

## MYTHOLOGISATION OF COMMUNIST IDEAS IN BULGARIAN SOCIETY

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The article explores the mythologization of communist ideas in Bulgarian society and their impact on the contemporary perception of the transition period. The specifics of stereotypes of the socialist past, which shape the nostalgic sentiments of the older generation, are analyzed. The main images of communism, including myths about the quality of life, social equality, and the role of the state, and their discrepancy with historical realities, are examined. The role of nostalgia in the confrontation between supporters and opponents of the socialist past and its influence on current socio-political processes in Bulgaria are outlined.

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## МІФОЛОГІЗАЦІЯ КОМУНІСТИЧНИХ ІДЕЙ У БОЛГАРСЬКОМУ СУСПІЛЬСТВІ

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**Ключові слова:** Болгарія, комунізм, міфологізація, ностальгія, перехідний період, історична пам'ять, суспільство, політична пропаганда, соціальні стереотипи, ідентичність.

У статті досліджується міфологізація комуністичних ідей у болгарському суспільстві та їхній вплив на сучасне сприйняття перехідного періоду. Проаналізовано специфіку стереотипів соціалістичного минулого, які формують ностальгічні настрої старшого покоління. Розглянуто основні образи комунізму, включаючи міфи про якість життя, соціальну рівність та роль держави, а також їхню невідповідність історичним реаліям. Окреслено роль ностальгії у конфронтації між прихильниками та опонентами соціалістичного минулого та її вплив на сучасні суспільно-політичні процеси в Болгарії.

Bulgarian society, at the beginning of the transition period from communism to a democratic society with the rule of law and a market economy, hoped for a fairly easy and uneventful process. However, transition is impossible without changes in both political and economic development and a fundamental change in the mindset of the people of a communist society. During the communist period, Bulgaria tried to form a «new man» and a «new society». After the Communist Party came to power in 1944, a new era of socialism began, changing the social and political conditions for people. A society that has long lived in a socialist environment has formed many positive and negative impressions of its existence. Myths are one of the most popular forms of nostalgia among older people. Myths about communism exist in the minds of our generation and our present. Memories

of the socialist past are an expression of criticism of modern life and a comparison of what was and what has become. However, at that time, it was only possible to tell jokes about it, which were the only possible criticism of the government, in which the change of power was impossible, elections were a formality, and freedom of speech and the media were prohibited.

The relevance of this topic is due to the fact that Bulgarian society still has a large percentage of older people who are convinced that the communist regime was a successful period in the history of the Republic of Bulgaria. Such nostalgic ideas are an excellent basis for Russian propaganda, which emphasises these, such as the «brotherhood» of all Slavic peoples and the unquestioning «support» of all post-socialist states in all their manifestations.

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to clarify the specifics of the stereotypes of the socialist past in the Republic of Bulgaria, which form the basis of the older generation's nostalgic motives against the democratic transition.

The formulated goal of the work involves solving several specific tasks, namely:

- to characterise the Bulgarian phenomenon of the communist era;
- to analyse the meaning of the main images of communism;
- to outline the role of nostalgia in the confrontation of contemporary Bulgarian society.

The scientific novelty of the obtained results is determined by the awareness of the multifaceted factors that shaped the nostalgic phenomenon in the Republic of Bulgaria. The peculiarities of the perception of collective totalitarian and ideologically political measures through the concepts of values and morality of the communist society are determined. The interconnectedness of nostalgia with communist and propaganda methods of informing society is investigated. The author proves the unreliability of all myths about the communist era in the Republic of Bulgaria.

Analysis of recent research and publications. This problem stands at an interdisciplinary crossroads and is the subject of attention of such sciences as history, psychology, and cultural studies, each discipline examining the problem from its perspective. The concept of the mass, the emergence of mass consciousness and manifestations of a person in the masses are discussed in the works of famous sociologists and philosophers. Given that socio-political myths are used to influence and manipulate mass consciousness, special attention is paid to political mythology and the peculiarities of its functioning. Among the researchers of political myth, it is necessary to highlight the work of R. Barth, «Mythology»<sup>1</sup>, which proves that ancient mythology and imaginative thinking are used as a tool for political manipulation and demagoguery. Socialist propaganda often used creative and technical achievements to create its political myth for the people. Also, the work of E. Cassirer «The Technique of Modern Political Myths»<sup>2</sup> is exhaustive, proving that political mythology has great power, which is designed to subdue people to political leaders and leaders and to blur the personality and individuality of citizens.

In the scientific works of Ukrainian scholars, the

<sup>1</sup> Barthes R. *Mythologies*. Paris : Éditions du Seuil, 1970. 247 p.

<sup>2</sup> Cassirer E. *The Myth of the State*. New Haven–L. Yale Univ. Press, 1966. – P. 277–296.

concept of «political myth» is thoroughly studied and formed. In the work of Y. Shayhorodskiy, political myth is defined as «a holistic, simplified, mostly irrational reflection in the individual and mass consciousness of political reality and basic social values; a tool for the implementation of specific political tasks – the struggle for power, its legitimation, the establishment of a new political ideology, etc.»<sup>3</sup>. According to N. Probyigolova<sup>4</sup>, political myth is a tool of information wars and is based on knowledge of ancient psychological attitudes, basic emotional states and the archetype of society. Researcher N. Liutko believes that political myth is «a mechanism of the spiritual and moral dimension of politics, which causes emotional experiences that motivate political behaviour and thus adapts the myth to political technologies»<sup>5</sup>.

Among the works of Bulgarian researchers, much attention is paid to the period of transition from socialism to democracy and the results of this process. One of the studies of a national nature is the work of P. Anchev<sup>6</sup>, which is devoted to the archetype of the Bulgarian people and the process of globalisation. In the collective monograph «Transition in Bulgaria – Memories and Reflections»<sup>7</sup>, researcher A. Angelov describes the concept of socialist nostalgia, namely its consumerist type. According to the author, socialist nostalgia can be described as a consequence of the loss of one of the fundamental values of the Bulgarian socialist society – equality in opportunities and consumption. The society is experiencing this loss during the transition period and contrasts different moments of its life in the two systems, which is one of the main themes in the nostalgic narratives of citizens. The problem of myths and nostalgia for socialism was the subject of a study by E. Valeva<sup>8</sup>. According to the results of the

<sup>3</sup> Shayhorodskiy Y. Zh. Political mythology in the crisis society // Y. Zh. Shayhorodskiy // Education of the region: political science psychology communication. 2009.– No. 1. – P. 61–62.

<sup>4</sup> Myth as a means of political manipulation in the process of elections // Scientific Bulletin of Uzhhorod University. Series: Political Science, Sociology, Philosophy. – No. 14. – Uzhhorod: Hoverla, 2010. – P. 41–44.

<sup>5</sup> Liutko N. V. Mythologisation of political advertising / N. V. Liutko // Scientific works of the Petro Mohyla Black Sea State University of the Kyiv–Mohyla Academy complex. Series: Political Science. – 2014. – Vol. 228. – No. 216. – P. 105–108.

<sup>6</sup> Anchev, P. Epoch of golemic troubles for small peoples / P. Anchev // New time. 2004. 5 – 6. – C. 29–42.

<sup>7</sup> Transition to Bulgaria. Memories and reflections. Compiled by. Mikhail Gruev. Sofia: Anamnesis Publishing House, – 2013. – P. 7–15.

<sup>8</sup> Vasilieva–Grueva, P. Social and Cultural Change in the

survey, Bulgarian society was polarised between the idealisation of the concepts of «young years», «work for all», «free medical care», and mosaic memories of «demonstrations», «commodity shortages», and «travel restrictions». Thus, the topic of the mythologisation of communism and the nostalgia of society is relevant today, but requires a more comprehensive understanding of the specifics of the images of the socialist past in the Republic of Bulgaria.

#### **Presentation of the main material.**

In general, it is clear that the myths about the better quality of life during the communist era are the result of propaganda by the communist regime itself, while others are the result of the ability of human memory to forget the bad and remember the good, and still others are the result of unfavourable comparisons between the present and past ways of life. But all these myths have one common cause: unlike democracy, under communism, all newspapers, television and radio were not only controlled, but also actively engaged in propaganda about the country's image. Bad news was banned. Thus, for almost 45 years, two generations of Bulgarians were influenced by specific propaganda messages whose accuracy could not be verified. Myths are based on partial truth, but usually only a part of it. Positive attitudes towards the communist era and the desire to recreate it in modern realities are based on nostalgia, which is a key motive.

This ideologisation of public opinion leads to the existence of a group of people in society who have a negative attitude to change, criticise democracy and its values, and create a destabilising situation within society. It is worth noting that Bulgaria's socialist period is hardly taught at school, so most young people form their opinions about communism based on family stories and media portrayals. As a result, society is divided into three groups.

The first group includes citizens who see socialism as a completely negative concept, as they associate it with camps, party dictatorship and red terror; in which Bulgaria's elite was either destroyed or humiliated; state security monitored every citizen. In addition, there was a shortage of goods, a stagnant economy, and queues.

The second group includes positive citizens, because they remember free education and health-care, order, sociability and joy, enjoyment of all the basics, authentic, healthy food, and a more «decent

life» than they have now. The transition to a market economy is perceived as chaos and plunder.

The third group consists of citizens who balance between supporters and opponents and see no reason to worry about Bulgaria's socialist past. The existence of such contrasting opinions in Bulgarian society is indicative of images of the recent past in which facts are not always the most important. Proponents of the idea of a communist regime are convinced that the accusations are exaggerated and selective, that such modern anti-communism only demonises the peaceful times of Bulgarian socialism and does not bring public opinion closer to the historical truth. After all, the aforementioned repressions were directed exclusively against the «class enemy» (of course, from the point of view of the supporters, this was fair, because it was the «dictatorship of the proletariat», the power of the majority over the minority) and affected only capitalists, fascists and private entrepreneurs. On the other hand, the poorest and the masses were given incredible opportunities – secure jobs, free medical care, good education – and, for the first time in history, they lived contentedly, happily and peacefully. There was indeed a binding ideology, but in real everyday life, ordinary people gradually tamed it, built a network of friendships, neighbourhoods and collegial ties, which helped them overcome shortages and mitigate repression, turning ideological clichés into empty phrases.

The first mythical image is formed concerning cheap and high-quality food. In Bulgarian society, banitsa, the most popular pastry among Bulgarians, has become a measure of quality and affordability. Of course, the taste of food is a rather subjective understanding, so it is difficult to compare because everyone has different tastes. Analysing official data, during the communist era, all production and trade were a state monopoly – both fruits and vegetables, as well as basic food and consumer goods such as clothes, cars, washing machines and everything else. Therefore, all stores offered the same thing, and the consumer's choice was limited. However, this system had its advantages. It provided the same prices for goods. This, in turn, created a sense of predictability and stability in the market, as well as relative equality between people. Since production and trade were state-owned, prices for staple foods such as bread, cheese, sausage, etc. were «subsidised», i.e. they were sold at prices lower than their real value. This is why some of these goods were cheaper under communism than today prices and incomes. But this system proved to be completely unsustainable.

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Transition Period in Bulgaria, Through the Minority and the Majority. A collection in honour of Prof. Dr Margarita Karamikhova, edited by P. St. Petkov, Publisher: Prosvita, 2018, pp. 318–327.

A serious problem of the planned economy is the shortage of basic food and consumer goods. This problem creates another – queues. But they are rarely mentioned. According to Angelov, the reason for queues is that the state cannot predict consumer behaviour. The absence of Western currency makes it impossible to compensate for shortcomings from the foreign market, as well as to purchase goods that are not produced in Bulgaria. For example, bananas – during the communist era, they were sold only in specialised stores several times a year (in winter). It was possible to get them only after a long wait in line.»<sup>9</sup> As a result of this shortage of goods, the concept of «over-saving» emerged in society – even if there was no need for the product, the buyer would still buy it when it was available in the store, because he was not sure that he would find it later. Most often, people bought what was in stock, not what was in demand. According to I. Znepolsky, all this created the phenomenon of a single product – a single chewing gum («Ideal»), a kind of napkin or toilet paper. This hypothesis also applies to clothing – there is limited variety, and almost everyone wears the same clothes. Purchasing goods such as televisions and washing machines was difficult for the average citizen. The problem with cars was even greater because having money did not mean being able to buy one. Waiting for a car took several years. In Bulgaria, only brands produced in the Eastern Bloc were sold – Soviet Moskvich and Lada, Czechoslovakian Skoda, and the cheapest – and therefore synonymous with communism – were East German Wartburg and Trabant. In the 80s, Trabant was sold for 5,700 leva with an average salary of 200 to 250 leva. After paying the amount, a person waited several years before getting the car they wanted, regardless of colour and other characteristics<sup>10</sup>. Most contemporaries of communism argue that such a trading system was subject to a great deal of speculation, especially in the presence of foreign currency. It is worth noting that in the 70s and 80s, there were shops called «Korekom» – they sold a wide variety of scarce goods on the Bulgarian market for their time – from chewing gum, baby food, jeans and sneakers, imported alcohol, cigarettes. However, the trade in these stores was a state monopoly, so the prices were set by the state. This created the illusion of a wide range and choice in a socialist bloc country.

<sup>9</sup> Transition to Bulgaria. Memories and reflections. Compiled by. Mikhail Gruev. Sofia: Anamnesis Publishing House,. – 2013. – P. 7–15.

<sup>10</sup> Znepolski, Iv. Българският комунизъм. Socio-cultural features and power trajectory. S., Ciela, IIBM, 2008.– 385 p.

This economic situation, with the shortage of goods due to the planned regulation of industry, in turn, forms the following mythological image of our study. Within the society itself, the impression is formed that all citizens were in an equal position, all experienced the same shortage of food, and had a similar range of clothing and household goods. However, this image existed only in the media and in the speeches of communist leaders, but in reality, it did not exist. And this statement existed in every country with a communist regime. The existence of the party «nomenklatura» was an inherent feature of communist society. These were relatives or part of the leadership of the Bulgarian Communist Party. Back in the 1940s, George Orwell wrote that in an ideal communist society, everyone was equal, but these particular people were «more equal» than others. In the Bulgarian version, this «nomenclature» included not only the leaders of the Communist Party and the state, but also officials at various levels in cities and enterprises, diplomats, and others. This group of people is formed in the Bulgarian Republic based on origin, thanks to their parents, real or imaginary, who took part in the «resistance» before 1944. The inequality is based mainly on the so-called privileges, which were diverse and innumerable. This group had access to elite schools and hospitals, to better jobs, to travel abroad, to foreign currency, to better resorts. The most elite part of this group had access to specialised shops, where goods differed from those sold in ordinary shops for ordinary citizens. According to D. Koleva, they were taken care of by employees of the so-called Department of Security and Safety, who provided cleaning, maintenance and even food. This social group was protected through lists and functions. Officially, there was a list of so-called «active fighters against fascism and capitalism». Those listed received a salary and pension supplement, but also enjoyed several privileges. The simplest and most widespread example of discrimination was the division of hospitals and schools into mass and elite ones. During the communist era, there was a so-called «government» hospital, access to which was regulated by the patronage of the party or state elite. This division was also symmetrical to schools. The highest part of this «elite» had the right to go abroad for examination and treatment, which was paid for by the state. The rest of the ordinary socialist citizens were looking for a way to get to the best doctor or the best teacher<sup>11</sup>. The system

<sup>11</sup> Koleva, D. Socialism as a worldly thing, keep it alive and don't let it fall. Communism is a Worldly Thing, edited by Daniela Koleva, IIBM/Siela, 2007. – P. 9–20.

of privileges and the black market, shortages and privileges opened up many opportunities for the emergence of individuals who provided services for a fee to influential people. This is how a group of people with sufficient savings is formed. Coincidentally, it was these people who could provide themselves with a decent standard of living during the transition in 1989.

At the same time, the majority of the population has strong nostalgic feelings about free hospital and school services. Examining this statement from an economic perspective, it should be noted that education and treatment cannot be completely free and of high quality. Indeed, under communism, there were no hospital fees, no healthcare contributions, and no health insurance fund. In other words, under communism, no one knew how much they were paying and how the money was spent on education and healthcare. The money that was meant to finance hospitals and schools became a source of corruption at lower management levels. This was largely true of hospitals, with the big difference being that the lack of funding led to a lack of modern equipment, which subsequently led to poor quality of care. These facts convince that «free» education and healthcare are the cause of corruption. Neither private lessons nor «gifts» for doctors were a phenomenon of democracy. So, once again, we can see that bright political slogans had nothing to do with reality. Ordinary people used free services, but free did not mean quality.

The next mythical image was formed by the presence of a large number of state-owned enterprises that created jobs for citizens. According to the official data of the Communist Party, everyone had a job in Bulgaria, and the unemployment rate was low<sup>12</sup>. According to E. Todorov, there was no connection between the quality of work and remuneration, so most workers had the impression of minimal workload at the workplace<sup>13</sup>.

Next, we find that the issue of crime is by far the most painful problem of the transition period. After all, many people associate the transition period of 1989–1990 with an increase in crime and corruption in the public sector. Every day, the media reported on internal incidents or real tragedies, and political parties insisted on solving the problem with tough measures. The communist regime has claimed that there are no negative phenomena, or rather that the

crime rate in Bulgarian society is low. However, the claim that crime was lower under communism may have some basis, but it is also greatly exaggerated. It is well known that communism was characterised by many repressive bodies. The People's Militia and the State Security were responsible for ensuring the security of civil society. In addition, there were volunteer groups in neighbourhoods that took care of public order. As a result of this control, there was a general feeling of unfreedom, suspicion and suspicion among people, a feeling that one was always being persecuted.

In the same way, the mythical image of a bright communist future was manifested. This image was shaped by propaganda slogans and promises made by those at the highest levels of power. It was a utopia of communism throughout the world. Nostalgia for unrealised dreams also continues in our time. Mainly, this is the biggest myth about communism, as it insists that only history, by its irreversible laws, leads to a better and more just life. This position fosters both public apathy and the belief that things will improve on their own. These were dreams of a better life without the joint efforts of society as a whole, the entrepreneurial spirit of people and the good organisation of the state. The history of communism itself has shown that this historical optimism is unfounded. Democratic regimes can fall into economic crisis just like communist ones. But unlike democracies, a communist crisis cannot be overcome by changing economic policy or by elections and a change of government.

According to P. Vasilyeva–Grueva, this can only happen through the collapse of the whole regime, which is a source of suffering for the whole society. The lesson of communism is that whether the future will be «bright» depends not on inexorable historical laws, but on the activity of people<sup>14</sup>. Indeed, communism was followed by a painful «transition» in which many social groups were left vulnerable. The available data show that in the 1990s, all indicators of quality of life deteriorated sharply, but our study shows that these trends did not begin with the end of communism, but at least a decade earlier. In addition to the fact that all of these quality of life indicators improved after the late 1990s, some of them quite dramatically, so that today the quality of life is at the level of the best years of communism, and in some

<sup>12</sup> Valeva E. L. Myths and Memory of Socialism in Bulgaria // Slavica Almanac. 2015. № 3–4. C. 200–211.

<sup>13</sup> Todorov, E. Na'chnik na nostalgika. How he lives under his friend Zhivkov. S., Janet–45, 2010. – 360 p.

<sup>14</sup> Vasilyeva–Grueva, P. Social and Cultural Change in the Transition Period in Bulgaria, Through the Minority and the Majority. A collection in honour of Prof. Dr Margarita Karamikhova, edited by P. St. Petkov, Publisher: Prosvita, 2018. – P. 318–327.

aspects even better. The difference is that these trends seem to be sustainable today.

During the communist regime, there was a myth that Bulgarians did not fight against the totalitarian regime established by the communists with significant assistance from the Soviet Union. This was the most popular slogan, echoed by the communist leaders themselves, starting with Dimitrov, Kolarov, Chervenkov and Zhivkov, and demonstrated the commitment of the whole nation to communism. In contrast, other people who had revolutions argued for leaving the regime and forming a civil society. The Bulgarian media covered the protests as a terrible example of disobedience and instability in general. According to the state media, the Bulgarian people did not create opposition parties and were a model of the communist system. This has been asserted throughout the entire period of communism in periodicals and academic publications. However, this is simply not true, and even the opposite! The Bulgarians were the first nation to launch an armed struggle against the communist regime. After the troops of the 3rd Ukrainian Front invaded Bulgaria and deployed in the strategic area between Yambol and Stara Zagora, all supporters of Hitler's Germany were killed in September 1944. It was at this time that the armed resistance of society against military communism began. After all, almost 250,000 rural residents experienced the violence of military communism, which was implemented by the forcible confiscation of food in the form of «state reserves»<sup>15</sup>. Therefore, rural producers robbed by the regime had no choice but to take up arms to stop the communist regime. The strength, breadth and determination of this struggle are evident from the fact that the inhabitants of the mountain villages fought with old weapons left over from their fathers and grandfathers during the First World War and from previous Balkan wars. Nevertheless, the resistance movement managed to blockade regional, district and city centres. The insurgency was so powerful that even government officials did not dare to approach them without reliable security. This course of events was only possible because the regular army was not fully formed. So the people were able to show their will and prove the anti-people nature of the regime.

Unfortunately, today we hardly know the exact number of participants and victims of the mountain movement. The communist regime was not interested in the archives that miraculously survived. Access to the materials became possible «only with the advent of democracy, when researchers such as S. Tsanev

<sup>15</sup> Todorov, E. *Nar'chnik na nostalgika*. How he lives under his friend Zhivkov. S., Janet-45, 2010. – 360 p.

with his Bulgarian Sketches, historian D. Draganov with his publications on Bulgaria's preparations for becoming the sixteenth Soviet republic of the Union, etc., made public the true figures of communist terror. According to the archives of the DS, at the end of 1953, there were 736 illegal organisations and groups in the country, and the «enemy» contingent numbered 384 thousand people. Against the «counter-revolutionaries», the regime threw 55,000 employees of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, plus two divisions and two brigades of internal troops. Between 1950 and 1953, almost 24,000 people were arrested, more than 13,000 were imprisoned in camps, and 6,300 were sentenced to various terms of imprisonment. However, the number of deaths remains unknown. Between 1952 and 1984 alone, about 500 death sentences were handed down for anti-Communist activities»<sup>16</sup>.

Thus, analysing the basis and meaning of the myths about the communist regime in the modern Republic of Bulgaria, it can be seen that the idealisation of the past is necessarily linked to a confrontation of opinions about the current transition period. The decade of transition has been criticised for its sense of insecurity, chaos, corruption, rising crime rates, anxiety, poverty, transitional education, poor healthcare, lack of human friendliness, and mass culture. The well-known principle of «there is no agreement between them and us» applies between the two opposing images of the recent past: the negative and positive images of the recent past are mirror images and are hostile to each other, have nothing in common, and even seem to be dividing the nation.

So, of course, we are talking about the nostalgia of a certain group of people, whose position leads to a conflict situation within Bulgarian society. Older people are often nostalgic in a utopian way and tend to idealise everything that was in their youth – they cannot forget the dreams and hopes that were life-giving and carefree then, but now are just a memory of the past. Nostalgia is always idealising, so no arguments work against any nostalgic paintings, because nostalgic people are not only interested in the prices of bread and jars, children's clothes and household appliances, they are not only talking about free education and healthcare. In these nostalgic paintings, people miss a whole life that has passed, and the imperfect present tries to tarnish and destroy certain facts and details of the young past.

<sup>16</sup> Koleva, D. *Socialism as a worldly thing, keep it alive and don't let it fall*. Communism is a Worldly Thing, edited by Daniela Koleva, IIBM/Siela, 2007. – P. 9–20.

It is worth noting that the goal of communism was to create a new man, a universal character, the embodiment of «everything written by poets and philosophers»; he had to be selfless, ascetic, heroic. At that time, people dreamed of utopias and state documents, and this was instilled in the minds of children at school. However, in the expression of people's nostalgia, we see a different person, focused on consumption, a person who can consume calmly, happily, in a safe and friendly environment, in a family, village, among friends. In this understanding, it seems that most of the older generation is not interested in the social and historical aspects. Socialism not only failed to realise its utopia of the «new man», but also created its opposite – the consumer, and a real consumer – a dreamer who has nostalgia for the socialist past with quality food, free services and reliable living conditions. Most often, this group of people cannot comprehend the real problems of the transition period and believe in the utopia of communism. The results of the study confirm the truth that the prosperity of the last years of socialism was based on credit consumption through the resale of cheap Russian oil, which subsidised cheap products, actually harmed the country's budget and led to a public debt that is being paid off now and by future generations.

In addition, the notion that «brotherhood» and «reciprocity» were forms of natural exchange of scarce goods, solidarity compensating for the deficit, and that the power of the closed planned economy would lead to bankruptcy in the future in the face of ruthless global competition, has not been formed. Everything indicates that the material condition of an individual member of a socialist society is largely and massively a consequence of uncontrolled appropriation of public goods, sometimes regular and

massive theft of public money and property<sup>17</sup>. It is obvious that the refusal to change one's worldview is the most problematic legacy of real socialism.

The study found that myths and legends about the socialist past still exist in Bulgarian society. The older generation passes on these myths to the younger generation, presenting them as a worthy example to follow in modern life. However, it is important to remember that these myths are based on the nostalgia of the «consumer» for his youth, which historically coincided with the period of Bulgaria's socialist past. The analysis showed that the idealisation of the past is inextricably linked to criticism of the current transition period, which is characterised by a sense of insecurity, chaos, corruption, crime, anxiety, poverty and other negative phenomena. This creates intergenerational conflict and polarises society, where positive and negative images of the past are often mirror images of each other. The study also confirms that nostalgia for the socialist past is largely based on memories of social equality, cheap and high-quality products, affordable education and healthcare, as well as a sense of community and security. However, an analysis of historical facts shows that many of these perceptions are mythologised or incomplete. It is important to emphasise that the existence of ideas about communism in Bulgarian society creates fertile ground for Russian propaganda, which emphasises the «brotherhood» of the Slavic peoples and «unconditional support» for post-Soviet states in all areas. This could have negative consequences for Bulgaria's democratic consolidation and European integration.

<sup>17</sup> Znepolski, Iv. Bulgarian communism. Socio-cultural features and power trajectory. S., Ciela, IIBM, 2008. – 385 p.

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