairmen of both supreme courts and the Chief Prosecutor are appointed by the president on a motion from the SJC for a seven-year terms and are also part of the SJC, which is responsible for the appointment, promotion and demotion of the judges, prosecutors and the investigating magistrates. The members of the SJC are elected for five-year terms and they cannot be immediately reelected as a protective measure not to be influenced by promises of reappointment.¹⁴⁷

The institution of the president is a defect of the constitution. Due to his direct election he bears high political legitimacy, yet his power is highly insufficient.¹⁴⁸ The institution of the president arose from the former Chairman of the State Council. According to Peeva, the defect of the constitution derives from the National Round Table – the BCP favored a strong institution which is directly elected for 5 to 7 years. The UDF favored appointed by the

¹⁴⁴ Article 120

¹⁴⁵ Article 124

¹⁴⁶ Article 125

¹⁴⁷ Article 130

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.* 93.

National Assembly president. In that way, Mladenov could not take advantage of its popularity and get elected for a president, which would *de facto* legitimize the Party dictatorial control over the state.¹⁴⁹ Thus the presidential institution of the constitution was a compromise between the two parties and a resolution to a short-term fear – the BCP received directly elected president, while the UDF received weak head of state.

The president is elected for five years, and in order to prevent him from abusing power, he cannot be re-elected more than once.¹⁵⁰ The elections require the presidential pair to receive at least 50 per cent of the legit votes, provided that more than 50 per cent of the eligible voters have cast their ballots.¹⁵¹ The latter ensures that the president is popularly elected, and also prevents fraud by not allowing people to vote and thus by casting several votes to elect a president. One of the few presidential jurisdictions are the scheduling of elections, the consultation of parliamentary groups and appointing a prime minister after elections or a failure of a government,¹⁵² appointing a caretaker government, dissolving the parliament, appoint diplomats on a motion from the Council of Ministers, grant, restore and revoke Bulgarian citizenship.¹⁵³ The president is also allowed to return a bill to parliament with his motives. If, however, more than 120 representatives vote for the bill, the president is forced to make it a law within 7 days of voting.¹⁵⁴

It is evident that the short-term fear of the UDF brought into existence an extremely weak president who has even no saying in the appointment of ministers. His veto can be also

¹⁴⁹ Peeva, "The Round Table (Кръглата Маса)," 65-6.

¹⁵⁰ Article 95

¹⁵¹ Article 93

¹⁵² Article 99

¹⁵³ Article 98

¹⁵⁴ Article 101

overturned and he cannot do any appointments of important offices without a preceding motion by another body.

b. Multiparty system and popularly elected parliament

Drawing on its dictatorial past the constitution explicitly declares in article 11 that politics is established on the plurality of parties and that no ideology can and should be proclaimed as being part of the state. The first article states that no part of the people, a political party or organization, institution or an individual can monopolize popular sovereignty, thus ensuring that if the separation of powers or the checks set up by the constitution fail a dictatorial rule is still illegitimate and forbidden by the constitution.

After 1990 many parties surface and usually at least 20 parties run for parliament and 10 candidates for the presidential post. The most controversial statement in the constitution regarding plurality of parties is article 11, paragraph 4. It states that “[t]here shall be no political parties on ethnic, racial or religious lines, nor parties which seek the violent seizure of state power.” The Movements for Rights and Freedoms (MRF) has been argued to be an ethnic party, and thus, by the force of the constitution, it should be outlawed. This argument was put forth in the 1990 when the movement was denied registration as a party. Eventually, under foreign pressure, the movement was allowed to take part of the elections but still it was not registered as a party for the elections of Great National Assmby.¹⁵⁵

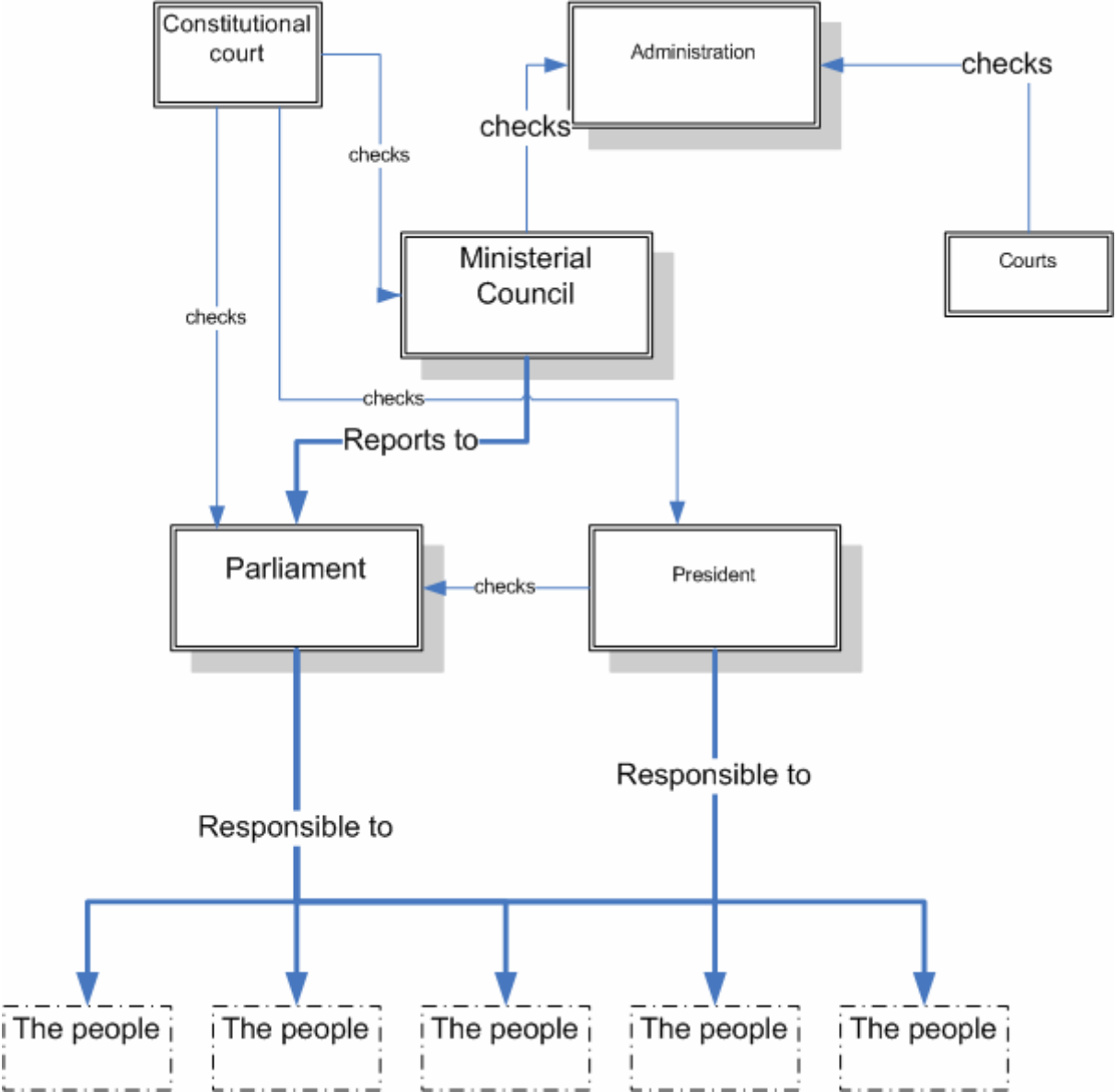
The Constitutional Court interprets the statement in negative terms – i.e. this is a ban on parties, who, through ethnic tension, would like to take control of the state. The Constitutional Court sees no such features in the Movements of Rights and Freedoms and thus does not outlaw it.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁵ Maria Bakalova (Мария Бакалова), "The Problem Of "Human Rights" In the Context of the Problems of the Minority and Its Normative Regulation in Bulgaria (Проблемът "Права" В Контекста На Малцинствената Проблематика И Нормативното Му Регулиране В България)," *On Transition (За Промените)*, ed. Lilyana Alexandrieva (Лиляна Александриева) (Sofia: Centre for liberal strategies and Center for social practices (Център за либерални стратегии и Център за социални практики), 1997) 207.

c. Separation of powers

The constitution clearly defines in article 8 that “The power of the state shall be divided between legislative, executive and judicial branches.” As we saw from the review of the institutions the National Assembly is the legislature, the Council of Ministers is the executive, and the Courts are the judiciary. The constitutional court should also be considered as part of the judiciary.

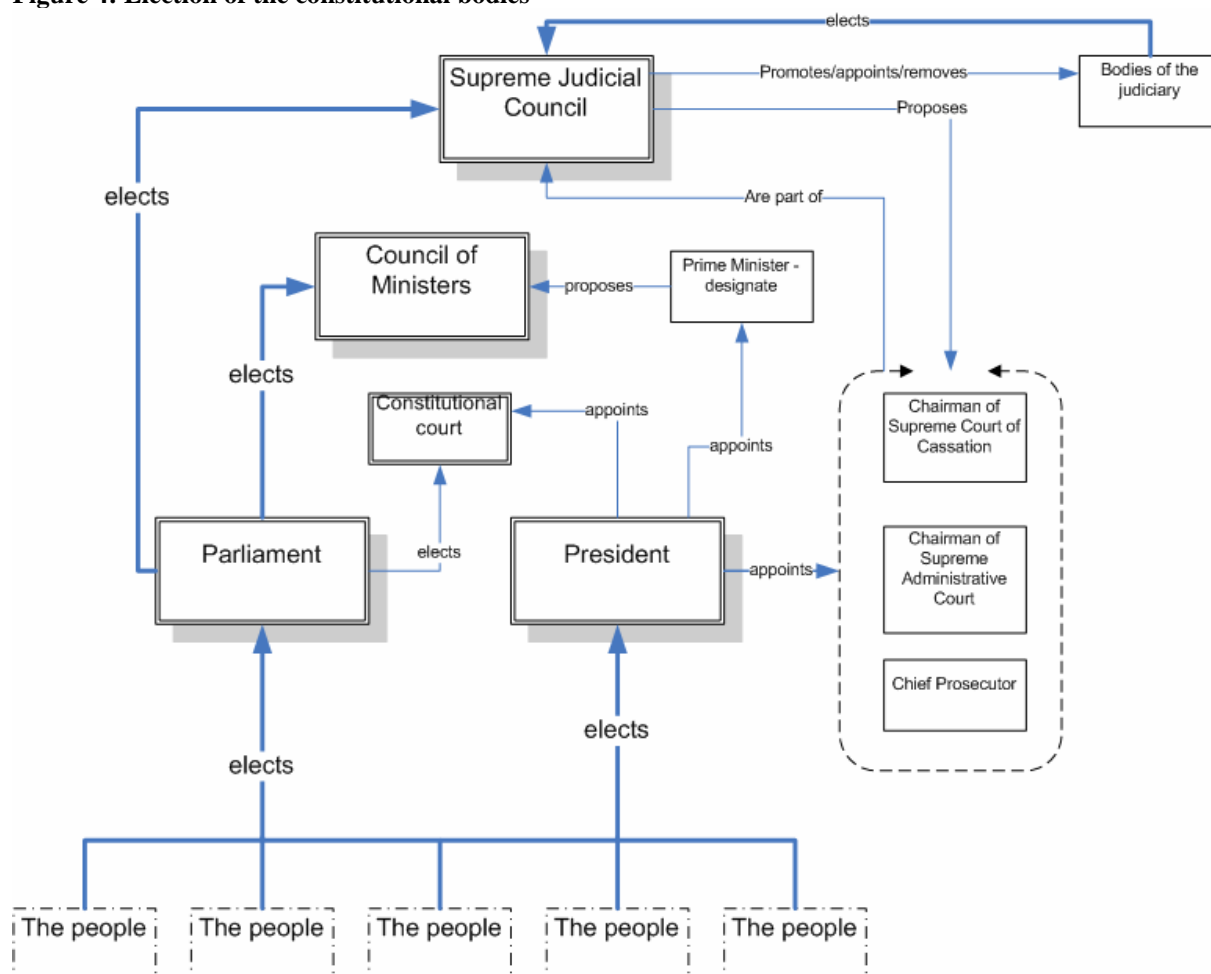
Figure 3: Responsibilities of the institutions



¹⁵⁶ Ibid. 209.

As we can see from Figure 3 the National Assembly checks on the activity of the executive. The Council of Ministers is also being elected by the Assembly (see Figure 4). In that manner it can be voted off by a vote of no confidence in case it is not fulfilling its duties. The Parliament is being checked by the president, through his/her veto power, and also by the people through elections. In January, 1997, the people also managed to force the government to resign with protests in front of the building of the National Assembly, thus election should also be considered a check. The legality of the acts of the president, the National Assembly and the Council of Ministers is assessed and checked by the Constitutional Council. The members of the judges are checked by the Supreme Judicial Council which is also checked by the parliament and the courts through elections.

Figure 4: Election of the constitutional bodies¹⁵⁷



¹⁵⁷ In order not to overload the figure the election of four of the twelve judges of the Constitutional Court by a joint meeting of the Supreme Administrative Court and the Supreme Court of Cassation is not shown.

d. Conclusion

The constitution of Bulgaria from 1991 not only guarantees the freedoms of its citizens but it also establishes an effective separation of powers. The latter prevents the concentration or abuse of power. If an institution tries to use its authority in a negative way, the action can always be blocked and negated by another institution, thus limiting the impact of unconstitutional legislature, harmful execution of a law, or unjust sentence.

Based on my analysis I conclude that the constitution ensures the democratic input of the people and also prevents its abuse by the elected representatives. Given that the elections in 1991 and 1992 for parliament and president, respectively, are accepted as free I can conclude that by the end of January, 1992, the Bulgarian state had in power democratically elected institutions.

3. Analysis of the Civil Society

In my final analysis of the civil society in the late 1980s and the early 1990s I am looking for evidence in support of the thesis that there is a sufficiently large civil society that can not only topple the regime but also uphold a new democratic regime. My point of interest is whether the civil society is predominantly led by its desire for governmental input and not other factors, e.g. economy. The details I will look at are the civil society's structure in the late 1980s; the more important oppositional groups that emerge in the 1980s, the size of their organization and the support they received; the voting behavior and the significant shifts of votes in between the elections for Great National Assembly, National Assembly and president.

a. The society in the late 1980s

From my analysis of the society under the dictatorial regime of Zhivkov I concluded that the regime was, indeed, destroying civil society and also trying to build a controlled, non-genuine civil society through its pseudo-organizations thus preventing a mass, uncontrolled by the state organization, to appear. In 1987, however, the protests against the human rights

violations and the ecological problems became more-widely supported and their protests more frequent. They, however, were geographically localized and never left their geographical scope. What is of interest to me is whether the social differentiation in the Bulgarian civil society presupposes the creation of distinct groups, which are aware of the group's existence. In order to analyze the society it is also important to identify whether those groups have a clear group interest defined.¹⁵⁸ If we do have distinctive groups, aware of their identity and their interest, within society then those groups can organize themselves and protect their group interest in case that is needed. If the latter is impossible then we cannot support a thesis of a presence of civil society. It is important to note, that I am going to investigate society as a whole and not certain specific cases, due to my interest in having a sufficiently large and active civil society and not several, small in number, groups as I have already shown that at least two such groups existed but they also lacked wide support from the public and their issues remained localized.

According to Dimitrov, Kabakchieva and Kijossev the late 80s society was suffering from "status inconsistency", which meant that highly prestigious work was underpaid or not paid at all (e.g. the intellectuals' labor was not paid for), while work with low prestige is overpaid. As a result there was a differentiation but there was no clear group identification. Differentiation and group identification were present only in the Party elite, and thus one can support that seeing the collapse of the economy, part of the Party elite could have decided and organized a change of the system, thus supporting some of the conspiratorial explanations of the collapse of the Communist regime in Bulgaria. Dimitrov, Kabakchieva and Kijossev argue that there were only two groups which could have formed a distinct group identity within society – the repressed intellectuals and the Muslim minority. They, however, argue that the

¹⁵⁸ Petya Kabakchieva (Петя Кабакчиева), "Constitution and Development of the Main Political Subjects (Конституиране И Развитие На Основните Политически Субекти)," *On Transition (За Промените)*, ed. Lilyana Alexandrieva (Лиляна Александриева) (Sofia: Centre for liberal strategies and Center for social practices (Център за либерални стратегии и Център за социални практики), 1997) 117-8.

civil society movement in the eve of the coup was weak and insufficient to provoke a revolution, which is also supported by my thesis as the repressions were localized and lacked popular support. On the other hand, they put forward the abundance of economic changes which preceded the coup – the liberalization of foreign trade by Decree 56, the admission that there is a significant need of a change in the economic model published several days before the coup, and in this way they argue that indeed the change of the political system was initiated by members of the Communist Party, rather than the people.¹⁵⁹

In support of the weakness of civil society I am going to use a recent (from 2002) social research conducted by the Open Society Foundation. According to it just 3 per cent of the interviewed were or had someone close to them involved in politics or being part of local or central government.¹⁶⁰ 85 per cent of all interviewed were not part of any form of civil organization – clubs, sports clubs, political parties, non-governmental organization or labor unions. This weak activity in 2002 supports the thesis that civil organizations were not popular in the communist regime and the pseudo-civil organizations were enforced onto the people. In the same study, only 21 per cent declared that they will participate in some form of civil action (subscription, rally, protest, etc) if their rights (including the right to vote) were limited. Only 15 per cent would take action in protection of their freedom of speech and citizen's rights. As we can see the protection of freedoms and rights seems to be unimportant to the modern day Bulgarians, and this is also one of the primary aspects of civil society – the protection of the common interest.¹⁶¹

What is more supportive, however, is that just 21 per cent considered the plurality of parties as an important change after 1990. More than half (56%) considered it not important

¹⁵⁹ Dimitrov, Kabakchieva and Kijossev, "Tendencies Towards Authoritarianism in a Transitional Period - Comparative Analysis between Russia and Bulgaria."

¹⁶⁰ 93% do not have anyone, and 4% declined to answer

¹⁶¹ Dimitrova, "Condition of the Society - Basic Conclusions (Състояние На Обществото - Основни Изводи)," 46.

of all. Slightly more than half of the questioned (52%) consider an important aspect of the changes in Bulgaria the ability to punish politicians via elections and 21% consider it as not important. It is important to note that the numbers differ substantially according to income. Those with income above the average salary account for the larger approval rate of the abovementioned policies – more than one third of those with higher income consider the diversity of parties important.¹⁶²

From my overview of the civil society I can conclude that not only democratic desires were scarce in 1990 but that they are also quite unpopular a decade after the fall of the dictatorial system. The weakness of civil society is a strong argument in favor of my thesis that democracy was not a popularly-desired form of government during the changes of the system even after the democratic election of the Bulgarian institutions.

b. The opposition

In this chapter I will present the opposition groups with larger support, their support basis and their fate. There are two distinct types of groups, regarded by the regime as oppositional – dealing with ecological issues, and dealing with human rights.

The first group to be created for ecological issues was the Committee on Ruse which I already discussed in a previous chapter. On 3 November 1988 in Sofia was founded the “Club Supporting the Glasnost and Perestroika.”¹⁶³ It had about 100 members of which 60 were members of the Party. Its declared purpose was to discuss economic, political, ecological, and scientific issues, as well as human rights and art. Their founding meeting was also their only meeting for about a year. The board of directors consisted of 6 people, who were also the only members to meet during that year, because the state did not place a hall at their disposal. The club had no visible activity but its members were active. As private individuals they managed

¹⁶² Ibid. 20-1.

¹⁶³ „Клуб за подкрепа на гласността и преустройството” – translated by me

to arrange several subscriptions, which, however, did not go above 300 signatures. The people under 40 left in 1989 to participate in “Ecoglasnost”¹⁶⁴

“Ecoglasnost” was founded February-March, 1989, meeting the same problems as the “Club Supporting the Glasnost and Perestroika” it gathered in private homes. After recruiting 101 members the admission of new members was ceased because they could not fit so many people in private homes anymore. It is known that the organization was monitored by the regime, yet it was not found as dangerous and the state did not interfere with it. “Ecoglasnost” also received credit for the largest number of gathered signatures (12500), first street subscription, first printed and posted placards, first international press conference (held as well in a private home). “Ecoglasnost” was responsible for the first peaceful demonstration on 3rd of November, 1989, which I already mentioned. Its supporters were also those beaten in front of international media during the ecological forum of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe. “Ecoglasnost” was the most successful unofficial group and the one that can be attributed the first and largest peaceful rally that was not organized by the state (3000 people and another 2000 agents of the state). Due to the beating of its activists and the alienation of the USSR delegation to the forum it certainly had an international impact and also held some responsibility for the loss of Zhivkov’s USSR support.¹⁶⁵

The other important group that was persecuted and monitored by the state was the human rights activists whose main topic was the forcefull assimilation of the ethnic citizens. In January 1988 Petar Manolov together with several former political prisoners, artists, writers and priests established the “Independent Society for the Protection of the Human

¹⁶⁴ „Екогласност” – translated by me; Kiuranov, "The Bulgarian Unofficial Political Opposition before 10th November, 1989 (Българските Неформали (До 10.Хи.1989))," 342-4.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid. 346.

Rights in Bulgaria.”¹⁶⁶ Their main activities were interviews for western journalists and calls to radio “Free Europe.” They managed to get in touch with representatives of the persecuted Turkish minority but about 6 months later some of the founders were expelled and the group’s leader left the country after being threatened by state officials. Their meetings were short, due to the constant police presence around the members, and they did not manage to do anything significant.¹⁶⁷

In November, 1988, 3 interned ethnic Turks founded “Democratic League for the Protection of the Human Rights.”¹⁶⁸ They managed to get in touch with some of the activists of Manolov’s independent society and recruited some of them. The state, however, blocked their actions and constantly interned or expelled their leaders. The league managed to recruit at most 300 activists and to organize a 10 000 people to protest which escalated to an armed clash with the police and to 6 deaths.¹⁶⁹

In February, 1989, the Labor Union “Podkrepa” (Support) was founded. As the other human rights organizations its only activity was to take part in interviews for international media. Manolov’s independent society lent many of its activists to found the labor union. It was severely prosecuted by the state but managed to survive Zhivkov’s fall and exists until present day. Yet, it did not have much success stories of its own.¹⁷⁰

As the outline shows, the unofficial groups were severely persecuted and regarded as opposition to the state, although they only tried to exert some control over the state’s deeds and not really topple the regime. They lacked popular support and also, with the exception of “Ecoglasnost”, did not manage to escalate the issues to a national and international level. The

¹⁶⁶ „Независимо дружество за защита правата на човека в България” – translated by me

¹⁶⁷ Ibid. 341.

¹⁶⁸ „Демократична лига за защита правата на човека” – translated by me

¹⁶⁹ Ibid. 344.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid. 345-6.

only successful organization was “Ecoglasnost” and its main success is attributed to the fact that it operated in the capital, Sofia. The small number of civil organizations, not controlled by the state, is in favor of my thesis that the civil society was weak even in the latest year of the communist dictatorship.

c. Voting behavior

The votes shifted substantially between the two elections for Great National Assembly in 1990 and regular National Assembly in 1992. BSP’s support fell from 52.75% to 33.14% which is more than one third of the votes being lost. The votes for the UDF, however, also decreased slightly from 36 to 34.46 per cent. Thus I can conclude that for a year a large group of votes were lost to other smaller parties. The Movement for Rights and Freedoms, which was born from the human rights organizations with main goal to protect the Turkish and Muslim minority, increased its support from 6 to 7.55 per cent. Unfortunately, the official results of the different regions from the elections for Great National Assembly were never published and comparison of the votes cannot be measured. It is possible, however, to determine where the main supporters of each party were during the elections for parliament in 1991 and for president in 1992.

In order to analyze the geography of the vote I have divided the settlements in five categories as follows:

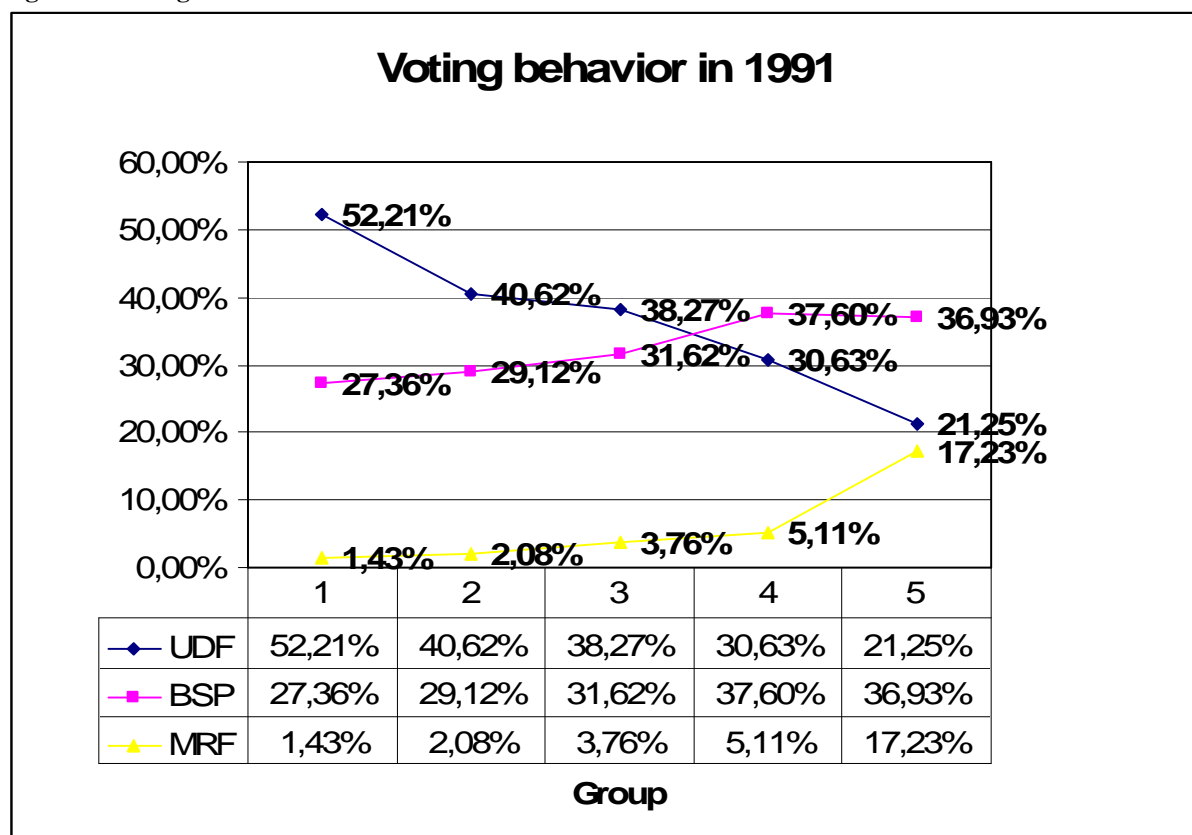
- Group 1 - Sofia - city, and several belonging villages, Plovdiv - city
- Group 2 - The city of Varna, Burgas, Ruse, Stara Zagora, Plevan, Sliven, Dobrich, Shumen, Jambol, Pernik (excluding the villages in these regions) - inhabitants are from 90 000 to 330 000
- Group 3 - Cities between 25 000 and 90 000
- Group 4 - all cities bellow 25 000

- Group 5 - all villages (excluding those belonging to Sofia - city)

In the table below is reflected the total population of each group and also the results:

Group	Named	Inhabitants (as of 04.12.92)
1	Sofia / Plovdiv	1531184
2	Big cities	1441628
3	Mid-size cities	1401789
4	Small towns	1381183
5	Villages	2731533
Total		8487317

Figure 5: Voting behavior in 1991¹⁷¹



From the chart above it is easy to draw the conclusion that the UDF had largest support, more than half of the voters, in the two biggest cities. Its support decreased to reach just 21,25 per cent in the smallest settlements. In the case of the Socialists and the Movement of Rights and Freedoms the situation was the opposite. The votes in their favor increased with

¹⁷¹ The data is taken from Dimitar Dimitrov (Димитър Димитров) and Kamen Ivanov (Камен Иванов), "Does the Vote Have a Steady Base? (Има Ли Вотът Устойчива Структура?)," *The Bulgarian Elections 1990-1996 (Българските Избори 1990-1996)* (Sofia: Demokraticzni Traditsii - Demetra (Демократични традиции - Деметра), 1997) 75.

the decrease of the size of the settlement. From the data the following observations and conclusions can be drawn: First of all, the newly-created, oppositional, party – UDF – was known best in the city where the most anti-communist rallies were available. Sofia and the other bigger cities (Group 1 and 2) are also worst hit by the economic crisis and that influenced the people to vote for the largest opposition party. Sofia is also the city which witnessed the most activity on behalf of the UDF and thus it can be explained that it has been influenced the most.

The people in the villages did not rely as heavy as the people in the cities on goods bought from shops. They have always relied on their own agricultural production, while the people in the cities have no way of obtaining food supplies if they have disappeared from the shops. The latter happened in the winter of 1990/1991. Thus I can conclude that the better results of the Socialist Party in smaller settlements are due to that it is better known, the settlements have not witnessed such massive demonstrations as the bigger cities, and especially Sofia, and that the smaller settlements were not affected in the same way as the bigger settlements from the economic crisis.

It is evident from figure 5 that the Movement for Rights and Freedoms gathered its support predominantly in the smaller settlements. It is also important to note that the movement does not propose party lists in 5 regions¹⁷². If we were to take the data from the 1994 elections and ignore the votes from those 5 regions combined with other 7 regions¹⁷³ there would still be no change to the seats in parliament the movement won in 1994.¹⁷⁴ According to Dimitrova, the votes for the movement come from regions with compact

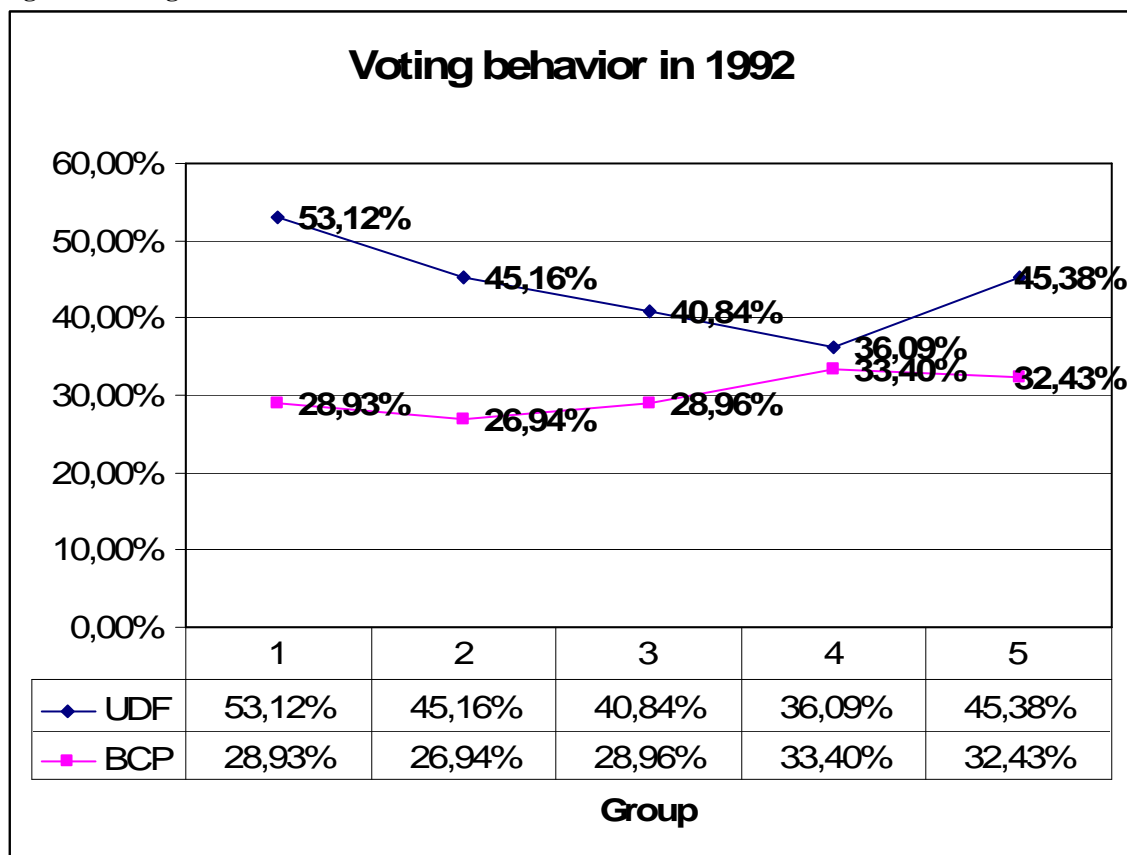
¹⁷² Vidin, Vratsa, Kjustendil, Montana, Pernik

¹⁷³ Sofia - city, Veliko Turnovo, Gabrovo, Lovech, Plovdiv - city, Sofia - region, Stara Zagora and Jambol

¹⁷⁴ Boryana Dimitrova (Боряна Димитрова), "The Movement for Rights and Freedoms - the Boundaries of the Stability (Движението За Права И Свободи - Границите На Постоянството)," The Bulgarian Elections 1990-1996 (Българските Избори 1990-1996) (Sofia: Demokratichni Traditsii - Деметра (Демократични традиции - Деметра), 1997) 45.

Turkish minority. 20 per cent of its support is drawn from just one region – Kurdzhali and 53 per cent from 4 regions – Kurdzhali, Razgrad, Turgovishte, Silistra and Shumen.¹⁷⁵

Figure 6 Voting behavior in 1992¹⁷⁶



If we compare the elections in 1991 and add the votes for UDF and MRF we can clearly see that the numbers and the results are almost the same as those in the 1992 elections. This could be explained by the “regenerative process” which alienated all Muslims. As there is no candidate by MRF for the presidency all its voters cast their ballots for the UDF. Thus, in practice, if the MRF was forbidden by the Constitutional Court its votes would have went in favor of the UDF.

On that basis I can conclude that the popularity of the UDF extends only in the bigger cities and it won the elections due to that. The electorate of the BSP is well known and the

¹⁷⁵ Ibid. 44.

¹⁷⁶ The data is for the first round as there is plurality of candidates and parties similarly to parliamentary elections. Data is taken from Dimitrov and Иванов, "Does the Vote Have a Steady Base? (Има Ли Вотът Устойчива Структура?)," 70.

party is also well known thus the smaller settlements, which were considerably less affected than the big cities from the economic crises, voted in favor of the BSP, proving that the rest of the voters did not vote for the UDF because of their own anti-communist beliefs but because of the stagnation of the economy and the lack of food supplies. My analysis also proves that the MRF is voted for in smaller settlements in regions with large Turkish and Pomak minorities.

d. Conclusion

The civil organizations in Bulgaria during the late 1980s were severely persecuted and their activities blocked, regardless of the fact that they were not opponents of the regime. The regime until its last moments was all-pervasive and regarded all form of civil organization as a challenger. Had it not been for the coincidence of international isolation, the palace coup, and the grave economic crisis the people would have not went out on the streets and thus put pressure on the regime, which was discussing the issues with the oppositional UDF. The latter was a loose mixture of dissidents, human rights and ecology activists, and people repressed by the regime.

All civil groups had only local impact and never managed to bring their issues of interest to a national or international level with the exception of "Ecoglasnost". All other organizations had very limited success in gathering signatures in support of a cause and were mostly blocked by the regime by either its refusal to register them as organizations or by the expelling or interning of their leaders and main activists.

The regional analysis of the voting behavior showed that the UDF had biggest impact only in the cities, where it had held activities and was known to the population. The BCP lost the most during the economic crisis. It lost one third of its voters but it seems that not in favor of the two other major parties but to smaller, mostly local, parties.

IV. Conclusion

To conclude my research I will first review the independent variables which I have defined and based on their status deduct my dependent variable, thus proving my thesis.

My exogenous variable describes the state of Bulgaria was isolationist throughout the majority of the second half of the 20th century. It had good relationship with its neighboring communist countries and the U.S.S.R.. Numerous diplomatic relations were broken off during the 1950s and some of them were renewed after Chervenkov's departure. Bulgaria's market was heavily dependent on the U.S.S.R. for their supply of cheap imports and their purchase of most of Bulgaria's imports. In the late 1980s Bulgaria became isolated even from the U.S.S.R., as some of its domestic policies were heavily critiqued by the Soviets. The so-called "regenerative process" brought even more negative publicity for Bulgaria and even more critiques from Turkey and its NATO partners.

The variable that studies Bulgarian economics describes the economy as having ups and downs. The economy, however, since the mid-1980s became into recession because the U.S.S.R. could not provide cheap raw materials in such quantities as before and much of Bulgaria's revenue from re-exports vanished and could not make up for the inefficiency of the Bulgarian economy. The economy crashed completely in 1990. After the repayment of the external debt was suspended Bulgaria ran into a major economic crisis. This deprived the people from almost all basic necessity goods. The latter resulted in reformed Communist Party's failure at the elections for legislature.

After studying Zhivkov's regime I deduct for my independent variable that his regime was totalitarian. In support of that I regard the censorship and persecution for his opponents and the opponents of the regime; the total disbanding of genuine civil society and mobilizing the people by means of pseudo-civil organizations which are sponsored and controlled by the

Party-state. In support of the regime's character are its domestic policies, as well as the organization of the economy.

The state of the variable measuring how democratic the institutions of the People's Republic of Bulgaria were shows that the constitution itself is not democratic. While it regards democracy and election as important components, it also forbids other than the two main ones from competing to power. This way the institution is not democratic as it cannot efficiently represent the diversity of interests of the electorate. The institutions were on purpose created in such a way to monopolize and centralize power in the hands of the State Council and its chairman. The constitution also had a very negative bias towards opponents of the communist ideology.

The study of the communist society shows that even before communism became the dominant ideology in Bulgaria there was little or no civil society at all. The state, controlled by the Communist Party, created a non-genuine civil society that revolved around the communist ideology and the Communist Party. The latter, coupled with the severe prosecution for the opponents of the regime, prevented the creation of a real civil society.

The historical analysis of the democratic transition was heavily influenced by other two independent variables – the exogenous and the economic one. Due to Bulgaria's reliance only on Soviet imports and large amount of exports, the Bulgarian economy was driven into a crisis when the Soviet economy deteriorated. The isolation of Bulgaria prevented it from having the same amounts and profits from its international trade and thus the economic crisis was inevitable. The latter withdrew large support from the, renamed to Socialist, Communist Party and shifted the elections in favor of the oppositional party.

The analysis of the institutions of the post-communist constitution proves that with the free election of a parliament in 1991, and president in 1992 democratic rules and procedures were in place. The plurality of parties and the democratic input were guaranteed and the

elections themselves were accepted as democratic and free. Consequently, I can conclude that democratic transition was indeed finished by January 1992.

The variable that studies the society in the dawn of the Communists' fall shows that the regime kept its all-pervasive nature until the very last. Civil actions and organizations were always regarded as oppositional and hence were blocked by the regime. The issues raised by these organizations were local and were not elevated to national or international level. The analysis of the voting behavior shifts supports the hypothesis that the changes occur because of economics and not because of superiority of the anti-communist, oppositional party.

In conclusion I deduct that the foreign policy of Bulgaria played a major role in the economic crisis. The latter caused a significant withdrawal of supporters of the former Communist party. The civil society during and near the end of the regime was weak and fragmented. The civil organizations were blocked by the state and lacked popular support. Thus I can wrap up that, indeed, the Bulgarian consolidation of democracy and civil society were still under construction.

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VI. Appendix

The constitution establishes four distinguished institutions at state level whose purpose is to enforce the guidelines set by the constitution – the National Assembly (Narodno Subranie, Народно събрание) in chapter IV, the State Council (Durzhaven Suvet, Държавен съвет) in chapter V, the Council of Ministers (Ministerski Suvet, Министерски съвет) or also called Government (Pravitelstvo, Правителство) in chapter VI, and the Judiciary in the face of the Court and the Prosecutor’s office (Sud i Prokuratura, Съд и прокуратура) in chapter VIII.

The constitution in article 6 states that the representative bodies are elected directly with universal suffrage by the means of a secret ballot. The term of the National Assembly, the only directly elected and representative body at state level, is 5 years. Everyone who is 18 years or older and is not sentenced at the time of the elections can vote and run for parliament. Article 7 states that the representatives are responsible for their action to the people and they can be recalled before the end of their term.

The National Assembly’s primary function is representing the people’s will (article 66) through the 400 representatives that are popularly elected. The 5 year mandate can be extended in case of a war, state of emergency, other extraordinary circumstances during elections and “up to one year and for other important reasons”¹⁷⁷ According to article 67, its main function is legislative and executive and it also exerts supreme control. In terms of legislature, the assembly is the only body that can introduce new laws, change and revoke existing ones. It is also responsible for adding, removing and changing parts of the constitution as well as interpreting it.¹⁷⁸ The assembly controls internal and external affairs, ratifies international treaties, approves the budget, elects the State Council, the Council of

¹⁷⁷ “до една година и по други важни причини” – translated by me – (article 69, paragraph 4)

¹⁷⁸ Article 85

Ministers, ensures that the constitution and the laws are observed, as well as exerting overall control over the state administration.¹⁷⁹ The assembly is also responsible for resolving any disputes that arise of the validity of the election results. The assembly, on its first session, appoints a commission which has to check the validity of the results and whether they were falsified.¹⁸⁰

The representatives in the National Assembly are allowed to question the Council of Ministers or only certain members which are obliged to answer those questions on the next session of parliament. Legislation can be initiated from the Council of Ministers, the State Council, the commissions of the National Assembly, the members of the assembly, the Supreme Court, the Chief Prosecutor, as well as several governmental and Party institutions.¹⁸¹ The State Council is the institution that schedules the sessions of the National Assembly. The State Council must summon the National Assembly at least 3 times per year, and every time more than one fifth of the representatives requests a session.¹⁸²

The institution of the State Council is defined in just 8 articles – from 90 to 97. The State Council is active at all times and its purpose is to take decisions regarding the state and to implement their executions, thus combining legislative and executive powers.¹⁸³ According to article 91 the State Council has the authority to guide and control the Council of Ministers and the other state institutions. It is entitled to take decisions and their implementation regarding the government of the State. The authority over certain issues, defined by a separate law, can be delegated to the chairman of the State Council from the State Council.¹⁸⁴

¹⁷⁹ Article 78

¹⁸⁰ Article 74

¹⁸¹ Article 80

¹⁸² Article 71

¹⁸³ Article 90

¹⁸⁴ Article 96

The State Council has a total of 27 rights defined in Article 93 which it can exercise at all times. Article 94 adds another 10 rights, which are to be exercised whenever the National Assembly is not in session. Here are some of the more important ones:

According to article 93:

- Schedules elections for a National assembly
- Schedules referenda, requested by the assembly
- Summons the assembly in session or the latter to decide whether to extend its mandate
- Legislative initiative
- Determines which drafted laws to be discussed by the assembly
- Promulgates laws by publishing them in the State Gazette
- Issues decrees and other juridical documents based on the laws and decisions taken by the assembly
- Interprets the laws and decrees
- Controls the security and the protection of the state
- Appoints and dismisses the members of the State Committee of Defense
- Appoints and dismisses the high command of the army
- Represents the state in its international relations
- Appoints and dismisses, based on proposal from the MC, the diplomats and consuls in foreign countries
- Ratifies and denounces international treaties
- Controls the Council of Ministers, those in charge of ministries, and those in charge of other departments
- Controls the precise execution of acts introduced by parliament or by itself
- Revokes unlawful or wrong acts by the Council of Ministers or by Ministers
- Has the right to pardon

- Cancels outstanding debts towards the state
- Controls local administration and borders of the territorial division
- Gives, restores or revokes Bulgarian citizenship
- Grants asylum

According to Article 94:

- General management of internal and external affairs
- Issues decrees, which are presented to the assembly at the next meeting for approval
- It can appoint or dismiss the Commander of the Armed forces, which is approved by the National Assembly
- Exerts general control over the Prosecutor's Office
- Declares state of emergency
- Declares war in case of attack or when a defense-pact is evoked

According to article 98 the Council Of Ministers (the government) is “superior executive and directive body of the state authority.”¹⁸⁵ The Council of Ministers is responsible to the National Assembly if it is in session, or to the State Council. The government has to present an account of its activity annually to the National Assembly.¹⁸⁶ The government is elected in the following way – first, the Prime Minister is elected by the assembly, he proposes a list of people who are to be ministers, who are elected by the assembly.¹⁸⁷ The Council of Ministers, according to article 103, is given the following 16 jurisdictions:

1. Arranges the internal and external affairs of the state
2. Legislative initiative
3. Creates the economic plans and introduces them to the National Assembly
4. Prepares the budget and introduces it to the National Assembly

¹⁸⁵ “висш изпълнителен и разпоредителен орган на държавната власт” – translated by me

¹⁸⁶ Article 102

¹⁸⁷ Article 101

5. Controls the implementation of the state budget and the economic plans
6. Provides conditions for the exercise of the rights and freedoms of the citizens
7. Ensures the internal order and the security of the state
8. General control over the armed forces
9. Concludes international treaties
10. Approves and denounces international treaties, which are not to be ratified
11. Presides, coordinates and controls the activities of ministries and other departments
12. Manages and controls the activity of the executive committees of the people's soviets
13. Organizes the execution of the acts of the National Assembly and the State council
14. Revokes the unlawful or unjust acts and deeds of the ministers and the chairmen of other departments
15. Revokes the unlawful or unjust acts and deeds of the executive committees of the people's soviets
16. Stops the execution of unlawful or unjust acts and deeds of the people's soviets and reports to the State council for their revocation.

The Judiciary is supervised by the Supreme Court which is elected for 5 years and it is responsible and accountable to the National Assembly or the State Council, if the former is not in session.¹⁸⁸ The Prosecutor's office is organized in similar way – the Chief Prosecutor is elected for a five-year term and is responsible to the National Assembly and the State Council.¹⁸⁹ The Constitution is explicit that the judges, the jury and the prosecutors are subordinate solely to the law when fulfilling their duties.¹⁹⁰ The Prosecutor's office is responsible to ensure that laws are abided by everyone – citizens, organizations, ministers,

¹⁸⁸ Article 132

¹⁸⁹ Article 134

¹⁹⁰ Article 129 and Article 135

etc. It has to be extremely vigilant of miscreants who injure the state's independence, sovereignty, political and economic interests.¹⁹¹

¹⁹¹ Article 133