

BALKAN YOUTH: REFLECTING THE PAST & FACING THE FUTURE

A three-step seminar

**Sofia
2003**

A 03 - 03401



Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) ©
 Regional Office Sofia
 P.O. Box 958
 97, Knjaz Boris I St., 2nd floor
 1000 Sofia, Bulgaria
 Tel: 00359-2-9808747
 Fax: 00359-2-9802438
 www.fes.bg

Bosfor Obshtestvo - Bulgaria ©
 1, Velchova zavera Sq. 1st floor
 1000 Sofia, Bulgaria
 Tel: 00359-2-9630948
 bosfor_obshtestvo_bg@mail.com
 www.bosporus.org

Responsibles for project implementation:

- Step One: Regine Schubert (FES, Regional Office Sofia)
 Emilia Ilieva (Bosfor Obshtestvo - Bulgaria)
- Step Two: Regine Schubert (FES, Regional Office Sofia)
 Emilia Ilieva (Bosfor Obshtestvo - Bulgaria)
 Vanya Ivanova (Bosfor Obshtestvo - Bulgaria)
- Step Three: Nena Trajkovska (FES, Regional Office Skopje)
 Emilia Ilieva (Bosfor Obshtestvo - Bulgaria)
 Vanya Ivanova (Bosfor Obshtestvo - Bulgaria)
- Editing: Emilia Ilieva (Bosfor Obshtestvo - Bulgaria)
 Vanya Ivanova (Bosfor Obshtestvo - Bulgaria)
- Pictures: Emilia Ilieva (Bosfor Obshtestvo - Bulgaria)
 Regine Schubert (FES)

Graphic Design: GERA ART, Sofia, Bulgaria
 Print run: 500

The points of view expressed in the book are those of the authors
 and not of the two organizations.

Content

Forward and Project Idea	4
About Friedrich-Ebert-Foundation	6
About Bosfor Obshtestvo - Bulgaria	9

Chapter One

Step One: "in-between Central Planning and Participatory Democracy", Koprivshitzta-Sofia, Bulgaria, 11-15 May, 2001

Short description of the seminar	10
Programme	11
Experience Letters	11
Participants presentations	14

Chapter Two

Step Two: "The New Balkans Facing United Europe", Blagoevgrad-Sofia, Bulgaria, 16-22 November 2001

Short description of the seminar	30
Programme	31
Experience Letters	31
Participants presentations	34

Chapter Three

Step Three: "Emigration Phenomena on the Balkans: Looking for the "Right Choice", Ohrid-Skopje, Macedonia, 31 May - 04 June 2002

Short description of the seminar	54
Programme	55
Experience Letters	55
Participants presentations	58

Forward

Dear Reader,

You hold in your hand a publication which is the result of an inspiring three step project. The result of a unique idea coupled with committed people, responsibility and emotions, it reflects the beginning of a fruitful cooperation between Friedrich-Ebert-Foundation - Regional Office Sofia and Bosfor Obshtestvo - Bulgaria, which brought to world possibilities for both personal and organizational growth.

The project executed from May 2001 to May 2002 gave the chance to 60 young people to experience the charms of intercultural learning. We are proud to have been able in the project to see young people becoming active citizens and reflecting deeper on the realities and the challenges of the future of the Balkan countries. The established Bosporus Group - Tirana and Bosporus Group - Skopje rises the hope for new cooperation activities on the Balkans and evergoing learning possibilities for Youth.

The present publication contains within its covers the meanders of all three seminars, bringing to taste the full flavour of the variety of all aspects discussed. This is made with the belief that in this way more people will be indirectly informed. It includes various information on the programme schedules, some participants' presentations, personal impressions and experiences, that we hope will be interesting and useful to the Balkan Youth.

The information is designed in a way following the actual project development and structured in three main chapters revealing the three seminars.

We are grateful for the support of the whole staff of the offices of Friedrich-Ebert-Foundation in Sofia and Skopje.

We are grateful to all the people who supported us in all the stages of the project implementation and thus made possible the great variety of visited institutions and shared knowledge.

We are grateful to all the participants that took active part in all the discussions and made bright planning for the future.

Finally we are grateful to Mrs. Regline Schubert for her devotion to the idea, her professionalism and enormous patience.

With this publication we complete the circle of only one idea and we leave to you the responsibility to walk with us towards a brighter Balkan Future, because a considerable change can only be reached with joint efforts.

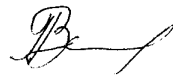
Yours faithfully,

On the behalf of
Bosfor Obshtestvo - Bulgaria



Ms. Emilia Ilieva

On the behalf of
Friedrich-Ebert-Foundation
Regional Office - Sofia



Mr. Pentcho Houbtchev

About Friedrich-Ebert-Foundation

"International co-operation is far too important to be left to governments alone"

Willy Brandt

History

The Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung or FES (Stiftung is the German word for foundation) was founded in 1925 as a political legacy of the Germany's first democratically elected president, Friedrich Ebert, who died in that year.

Ebert, Social Democrat of humble origins, had risen to hold the highest office in his country despite considerable opposition from his political adversaries. He assumed the burden of the presidency in a country which was crisis ridden following its defeat in World War I. His personal experience led him to propose the establishment of a foundation with a threefold aim:

- Furthering a democratic, pluralistic political culture by means of political education for all classes of society
- Facilitating access to higher education for gifted young people by providing scholarships
- Contributing to international understanding and co-operation wherever possible to avert a fresh outbreak of war and conflict.

The Foundation, which was immediately banned by the Nazi in 1933 and reestablished until 1947 after World War II, continues today those aims and has developed extensive programs in each of the above mentioned areas.

International Co-operation

Friedrich-Ebert-Foundation has offices in the OECD countries, in Central and Eastern Europe, the former Soviet Union and the Middle East. There are offices in Africa, Latin America and Oceania as well. Together with its partners in the trade unions, education and research, public administration, local government and various social groups and organizations the foundation fosters dialogue amongst all democratic forces with the aim of bringing about a balance of interest, solving conflicts and developing policy options.

In the reform states of Eastern Europe the foundation is involved in supporting the transition to market economy and establishing a civil society.

Friedrich-Ebert-Foundation in Bulgaria

Already before the changes in eastern Europe during the 70's and 80's Friedrich-Ebert-Foundation invited scientists from Bulgaria to the Federal Republic of Germany and provided scholarships to talented young Bulgarians. This led to a continuous dialogue between interested Germans and Bulgarians.

With the beginning of the reforms in Bulgaria the foundation supported various activities in the field of political education and towards exchange of experience with reform programs in Eastern Europe. In 1994 an office was opened in Sofia which further enlarged the foundation activities in successful stages. The foundation provides support in the following fields/list of projects/:

• Democracy and Institution Building:

Objectives: Stabilization of democratic structures, development of a culture of democracy and strengthening of civil society

Partners: Parliament, political parties, Institute for Political and Legal Studies, Institute of Social Democracy

Projects: Training courses of Political Management, Barometer on the Development of the Political Parties, Political Club (regular discussion forum).

• Decentralisation and Local Government

Objectives: Self-sustainable local governments

Partners: National Association of Municipalities in Republic of Bulgaria, Foundation "Alternatives"

Projects: Tax reform for local governments, reform of the legal framework for local governments, training on budgetary skills for local government administrations, local sustainable economic development.

• Labour Relations and Social Security

Objectives: Labour relations system based on tripartism, strengthening trade unions and employer's organizations

Partners: Ministry of labour, KNSB, Podkrepa, ETUC, ICFTU

Projects: Labour law revision, improvement of social security code, training of trade union officials, tripartite activities.

• **Youth Programme**

Objectives: Participation of youth in civil society and politics, creating a regional network of young leaders

Partners: YES-Bulgaria, Bosfor Obshtestvo-Bulgaria, youth organizations of political parties

Projects: Unemployed youth, youth and higher education, youth and EU, simulation games on politics, Balkan Youth's Past and Future (series of regional seminars).

• **EU Integration**

Objectives: Promotion of EU integration, information of the public on changes and problems of EU accession, capacity building within Bulgarian institutions

Partners: European Policy Forum, Economic Institute of the Bulgarian Academy of Science, Parliament

Projects: EU monitoring (studies, seminars and publications), study programmes in Brussels, studies on economic progress, short term consultancy.

• **Regional Co-operation:**

Objectives: Enhancement of regional co-operation to foster political stability and economic development in the region

Partners: Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe, national governments, research institutes, NGOs

Projects: Cross-border programmes, social and employment policy, local government, minority rights, labour relations, parliamentary co-operation, fight against corruption, dialogue between civil society and military, youth co-operation.

About Bosfor Obshtestvo - Bulgaria

"Connecting cultures by mutual dialogue"

"Bosfor Obshtestvo - Bulgaria" is a non-governmental, non-profit organization. It has been registered in 1999 by students from Political Science and Sociology Departments, Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski". "Bosfor Obshtestvo - Bulgaria" is one of five registered and independent organizations sharing the same idea and acting under the same name: Bosphorus. So far there are Bosphorus Organizations in Germany, Greece, Turkey, Romania and Bulgaria which are supported by the so-called Bosphorus Groups formed in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Albania, Macedonia/FYROM, Serbia and Montenegro, Slovenia, Hungary and Spain. They all together form the Bosphorus International Network.

By means of their project-related work the members aspire to inspire personal responsibility, social activism and civic devotion as preconditions for a culture of democracy and peace; to promote the role of non-formal education and life-long learning as a way of bringing greater awareness to the people; to foster international cooperation and cross-border initiatives. *

The Network aims at: *

- Fighting against prejudices and ethnocentrism
- Stimulating wider civic participation of youth
- Inspiring social activism and civic responsibility
- Raising multiethnic awareness
- Maintaining greater empathy for cultural diversity
- Promoting respect and mutual understanding

** Extract from The Bosphorus Network Protocol signed on 25 of May 2003, Plovdiv, Bulgaria*

Step One: The Missing Link?

In-between Central Planning and Participatory Democracy

In 1989, with the collapse of the communist regime, Bulgaria ventures on its way to democracy and market economy. Two years later by declaring its independence from Yugoslavia, Macedonia/FYROM undertakes the same radical change, followed shortly afterwards by Albania. This shift from a centrally planned economy and authoritarian state is a step upward and forward requiring a radical break with the past in all spheres of political, social and economic life. The hesitance these three Balkan countries show at first results in more difficulties on the way and at present the countries are still attempting to rise out of the transitional quagmire.

The seminar "The Missing Link: In-between Central Planning and Participatory Democracy" aims at clearing the concepts of transitions to democracy and reaching a comparable level of a „post-totalitarian reality“. Since real democracy requires **mature, tolerant, responsible citizens**, the seminar attempts to make participants aware both of the burdens of the inherited past and the basic truth that democracy is helpless without its citizens.

Therefore the present project examines the main hindrances in each of the countries for the development of a vital civil society. It refers to the communist past as a stepping stone and a precondition for the present situation, but focuses on the challenges civil society faces today. While reflections on civil society inevitably goes together with the perceptions of a civic culture, the seminar raises the issue of getting politically involved and helps young participants realize the importance of taking civil responsibilities.

The seminar emphasizes that democracy is not merely freedom and the absence of repression; that democratic institutions are empty structures without the belief that they are helpful to the needs of society; that individual rights cannot be preserved if the public does not know what those rights are; that for the rule of law, pluralism and all other features of liberal, participatory democracy people need a *civic culture*, the seminar challenges youth to focus on how to become better citizens.

In the same time this seminar continues the dialogue between these three Balkan countries that have much common to share in their historic development and cultural traditions and serves as a basis for an intensified intellectual and cultural exchange.

Seminar Agenda
(Koprivstiza - Sofia, Bulgaria)
11 - 15 May, 2001

20:00 Opening session

Presentation of "Bosfor Obshtestvo - Bulgaria" - Ms. Emilia Ilieva

Presentation of Friedrich - Ebert - Stiftung
- Ms. Regine Schubert

20:30 Welcome dinner

"Honey and Bread" or Bulgarian National Cuisine

12.05.2001

Balkan Transitions to Democracy

9:15 - 10:30 Presentations:

Emilia Ilieva - "The Third Wave of Democratization: Central Planning and Democracy at Trial"

Milcho Uzunov - "Aspects of Balkan Transitions to Democracy - Albania, Bulgaria, Macedonia"

Nikolay Gerov - "Political Influence on the Economy of the States in Transition to Democracy"

10:30 - 11:00 Discussion

11:30 - 12:30 Presentations

Dinko Gospodinov - "The Therapeutic State" and the Process of Transition"

Nenad Markovic - "Perceptions of Democracy"

12:30 - 13:00 Discussion

14:00 - 15:30 Presentations

Blendina Busti - "Adapting a "Working" Model of Democracy in Albania: Democratic Failures and Acquisitions"

Experience Letters - Extracts

We need this kind of seminars to know better each other, to build up warm friendship because as a result of this, in the future we will be more prepared to solve our problems in peaceful ways.

Desdemona Gaba

The most positive thing for me was the fact that after this seminar I started to feel the kind of strength inside of me, which I didn't feel for so long. It was the voice inside of me that use to repeat to me: you can do something, every one of us can do something and all together we can make this world a better place.

Edlira Xhafa

I liked very much the initial idea of the seminar and the selection of countries that took part in it. Macedonia, Bulgaria and Albania have been "faraway, so close" for the past 50 years, so it is very important to (re)establish normal communication between them on every level. Big infrastructural projects like "Corridor 8" and "AMBO" are very important, but it is also important, as much as that, to establish a network of communication between the students, NGOs, future leaders and youth in general in order to overthrow the prejudices of the past.

Iljia Milceviski

That was a seminar which widened my horizons of knowledge and understanding, opened a few more perspectives of the future, brought me friends which I am proud to know, helped me to understand some of the problems

Maja Smakova - "10 Years Macedonian Transition to Democracy"

Neli Mihajlova & Vasilena Sekulova - "The Influence of the Past Social Traditions and the Present State of Civil Society in Bulgaria"

15:30 - 16:00 Discussion

16:30 - 17:30 Presentations

Sonila Kaplani - "Albanian Youth Participation in the Democratization of the Albanian Society (1990 - 2001)"

Petyr Vylkov - "Analysis of Cultural Development in Bulgaria (1989 - 1993)"

Vladimir Mitev - "The Stranger" - A Short Trip through the Rituals of Understanding"

17:30 - 18:30 Final Discussion

18:30 - 20:00 Free time

20:00 "Cooking together & Dancing Together" - National meals & National Music from the participating countries

13.05.2001

9:15 - 10:30 Presentations

Vania Ivanova - "History Approaches Bulgarian Transition"

Klodiana Tosuni - "Identity problems in a "Post-Totalitarian" Albania"

Desdemona Gaba - "The political Dialogue in Albania: A Missing One?"

Krasimir Genchev - "Historical Development of the Balkans"

10:30 - 11:00 Discussion

11:30 - 12:30 Presentations

Ilija Milchevski - "Western Perceptions of the Balkans & Youth Awareness of the Reality"

of our countries, broke a lot of barriers that I had for the others...

Milcho Uzunov

The seminar was a big provocation for me. It put on the test my openness to accept new information and new inconvenient ideas, my willingness to share, to free my mind from old propaganda opinions, to achieve knowledge and understanding about others. The long and intensive discussions about democratization, civil society, economy and our common totalitarian past made me aware not only of the present political and social situation in the three participating countries but also gave me the possibility to break up with some nationalistic prejudices of mine and to re-think the opportunities for the future, not only national but also common democratic development of the three countries - Macedonia, Albania and Bulgaria.

Vasilena Sekulova

The thing I liked best was that the participants had time to communicate with each other outside the debate room. That way we were able to express ourselves freely, because the formal style of communication to some extent prevents that to happen. During the informal communication process we had the chance to learn more about each other and about the countries we represented. Having this information database, we were able to exchange cultural elements. The next step of course was the mutual ideas. We exchanged ideas for a future joint venture, and for future projects.

Peter Valkov

Plamen Bradvarov - "The way to Europe: A Successful Model of Overcoming Historical Contradictions"

12:30 - 13:30 Discussion

14:30 - 15:30 Evaluation

15:30 - 17:00 Sightseeing

17:30 Departure for Sofia

21:00 Meeting with the hosts

14.05.2001 Lecturers:

10:00 - 11:00

Dr. Georgi Dimitrov - Sociology Department, Sofia University - "Facing Europe to Rethink the National History"

11:30 - 12:30

Mrs. Roumiana Kolarova - Political Science Department, Sofia University - "The Transition between the Party State and Participatory Democracy"

14:00 - 15:30

Prof. Ivan Ilchev - History Department, Sofia University - "The Short Bulgarian XXth Century"

15:30 - 16:30 Discussion

17:00 - 19:00 Sightseeing in Sofia

20:00 Dinner & Cultural Activities

15.05.2001

09:00 Meeting

09:30 - 10:30 Evaluation

11:00 - 12:00 Press Conference

15:00 Departure

The most important thing was that the seminar was planned in a special moment - the situation in Macedonia. If its development is positive it will prove the political wisdom of the local leaders and to show the international community that a new principle emerged, that tolerance and democracy are accepted. Every little step to that aim would make our countries peaceful and therefore, the whole picture of that part of the world would be more clear. So our ethnical model could be an example for a conflict solution and to get rid of the negative viewpoints.

Nikolay Gerov

The part I really liked is when we stressed what are the good and the bad points of our previous regimes and the good and bad points of the transition period. I was pleased to notice that more or less we all share similar experiences. We all come against the same problems and dilemmas and with this seminar I think we also shared ways and methods of overcoming some problems. When we speak about this question, it is very important to point out that isolation is the problem that has been tearing apart the Balkans. By organizing this kind of seminars we break the wall between our nations. This wall was the main divider many times and brought us many problems.

Nenad Markovic

We are in the wave and we make the wave move.

prof. Georgi Dimitrov

The Third Wave of Democratization: Democracy at Trial *

By Emilia Ilieva (Bulgaria)

Background

Today, as we are facing the world of year 2000, democracy seems the most common form of government. Since 1974 we witness a process that Samuel Huntington defined as "the third wave of democratization" which has initially started with the democratization of Southern Europe, moved to Latin America and Asia and finally reached its crest in 1989 with the collapse of the communist regimes in Central and Eastern Europe and the disintegration of USSR. These events tempted some political scientists to conclude that Western liberal democracy is destined to triumph everywhere and therefore proclaimed the "end of history" (Francis Fukuyama).

Definitions

I believe that all reflections on democracy are doomed to remain rootless words without a methodological framework. Therefore only for the purpose of a better understanding of the selected theme, here follows a "definition" of democracy. And if I am willing to try to define something as "undefinable" as democracy it is only because years on end I have found it one of the biggest challenges for political scientists. Still this is the only way to justify the efforts of any theoretical thinking.

So, democracy.... "encompasses extensive protections for individual and group freedoms, inclusive pluralism in civil society as well as party politics, civilian control over the military, institutions to hold officeholders accountable, and thus a strong rule of law secured through an independent, impartial judiciary..." This is a definition of democracy that I have found the most suitable for the purposes of the present paper. It belongs to Larry Diamond and is taken from the book "Consolidating the Third Wave Democracies".

Focus

The present paper will examine the third wave of democratization specifically

emphasizing the main new characteristic of the process: **the international aspects of transitions to democracy**. If earlier political scientists who have studied the patterns of transitions to democracy were placing extensive attention to the importance of concrete domestic determinants viewed as obligatory preconditions for democracy, the Third wave of democratization shifted their attention to the subtler question of the international influences on democratization processes. In this way their main concern became the specific role of the "foreign" actors.

Third Wave of democratization

The most discussed outcome of the Third wave of democratization is the fact that "modern liberal democracy" has emerged as the only legitimate political regime in most, if not all parts of the world. All "regime changers" at least proclaim that their intention is to consolidate some form of democracy.

Therefore during the 80's and especially during the 90's this literally "invited" the so-called established democracies to play the role of "exporters" of democracy. Moreover they seemed increasingly convinced that their institutions, rights and practices provide the "model" applicable worldwide.

Truth obliges us to point out that since 1974 over fifty countries have attempted to transit toward different types of liberal political democracy.

Another definition

Transition is a term that usually implies a change of political regimes that is viewed in the direction of different forms of autocracy towards different types of democracy. (The focus of the paper is not the different *cases of transitions*, which are defined by Schmitter and Brouwer as: pact, imposition, reform and revolution) Still I would like to draw your attention to three different processes that have been observed within the broader definition of transition.

1. Political liberalization - a process determined by increasing quantity and quality of political liberties and by encouraging destabilization and eventual collapse of autocratic regimes
2. Democratization - a process that establishes minimal democratic regimes
3. Consolidation of democracy - a process that aims at survival of newly established democracies by introducing elements of predictability in an effort to avoid a relapse to autocracy.

The International Context

While discussing the transitions to democracy we should be aware of the role played by different actors not only within a specific country but also on an

* This paper refers to the definitions and conclusions on transitions to democracy, as expressed by Philippe Schmitter and Imco Brouwer in their working paper "Conceptualizing, Researching and Evaluating Democracy Promotion and Protection"

international level. The international influence on the transitions to democracy is manifested in a variety of ways the most important from which are: the direct influence of different western governments, the multicultural organizations developing activities in a global context and the multilateral organizations with a regional scope of activities. All these do play an important role on the democratization processes even if it was often underestimated.

It is true that the role of the international organizations is not as visible as any other form of direct government policies, yet the variety of private associations, charitable organizations, social units and alike often played key roles in the countries establishing democracies by introducing variety of programs aiming at democracy promotion or consolidation. These international influences made possible a new approach towards democracy. If we assume that every process of democratization is inevitably bounding domestic and foreign participants, the new trend of the process changed what was determined as "prerequisites" for democracy into "products of democracy". In this context it becomes clear how and why there is a new definition of democracy that is getting more and more popular: *"Democracy as a method or procedure of government"*.

Within these reflections it seems also easier to understand the appearance of two new disciplines of political thought. Lately the so-called "transitology" and "consolidology" are playing greater and greater role in the studies of democratization processes. Moreover they have reached some important conclusions that I would like to shortly summarize:

- All democratizing countries since 1974 have been affected by similar diffusion across national and regional borders
- The international processes through which they have learnt have been growing stronger over time.
- The instruments of international assistance have evolved and proliferated into so-called Democracy Promotion and Protection programs.

Democracy Promotion and Protection

Definition: *"Democracy Promotion & Protection consists of all overt and voluntary activities adopted, supported and (directly or indirectly) implemented by foreign actors explicitly designed to contribute to the political liberalization of autocratic regimes, democratization of autocratic regimes or consolidation of democracy in specific recipient countries."*

The above stated definition belongs to Philippe Schmitter and Imco Brouwer and is taken from an unpublished working paper entitled: "Conceptualizing, Researching and Evaluating Democracy Promotion and Protection".

While Democracy Promotion is focused mainly on the political liberalization and democratization as explained earlier in the text, the Democracy Protection is focused on the consolidation of democracy.

The complexity of these processes is in the multilevel influence that they exercise: from a **state level**, to the level of **political society** and down to the **civil society** level that transmits it to the **individual citizens**. This multi-level, pyramidal influence could be seen as two main phases of democracy assistance:

- Democracy promotion starts at the political level and therefore deals mainly with issues concerning political movements and political parties.
- Democracy Protection has a wider range of activities and the programs cover issues of Civic Education, Media, Judiciary, Legislature, Police, decentralization and so on.

It should be noted that these divisions are simple theorization. While this is just a model that reality quite often proves inadequate it is still a good reference point before we "jump" in any case of transitions to democracy.

Final "Excuses"

The aim of this paper was not to reach conclusions. Moreover it was not to provide you with any tools for a better understanding of the cases of the transitions to democracy, experienced by the three countries we are representing.

It has humble aspirations: to heighten our awareness on the complexity of the transition processes within the internal/external influences and to deepen our understanding only on the unpredictability of the final outcomes.



*Kopivshiliza
welcomes
the group*

10 Years Macedonian Transition to Democracy

By Maja Smakova (Macedonia)

The wave of deep structural distractions and changes that hit the countries of the Eastern and Central Europe did not pass even Republic of Macedonia. The end of the 80's brought social and ethnical tensions and conflicts in the ex-Yugoslavian federation.

In that period Macedonia with unstable economy and ethnical relations succeeded to overcome the danger of instability and conflict, to accept undemocratic solutions in the process of political changes, to govern peacefully and to create its own independence. Political democratic processes, market economy changes and its enormous efforts for international recognition are still going in Macedonia. But Macedonia has internal potential and strength to intensify those political and democratic changes, to improve human rights (including those of the minorities), through stimulating market economy and privatization, to strengthen and to make its own economy more prospective. If that potential is completely activated, with its market directed economy, parliamentary, political and democratic institutions as well as with the structures of the civil society, that Macedonia is building very fast in order to join the big family of democratic and free countries and nations of United Europe.

After declaring its independence Macedonia opened its way to the democracy and market economy. By taking this big step started a new era in the development of Macedonia, started a period of transition and radical break in the politics and economy which is one step towards association and integration in to the European Union. Another very important condition that Macedonia has to achieve is to fulfill the basic formal properties of democracy, which are constitutional guarantees of basic rights and freedoms, parliamentary representation, division of power and the rule of law.

As a young country Macedonia is on its way to achieve these properties by creating democratic institutions, fair, secret, correct and democratic elections with free right to vote for all the citizens in the country and free education to everyone, free media, independent courts, protection of human rights. It seems that this last principle is the most important and popular for Macedonia and the whole Balkans during the last period. In Macedonia 33% of the population are minorities such as Albanians, Turks, Romas, Serbs...etc. Beside that Macedonia is doing everything to give normal and peaceful life to the citizens.

During the last ten years it has become an inevitable practice for every government in Macedonia to enter a coalition with the political parties from the Albanian minority. In the current coalition government, the political party of the Macedonian Albanians holds four key minister seats and several deputy positions. There are 28 Albanian MPs in the 120 seat Macedonian parliament.

Minority rights are extended to maximum when education is concerned. The Albanian minority in the country has education in its own mother language up to and including University level (a brandnew Albanian Language University is under construction at the moment). Many TV and radio stations in Macedonia broadcast have full programmes in Albanian. There are numerous Albanian daily newspapers, magazines and literature printed in Macedonia. The Albanians have free right to their religion and there are many mosques in every city and every village in Macedonia. Albanians in Macedonia hold high-ranking executive positions in public enterprises, army, police, local government etc. The Macedonian army and police have Albanian generals and other high-ranking officers. In the municipalities where Albanians are more than 20% of the population Albanian language is the official language of the communication. This is just a small fragment of the enormous amount of rights given to the Albanians in Macedonia. It is proved by the fact - in 1999 Macedonia welcomed 400 000 Albanian refugees from Kosovo into Macedonia during the NATO attacks of Yugoslavia. Macedonia's stability was sacrificed in the name of humanity.

Beside all this Macedonia is still doing the best to keep good relations between all the people in Macedonia, to overcome the transitional period, to create good economic and political stable country. We all know that it takes time, it needs a lot of changes and sacrifices, because leaving the past and moving on to a new civil society face many difficulties. Macedonia is trying to create one democratic country and to reach the level to fully participatory democracy.

Political Dialogue in Albania

By Desdemona Gaba (Albania)

Personally I am a member of an Albanian political party Youth forum since 1996 and a member of the Head too. And being near to the different political situations I have had the possibility to know better some of the Albanian political leaders and their way of communication and trying to be real leaders. So, I will try to discuss here with you about political dialogue in Albania and the importance of this dialogue in a new democratic society.

We come from similar ex-dictatorial systems and we have seen and lived the bad situations that our countries inherited from, in every field. As the reforms in public administration, in social policy, in economic transformations, the new democratic society needs more than everything does the responsibility of the leadership. The key elements as the public responsibility, the respect for the different thoughts, the respect for human rights and the rule of law that are new "terms" for the countries in transition, need to be taken into consideration by the new political leaders.

The contradictions between the political parties in Albania have originated from the old ways of communication when one must be the most important of the smartest. Between ruling parties and opposition parties there is no dialogue, they are not used to share ideas, to discuss together about principal problems of the country or other important issues. And here come the problems because if it seems to be a political party's problems soon it becomes country's problems.

The Youth forums of the main political parties have organized many seminars on different topics but with main goal to know better each other, to become friends. And in this seminar we have shared the same ideas about youth problems as the unemployment, the education, the emigration, etc. However we have been like different parties with different programmes.

One year ago the main Albanian political parties Youth forums have reached a "Code of Conduct", to give an example of collaboration to our political parties, to give the idea that is coming a new air of becoming good and successful politicians. Because we live in a time when human development aims to expand people's choices for better life and the most significant choices are those that are guaranteed by the rights and freedoms of expression, organization and participation.

In these transition years we have understood that disagreements in politics provoke disagreement in economic stability, social stability and finally influences the integration in European civic societies. Therefore the dialogue between politicians of the whole political spectrum, center, right and left is very important especially in a country with big problems in every field. We do not deserve this. Albania is a country of great culture and an antique civilization. We have to establish mechanism between our countries to continue sharing ideas and experiences, we also look forward to work together in a variety of international democratic principles and activities.



We are in the wave and we make the wave move

The Influence of the Past Social Traditions and the Present State of Civil Society in Bulgaria

By Vasilena Sekulova and Neli Mihalova (Bulgaria)

The Western civil society is a historically established phenomenon, result of a slow century-old evolution: which means emancipation of determinate public spaces and the building of mediating links between the state and the individual.

Civil society is the public place where the citizens can declare own interests and opinions as public figures, as participants in the civil community, and as people engaged in debates and in social activities which they have chosen on their own free initiative.

The post-totalitarian period in the development of our region begins with a revolution from above (supported from below) and a quick radical change of the political system and the economic model. At first sight all political, law and administrative preconditions for the forming of a civil society exist. But practically, things are different despite of the constant speculating about civil society. The classical civil societies have won their freedom from the state but the civil society in the post-totalitarian reality had to be created by the state. Historically this is a completely opposite logic of development caused by the so-called late progress. To an adequate civil society do not respond the political, free elections, market economy, independent law system, and freedom of association and press. The democratic state system was interested in building up a natural partner as a measure of its own democratism. And here is the theoretical challenge - despite the presence of the necessary political and normative frame is it possible fast consolidating of the structures of civil society? And if it is not possible (we are still far away from this in Bulgaria ten years after the changes) - then - what are the reasons for this and what are the perspectives?

One of the main obstacles in the process of establishment of an adequate civil society is the tradition - the presence of some and the lack of others. A lot of cultural and historical facts in the Bulgarian history are an obstacle on the way to the fulfillment of civil society. The long Turkish rule has the following consequences: 1. Late progress (low level of industrialization and urbanization); 2. The hostile attitude toward the state administration and finally the accepting of that part of the Oriental culture which is characterized by its obvious communal aspects. The individual feels a part of the community (family, local, social, ethnic) which expresses its dreams, rights and obligations. The liberal and the individual values, the idea for the active independent person are not

so developed. All this determined our past - the Bulgarian society was broken more easily by the totalitarian wave than the Central European societies. But our historical route contains other tendencies, which can be transferred to our times and transformed into successful practices. First of all these are those parts of the traditional culture, which are universal and the base of every development: the diligence, the love for the land, the high professional moral of the old craftsmen, the habits for cooperation, the vivid sense for social solidarity and the multiethnic tolerance.

Here nowadays we can see the plebeian, anarchistic democratism, the lack of strongly centralizing tendencies, the limited influence of the Orthodox Church in the field of personal choice consciousness. Unfortunately a big part of these traditions were lost through the years. To the positive part of the inherited tradition we can add the strong aspiration of the individual for independence and freedom of association. In our cultural history there are a lot of influential heralds of individualistic values. Although they were not dominating they had a high polemical potential. They could not define the common social attitude but they undermined the bases of the traditional patriarchal system. They were the opposition against the dominating until the end of the totalitarian period peasant culture. That peasant culture was emanation of the traditional society and the relations of solidarity in the family. It was hostile toward the political power and the city because the city was the site of this power. And a lot of the intellectuals and the political elite were the bearer of this peasant culture. Out of the community man is lost. The urban culture is characterized by the lack of confidence in the state and the city.

The totalitarian period carried new paradoxes with itself. Despite its cult to the industrialization and modernization it was a continuer of the spirit of the traditional society. It destructed the old peasant-patriarchal system but it made a cult for the peasant culture. It created artificial spirit of community but practically destructed the traditional communities and kept under control the new created professional communities, which became a reason for total alienation. The totalitarian system was against individualism but actually with its attitude prepared the society for the individual values. The totalitarianism destroyed not only the young traditions of the civil society in Bulgaria but also the vulnerable roots of the democratic culture. All these make the return to the former and normal situation more complicated.

The democratic changes in 1989 mark the return to the urban culture. With the meetings and demonstrations that came with the changes starts the revaluation of the urban space. The first few years of the post-totalitarian period couldn't overcome the system of family relations and solidarity - just modified them. But with the gradual course of the changes a process of ideological accepting of

the liberal democratic values begins. This starts influencing on the attitude of a bigger part of the people, influence related to the creation of a new civil culture. A consciousness for standing up for civil rights appears. And this is a precondition for forming the structures of civil society. As a result every attempt to restore the totalitarian system which carries the old social traditions seems to be impossible. The creation of those social relations, which are the base of civil society, proceeded by the restoration of all the civil and political rights. The censorship was officially eliminated. Public space, which is a natural successor of the urban culture from the years after the Liberation, appeared. Although the succession can be traced back, the appearance of the conception of the society as a civil one is also a consequence of the "import" of Western type of modern state system. Bulgarians try to become Europeans, to become civilized. But in order to make our civil culture European two things are needed: 1. more active, civil participation in the decision-making process (something that is very difficult to be done having in mind the total desperation from the politics in Bulgaria) and 2. the state should not construct the civil space anymore. It should only regulate it.



After all Europe cannot be identified only with the market economy but also with the public involvement in decision-making and the standing up for civil interests.

*Macedonian-German-Bulgarian
friendship*

Political Influence on the Economy of the States in Transition to Democracy

By Nikolay Gerov (Bulgaria)

The Southwest Europe is still in transition ten years after the political changes. We have already to answer the important questions of the future of the region. To what extent we belong to the European civilization? What kind of an economic model would be better to choose in order to find the fulcrum? Is the welfare on the Balkans possible? The approach must keep in touch with reality and respond the specific situation of every country. There is a short review of those topics.

The European East and West

A Bulgarian scientist, prof. Ivan Bataklev, mentioned in 1940 that the Balkans was an "an understandable political broken area". That was a result of the diplomatic hostility between the neighbour countries, the aggressive nationalism, the participation in different military unions and the relations between the Great powers. The situation has not changed a lot and the Peninsula became a synonyme of "intolerance". Although it is particularly true, some Western journalists "invented" additional conflicts due to their poor knowledge languages of the region and the refusal to use local information sources.

There are some facts from the history, which prove the special cultural development of the region:

- 395 - the Roman Empire was divided in two
- 1054 - the Eastern and the Catholic churches "divorced"
- 1453 - Constantinople was conquered and the Turks mightily reigned over that part of the world
- 1945 - Yalta marked it as belonging to the sphere of the USSR

Our countries were a part of a united religion and ideologic system. Therefore, they have common values. It would be facile to pretend that the culture here is not European, but it is a different branch of the European civilisation.

The social aspects of the transition

Transition cannot be characterized with stability. It is not easy to foresee its

development. The main problem is that there is a strong impact of opposite interests - the community body is broken in three main pieces:

- The group, which is stucked to the tradition
- The defenders of the new practice
- The "fans" of foreign samples

Different minds about the identity and the future aims reign in the transition society, which is disconnected, a slight resemblance of a stable and efficient organisation of resolving problems. People quarrel about their points of view, but they cannot understand the other side (seen not as a partner, but as an enemy). The words have simply divergent meaning, because the roots of that fit-for-fat relationship are the conflict of values. For example, "equity" could be seen for their cross-purposes as a right to be treated equal without any discrimination, but also as a right of one class to reign the state.

The decision-making may be various: the isolation of one group, civil war, revolution, beginning of dialogue etc. All that means have different social price: the growth of instability succeeding of finding a solution. It is necessary to get known with the people's attitudes, because they are the backgrounds of the transformation and could show the most acceptable way of acting.

Three models of relationship between the political system and the economy (central planning, free market, social democracy).

The features of that project are shown according to the viewpoints of their creators and they can be simplified in three pickets:

1. Political system
2. Economic system
3. Conclusions

As for the agents four kinds of participants could act:

- The State (S)
- The Companies (C)
- The average citizens (P1)
- The social outsiders (P2)

P2 have to be described briefly - poor and old men, disabled persons, refugees etc. - they all belong to that group. It lives under the living standard, its number could increase in the time of transition and P2 will become a majority. They use to dream about the previous stability (forget, that their human rights were

violated) and are against the existing order. P2 feel isolated and have no organisation. P2 wait for a leader - sooner or later they will find him if S does not pay any attention on their problems. P2 are potentially dangerous for every society, because they have nothing to lose and can risk. The failure in the struggle of values would not change their status dramatically - their situation is dramatic any way. P2 are not patient - they want to live better now. Therefore P2 are the main factor of the instability and an important part of an analysis.

I. Central Planning

1. Political system

S: one state party, controlled media, very partial criteria, the other is obsessed by one ruling class.

C: no influence on the political system

P1: only those, who respond the "high" requirements of the state party, can be involved in the process and decision-making

P2: the same as P2, defenders of the existing order.

2. Economic system

S: main economic agent, produces a plan, which has to be completed, tries to guess right the needs of C, P1 and P2, the officials have uncontrolled power, can misuse it, work against the efficiency of the economy.

C: have to complete the plan, try to mislead the planner about their abilities and to be subsidized, work against the efficiency of the economy.

P1: have to put up with the standard of P2, their incomes are not higher than the dole of P2 and prefer to become P2 instead of work hard.

P2: are protected by S and are on the dole, try to mislead the planner and to be given more real needs, work against the efficiency of the economy.

3. Conclusions

The participation is limited, S is often misled and the plan is not real, P1 and P2 don't not like their equality, no contact between C and P1, because they are forced to use the "help" of S, only P2 have positive attitude to S, everybody become "lazy" - there is lack of economic interest due to the isolation. Central planning brings unparticipatory economy.

II. Free market

1. Political system

S: creates only the juridical frame of the political process

C: have influence on the decision-making

P1: can express freely their political will, participate in the politics

P2: have the same political status as P1, but are not able to find their defenders in the existing frame, against the order, their position resemble the situation of P2 in the time of transition.

2. Economic system

S: just one of the actors, creates only the juridical frame of the competition.

C: can freely choose their strategies, try to maximize their profit

P1: are satisfied, have the chances to choose their best product, but feel the hostility of P2

P2: live in poverty, isolated, lack of protection, against the system

3. Conclusions

Everybody has theoretically the chance to participate in the politics and economy, but a part of the people cannot use the advantages of the free market and become enemies of the project (P1 and P2 are too different)

III. Social democracy

1. Political system

S: creates only the juridical frame of the political process

C: have influence on the decision-making

P1: can express freely their political will, participate in the politics

P2: have the same political status as P1, are able to find their defenders in the existing frame, defend the order

2. Economic system

S: one of the actors creates the juridical frame of the competition, produces a plan for the integration of P2.

C: can freely choose their strategies, try to maximize their profit, are subsidized by S to make discounts for P2.

P1: are satisfied, have the chance to choose their best product, pay taxes for the integration of P2, but avoid the hostility of P2.

P2: have higher living standard, feel protected and integrated, defend the system.

3. Conclusions

Everybody has the chance to participate in the politics, the economy is efficient, and the stability is growing up.

Which is the best model?

The link between the political system and the economy is still unclear. Some of the Asian countries have central planning and welfare. That implement was successfully used by the Western countries in the management of the crisis after 1945 and the chairman of those councils became the leaders of the European integration afterwards. And the EU is one of the examples of the cooperation between the countries. No country has nowadays a totally free market. The decision on the role of the planning is obvious.

The different situations need flexible economic policy. Central planning fits well in the time of global problems, when the companies are too weak to overwhelm the foreign competition and have to be encouraged by the state. But the possibility of power misuse exists and the democracy is not guaranteed. It must be used very carefully.

Some scientists claim, that we have to construct some kind of a theory of the social process, if we are not able to find out the best one. That is a hit-or-miss approach and it could not be the strategy of Wilhelm Tell. Sometimes the "second good decision" would bring a failure of the policy. Thus we live on the edge in a world risk society, where it is not possible to use only standard prescriptions. But it provokes the young leaders to work for the welfare of their countries.



See you soon, my friend

Step Two: The New Balkans Facing United Europe

The fall of Iron Curtain and the collapse of the East-West block separation gives to all European nations the unique opportunity to extend deeper the process of integration and to create one united community. The Balkan people as an inseparable part of this process firmly declare their willingness to integrate to the European democratic space of "peaceful co-existence and tolerance". At the same time the end of the Cold war and so the end of the official communist ideology oppression brings to the fore out-dated nationalistic, ethnic and chauvinistic oppositions. At present this particular historic tradition seems to be of the main hindrances for the whole Balkan region on its way of European integration.

The seminar **The New Balkans Facing United Europe** aims at trying to define new strategies and search out different approaches to escape from this kind of historically inherited, nationalistic way of thinking, as a result of which the region has been often characterized as a problematic one.

The importance of the seminar is in pointing out the European community as a successful model, which manages to integrate different, since hundreds of years hostile nations. Therefore on the first place the seminar urges young people to get awareness of the importance of cooperation on the Balkans as a precondition for becoming a compatible part of Europe.

On the other hand this seminar is organized in order to bring together people with different social and cultural backgrounds, who as members of their respective societies pretend to be mature, responsible and tolerant citizens not only of Macedonia/FYROM, Albania and Bulgaria, but also citizens of United Europe. Since the co-operation and co-existence between the civil societies in Europe represents and contains the essence of the idea of a united, peaceful and tolerant European Community, we consider following this model a valuable way to overcome the present situation on the Balkans.

The youth is the generation able to take the responsibility for the successful realization of this process. And this seminar has the purpose to give the opportunity to the young people from Macedonia/FYROM, Albania and Bulgaria, to discuss about different social, political and cultural topics, which until now have been considered only as a reason for separation and political tensions among the Balkan people. It makes room for further and deeper discussions among the broader circles in our societies, which inevitably leads to the finding of those aspects, that common base, on which we together can build the foundations of mutual understanding and our co-existence in the frame of the multinational and multicultural Europe.

Seminar Agenda

(Blagoevgrad-Sofia, Bulgaria)
16 - 21 November 2001

Opening Session

Presentation of Bosfor Obshtestvo - Bulgaria - Ms. Emilia Ilieva

Presentation of Friedrich Ebert Foundation - Ms. Regine Schubert

17.11.2001

The Balkans and Europe: Identity, Nationalism and Integration

9:30-11:00 Keynote speech

Prof. Albert Osborne, Chairman of the Dpt. Of Journalism and Mass Communication at AUBG: "East vs. West: Collective Identity and Integration"

Discussion

11:15 - 13:00 Presentations:

Nenad Markovic - "National Identities vs. New European Identity"

Milcho Uzunov - "Balkan Culture / European Culture"

Discussion

14:30- 17:30 Presentations:

Ivo Darackchiev - "The Balkan Nationalism at Question"

Arta Burimi - "Concepts of New Multi-ethnic Balkans"

Entela Beke - "Integration of Minorities on the Balkans: The Case of Roma Minorities in Albania"

Experience Letters - Extracts

Informative and educational, funny and amusing, yet at every moment keeping a rational perspective, inspiring and invigorating - an overall success... I greatly value this experience of mine for a number of important reasons.

Firstly, through a set of panels, developing different aspects of the main theme of the seminar, I as a participant got an insight into the concepts of multiethnic Balkans, the European policies, some economic issues, education and NGOs sector, the structure and the functioning of EU, just to name a few. Moreover, the depth of the presentations was yet triggered by productive and beneficial discussions, thus creating a great process of exchange of ideas and informal communication among the participants.

Valentina Stoeva

Hemingway has said that ideas just like a plane taking off, need not only wings but also a solid ground to become facts. I think that we have found this ground and now we need to take off. It was during our discussions that I learned a lot for the situation in the other countries, for the attempts to integrate in the EU, for the way NGOs are working not only in Albania but in other countries as well. I can say fully convinced that this seminar has increased my professional knowledge, but also I have learned a lot about the cultural life of the other countries.

Mira Zgiani

Discussion

20:00 Cooking Together

Traditional dishes from Bulgaria, Albania and Macedonia

18.11.2001

The European Union and the New Balkans

9:00-11:00 Presentations

Petya Pesheva - "Structure and Goals of the European Union"

Emil Atanasovski - "The European Politics Towards the Balkans"

Discussion

11:15 - 12:45 Presentations

Emilia Ilieva - "The State of Bulgarian Progress Towards the EU"

Nena Trikovska - "Progress and Obstacles on the Macedonian Way towards EU"

Okela Zhulati - "Albanian Progress Towards the EU - Meeting the Copenhagen's Criteria"

Heviola Sherifi - "Political Agenda of the European Integration in Albania"

Discussion

13:00 Excursion to Rila Monastery

19.11.2001

Steps of the Balkan Way to Europe

9:00-10:00 Economy

Thomir Dimitrov - "A Concurrent Balkan Economy: the Main Challenge on the Way to Europe"



I really loved the idea that we could present the subjects ourselves, discussing and sharing information afterwards regarding specific topics that we had chosen. But what I found different from other seminars was the fact that we were not only changing ideas and opinions, we were sharing our ways of living, including different words from each others languages, different kind of cooking, different attitudes in different cases as well as sharing myths and stories in a warm environment, where songs were sung in between as a nice intermezzo of these cultural nights.

Arta Burimi

What I really liked about this seminar was the concept that the participants had much greater role by presenting their own thoughts on some relevant topics instead of having lecturer-listener sessions that can sometimes be boring. I liked the methodology which obtained different aspects of a broad topic.

Ivan Damjanovski

10:00-11:00 Civil Society/Education

Lindita Luzo - "Civic Education in Albania: A Precondition and a Necessity"

Adri Nurelari - "Albanian NGOs Promoting EU Integration"

Discussion

11:30-13:00 On the Way to Europe

Mira Zgajani - "Albanian Youth Participation in the Building a Democratic Society"

Vladimir Bozinovski - "Generational Clashes on the Balkans in an European Context"

Discussion

14:00 - 15:30 Balkan Cooperation

Daniela Savova - "Historical Background of the Balkan Unity"

Valentina Stoeva - "Future Prospects of Cooperation on the Balkans"

Ivan Damjanovski - "Cooperative Balkans on their Way to Europe"

Discussion

16:00 - 17:00 Evaluation

Cultural Evening

20.11.2001

Morning:

Transfer to Sofia, meeting with the Bulgarian hosts

Afternoon: Lectures

14:00-15:30

Prof. Georgy Dimitrov - "Sociology Professor, Department for European Studies, Sofia University"

Topic: Civil Society Demolition in Post Communist Countries in a South-East European Perspective

Discussion

16:00 - 17:00

Haralan Alexandrov, Associate Professor, New Bulgarian University, Bulgarian Institute of Human Relations

Topic: Social Participatio of Young People in a Transitional Society

Discussion

19:00

Reception at the German Embassy

21.11.2001

Presentation of Institutions, Active in the Field of European Integration

10:00

Visit to the Institute for European Studies and Information

Presentation of the activities of the Institute by Mr. Krassimir Nikolov

11:00-12:30 Lecture:

Mr. Krassimir Nikolov - Director of the Institute for European Studies and Information

Topic: Bulgaria's accession to the EU: Negotiation and Beyonds

Afternoon: Departure

National Identities vs. the New European Identity

By Nenad Markovic (Macedonia)

The national identities as political, historical and anthropological categories are, at least said trouble categories. The main problem when it comes to defining national identity is the definition of identity itself i. e. what it contains, what it relates to, where does it reflect... The most common understanding of that category is "a summa of attributes that are immanent to something or somebody". Although this is one way of defining the term "identity" there is no unified definition for this term. The situation complicates itself when it comes to the connection between nation, peoples and identity. The semantics of these terms is already confusing (they are closely related), let alone the perspective of sociology, history or political science. Their meaning, relation and mutual influence is to be described which results in a full picture related to where they stand and what they mean. A scientific and academic consensus is nowhere to be found.

Perception of National Identity

The lack of scientific consensus is may be the last thing that troubles the Balkans when it comes to national identities. And it is a fact that this unhappy term is more troubled and misused in the Balkans "per se" more than ever, more than anywhere else in Europe. "Volkgeist and Republicanism" is a chapter closely related to that, but first I would like to give advantage to something that confuses us all from a historical standpoint.

Although a matter of a contemporary political and cultural (even sub-cultural) view, the modern relation towards the term "national identity" is not exactly on the Balkans what it stands for in the modern political science in the States and in Western Europe. Sadly it is a historical legacy. To explain this problem I must draw two very interesting and provocative theses:

- None of the people, nations in the Balkans **directly** originate from the antique peoples, nations of the old world
- The creation of the national states is a process that officially started from the Westfall peace agreement in 1648 and especially after the French revolution in 1789

What seems as an unlike historical truth, or if you prefer a historical speculation

is merely a logical cosequence of the migrations in Europe and in the world during the centuries. The migrations of the Slavs, Norman, Anglo-Saxons, the German tribes, the Celts, the Iliric tribes, the Arab tribes etc. is just a simple example of the mosaic that was created in Europe during the centuries. It is an oversimplified, rude and untrue historical standpoint, when one refers today, to its own national identity as for example "a proud inheritor of the Iliric traditions", "a son of the great king Samuil" as much as it is incredibly crazy for one to refer to itself as a "a glorious soldier of the Macedonian phalanx". **Why?** The answer is very simple indeed. Is there a historian, an anthropologist or a political scientist that does not agree with the thesis that all this derives from the fact that the intercultural, intertribal and inter-religious influences among different groups of people were that high that no one could claim purity of nation as some on the Balkans perceive it. The numerous wars, assimilation and intergration processes during the years brought us to a political "galimathias" of ideologies, and a historical mosaic of national, religious and cultural breeding and spawning among connections with the previous political systems, states and traditions can not be denied, a sole nation that derives from a sole antique tribe or peoples is simply - not a fact.

As for the other thesis, I might notice that it is an obvious fact that it represents a sequel to the first one. The Westfall peace agreement in 1648 is a turning point in the world's political process. That is the period in time when a phenomenon of the modern age started - the creation of the first national states. The Westfall agreement happened after the thirty years war among the feudal states in Europe. The contradictions in these wars went as much as the fact that Catholic France found an ally in the Protestant German princes, against Catholic Austria. When they finally reached the agreement in Westfall (after realizing that they have slaughtered a third to a half of the population in Europe) it became an inspiration for creation of the first national states in Europe. Before that, the political map of Europe contained of totally decentralized feudal monarchies without any national or ethnic belonging what so ever. The identity of the people in the feudal ages was expressed towards the religious and the regional belonging, in service of the feudal tyrant that used the peasants (or the rare "citizens" that lived in the fortified cities) for constructing an army while serving the king. What it means from a modern aspect of looking and interpreting is that we cannot call upon the tradition of "our" feudal states to justify any ethnic violence or to underestimate any other ethnic group. It is as wrong to say that the Croats had a national state during king Tomislav as it is wrong to claim that the Serbs had a national state during king Dushan. On the territories of these (and not just these) states, several feudal monarchies existed, containing many different "ethnic groups" as we nowadays would say. Simplified naturally.

Although more a contemporary political, that historical view (in terms of Hegelian logic) some may totally disagree, especially if they have blond hair like the Vikings, and a sharp nose just like the Arabs.

Volkgeist vs. Republicanism

The political lies and half-truths are even more dangerous and threatening than the historical ones. That is because the history refers to something that already passed and we can never be sure of the past. But, politics is a sphere of life that is perceived in its total and is felt here and now. That is why a serious political scientist (or anyone concerned with politics) must underline the difference between two main lines of perception of national identity in the past and the present (unfortunately): the line of patriots as a republican legacy and the line of nationalists as a primitive one.

In order to absorb these terms and typology, a priority must be given to the explanation of "peoples" and "nation" although this is most definitely a sphere where most contradictions lie in the scientific sense. Namely what is "nation" for some, is "peoples" for others and visa versa. The term "peoples" to the past, at least in the biggest part of the globe. It means a group of people connected with traditions, cultural marks, language, territory, habits, behaviour patterns etc. It is a term mostly accepted by the hard liners especially the right wing ideologists and quasi-intellectuals in the defense of ethnic violence. Based on stereotypes and prejudices the term "peoples" is often misused as a category for a violent and exclusive propaganda, and not as a simple continuing of the gender, the horde and the tribe. In this sense the ideologists that easily revert and accept these theories are called "nationalists" or "national-chauvinists". They always use this term to note something that is pure, clean, untouched... Something that does not need interference and penetration from a factor of the outside. The division among "us" and "them" is strong and is often "conditio sine qua non", a BIOS in the PC. Being a white male, age 35, middle classed, of a rural origin, heterosexual is the ideal and the culmination of such political theories. "Volkgeist" is what brings people together and not basic human goodness, or ability to continue to something positive. The woman is viewed from the aspect of the holy three rules: "Kuchen", "Kinder" and "Kirche". Ethnic violence is always approved and even highly appreciated in some situations. Does this sound familiar? The last ten years of the historical turmoil in the Balkans showed a lot of similar ideologists when it comes to resemblance with what I have described in the past few sentences. As much as "Great Bulgaria" was defeated on several occasions in this century, and as much as "Great Croatia" and especially "Great Serbia" lost in the last ten years proving how great they can be, the project "Great Kosovo" is yet to be defeated.

On the other hand there is the theory of "republicanism" and "patriotism" as professor Maurizio Viroli would say. It is not a coincidence that these two terms are used as synonyms. Namely, "patriotism" is understood here as a republican tradition that is strictly against the monarchy as a way of organizing the political structure within a society, as well as against any form of tyranny and repression. In that term a patriot is a person that loves his country but not on the behalf of the other ethnic groups. He appreciates the legacies of his fatherland and accepts the minorities as an equal part of his country. A person totally convinced in everything that is democratic political ideologies such as the liberal democracy, social democracy, and consensual democracy... Nation, in the sense of the modern political science, represents a term very different from the term peoples. It is not connected with traditions, habits, or a religious matrix. It is more a loyalty to a state in the post-modern meaning, a loyalty towards a passport, citizenship, and a love from the ballot box you belong to. A political constarction made out of all people that live in a state that is modern, non-bias, depersonalized and decentralized, and what is most important deethnicified. A state of liberal capitalism and social justice, post modern democracy and rights for minorities, a state of non-bias gender policy and a state where it does not matter who you are or to which ethnic group you belong, but what can you contribute for the overall benefit of all people in your state. This requires a new set of political elites in the Balkans. Replacing the militant and corrupted political elites of the present, with a new set of pacifistic and open-minded politicians of the future is a task that is yet to be performed by any future true republican and patriot, regardless if he/she is a part of the majority or a minority in any given country.

The misuse of the term "peoples" and "nation" ("national identity") was a pillar of the ethnic violence in the Balkans from a propaganda point of view. The projects of great countries approved by many militant political factors within these countries and outside them, ended up in a development of events that lead to exact opposite. The modern political scientists understand the process of "balkanization" as a process of dissolution, falling apart into microstates through a violent process of ethnic wars and degradation. All of this spices with the intensive process of, as professor Bogdan Denic would say, "mexanization" which means a general theft of everything that used to be state owned by a group of newly promoted "businessmen" pejoratively called the "neo-feudals". As one might notice, we have evolved from feudal monarchies into national states, than fought wars to prove which national (istic) state is the biggest, and than we are to be violently returned into some new form of feudalism (under the mask of liberal capitalism) to serve under the same neo-feudals that were the most red communists just 15 years ago. A

betrayal towards us, a betrayal towards history. At least we now can see that ethnic violence is pointless. Or can we?

Project Europe: The New European Identity

The process of forming a new European identity is a process that is not going to be easy. Transition countries, in the words of the Italian professor Stefano Bianchini, are not just the countries that are not already within EU and NATO but also the countries that are already within EU and NATO. It is not merely an identity crisis but a phenomenon connected with the ability to be ready to enter, but also to receive new members and to integrate them as painless as possible. This obvious identity crisis from the eastern standpoint derives from the breakdown of communism and socialism, as much as it derives from its substitute - the painful process of democratization. The Western identity crisis, believe it or not, derives from the same thing: what after we have defeated communism? But it also derives from the integration processes that are happening within Western Europe: EU and NATO. These processes benefit all and it is a normal process to forget your own national identity and replace it with a new European one for the simple reason: it provides you a better life and a feeling of closeness to a larger group of people. The general crisis of the national identity on both sides is nothing to be feared of. It is merely a chance to destroy and free ourselves from the historical and national burden, in order to create a new identity for all. Is there a better chance than Europe through its already very successful organizations: EU and NATO.

But as much as we want to think that this is a simple process we see that that is not the case. There are objective limits and boundaries that are a legacy of a totally different judicial, political and moral system that was active just 10 years ago. On the other side there are standards and rules that must be achieved and implemented if we want as much as possible the transition to EU and NATO to be smooth and easy going. But anyhow this cannot be met until a certain period of time passes even maybe a whole generation shift.

But there are some moments in the process of unifying Europe that already trouble both sides. The fault for these is mostly in the turbulent political life of Europe. There is a going political force within the countries of the EU that might be an obstacle for a full "identity integration" of the countries that are already in, let alone the countries that want to enter. The example of "Liga nord" of Umberto Bossi, the short political excursion of Austria with Jörg Haider, the reviving neonacism in Germany, the partial acceptance of the Euro as a single currency indicate that there are objective problems in forming a European identity within the present EU countries. And as much as the Balkan countries were blamed for ethnic violence and minority trouble, I do not need to remind

of the Basque problem, the Ulster trouble, of Corsica and every other centre of ethnic violence in those countries that have set the rules of engagement in Europe.

On the other hand this cannot be used as a fact that justifies all the violence and bloody conflicts in the Balkans that objectively only make the situation worse. Namely how can we build a joint European identity if first we cannot agree upon a common Balkan identity? We have to settle down all the troubles among ourselves in order to be a productive and finally pacified part of the EU. Because once we enter the EU, a possible bloodshed will cost all, not just us.

There is also the problem of the approach of the EU and NATO towards different countries in different regions. The groups that were formed such as "the Western Balkans", or the "Baltic" region clearly show an unfair ghettoization of the countries. An individual approach would have been fairer because every country would have been graded according to its individual efforts. This way we produce a situation where somebody feels more European than the other does. And the identity should be created in advance.

Regarding this problems the politics of the Schengen wall is also a troubled matter. The countries of the Western Balkans already feel like living in a rubber condom, and the way out is percept through the long lines in front of the embassies and the hostile faces of the staff that works in them. The simplest message that any citizen that waits for visa in front of an embassy is that he is not wanted there. In this case the EU chose to implement the Schengen wall on an individual level which is obvious contradiction to what I have written about previously (for example Croatian citizens do not need visas for Italy, Macedonian, Albanian and Serbian citizens do). And this does not help a common European identity does it?



*Macedonian
participant
summing up
the day*

The Balkan Unity - is it Possible? (The Historical Background of The Balkan Unity)

By Daniela Savova (Bulgaria)

Maybe the right question is has there ever been such a phenomenon as Balkan unity? When we look in to the past see the conflicts between the Balkan states we think that the answer is very simple. But history is not made up only of conflicts and wars. History also consists of cultural, ethnic, religious and trade relations. Taking all these into account the answer to the question of Balkan unity becomes much more complicated. In my paper I will try to present today's situation on the Balkans as the result of a historical chain of events starting at the beginning of the Middle Ages - that is IV c. A.D. The underlying idea of my approach is that despite the tensions on the Balkans, there exists some sort of unity among all the nations living on the peninsula. Compared to one another the Balkan peoples are very different but for the rest of the world they form a unified concept (one predominantly associated with violence and savagery). Speaking of Balkan unity may sound absurd to some people especially having in mind the conflicts of the last decade, but from a historical perspective, such a unity exists and I will try to explain how and why it appeared and trace its development to present day.

Historically speaking the simultaneous process of differentiation and unification of the peoples on the Balkans started with the Byzantine Empire. In the IV c. A.D. the whole of the Balkan Peninsula and Asia Minor were under Byzantine rule. This leads to the establishment of a common religion (Christianity) and culture on these territories. The evidences for this are the churches and fortresses of the same type that can be found in present day Balkan states.

The unification is destroyed with the advent of different "barbarian" tribes at the time of the Great Migration. They all pass through the Balkans and only some of them settle here. These are the Slaves (VI c. A.D.) and later the Bulgars (VII c. A.D.) who lay the foundation of new states on the Balkan Peninsula. Gradually these two ethnic groups take over parts of the territory of Byzantium. All the attempts of the Empire to win them back are unsuccessful. Nevertheless the Empire is not beaten down. It sees the newly founded states as yet another possibility for the spread of Christianity and its culture. In the eyes of the rest of the world the Slavs and the Bulgars are barbarians. The only way for them to be recognized as states is to accept the Byzantine culture and religion. This process

of integration starts with the substitution of the pagan clothes with the Byzantine fashion style. The next step is the acceptance of the Byzantine language for administrative purposes since their languages have no written form. They are finally considered civilized only after they have accepted Christianity, which happens between IX and X c. A.D.

In this way Christianity and Byzantine culture unite the Balkan peoples. All the Slavic states take the cultural models of the empire but they also manage to retain their individuality. The Byzantine cultural models are taken literally but they undergo a transformation to fit the specific characteristics of the different peoples. The empire itself greatly assists in this process by encouraging the use of the written form of the Slavic languages created by Saint Cyril and Saint Methodius in 855 A. D. Christianity creates a religious unity between the Slavic states and Byzantium and the empire's policy of not enforcing the Greek language further strengthens their relations which leads to the formation of the East-Orthodox community.

Unfortunately throughout the Middle Ages the Balkan states never manage to extend their cultural unity to the political scene. The peoples on the peninsula never succeed in overcoming their differences and uniting against their enemies. This is seen in their behaviour at the time of the Crusades. The Balkan states oppose the invaders individually without ever managing to form a stable political union against them.

Things are very similar with the Ottoman conquest. The difference is that in this case we have the clash of two different civilizations, two different religions. Even in this situation when at stake is not only the territorial integrity of the peninsula but also the cultural identity of the Balkan peoples, the states never unite politically and consequently are conquered. As a result of this lack of political understanding between the Balkan peoples the whole peninsula becomes part of the Ottoman Empire.

The new rule brings with it a new religion (Islam) and culture. With the Ottoman conquest Islam substitutes Christianity as the official state religion, but at the same time it is not forbidden and made illegal. This new situation provokes two diametrically opposed processes in society. On the one hand, Christian faith consolidates in order to survive and on the other, the first Islamic communities on the Balkans appear.

In this way the Ottoman rule destroys the religious integrity on the peninsula but it also strengthens the social and cultural connections among the peoples living there. After being conquered by the empire the Balkan states lose their boundaries and become one whole, which greatly facilitates the contacts

among the peoples and unites them in one new community - Balkan people. This group no longer consists only of the Slavs and the Greeks, now it includes also the Ottomans and after 1490 - the Jews driven away from Spain.

In this way the Balkans become a colorful mixture of different ethnic groups. The prolonged free contacts among them lead to the formation of a new type of culture, one that is made up of the different characteristic elements of the different ethnic and religious groups. The co-existence of Christianity and Islam within the boundaries of the Ottoman Empire reflects on the two religions making everyone of them accepting elements of the other. For example, the Muslims in Bulgaria and Bosnia celebrate the Christian holiday of Saint George (6 may).

Another element in the new culture on the Balkans can be found in the folklore of the peoples from the peninsula. As an example of this serve the figure of the folklore hero Krall Marko. Songs, tales, place names related him could be found in Bulgaria, Macedonia, Serbia and Albania.

The contacts among the peoples under Ottoman rule are usually maintained by the traders, who together with the circulation of goods, spread information, news and ideas. This facilitates the spread of ideas for national liberation at the beginning of XIX c. For the first time the Balkan peoples manage to unite politically in their struggles for freedom. The separate nations start movement for their own liberation. Formally they act separately without forming a unified opposition to the empire but in fact the Balkan people help each other. Many Bulgarian revolutionaries take part in the Greek and two Serb rebellions against the Ottoman rule. In this particular moment the Balkan peoples manage to overcome their differences and to unite against their common enemy. Since for centuries now there have been no Christian states on the peninsula, this union is formed on the level of the common people. They fight together and eventually manage to win their freedom but as soon as this is achieved they take their separate ways.

The situation is further worsened with the Berlin Congress in 1878 where the Great Powers led by their strategic interests in the region divide it artificially which leads to great parts of the Balkan population remaining excluded from their mother-country. In fact none of the new states manages to include in its boundaries the whole of the population ethnically belonging to it.

This is the explanation of the series of wars on the peninsula between 1878-1918. Only after WWI the Balkan population which the Berlin Congress left stranded in the Ottoman Empire is finally freed. Unfortunately this does not bring peace in the region. This is the time when nationalism takes over the Balkan states. As any other phenomenon related to the Balkans, nationalism here has some specific characteristics. It is based on religious differences, its

aims are maximalistic and finally it has strong historical foundations. In its nationalistic programmes of every state strive after reliving the most glorious periods of its history. In trying to achieve this Balkan states inevitably clash, which leads to unending series of conflicts on the peninsula. This automatically provokes a reaction from the Great Powers who reshape the region after every war. Such a policy creates the false belief in the Western world that the boundaries of the Balkans can be changed any time the Great Powers want to. The attempts of outside forces to create a stable political unity on the peninsula fail because they do not take into account the realities in the region. The artificially formed Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenians after WWI and the Yugoslavian Federation after WWII cannot stand the test of time and they disintegrate with disastrous effects.

For me the success of the idea for political unity in the region is possible when the initiative for it comes from the Balkan peoples themselves. Unfortunately the conflicts set with the creation of the new states after WWII impedes the realization of these plans.

The political unity of the Balkans can be achieved only after the Balkan people accept their past as it is - glorious or not that glorious - and look forward in the future. The basis for this is already set - we share a common cultural heritage and our religions though different are greatly influenced by one another.

The Balkans can reach a unity when they stop seeing their neighbours as enemies and start viewing them as partners in the process of building a better future.

The so needed friendly atmosphere between neighbours on the peninsula can be felt among the Balkan people abroad. Away from their home country, in alien surroundings the immigrants are united by the idea of the Balkans. In the foreign country the boundaries that divide us so sharply are obliterated, the negative prejudices that make us strangers for one another are overcome and a true community of the Balkan immigrants is formed. Forming a closely connected group they manage to preserve the specific characteristics of the region they come from.

Similar should be the aim of the so much wanted Balkan unity - to save the unique culture of the peoples from Southeastern Europe. In this time when globalization is the driving force of the world, we need to stand together against the unification of cultural values in order to preserve all the specific features of our soul that make us Balkan people.

Cooperative Balkans on their Way to Europe

By Ivan Damyanovski (Macedonia)

There is no doubt that after the Nice meeting of the EU, the process of European integration has taken new bolder steps and strategy which foresees united Europe much sooner than previously expected. There are no more legal dilemmas before starting the integration, unifying the continent is definitely on the agenda and there is no misunderstanding on that issue among the EU countries. The end of 2002 is the deadline for finalization of negotiations for integration of the first member candidate countries. However, while the Czech Republic, Slovenia and Poland are very close to becoming EU members, sadly the Balkan countries are last on the agenda.

After a decade of war and instability among the Balkan countries now we are facing a process, which needs reconciliation and cooperation. Probably the biggest problem that all the Balkan countries have to deal with is the problem of state weakness. It is reflected in the fragility of the institutions, there is an overflow of corruption and crime that imposes incomplete modernization. Final product of these anomalies is the identity crisis which are facing today. If the Balkan countries want to overcome this problem and go further in the unification process they will definitely have to fulfill three main objectives:

- Trade integration
- Fundamental reform of the institutions (professional administration and state building institution is needed for adopting the EU standards)
- Regional cooperation

However this process is two streets, which means that the EU needs to change and adopt towards the new situation. So far the public opinion in the Balkans is not quite satisfied with the EU strategy. Signing agreements with Bulgaria and Romania as well as the introduction of the stabilization and association agreement for the western Balkan countries are constructive and positive moves but still more structured and objective agenda is needed. The role of Greece as the only EU country on the Balkans is another question.

It is obvious that this integration process is a very broad and complex issue that needs constructive debate and long-term cooperation strategy. This cooperation must be implemented on three bases: on the political scale, in the economy and in the field of defense and security.

Political Cooperation

Just a short historical overview on the bilateral and multilateral political dialogue will show that achieving political cooperation in the Balkans is a very hard thing to do. Having in mind the transitional anomalies that occurred in the last decade one can easily realize that solving the political problems among the Balkan countries is the key problem since political misunderstanding between nations are often irrational and by inertia are stopping the process of cooperation in all spheres. Countries and regions that have not solved their political disputes by definition can not rely on much needed economical or cultural cooperation.

One of the biggest barriers to the process of cooperation on the Balkans is the relationship of power called ethnocracy. We are talking about particular type of rule in which power is concentrated in the hands of leaders who promote themselves as uniquely qualified to define and defend the national interests. In order to create political landscapes that fit their political strategies and aims they tend to close the society within the frames of the political power and to reduce the regional cooperation to maximum often blaming other nations for their problems. Although big time ethnocrats like Milosevic and Tugman belong to the past, the Balkans has always been a fertile land for such ideologies, which are always slowing down the regional cooperation. Fighting ethnocracy always goes along with the process of overcoming the historical barriers that are still present. Balkan nations must realize that they have to start looking into the future instead of being stuck in the past.

Another big issue that is of a high importance for the strengthening of the Balkan integration process is the rethinking of sovereignty. So far on a wide European scale the trends of globalization and domestic fragmentation have weakened the conceptual and practical foundations of sovereignty. Yet while the notion of sovereignty is increasingly contested at the end of the 20th and the beginning of 21st century are marked by conflicts over the issues of sovereignty as the case of former Yugoslavia shows. If the Balkan countries want to share the European political scene and its values, they will have to follow the EU example. Rethinking sovereignty meaning decentralizing the power of the state and rechanneling some state functions on an above state level is a process that is destined to come. This process also means soft borders that will defeat the concepts of statehood and state boundaries.

However the problems that are slowing the process of cooperation of the Balkans does not mean that the level of cooperation is very low. On the contrary the Balkan countries have already taken bold steps in providing firm fundamentals for political cooperation. One of the most significant is the series of summits of

the Balkan leaders. If nothing else, this process has very significant symbolic importance, since for the first times all the Balkan political leaders are discussing regional problems together. Although this is just the beginning, hopefully these summits will be the introduction to more serious Balkan integration process.

The EU policy towards the Balkans has also urged the Balkan states to cooperate. Besides Greece, which is an EU member, Bulgaria and Romania already have associative membership agreements with the EU. The rest of the Balkan countries are supposed to sign stabilization and association agreement (Macedonia and Croatia have already signed the agreement). What is indicative with these agreements is that they are not dealing only with relations between the particular country and the EU, but also the imperative is also on regional cooperation. The countries in the region are urged to solve their regional disputes before joining EU.

People seem to forget one crucial segment in the integration and that is the cooperation of the civic sector. Being the fundament of every democracy civil society by definition must cooperate in finding solutions for balancing political power on a state and regional level. Civic cooperation is definitely a bright side in the Balkan cooperation, since in the last decade we are witnessing a vast number of different projects, initiatives and strategies that are coming from the NGO scene. However these subjects seem to lack the support either from the west or their own states. There is still no awareness of the extremely positive role that they can play in the integration process.

Economic cooperation

The cooperation between the Balkan countries in the field of economy is another key factor in the integration process. Stable and cooperative Balkan economic system will produce economic growth and increase the living standard in every country which is the best way of fighting ethnonationalism and instability. Following the EU example economical cooperation is also the best way for establishing later political cooperation as well.

The first step is the creation of solid and functional trade integration. What the Balkan states need to do is the radical changing of the legislative. Most of the laws dealing with economic matters have leftovers from the past economic systems and are a major hindrance to the cooperation process. The Balkan countries must adopt laws which are parallel to the EU standards and which will increase the flow of goods and money in the region. Also even wider opening of the markets is inevitable. Governments must work on finding solutions for bigger foreign investments in the region.

So far a lot has been done in this field. Almost all the Balkan countries have

already signed bilateral treaties, which provide free trade. For example Macedonia has free trade agreements with almost every country from the region. However, probably a multilateral trade organization is needed.

Another good opportunity for cooperation is the Stability Pact for Southeast Europe. Although so far the countries involved are not satisfied with its functioning, it still can be a major factor for economic reconstruction. The very nature of the Stability Pact is the cooperation between the Balkan countries. So far all the major reconstruction projects have been multilateral.

Security and Defense Cooperation

The stability and the security of the region are the preconditions for a successful political and economic cooperation and integration. Peace and stability of the region have been the number one priority of the international community in the past decade. It is clear that the Balkan region (especially the Western Balkan countries) as long as it is unstable it has no chance of integration into Europe. Sadly, so far the Balkans have done very little in improving security and stability. This means that much more cooperation is needed on every field.

European Union's biggest concern is the security of the borders. Cooperation between the Balkan states on border control has not been much successful. Illegal traffic of drugs and weapons is still dominating the region. Fighting organized crime is another issue that desperately seeks more involvement and cooperation between governments and intelligence agencies.

In the field of defense, the cooperation is much better. All the countries are supporting the Euro-Atlantic integration process. The best organized form that provides cooperation is the Partnership for Peace Programme. After the democratic changes in Serbia in distant future all the countries from the region will be members of this programme which provides mutual cooperation on every level of military defense.

Another more symbolic but very important step is the recent creation of the Balkan forces. Although still at the beginning this project is good basis for providing further cooperation in the region.

From European perspective it is quite clear that on their way to European integration the Balkan countries must learn how to solve their problems and how to cooperate. That is the supreme condition which Balkan states have to fulfill. So far the political elites realized that and first step has been taken. But still much more needs to be done. Balkan people must realize that they cannot rely on the EU all the time but on a contrary their integration depends on their will and ability to cooperate and make things better.

Civic Education - a Precondition for the Integration of Albania in Europe

By Lindita Luzo (Albania)

One of the fundamental features of the people in a democratic society is the introduction and the exercise of civil rights, freedoms and responsibilities by them. It is evident that people do not inherit these rights but are educated with them. This education is certainly not easy. It can be attained only by a persistent, systematic, continuous and qualified work for the explanation and installment in every citizen's consciousness of the utter belief about the necessity for respecting these rights and responsibilities. Our citizens of democracy must enjoy the right to individual freedom but they also must share responsibilities. Only highly qualified people, who know very profoundly civil rights and responsibilities as well as the contemporary methodologies to impact them clearly and comprehensively to the others, can carry out this educational mission. Everybody must be guided by the idea that it is school that educates the future generation with the citizens' values that inculcates in them the respect for human rights alongside with the realization of responsibilities.

School must embody the essential etiquette of the new man of the world. Human rights education in school is the necessity of time, since all the members of our future society go to school. The attention must be focused on these teaching and educational institutions. Only by a continuous education of the young generation our society will not suffer in the future from the illnesses that are witnessed nowadays such as disrespect, disagreement, intolerance, racism, crime etc. To this end a complete curriculum for the school levels must be processed and experimented.

In this field many partners are interested to fulfill this obligation that they have towards the young generation. These partners are government, politicians, voluntary associations, teachers, and young people. All of them contribute according to their own way and competences to accomplish the goal of civil education. The governmental policies in the field of education include:

- Development of curricula
- Formation of teachers
- Reforms in the system
- Management of the budget

- Negotiation of the foreign assistance
- Security of the legal framework
- Inspection and monitoring

The main roles of the civil associations are:

- Suppliers of the alternative services
- Sources of new practices and ideas
- Well informed citizens and lawyers
- Political partners

The Albanian Center of Human Rights is doing a hard work in these aspects. So it has organized seminars with students of the third year of the Law Cycle (who are / would be teachers in the Albanian elementary schools) in Elbasan and Shkoder. They have completed their training in the field of human rights education through eight modules introduced to them to the second seminar. In both seminars twenty students and five pedagogists from each university participated. There were discussed piloting processes of the curriculum of human rights education for the children in the elementary school and were organized practice activities for the pupils, activities related to their integration in this field (...)

The main motives of the work done by the schools have been:

- to learn to know
- to learn to act
- to learn to be
- to learn to live together

Side by side with the process of learning in our schools there is the process of entertainment through cultural activities representing children's desires and needs in the field of human rights, through exhibitions, excursions, discussions, artistic activities etc.

In three of the six municipalities of Gjirokastra Prefecture, in Gjirokastra, Tepelena and Permet there has been some efficient collaboration with the Educational Directorates with NGOs in the field of Human Rights. Another important aspect of this collaboration has been even the election of student's governments near to each school in which the new elements, the young people are embodied with democratic values of leading.

This was a great achievement in the development of the new generation with

the norms and laws of a sound democratic society. Three important levels must be included and institutionalized in the achievement of these issues. There are: teachers and pedagogues, pupils and students and parents. The latest reflects in an indirect way towards these issues. In January 2000, the human rights education began even at the universities of 5 districts: Elbasan, Shkoder, Korce, Vlore and Gjirokastra. Here were formulated the first modules, which are applied nowadays in the Albanian system of education in agreement with the Ministry of Education and Science and the deans of these universities.

The main fields of education of young people, which contain the meaning, interior and most essential ways of education are: Mental education, Moral education, Work education, Technical education, Physical education, Health and sexual education and Esthetic education. All together they reflect the purity of human character and personality. Only by short-term and long-term programs in the civic education at school we can realize this complicated and necessary process for the future of human beings. This must be an upbringing in accordance with the country need and recommended by the experience of the civic society. The famous principles of the philosophy of the well understanding of life in the society can be inculcated more consciously and harmoniously in the people's consciousness if the intellectuals and the specialized people will have the pleasure and feel the responsibility to render their contribution.



Dancing on Balkan music

Albanian NGOs Promoting EU Integration

By Adri Nurellari (Albania)

Integration in EU is the main aim of the Albanian society nowadays and of course the civil society is playing a major role in supporting this process. This paper will give a brief introduction to the role of the Albanian NGOs and offer will be mainly focused in the problems that the NGOs are facing in this process.

The NGOs in Albania contribute to the process of integration in two ways: directly and indirectly.

Direct Contribution

By direct contribution I imply activity that has a direct impact in stimulating the integration process. There are different NGOs that are working very actively in promoting the awareness of the population about European affairs. They also cooperate with the government. So organizations like the Albanian European Center or the Institute of Contemporary Studies have been assigned the role of advisor and consultant to different Albanian ministries for European matters (in the case of the Albanian European Center it is the advisor of the Ministry of Justice in matters of European Law).

The work of these NGOs consists mainly in doing studies and researches for strategies that are to be adopted for a successful integration. They also give a great contribution in Albanian task group of the Stability Pact where NGOs like Albanian Center for Human Rights and Albanian Civil Society Foundation are among those who represent Albania in different negotiations and other international activities. Other NGOs are publishing manuals, treaties and reports, which are distributed with the aim of making the EU more known to the Albanians.

Also Albanian NGOs are active in participating in many intercultural activities that aim at bringing Europeans closer to each other, easing the regional tensions and fostering international understanding. Many Albanian NGOs are active members of international networks of NGOs like Anti Corruption Coalition, Balkan Network of Human Rights Organization, which have increased the international cooperation and achievement.

Indirect Contribution

The Albanian non-profit sector plays great role in the process of integration

even indirectly by trying to shape an Albanian society that can be eligible to join Western Europe. They do so mainly by helping Albanians to acquire the principles of the European Union:

- Rule of Law
- Human Rights
- Free Market
- Democracy
- Environment protection

So many activities have been organized in the field of civic education by Albanian NGOs. They have aimed to increase the awareness and consciousness of Albanians for the rights and the responsibilities that characterize the EU. Also they have organized many trainings, workshops that are trying to adopt the population to the market economy like courses for entrepreneurship and have also organized capacity building activities that have aimed at enabling the Albanians to seek and advocate their rights. Environmental concerned organizations are progressively increasing in Albania and their activities are increasing in matters of participation.

Problems of the Albanian NGOs in Promoting Integration in Europe

In their efforts to promote the integration in Europe of Albania the NGOs are facing many problems and difficulties and I am going to list some of the most important:

- Lack of quality of the NGOs' activities which comes as a result of the lack of organizational skills. Their staff requires capacity building trainings that can enable them, acquire their skills like fundraising skills or project management skills, which are indispensable for achieving efficient activities.
- Limited impact. The activities of the Albanian NGOs involved only a minority of Albanian society, they are mainly concentrated in Tirana, the capital of Albania, and few other towns living apart the remote areas and the rural population therefore, which means not involving the majority of the society.
- Corruption. Often the staffs of the NGOs have speculated with the funds granted to their organizations preventing these funds from being put in use and ruining the confidence of the Albanians in general for the third sector.
- Dependency in foreign aid. As the domestic resources for the Albanian organizations are almost non-existent the NGOs are dependent on foreign financial and expertise aid creating a strong dependency in foreign help. This

fact has a great impact in their activity because it distorts the natural development of civil society in Albania and prevents them from developing and exploiting local resources.

- Political dependency. The political polarization of the Albanian society is reflected in the sector of the NGOs as well. So the activities of some organizations are very influenced by political parties and this fact has damaged the trust of the Albanians in these organizations and obstacles the massive participation.
- Not enough cooperation from the state. The integration process requires the maximum of the support therefore the maximum cooperation from the entire sector of the Albanian society, often the government refuses to help or cooperate in initiatives of the NGOs. For example, they refuse to allow access to state owned facilities and educational structures to many NGOs.
- Lack of participation and massive involvements. Unfortunately due to the economic and political misfortunes of the past years the Albanian society has fallen into a kind of apathy and lack of confidence, which is of course reflected in activity of the NGOs.

To conclude despite their many comprehensive activities, because of the above mentioned problems and other ones, the Albanian NGOs have not been to fulfill properly the goals that they have undertaken. The anarchic events of

1997, the violent demonstrations of September 1998 and the low support for integration that Albania has been able to achieve clearly show that very much remains to be done and that the Albanian NGOs should take over a major burden of the efforts of integration.



Lecture about Albania

Step Three: Emigration Phenomena on the Balkans: Looking for the "Right Choice"

Emigration phenomena on the Balkans became a widely discussed issue during the years of post-totalitarian reality. Emigration as a continuous process in Albania, Bulgaria and Macedonia/FYROM is generally viewed today as a serious threat for the efforts of these countries to achieve a functioning market economy and social prosperity.

The present seminar uses the term "emigration" in its commonly accepted definition as a process of leaving someone's country and settling to another. From this starting point the main questions of the seminar are: "Why young people from Bulgaria, Macedonia/FYROM and Albania leave their homelands and settle elsewhere?" And the more delicate one: "Why do not they want to stay?"

The main idea of the seminar is through an open exchange of experience and opinions, to discuss the "Great Dilemma: Should I stay or should I go?" about the "Right Choice". It provokes the potential abilities of the participants to see themselves as creators of their own future and gain a better understanding of their current hopes and fears.

While all young people witness the transition process and clearly see one of the biggest challenges of the states - their inability to keep youth within their boundaries and make use of their potential - the seminar serves as opportunity to closely examine the issue and emphasize the importance of the young people as citizens. Since citizenship requires freedom of choice, the seminar also faces the existent prejudices concerning equally both those who leave a country and those who stay at any price. In this way a common understanding of the emigration phenomena and an insight view of the related issues reach within each country and between the countries in question.

We are aware of the fact that before becoming immigrant one becomes an emigrant. And we believe that while locating the problems, which urge young people to dream of a future abroad, we make the first step in rebuilding our common home.

Seminar Agenda

(Ohrid-Skopje, Macedonia)

31 May - 04 June 2002

Arrival in Ohrid

1.06.2002

Opening session

Presentation of "Friedrich-Ebert-Foundation", Regional Office Sofia - Mr. Arnold Wehmhoemer

Presentation of "Bosfor Obshtestvo - Bulgaita", Ms. Emilia Ilieva

Presentations

Tanja Tomic - "Historical Perspectives of the Emigration Process in Macedonia"

Stefanija Makarovska - "Directions and Effects of Migration Processes in Macedonia through Centuries"

Vanya Ivanova - "Emigration Processes in the Last 50 years of the Bulgarian History"

Discussion

Aida Kocaqi - "Mass Emigration and Brain Drain of Albanian Intelligence in the Post-Communist Years"

Keti Strakosha - "Waves of Emigration of Youth in Albania in the 90s"

Isvetelina Tomiova - "The Main Problems of Young People in Bulgaria - Preconditions for Emigration"

Discussion

Dragan Donkov - "Emigration as a Source of Salvation"

Experience Letters - Extracts

*Being one of the countries of the Balkans means to give your contribution for helping the development of all these countries. That is why Balkan countries have to collaborate with each other. Their force comes from the youth. We are the first that will make things change, because the future depends on us. The first thing that we can do is to be together. There is a proverb in Albania that says: **Being together means strength.** So, if we help each other and work together things will be easier and the solutions will come faster.*

After discussions we reached several conclusions: It is good young people to be in their countries and to help for the development. Even if you emigrate, you have to return and using everything you have learned to help your country. The state has to work hard for changing the economic and political situation because of the youth. The original values of every country must not change. We have to use the past and by learning from it to face a better future.

Orilda Kalami

It is always very interesting to see the big similarities of the emigration phenomenon of nowadays in our countries. The discussions helped to look at the emigration from another perspective and to see also the other

Adri Nurellari - "Social Analysis of the Emigration Reasons in the Contemporary History of Albania"

Jasmina Cukalkovska - "Contemporary Emigration Processes in Macedonia: Where Do the Young People Go and Why?"

Ivaylo Hranov - "The Crisis if Cultural Identification as a Reason for Emigration"

Discussion

2.06.2002

Presentations

Orilda Kalam - "Positive Aspects of Emigration: Albanian Youth in the Search of a Better Education"

Goran Sekuloski - "The Internal Migration in Macedonia: Clash of the Rural and the Urban Culture"

Vasilika Laci - "The "Canadian Phenomenon" in Albanian Reality"

Aleksandar Shumkovski - "Forced Migration Processes on the Balkans and in Macedonia in the Last Decade - Refugees and Displaced People"

Discussion

Guided tour in Ohrid

Dessislava Sirakova - "Nationalism / Emigration / Globalization"

Ivan Damjanovski - "Brain Drain: Who Stays, Who Goes? - Manneuvering Space for the Second Best"

sides of the emigration as part of development, civilisation and a natural process, which cannot be stopped by force.

We could not avoid the very disputable point of the brain draining and of the consequences it brings to our countries. All of us understand that the development of our countries is one of the ways to limit this phenomenon.

I am very happy that the question of finding solutions for the problem was raised almost from everybody. I think we are making good steps towards democracy and it is especially this approach to being active and looking for solutions from the individuals themselves, which makes me sure on that.

I got also the message that there will be always people who will emigrate, independently from the developing stage of the country. Maybe this will be called something else in the future, but the human nature of trying something new and have experiences in life will never change.

We could not give any response to the big question of the time "Should I stay or should I go?" and I think this was for the very simple result of the seminar: the emigration is first of all a question of personal choice and is very much related to the development process of the country, including the social, economical and political stability. But I think we all agreed that each of us

Discussion

Edlira Xhafa - "The Role of the Government on the Emigration Questions"

Dane Taleski - "The Civil Society: Catalizer or a Dam for the Brain Drain"

Asela Balla - "The Choice and Challenges of Emigration"

Final Discussion

Evaluation

3.06.2002

Transfer to Skopje

Lectures:

Dr. Verica Janeska - Economic Institute

Topic: "Economic Development and Emigration Processes - Social Aspects of the Emigration and Immigration I RM and the Region; Statistical Data and Analyses"

Tommazo De Kataldo, Vladimir Danailov, Marija Nikolovska - IOM / International Organization for Migration

04.06.2002

Lecture:

Iskra Najdenovska, Despina Mukovska - Emigration Agency in Republic of Macedonia

Evaluation of the seminar

Departure of the participants

can give his or her own contribution to the development of the country and is very important each of us to understand that in democracy everybody should participate.

Edlira Xhafa

This seminar opened my eyes to see how much common problems we have, how similar we are and how easy we can communicate, debate and find solutions. That is my evaluation - it is possible to find solution together, to work and to understand the social, economical and cultural realities on the Balkans. That is the way to understand our own problems - looking at and discussing the problems with the neighbours. I feel myself now aware that the future is here not abroad and that we have the power to find our welfare society, not to acquire models adopting them and falling in the cloning postmodern reality of "no way".

Dessislava Sirakova

The Role of the Government in the Emigration Question

By Edlira Xhafa (Albania)

It is since 1990 that emigration is being estimated as one of the main means of facing living and guarantying especially the economic perspective of the Albanian individual, family and society. For a long time it has served as a powerful moderator in smoothing the internal conflicts and tensions characterizing the last years social and political developments in Albania and particular those of 1997.

Emigration remains also one of the most important economic, social and institutional restorations. In 1990 Albania has known high rates of population emigration. Actually it has the highest emigration in flux rate compared to all the other Eastern and Central European countries.

Approximate and indirect data witness that about 15% of the population lives abroad presently, while the emigration practice in developing countries of East Europe as well experts' forecast at the beginning of the 90's suggested a 5/6 average in flux annually of the active population. Emigration has not only been a way out to meet the needs of the economic development, but also a consequence of the political and social tension in the country.

Regarding the employment of the Albanian emigrants, the prevailing work activity for man is construction field and housekeeping for women, especially in Athens, where the biggest Albanian emigration community lives. The hard type of work, in which the Albanian emigrants are engaged, hinders their professional qualification growth and acquaintance with contemporary techniques and technology, applied in these emigration countries. Their employment in such areas serves more as a means of economic survival than an integration, civilization and emancipation factor.

During the period of time 1990 - 1998 was noticed an inferior treatment of the Albanian emigrants compared with emigrants of the other countries. Now we are in the way out of this situation, especially after negotiations between the Albanian Government and the Italian and Greek ones, which were concluded with the last legal and institutional procedures undertaken from the respective Governments, regarding the legalization of the illegal emigrants.

One of the biggest achievements in the emigration area during this period has

been the realization of the possibility that Albanian citizens can emigrate in Italy, not only having a work authorization, but also through a guarantee from the Albanian legal emigrant or by self financing the trip as work-seeker.

Actually the work of the state on the emigration area is mostly done through the Directory of Emigration and the Ministry of Labour. The Albanian Government has no policies to promote the emigration, because it does not think that the emigration is the key of the economic solutions. In this meaning the work of the state is mostly concentrated on facilitating the process for people who are interested to emigrate.

There is a draft - law prepared by the Directory of Emigration in the Ministry of Labour, regarding the state of the Albanian emigrants and which is waiting for approbation from the Albanian Parliament. The specialist there explained that apart of this Directory there are also some other possibilities of contacting the state structures, for the people who are interested to emigrate.

The labour offices, which are located in every district of Albania, should cover the emigration question, but there is not a specific and definitive approach of these offices and there is lack of capacities to deal with this problem. As in many other aspects of the post-totalitarian society, there are institutions and structures, but there is lack of capacity within the state system for using these structures and parallel common people do not know anything about these kinds of offices.

In order to help out of this situation the new law foresees the creation of the specialized offices for training and qualification of the Albanian citizens, who want to emigrate, creating in this way equal possibilities in training and labour market knowledge and preparing them for emigration. Anyway there are some employment's agreements with some European countries (Greece, Italy, Germany), season and organized emigration.

The Albanian legislation gives space also to the private bureaus of emigration which offer advices for the Albanian citizens who are looking for temporary or permanent emigration and to the private agencies of employment, which are created for the employment's management of the Albanian citizens out of the country. A new step would be also the ratification of the new European social chart, where is included the emigrants' state, which is a very important document.

Another problem in another stage of the emigration phenomena is once you have become an emigrant. Unfortunately there are no structures to take care of the emigrants' problems in the Embassies, at least in some countries, where a bigger number of Albanian emigrants are located. Parallel to this are missing

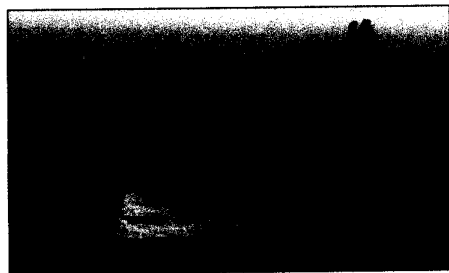
the associations of the emigrants, where they can be self-organized and discuss for their problems. That means in few words that every time there are problems in their lives and working places, there are no state's structures or institution where to be headed and where to ask for help services.

The way, how the solution/reducing of these problems is foreseen is through agreements with other countries to facilitate the legal emigration of the Albanian citizens, and to guarantee their rights, according to the legislation of the respective countries and the International Conventions for the Emigrants' rights. Another direction of the state's work will be the investigation on the ways, how to make possible the emigrants' savings can have access of investment in Albania.

The last stage that not always follows the first ones is the repatriation of the emigrants who come back home to have their lives in Albania. The specialist explained that there is no strategy at all from the state part. There are some NGO's that are working in this field, but this is very much limited and not much is done.

In general the new law foresees the state responsibility in creating facilities for the emigrants during the time of migration, the promotion of the voluntary return of the successful emigrants, the education in Albanian language of the emigrants and their children, the functioning of the state and private services of work and emigration, the information, the communication and promotion of the communitarian life of the emigrants abroad.

The draft-law foresees also the bank transactions, like withdrawing of the emigrants' savings and the encouragement of their use in production and services' fields in Albania. In the same time the state through its embassies will take the necessary measures to deal with the emigrants' questions in the host countries where the Albanian emigrants are located.



*Building bridges
through mutual
dialogue*

The Main Problems of Young People in Bulgaria - Preconditions for Emigration

By Tzvetelina Tomiova (Bulgaria)

After the beginning of the democratic reforms in the countries from the region, Bulgaria also launched its difficult transition towards market economy and democratic development. The country lacked political and economic stability for years and this influenced negatively over the development and living of young people in Bulgaria. In 1997 stabilization measures were undertaken through the introduction of the currency Board according to IMF recommendation.

The implementation of the most important priority of the country in its most modern history began with launching the EU membership negotiations in February 2000.

Young people are the most motivated to look for alternatives; so, they are really valuable as a generator of new progressive ideas. Today they do not get satisfied only with conclusions. We, being young people, do not need descriptions of dark realities as the traffic drugs, women and economic emigrants; the unemployment mainly amongst young people; the negative demographic processes, in particular in Bulgaria and Macedonia; and the emigration of the skilled staff and intellectual potential of all the nations from the region to Western Europe and USA. Of course, we cannot omit the general decline of the living standards and the impoverishment of the population, the demographic decline fueled by the emigration of young people, the negative growth rate of population, the high rate of infant mortality and the aging population. The crisis within the educational system becomes deeper, a gray course invades culture and cultural values and norms, that are unique for the Balkan Peninsula, are being ruined.

We have to look for ways to develop the resources inherent to young people in Bulgaria. Therefore the active involvement of young people into the development of the civil society, social and employment realization should be ones of the top priorities. Moreover, there are several issues that are extremely important not only for Bulgaria but they are common problems of the young people in the Balkans and are some of the factors leading to the emigration phenomenon.

1. Youth unemployment

According to Government's Programme for the period 2001-2005 the labor market policy is aimed at the creation of conditions for a well- functioning labor market guaranteeing higher employment rate and reduction of unemployment.

The directives of the European Employment Strategy and the EU directives concerning employment are fundamental for the employment policy in Bulgaria. These European documents are priority oriented towards increase of employment, reduction of the number of unemployed, reduction of the long-term stay of the unemployed people at the labor market, social-economic integration of vulnerable groups, development of the vocational training for employed and unemployed young people, improvement of the skills and retraining, entrepreneurship development, development of social partnership.

The priorities of social-economic reform in this field are oriented to the creation and the implementation of equal opportunities for young people in relation to their access to education and vocational training in view of their future career development.

One of the priorities of the labor market policy is the increase of employment amongst young people in order to ensure a well- functioning labor market guaranteeing higher employment rate of the active population.

What are the realities?

Up to date the unemployed youths up to 29 years old are over 30% of the total number of the registered unemployed people. The relative share of the unemployed youths up to 24 years old in the total number of unemployed is nearly 15%. In reference to the economic activity coefficient the group between 15-24 years in the period 1993-2000 has decreased from 43.2% to 27.8%. The employment coefficient also tends to decrease but less than the economic activity coefficient.

Young people with low education or having an education degree without profession prevail amongst the registered unemployed. The contemporary conditions and the changed requirements respect to the people as separate individuals and respect to the human resource requires improvement of the adaptation of the labor force through permanent vocational training. Therefore it is necessary to involve the unemployed youths in training courses to adopt basic and key skills.

Effective forms are to be ensured to link education with practice, measures for transition from education to a real working environment and practical activity,

to help the labor and professional realization of youths.

The data of the national representative research of the Agency for Social Analyses show that 60% of the young people between 18 and 35 years old include themselves in the group of poor, 50% of the young people work part-time and full time and 27% of them are unemployed. Although the youths are in the group of people with highest computer literacy, 50% of them have no computer skills.

Several negative tendencies coexist in the development of young people- poor, with secondary education, without good skills in computers and languages- this makes them deprived of competitiveness at the EU labor market.

On the other hand, young people demonstrate an active position respect to their living - 60% of them are willing to develop their private business, 50% are disposed to work looking for a way of a professional realization.

Their will to emigrate from the country is more firmly declared: 64.2% want to emigrate from Bulgaria to European countries, 56.2% to countries out of Europe.

Today in Bulgaria the young people are not the traditionally most optimistic group - 45% of them do not find opportunities to improve the living standards, social status and the welfare in Bulgaria, considering the actual situation.

2. Entrepreneurship and young people

Young people are the last appointed at work and the first made redundant. Unemployment draws a situation that seriously threatens the living standards, the conduct in public and family aspects.

Entrepreneurship is one possible alternative within the market conditions, close to the thinking and the better mobility of young people. However, there are no real conditions for its implementation. And the young people accept the situation in the way as it is. They do not want „ to be wasted“ with public initiatives. Their potential is to be aimed at the private enterprising.

Each economic activity - from the operation with a washing machine to the construction of a most modern microprocessor- is performed not by individuals but by organizations that require a high rate of social cooperation. The ability to form an organization depends on property rights, contracts and mercantile law. But it also depends on the perception of a moral community, which is a non-written system of ethnic rules and norms that are the base of the social trust. The trust makes possible the effective forms of the economic organization, otherwise, it would be charged by complicated rules, contracts, disputes and bureaucracy.

Today the main problems that small and medium size enterprises (SMEs) face are the shrunken market, the enhanced competition, the state bureaucracy, the disloyal competition as well as the small capital that entrepreneurs dispose of.

Entrepreneurs face difficulties in starting up their business mainly with the creation of consumers. The lack of skilled labor force is a problem for firms from undeveloped rural regions and the regions for development. The studies show the higher importance of the administrative obstacles, the lack of access to external financing, and the undeveloped advisory services network. Entrepreneurs from different regions work in different conditions, have different values and entrepreneur culture.

3. Migration

The political and economic processes in CEE led to migration mainly to countries with stable democratic traditions and better living standards. Bulgaria did not remain isolated from the world migration processes. According to data of the Agency for Bulgarians abroad nearly 2.5 millions people from 67 countries consider themselves as Bulgarians, in USA they are nearly 81 000 people, in Canada 30 000. After the political reforms in the end of the 80s there we can mention several waves related to the liberal regime of travel out of the country, as well as to the climaxes of the economic crisis in Bulgaria:

1989-1990 nearly 300 000 to Turkey and Canada

1992 nearly 80 000 to EU

1995-1996 118 000 to Germany and the Scandinavian countries

In 1999 the course got oriented to USA and Canada. Only in 1999 410 000 Bulgarians applied for USA green cards and 3 500 of them received green cards in 2001. In 1999 4 381 people had green cards. These figures are not full and complete because the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the National Statistics Institute cannot account all the cases. In particular those of illegal migration.

Due to the specific particularities of the historic and social-economic development of Bulgaria the external migration has always been related generally to the emigration of the population. After the prohibition of the free movement of people cross the country's borders that lasted more than 40 years, during the next years rapidly shrank its extent. This wave primarily had a political character based on ethnic grounds. Then the emigration from the country began being determined by conditions and factors that gave it economic character.

Who are the emigrants? The data show that over 50 % of the emigrants are 30-49 years old but the relative share of the youths up to 30 years old is also high.

There is a stronger participation of women in the migration process and most of the women are up to 29 years old. Although the considerable emigration of scientists - nearly 50 000 have left the country- it is too extreme to say that the intellectual potential exclusively abandons the country.

The main part of the emigrants has secondary education but in most cases are skilled, the people with high education are 1/3. The reasons leading to actual and potential emigration are not political for a long time. They are and will continue being related to the high unemployment rate and low living standards- the average wage for the country is a little more than 100 USD and the cost of living of one individual is higher than this amount.

Those, who want to move to other country to work and live there, are defined as "future migrants".

Other category potential emigrants are those, who intend to go to work or study abroad for more than a year. This category of potential emigrants mainly forms the course of external labor emigration.

During the recent years some countries become sustainable centers of the Bulgarian emigration. The major part of Bulgarian emigration goes to Germany- 23%. Nearly 1/5 of the emigration goes to USA. The relative share of potential emigrants to the other countries is considerably lower:

Greece -8%, Spain - 8%, Great Britain - 6%, Italy - 6%, Canada -5%.

The population at the age between 20 - 39 years will constitute the main part of the future emigrants. The willingness to move is more frequent among the people between 20 - 29 years old - 64.2%. Men are the prevailing part of emigration.

60 % of the people intending to emigrate have a specialized subject at the secondary and high schools. The relative share of people, who have specialized technical subjects, is the highest - 42%. They are followed by the specialists in the field of production and processing of raw materials - 10% and in the field of industrial management and administration -10%.

The highest intensity of the potential emigration /the will to emigrate/ is amongst the specialists in physical sciences - 18%, humanitarian arts - 17% and informatics - 16%.

The ethnic structure of emigrants corresponds to the ethnic structure of the population in the country. The composition of the emigration from the country includes Bulgarians - 80%; Turks - 12%; Romanies - 6%; other -2%.

The issue regarding the emigration trends of Bulgarians is really important now, when we have been invited to EU accession negotiations. Are there grounds

to provoke the fears of Western Europe that the EU enlargement would lead to an invasion of migrants? According to the studies of the International Migration Organization, where Bulgaria is a member since 1994 the people from Eastern Europe are not disposed to move to the west part of the Continent. They want to work there temporarily in order to increase their incomes or to improve their education. And those, who want to leave the country forever, are oriented first of all to USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. According to the same research Bulgaria is in the group of the countries with low migration potential. The main restraints in front of the emigration for Bulgaria are: the importance of the family, friendship and social ties of relationship, the high insecurity related to emigration, the hope for improvement of living in the home country, the difficulties for legal emigration, the fears of a bad treatment that could exist towards our emigrants in the West.

3. Social integration of young people

The period before the transition to market economy was characterized by a trend to prolong the youth age and to homogenize young people. The transition from the education field to work has not been made complicated by the labor market. The society adopted the specific status of young people.

The situation of today seems radically different. The youth period is being reduced; the transition to social integration is getting quickened. Young people's problems lose their independent importance and become a part of the common issue concerning political and economic rights of individuals.

The contemporary young generation in Bulgaria is in a complicated transitional situation: the ideological benchmarks of the past are invalid and the new values are still not established. The state is weaker and the civil society is still not built up. In the conditions of transition, building up a system of values amongst the youth generation coincides with the general re-evaluation of the values in the society. The new values preventively are formed exactly among young generations, without the existence of the traditional bases, the common stability of the morals system of the society. In the everyday consciousness there is a perception for a world "in opposite": instead the older people to show young people the right road, the young people deviate older people from the traditional road.

The most substantial fact is the abrupt domination of the skeptical position. Now the disappointment is previous. The group of idealists - those, who continue insisting on a change although their efforts have not been rewarded - does not exist any more. And the most important - the group of the generators of effective initiative has been marginalized.

At the new stage of the transition attention is drawn to youth problems of the society. The transition goes to a situation that in order to continue successfully, it has to include as an integral part a macro-program for social integration of youths. The social capital is a component of the human capital that allows the members of a community to trust each other and to cooperate in the formation of new groups and associations.

Several forms of social capital give people the opportunity to trust one another and to establish economic organizations. The most obvious and natural form is the family and as a result of this a big part of business in the past and now is family business. The structure of family influences over the family business.

However, the family is not a fully favorable ground for economic activity development. The most important form of communication in the economic point of view is the trust between people without familiar ties of relationship, and their ability to work in new flexible forms of organization. This form of a spontaneous communication often loses its potential in cultures that emphasize on the family ties of relationship, excluding all the external relationships.

Discrimination is also one of the factors leading to young people emigration. Youths of different minorities and ethnic groups should also be given the opportunity to develop their resource capacity in the country, where they live, instead of looking for the "chance" to emigrate, even illegally. So, multicultural learning and intercultural communication are to be promoted in order to acquaint people with the benefits that could provide them the awareness of the different cultures. Instead of making the minorities emigrate, the state has to formulate affirmative policies towards them and guarantee them the equal chance to prove and develop their potential because all young people are a source of creative and positive ideas.

We have to look for the solution of these matters because the state institutions have abdicated of their functions to help the young people. We have to find a way our discussions not to stay in this hall but to become our contribution to debates on the problems of the young people in the Balkans. Let's search together the response of the important issue concerning the young people's motivation - for our personal contribution in solving the common problems in our countries and in the region.

With the emigration of young people and skilled specialists Bulgaria loses reproductive, economic and demographic potential. It is true that we should not fear of emigration, it is a way to accumulate intellectual potential and professional experience in foreign countries. The question is how to make the state attract back its citizens that have succeeded abroad.

The state is to be able to use them, to give them a chance and to ensure financial incentive. Real economic conditions are to be created in Bulgaria- opportunities for jobs, professional realization and a decent payment for work- to retain young people and not only during the pre-electoral campaigns the political groups to promise "we will keep young people in Bulgaria"

Otherwise everybody talks about young people, on behalf of them and about their interests, but young people have still not become a subject of the democratic changes. Young people should become a subject of the democratic changes in the region.



The Group in Ohrid

Massive Emigration and Brain Drain of Albanian Intelligence in the Post-Communist Years

By Aida Kocaqi (Albania)

Albania has experienced massive emigration since 1990. This important demographic factor was irrelevant before when the society was totally isolated from migration movements. After 1990, the primary force shaping the demographic makeup became the emigration.

The economic situation in Albania at the end of 1980s was desperate and this was certainly a major reason behind mass emigration. But there were also other reasons: the very high percentage of youth unemployment and the influence of Italian radio and television programmes. During the previous decade, many Albanians watched Italian TV and the images it presented were very attractive.

All this was taking place against the backdrop of rapid and radical political change that had already begun in Central and Eastern Europe at the end of the 1980s. Events elsewhere provided a catalyst for change in Albania and helped to put in motion the energy of those who had been waiting for the right time to act.

After almost ten years of emigration, Albanians have a more realistic image of Europe- it is no longer as attractive and alluring as it first seemed. This new image, more realistic and less appealing is, in large part, due to the reception some countries have given to immigrants. However currently Albania has the highest rate among Eastern and Central European countries. Data indicate that 15% of the population is currently outside Albania. According to information from Western Embassies in Tirana, several thousand Albanians are found in other countries such as US, Germany, Belgium, France, Turkey, Canada, Switzerland, Italy and Greece, which remain the top destinations.

Between 1990 -1997, Albanians have immigrated by all means, legally and illegally. Legal emigration is mainly to the USA through the Green Card lottery and to Canada. Emigration to these two countries has grown increasingly in the last few years. But in 1997 Albania saw a disproportion between legal and illegal emigration. According to published data, 78.6% of emigrants are illegal. In absolute terms, this equals 400 000 emigrants while only 10 000 are in their country of residence legally. Illegal emigration takes place in the following ways:



1. Remaining in a country after the expiry of a tourist or business visa. In 1999, both Italy and Greece introduced legal measures to facilitate the conversion of the tourist visas into long-term residence permits. Such measures include advancing the process of legalization in Greece and the implementation of a decree by the government of Italy on the legalization of the emigrants, as well as allowing for the possibility to change a study, business or tourist visa into a working permit.

2. Illegal crossing of state borders. This is the most common way for low-income citizens, who come from remote areas and cannot get a visa. According to studies on the migration of Albanians, it is estimated that during 1991-1999, approximately 5 000 Albanians a month went to Greece either with a visa or as clandestines. The average number of emigrants to Italy both legal and illegal is approximately 1500 per month.

3. Illegal border crossing on speedboats is the method favored by those who can afford the relatively high fees involved. Departure takes place from the coast and port cities (Vlora, Durres shengjin) with the destination mainly to Italy and to a lesser extent Greece (from Saranda). The existence of this traffic served for a long time to alleviate potential conflicts and pressures, which could result from the marginalization and stagnation of coastal cities and areas.

4. Illegal border crossing by taxi, ships or air. Albania has a network of taxi drivers that take illegal emigrants, usually to Greece. Others use commercial ships or ferryboats that travel between Albania, Italy and Greece. From there, emigrants aim to leave for other countries in Western Europe, as well as to the USA and Canada. Airlines are also used mainly to Western destinations. This route is much more costly and affordable only for wealthy emigrants.

5. Claiming Cosovar identity was another important form of clandestine emigration from Albania, especially during 1999 when Western countries started accepting Kosovo refugees. Albanian citizens forget documents claiming Kosovar identity and emigrated as refugees although the authorities have no data to the exact number who left in this way.

The Choice and Challenges of Emigration

By Aisela Balla (Albania)

Economic factors are the most important reason behind emigration. The country's economic situation and the lack of a rapid recovery (given limited domestic resources), continues to encourage people to leave.

When Albanians compare the current overall social and political situation with the communist past, they immediately recognize that they are better off. But in the terms of the household economy and personal income, they are more skeptical. They faced the difficulties of daily life, the unstable economic and political situation and the lack of vision for the future.

Data from a survey of Albanian emigrants in Italy and Greece points out the following six main motives for emigration:

- Receive higher wages
- Support financially their families left in Albania
- Better working conditions
- Better living standards
- Better educational possibilities for themselves and their family members
- Political reasons

All levels of society in Albania have experienced deep economic and social change. Until the middle of 1996 there was a gradual improvement in the economic situation of Albanian households owing mainly to remittances and the flourishing pyramid schemes. These factors undeniably lessened even if temporarily the major economic and social problems, which emerged as a result of the high unemployment rates and big disparities in wealth.

Research made among emigrants reveals that a range of factors governs the choice of country of emigration. Geographical proximity is the prevailing criterion, for the following reasons:

- The prospect of going far away (an early feature of Albanian emigration) is less attractive because of the difficulties of the travel and communications. People prefer proximity.
- Cultures and especially similarity of language and way of thinking. This aspect has had a substantial influence if we consider the huge exodus to neighboring countries like Greece and Italy.

• Short-term or temporary migration. Many people think that they might come back.

Culture is a very important fact for emigrants. While economic reasons may be their primary consideration, the culture needs of the younger generations are very important. Emigrants think of schooling for their children and the possibilities of their lives in the new country.

Ease of a movement is also a strong determining factor. This means not only the ease by which emigrants can enter the new country, but also travel to and from their new home and Albania.

Other factors such as the presences of relatives in the host country, the employment possibilities of the employment, perhaps in their own profession, and higher wages are the motives of less importance. Re-emigration has become more common with neighboring countries perceived as stopover points for re-emigration to other West European countries.

The degree of integration of Albanian emigrants in Greece and Italy, the main host countries, is more or less the same and the problems they experience with the local population, institutions and social services are also similar.

The rate of clandestine emigrants to legal emigrants is beginning to even out given the effects of the legalization of immigrants in Greece and the establishment of legal and institutional instruments as well as a new law on foreigners, which acknowledges Greece as a country of immigration. Male Albanian emigrants in Greece and Italy are mainly engaged in construction or agriculture work, where as women are employed in domestic services. The fact that so many Albanian emigrants are employed in difficult manual labor has reduced their chances of improving their professional qualification and familiarizing themselves with modern skills and technologies. Employment in poorly paid sectors is a way of survival - it is not a means of integration or emancipation.

The process of integration in host countries becomes difficult due to the following factors: a difficult labor market, extremist political and regions attitudes and negative stereotyping by the press and the mass media which has turned the presence of the Albanian emigrants into a political issue. The negative factors have been compounded by a number of criminal acts committed by Albanians, which have been widely publicized by the mass media.

Emigration represents a means of guaranteeing survival for families in Albania. The financial support from remittances has been and still is one of the main sources of the revenue for Albanian families who have poor economic prospects. Emigration is perceived as a way to make a living rather than as a means of personal and professional development.

Albanian emigrants have almost no social or community life in host countries. This is due to a number of reasons including the marginal and poor nature of employment, the high number of illegal immigrants, the involvement of some emigrants in the black market and other illegal activities and the lack of priority given by the host governments to emigrants' integration.

During the last few years the role of the emigration as an important factor in the alleviation of the economic and social problems of Albanian society is declining. There have been many reasons for this, most of which are related to the ever-increasing difficulties that emigrants faced:

- Restriction of opportunities and possibilities offered by Greece and Italy, the main host countries. Both countries, different levels, are undergoing deep, financial and institutional reforms as part of their goal to achieve higher standards of integration within the European Union.

Intensive campaigns against emigrants resulting discrimination and the denigration of the Albanians. An element behind this is the involvement of some Albanian emigrants in illegal and trafficking activities in neighboring countries. Such a climate of intolerance is present both in Italy and Greece, despite of the differing number of the emigrants.

- A good proportion of emigrant remittances ended up in the labyrinthine pyramid schemes that collapsed in 1997. It seems very unlikely that they will ever be returned.

- During the last decade there has been a gradual aging of the first generation of the emigrants, while the second generation is not yet properly integrated in the economic, social and cultural life of the host country.

Given the above factors, after almost a decade of emigration experience, there are no visible signs of emigrants returning to Albania and there is no significant investment on their part in Albania.

Emigration has had an important impact on the reduction of unemployment in Albania and helps to regulate the domestic labor market in Greece and Italy. But in Albania, in particular in the rural areas, it results in large fluctuations in the size of the labor force that leaves the land used, and agricultural produced and collected. This phenomenon is most visible in the border areas close to Greece.

Emigrant's remittances continue to be important financial resources not just for families, but also for economic and social stabilization of the country. But world trends have shown that in most cases, remittances are spent on consumer and individual goods such as: household appliances, cars, land purchase and shops,

rather than investment in production. But emigration also has had a negative impact on children's education. Many children do not go to school in host country for a variety of reasons: among the most prevalent is the inability to speak the language, temporary residences in the country or having to work.

In the case of Albanian emigration it is difficult to determine which of these forms of integration, multicultural integration or assimilation, is more prevalent since there are not studies to this end and the data cannot be generalized. But, the efforts that emigrants make to find employment and housing and to overcome the many difficulties in the host country mean that they focus less on keeping their traditions, language and culture. There are cases where people have changed their names and even religious beliefs to overcome the great difficulties of integration. Also emigration without the family has increased the number of divorces. In return, the disintegration of the families due to emigration has led to increasing violence and criminality.



Workshop by the lake

Civil Society - a Catalyzer or a Dam for the Brain Drain

By Dane Taleski (Macedonia)

Until recently the term "civil society" was not known in our region. It came along with the transition of the society as a necessary transformation of the existing relations. The concept of civil society itself was invented and developed in the Western parts of Europe as an answer to the domination of the ancient regime. At the beginning it was the arrangement that gave more space to individuals to express and realize themselves in the society. Also the very much-needed freedom of gathering for the purposes of realizing ones goals was easier to achieve. We will not be very far from the truth if we say that soon it became one of the basic pillars of the new society. The concept of that new society became strongly dependent on free individuals with equal rights, but at the same time very proactive in the domain of public life. One of the main paradigms of the transformation in the 18th and 19th century in what today is known as Western Europe was that the public life and especially even more the public policy was the concern of every citizen. So in a way the civil society developed from the historical surroundings that needed such a movement for expressing and working for the needs of the people. Today it may be taught at university, it may be a topic of many books, and a main focus for many social sciences, but it was developed and still is a style of life. You see the civil society can only be some theoretical arrangement, it is the way that people live and behave.

Also a main reason that historically divides the experiences of West and East Europe is the space that civil society was allowed to have from the state institutions. In the West the civil society was defined as an autonomous space. The concept of the statehood that was developed was one of liberal democracy, in which civil participation is highly valued and needed. In the East when people could freely developed their own statehood the historical surrounding imposed totally different concept. The concept of communism and the leadership of the working class. That concept had very little free space for individual expression. As the time went by that space diminished to virtually becoming non-existing and collective reasoning and judging became way of life. Open-minded, free individual with needs for active participation in the public policy were persecuted and punished. I will leave it up to you personal reasoning to answer to yourself how much have things changed? So, in our

case the style of life was totally different than the one in Western Europe. "At this point I would like to address the topic of our seminar and say that the lack of civil society is definitely a very big reason for young people to live their home. Not having the freedom and liberty to express ones critical reasoning and attitudes is very big problem for young people. At the same time if those needs are also suppressed by the state institutions the brain drain is inevitable.

Some political philosophers believe that it is in the nature of people to be proactive in the public life, and that this behavior is the closest to building the best system of governing. This reasoning is true and how big is the need for civil society can be seen from the massive protest in East Europe in the late 1960s. Also the biggest protest then came from the young students to the regime that was repressive. Those acts of rebellion in the years continued but most were limited and never reached the intensity of the protest in 1968. As an example I would draw your attention to the case of the NSK (New Slovenian Culture). An experiment of creating a state without physical territory, a society as a state of mind. A clear and undisputed struggle for greater liberty and space for civil activism. The most recent example of this kind of behaviour and struggle against repressive regime is the case of the student movement in Serbia "Otpor".

The need of people to have and develop their space without governmental control is great and clear, and has always been present. The inability to have that can greatly contribute to the emigration of people. I think that I do not need to explain how is this possible. We all come from different places but we are very familiar with that practice.

I will state once more that non-existence of civil action and participation is a big reason for the brain drain. But is the civil society a dam for the emigration, especially of the young people? Today things have changed. The civil sector finally has its place and space in our societies. But how is it functioning? Is it mobilizing the creative and active potentials of the people? Is it providing enough space and possibilities for the youth? These are difficult questions, not because they are difficult to answer, because if we were to take a look at the situation in reality and give an honest answer, we would feel very bad. The civil society in our countries is still couple steps away of what it should be. A lot of people who were very active in the civil society at that time left their positions and went into politics. These people were considered to be the elite of the civil society. They were our examples, the role models of active civil participants. Is that the ultimate ambition of the civil life? Two days ago I would have said no! But on Thursday I had the chance to be at one foundation and to see a project proposal from a young man. The project was to create a "Shadow cabinet" that is a government that is not really in power but would consist of

civil activists. Ten activists that will have the role of ministers and would react on the governmental decision and of course they would get paid for doing that. I do not know about you, but I as a student of political science find this to be totally grotesque. Unfortunately this is the way of reasoning of young civil activists.

Civil society is still very entangled in the politics and the political institutions. Theoretically and practically this is good. The two need to be separated and have space for themselves. As much as the civil society needs to be liberated from the clutches of the state and political institutions, the state and political processes have to be left aside from the affiliation of some unexpressed politicians who do not dare to enter the political arena. That is if we want to have a developed and pro-active civil society and stable and strong state and political institutions.

In our countries civil society is still experiencing strange mutation and still can not be answered to all the tasks that are set in front of it. Not going any further into that matter I would just say that it is still difficult to say that the civil society is a dam for the brain drain. Will it ever be an efficient dam? I do not know. But I am an optimist and I see that things are changing to better every day. Beside the examples of political pollutioning of the civil society, there are also some good examples too that deserve to be mentioned. It is very clear to all of us that today the perspectives and possibilities of the young people are greater mostly because of the development of the civil society. And what is even more important those perspectives and possibilities are right here in front of us in our countries not somewhere away. The young people do not have to chase their dreams any more they can realize them where they are. (...)



Discovering the Old city of Ohrid

The Crisis in Cultural Identification As a Reason For Emigration

By Ivaylo Hranov (Bulgaria)

We all know what the emigration level on the Balkans is nowadays. And probably we all have our own opinion on it because we all have a friend or an acquaintance that has left his home, chasing his dream abroad. Hundreds of young people leave their home each year, looking for a better life. Some emigrate on the pretext of taking their high school education; others want to be sure that they will have professional realization and that it would result in their higher standard of life. Some of them feel homesick and some of them feel released from the burden of the life they have just left behind. They are all conscious of what they are doing but among the other reasons there is one hardly distinct that still exists. This is the lack of cultural identification. I do not believe that some people feel it. I mean that there are such people who do not care about their national culture and do not feel anything special about it.

Most people nowadays feel too excited about this Globalization going on, they study foreign languages and cultures. There is a process of intercultural education and its main purpose is to learn people belonging to different ethnoses, religions and nations how to live together, overcoming their prejudices. It is thought to be something useful to all the people around the world. It is a way to stop ethnical conflicts, a way to stop wars. But there is something more to know. Some people misunderstand the idea and think that globalization means equalization. They lose their identity because they think it all means Americanization. They watch American films and listen to American music; they are mad about Coca-Cola and Mc Donald's not because they are too good. They are just in fashion, a part of the Americanization. And while the world is being Americanized, people travel to different countries and study cultures that have not lost their identity, listen to ethno music and appreciate traditional food.

In this respect the Balkans is one of the most exciting places in the world. May be it is due to the numerous civilizations that lived here, but the result is an absolutely unique mixture of languages, religions, rituals and beliefs. It is something that has accumulated here for centuries and it is absolutely beyond description. Christianity and Islam have combined with old pagan rituals for health and happiness; Slavic and Turkish languages have mixed with Roman

ones; even our blood is a mixture of the blood of different tribes. May be this is a reason we are not understood from the world. We seem strange to almost anyone, but still we are just ourselves. The world thinks us for exotic and that is why a lot of people come to spend their holidays here. They are fascinated by our hospitality, but soon they fall in love with our entire culture. They like the music, the food, and the rituals. They like it all because they find something real, a world worth living in.

The whole world is fascinated by our folklore, our movies, our music. There is hardly an educated person in the world that has not heard of The Mystery of the Bulgarian Voices Choir and the music of Goran Bregovitch based on the traditional Balkan music. Everyone has seen Emir Kusturica's film or new films like "Dust", "Slogans" or at least the Oscar awarded "No Man's Land". The audience around the world knows about Maria Callas, Vangelis, Valya Balkaska etc.

I have friends who went to live in the States or in Western Europe. They confess that these countries have a bit of anything in the world, but they do not feel home there. They need their culture in order to feel home, to feel complete. They realize that money helps you a lot to feel free and citizen of the world, but they cannot give you happiness. They all need their past and their tradition to build their future. I have this idea that you could live in Australia for example, and still identify yourself as a Bulgarian. While in the same time there are people living here and feeling as foreigners in their own land. That is why I think that Bulgaria is not that piece of land on the Balkans. It is the Bulgarian spirit; it is in every person in the world who believes he/she is Bulgarian.

A lot of people in Bulgaria say that they feel Bulgarians and yet they want to emigrate so that they could survive. We have this presumption that you have to be satisfied (food, home etc.) in order to raise your mind above it all and start to think about your culture. I am not quite sure about this because there are so many ascots, living in the desert or in the street with no possession and they are wiser than we will ever be, they keep the tradition of their nation or tribe better than we can. So, poverty can not be an obstacle for your culture, for your wisdom, for your dreams. A person is as great as his dreams are. Our problem is that we have a majority of people with small dreams. These are the people with no culture and I do not mean education.

I belong to a certain group of young men who travel around Bulgaria with our sleeping bags, tents and bags, trying to live as close to nature as possible. We visit mountains and small villages with almost no civilization. Our usual way of transport is hitchhiking and our drivers are people from different social groups. They are all friendly although most of them are not too educated. Travelling

with these people gave me an experience, which I could hardly imagine to be possible because we learn a thing or two from each of them. The spirit that is purely Balkan. I think it is important to say that most of these people were as poor as we are, but they were all optimistic and they were all laughing at Misery's face. And this is a feature I am sure no one else but Balkan people have. And we are the only ones in the world who can help ourselves. There is a proverb, which says *"You better light a candle than to curse darkness"*

And we are the only ones who can light out candles...

