

On reading the signs of *Vox Populi*

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Sensing the body language of the public is rarely among the abilities its rulers master. And if they do, many a time the preferred posture is burying their heads into the sand. Which explains why there are so many popular revolts in mankind's history. And why revolution shall be with us until such time when a fair and just socio-political system is established, such as a true direct democracy.

Europe and US are pregnant with a revolution, whether the politicians want to acknowledge it or not. One country, Bulgaria, is already in its flames, and this note is to help raise the awareness of any and all intellectuals, given the Nomenklatura systematically downplays the significance of such events.

Prehistory

For more than 20 years now Bulgarians were led to believe prosperity would come with switching from planned, entirely state-owned to fully state-disowned economy; from a single Party- to multi Party Parliamentary Republic. After realizing that the economy has actually shrunk tremendously compared to the Soviet-era days because the Nomenklatura has plundered the state assets during the first 10-15 years, their hopes were pinned on the EU membership. Yet the balance of five years into the club of the rich is nothing to be proud of: Bulgarians have the lowest of all members per capita income and there are no prospects of that to grow in an admirable manner. Add to it the fact that many non-EU member countries on the continent sport higher income while during "Communism" they were lagging far behind – as were some "economic miracles" of late like Greece and Cyprus – and the mood becomes sour. Add now the fact that today the country's population is more than 20% below the count in 1989, tantamount to a genocide of its own people, by the ruling Nomenklatura, and it's only natural that the hope turns into desperation.

Above process is described in more detail and analyzed in depth in a recent book, "*Bulgaria, terra europeansis incognita*,"¹ where also the remedy is proposed. The argument is raised that Representative Democracy has degenerated into what is called Nomenklaturocracy and it should be replaced with an optimized form of Direct Democracy. The culprit being the profession "Politician" and the arrangement whereby the Nomenklatura spreads and multiplies its cells like cancer, it is actually draining the economy of its nation by claiming added value for no good reason. The non-productive segment of society thus suffocates the productive one and must be removed, in order to avoid asphyxiation. That is a fate awaiting all Nomenklaturocracies; the difference in the urgency to reform is defined solely by the distance from the tipping point, when the superstructure with the non-productive "contribution" to the economy overwhelms the basic, productive economy of the given state. In the wake of the "subprime mortgage" banking crisis we have seen exposed several EU member states whose economic malaise is clear to see: in Portugal, Spain, Greece and Italy prosperity has been built on borrowed money over invented, non-existent added value that the ruling Nomenklatura has claimed as justified. But the clear-cut example of our point of view is Cyprus. If we assume that the economic situation in Germany can be represented by a pyramid of which a cross section at $\frac{1}{4}$ ² of its height would represent the border plane above which the "added value" of the Nomenklatura is placed, while the added value of the productive economy is below that in a supporting function, then Cyprus would be the same type of pyramid – after appropriate scaling down – but positioned upside down. How on earth

would that not fall down lest either perpetuating the borrowing of cheap money or having the money laundering machine (oops, sorry, the banks) work full speed?

Hence our model of Nomenklaturocracy predicts that in the open economy of a globalized world it will inevitably drive downwards the purchasing power of the majority of the population. The lack of accountability is making the system doomed: predicted in the book is that EU can not continue to exist in the same form as initially intended. More important, predicted is that reform to direct democracy is a must as the best alternative to the current socio-political system, and that it is the moral responsibility of the leading intellectuals to see to it that change is introduced by peaceful, democratic means – a transitional period during one last mandate in a representative Parliament. The alternative being a revolution with all its unpleasant characteristics, it shall inevitably strike, in case the Intelligentsia in the respective country fails to make headway with the peaceful option. That conviction is expressed in a chapter entitled “The basic economic considerations underpinning the upcoming revolution in Bulgaria.” Today, just a few years later, that revolution has just started up!

Characteristics of modern popular revolt

For about a month now Bulgaria is a scene of protests and demonstrations by crowds of different size. Started spontaneously in a few cities and towns, the protest marches grew in size and in numbers, to have at the peak a crowd of over 100 000 in Sofia, the capital, and simultaneous action in some 30-40 towns, cities and villages. Barring a few minor incidents, including some with targeted deliberate provokation, the action was going strictly civilized. The important thing is that while the initial protests have been focused on different specific demands, mainly cost of utilities, ecological crimes on the part of Nomenklatura members, poverty, corruption and the like, soon the slogans were reading “Enough!”, “23 years are enough!”, “It’s time to go!”, “We want change!”, “Change!”, etc., clearly indicating that the nation does not accept any longer to be fooled by the establishment, and that it demands radical change, now! The protesters threatened that they will be marching, again and again, until change is implemented.

The reaction

The government promptly resigned as this suited best its prospects for the next elections. The President promised to meet representatives of the protesters, and then immediately exposed his true substance as Nomenklaturchik: on the round table where six or seven protest leaders were supposed to meet him he has invited another 20 or more servants of the Nomenklatura – *claqueurs* from “NGO’s” and similar. Still, the youngsters slapped him in the face, figuratively at least: they declared they would not sit at the same table with those whom they protest against, hence as they could not just be left alone with the President, they’ve deposited their written demands and stormed out.

The President held a long – and meaningless – meeting with the rest and promised to look into the demands of the protesters. He then informed the diplomatic court that there is just a (minor) political crisis in the country – nothing special – and that there will be earlier elections, and that’s that. Clearly he is playing for time, giving lip service to everyone interested in listening, with the intention to have a new Government that should continue as before, assuming the enthusiasm would dissipate, a few hollow promises would be thrown in the direction of the crowd, and there we are: business as usual.

The escalation

It might have gone in history as the first bloodless revolution (or at least the first wave of one) was it not for the sensational – at least for Bulgaria and Bulgarians – events of self-immolation: five (5) of them, one after the other, till this moment. The first one – of a young and cheerful man – took the nation as a surprise. In fact, it has created a true shock wave: never before has this happened; moreover, it has been considered impossible, given the typically (over)optimistic – bordering with permanent yet inexplicable exuberance – national psyche and the living conditions in what we consider the Paradise on Earth. In that very instance Plamen Goranov (36) became a national hero.

Nomenklatura against Revolution

From what we've learnt the media coverage abroad is faint and occasional, bending on sensational news, if any. With the notable exception by BBC, it does not seem that the information provided leads to a true impression of the reality on the ground. And then clearly the Bulgarian Nomenklatura is getting the helping hand of their comrades abroad, in order to play down the dominant phenomena, and the actual situation in general. The day after the sacrifice of "the Bulgarian Jan Palach" there has been a press conference on other issues at the EU premises in Brussels, on which the Foreign Minister Nikolay Mladenov was present. He had the obnoxious idea to call for a minute of silence in tribute to "the sacrifice in the name of freedom" of our new young national hero. This was an outrage! Plamen has died in flames protesting against the whole Nomenklatura, part of which this guy was – how dare he?!³

Of course there was no mentioning of this scandalous event in the press over here in Bulgaria. We would not at all have heard about this was it not for a famous rapper who happened to be on the spot and recorded the whole incident on his mobile phone. He couldn't help but start screaming "hypocrite" against the Minister, and then was promptly being escorted outside, by the security... The short clip by the musician was immediately on YouTube, the Internet forums and blogs were white-hot, yet nothing at all showed up in the official media...

But then Foreign Policy Magazine topped them all external supporters of our Nomenklatura, with an article entitled "Self-immolation in Bulgaria isn't as new as you might think," by one Marya Hannun. Quoting a literature review by *Médecins Sans Frontières* the lady states that she expects here an average of no less than 7.4 cases per annum, of which only a third is to be attributed to psychiatric patients. At 64, and having spent half of my life in Bulgaria, half abroad, thus disposing of waterfall of information; having had enormous network of contacts, friends, colleagues and acquaintances among the progressive Intelligentsia, that is the people opposing the one time Communist regime; having thus had (classified) information even about the labor camps, the fate of political detainees in the prisons and the dissidents; with all that never ever have I heard of a single (!!!) case of self-immolation in Bulgaria in its recent history: obviously I was outraged to read this "news." And so were any other Bulgarians who have seen the article.⁴

After checking up the source⁵ of Mrs. Hannun I wish to make just a few remarks: First, the author of the review states explicitly, and I quote "In this paper, the term 'deliberate self-burning' does not imply a specific intention or outcome and therefore covers a range of burn injuries inflicted by self which includes, but is not restricted to, suicide by burning." Second, for the reason mentioned above the title does not include the term "self-immolation." Third, the cases reported for Bulgaria have an estimated average of total area of burnt skin in the range of 21-30%, and no mentioning of suicidal attempt or self-immolation is associated with

them while for other countries those descriptors abound in the provided table. In all cases attested as suicidal or self-immolation, the burns are at least 45%, and mostly way above that... Four of the five Bulgarians who have committed self-immolation within last month had all 70-90% burnt skin area, and have all died as intended; the fifth one – having set himself on fire in front of the presidential palace, and thus vitally benefitting from the prompt reaction by the security – had his flames quickly extinguished and has survived, with 25% of burnt skin... And I find it grossly wrong, to even attempt to search for evidence to diminish the sacrifice of those souls who are screaming for attention, just because they simply can not support the burden of life in a Paradise turned into Hell. And I find it grossly worse, to even publish such “work.” It makes me sick to even think about the fact that somebody is actually earning their daily bread with it: searching for consolation I am trying to figure out how much more human is to decide to pour gasoline over one’s head and strike the match, simply because you can’t find a job and tonight your kids will go to bed hungry again... So much so, for contemplating the highs and the lows of moral ground!

Meanwhile four people have died protesting against the Nomenklatura which robbed the common Bulgarians from their future, robbed them from their hope, and from the meaning of life. They died making the ultimate sacrifice a desperate *homo sapiens sapiens* can undertake in the name of change. The demand of those burning bodies is ringing the bell loud and clear, even though the chime is falling on deaf years, so far. The death of those people is upping the stakes, and if the ruling class does not pay attention today, one day – the day of reckoning – they might be asked to pay for everything: the total bill; no more, no less! It is a crime to cause death, it is a crime to conceal guilt, and high crime is paid for by high price. Those who ignore the signs by Its Majesty The People may come to bitterly regret it, one day... And this is part of the body language of a Revolution. Make no mistake!

And one last thing: revolutions are contagious.

The sad conclusion

The West keeps being oblivious to the East (and Bulgaria in particular). This is by no means a healthy attitude; healthy to itself, that is – such ignorance, combined with complacency, is not just going to bring surprises in terms of events abroad: that is a rehearsal for big shocks at home, sooner or later, lest someone takes note.

A radical system change is under way: in a world plagued by consumerism and greed representative democracy is no longer viable – economically and, as a consequence, morally. Reading the signs of the budding revolutions is crucial, for the ruling “elites,” and requires a paradigm shift, on the part of Intelligentsia. Ironically, in the context of Bulgaria I am reminded here of the exchange with Richard Rahn last year. In an article⁶ in TBJ some time last year he claimed “The Success Of Eastern Europe.” Which success, Dr. Rahn?

¹ Written 2002-2009, published 2010, ISBN 978-954-91584-3-4.

² The number is arbitrarily picked, for illustration purpose only.

³ On top of it all, he announced the wrong name!

⁴ Self-immolation in Bulgaria isn’t as new as you might think, Marya Hannun, Foreign Policy, 14.03.2013, http://blog.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2013/03/14/self_immolation_is_not_new_to_bulgaria?wp_login_redirect=0.

⁵ Patterns of deliberate self-burning in various parts of the world: A review, Véronique Laloë, Burns, 30 (2004) 207-215. (The single source on Bulgaria is a clinical study covering 12 year period, 1983-1994. In view of the prevailing mentality during the studied period, my interpretation would be that this is a mere study of workplace accidents: it would be suicidal for the two authors to suggest that these accidents are anything but voluntary burns, apart from psychiatric cases, of course).

⁶ The success of Eastern Europe, Richard Rahn, The Brussels Journal, 2012-09-06, <http://www.brusselsjournal.com/node/4979>.