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**BULGARIA, CUBA, UZBEKISTAN: THREE VERY  
DIFFERENT EXPERIENCES WITH COMMUNISM  
THAT TURNED UP TO AN IMPASSE**

Abstract

Bulgaria, Cuba and Uzbekistan seem quite different and distant one from another. It appears futile to juxtapose Southeast European Bulgaria, Central American island of Cuba, and Central Asian landlocked Uzbekistan. Cuba is almost completely Catholic, though with relatively strong impact of the pagan Santeria; Uzbekistan is predominantly moderate Moslem country; in Bulgaria, Eastern Orthodox Christianity prevails, with some 10-15% of mainly Moslem population and small presence of predominantly Christian denominations. Ethnically, Cuba is presumably most diverse, with white and Black people, and descendants of many mixed marriages. Ethnic picture in Bulgaria matches that of confessions presented, with prevalence of Christian Bulgarians, but also Bulgarian Turks, Roma, Bulgarian Moslems (Pomaks), and negligible other groups of Armenians, Jews and other – with all typical for the Balkans disparity between official data, self identification controversy, and claims of adjacent countries to share separated by the borders ethnicities often with other names. Uzbeks constitute 81% of their country's population, followed by Russians, Tajiks, Kazakhs, and others more than 100 Nations and nationalities. Despite their remoteness and attachment to diverse types of cultural traditions, national specificity, and historical background, deeper knowing of these countries reveal some significant similarities. It is the communist legacy that brings them together. Article is focused on the analysis of their experience with the post-communist realities.

**Key words:** Bulgaria, Cuba, Uzbekistan, post-communist realities, political regimes, ethnic relations.

Bulgaria, Cuba and Uzbekistan may seem quite different and distant one from another. To juxtapose Southeast European Bulgaria, Central American island of Cuba, and Central Asian landlocked Uzbekistan appears futile. Cuba is almost completely Catholic, though with relatively strong impact of the pagan Santeria; Uzbekistan is predominantly moderate Moslem country; in Bulgaria, Eastern Orthodox Christianity prevails, with some 10-15% of mainly Moslem population and small presence of mainly Christian denominations. Ethnically, Cuba is presumably most diverse, with white and Black people, and descendants of many mixed marriages. In Bulgaria ethnic picture matches that of confessions presented, with prevalence of Christian Bulgarians, but also Bulgarian Turks, Roma, Bulgarian Moslems (Pomaks), and negligible groups of Armenians, Jews and other – with all typical for the Balkans disparity between official data, self identification controversy, and claims of adjacent countries to share separated by the borders ethnicities often with other names. Uzbeks constitute 81% of their country's population, followed by Russians, Tajiks, Kazakhs, and others more than 100 Nations and nationalities.

Communist legacy (and for Cuba present-day, since the sole and ruling Communist Party) brings together all three countries. Cuba, with the sugar cane (reaching one time about 80% of the value of Cuban exports), and Uzbekistan with cotton, were typical monoculture agrarian economies, and Bulgaria was also dependent on agriculture. All three, however, endured serious industrialization efforts, not always rational and consistent with local conditions and resources: Cuba with nickel, Bulgaria with heavy industry, warehouse hauling equipment and electronics, and Uzbekistan with ore processing and aircraft manufacturing. With the exception of Cuba with its enormous stocks of nickel, Bulgaria and Uzbekistan were heavily dependent on import of raw materials, and Cuba and Uzbekistan (to a lesser degree Bulgaria) also for qualified working force.

Despite their remoteness and affiliation to different types of cultural traditions, national specificity, and historical background, deeper knowing of these countries reveal some significant similarities. Being on the crossroads of the greatest human movements in history, Bulgaria and Uzbekistan has experienced various influences, not always positive and delightful, that has left traces in the overall cultural shape, language, folklore, and even cuisine. We could mention, for example, that one of the central figures of the Balkan fairy tales, Nastradin Hodja, is appreciated as a national character in Uzbekistan. Influence of the prominent Islamic thinkers, Baha-ud-Din Naqshb and Bukhari (1318–1389), founder of one of the largest and most persuasive Sufi Muslim orders, has had reached as far as on the Balkans. Both Bulgaria and Uzbekistan offer various dairy products, incl. one with same name – katuk.

Likewise, we can find a number of historical resemblances between Bulgaria and Cuba. Poets and revolutionaries Jose Marti and Khristo Botev contributed greatly for the national liberation struggle, and lost their lives in the combat. Familiarity of national mood created outstanding relations between Cuba and Bulgaria at least during 1959-1989, which far outstripped common ideology and the routine of economic cooperation.

Political regimes distinguish all three countries. While Bulgaria exercises most of the at least formal traits of the representative democracy, with regular national elections, multiple political parties, none of this exist both in Cuba and Uzbekistan. In Cuba, strict grip over society by the ruling Communist Party and omnipresent secret services is far of easing. As for Uzbekistan, it represents a classical example of an authoritarian regime, where President Karimov and his closest circle keep control over the total socio-political and economic life<sup>1</sup>.

#### UZBEKISTAN: LEGACY OF THE SOVIET SYSTEM

Endeavor to achieve social justice according to Marxist-Leninist ideology was not limited to Russian culture and society itself, but it tried to reach almost every cultural, ethnic and religious subgroup of the diverse republics of the USSR, including Uzbekistan (Shahrani, 1995). Thus, as John Pottenger wrote, while the Soviet Union disappeared, the Soviet system remained (Pottenger, 2004: 59). End of 20<sup>th</sup> century in Uzbekistan saw a rebirth and reassertion of the significance of the medieval Islamic texts for personal ethical elevation (See Allworth, 1990: 277-8; cf. Akbarzadeh, 1996; and Djumaev, 2001). Thus, Uzbekistan appreciated the necessity of both invigorating civil society, and habitual religious values. Nearly a year before the dissolution of the Soviet Union, President I. Karimov publicly expressed his concern over the former Soviet régime's hostility toward the institutions and principles of traditional Islam: "The consequences of the destruction of age-old moral principles for ideological reasons will be far more difficult to overcome than the chaos in the economy"(quoted in Berger, 1991: 30).

Karimov's extensive personal political experience with Soviet totalitarianism, his career in the Uzbek economy's industrial sector, and familiarity with the historic role of Islam in the history of Uzbekistan provide the incentive and basis for his political thinking and leadership of contemporary Uzbekistan<sup>2</sup>. Calls for the democratic participation of Uzbek citizens in the governance sound completely futile (for example, Karimov, 1998: 108-109). With the collapse of the Soviet Union, and departure of the false, artificially imposed Marxist-Leninist values, this vacuum had to be filled by an alternative ideology or public philosophy. In

Uzbekistan, where more than 80% of the population is at least nominally Sunni Muslim, the only such alternative that commands extensive appeal is that of Islam (see Tazmini, 2001; and Allworth, *op. cit.*, Ref. 18). Many observers argue that presence of Islam in Uzbekistan is crucial for the shaping of the national identity as required by civil society (see, for example, Hanks, 1999: 159-163, and Abduvakhitov, 1995). In their resistance to Soviet ideology, many Uzbek political and religious leaders often appealed to the upright moral traditions and values incorporated in the historic literature. This fosters a civil society on the basis of Islamic traditionalism principles and dogmas, an attempt for a synthesis between modern liberal values of religious tolerance and the traditional Islamic values of social welfare. However, in order to reduce political risks to the regime, authorities banned most opposition political parties, both secular and Islamic – the Army of Islam, followers of Wahhabism, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), and Hizbut-Tahrir (Liberation Party), the autonomous Islamic mosques and NGOs, incl. the Erk (Freedom) Democratic Party, the Birlik (Unity) Party, the Adolat (Justice) Party, and the Islamic Renaissance Party. These and many other non-state approved, independent Islamic organizations are often characterized as conservative movements advocating fundamentalist teachings at odds with the ethos of toleration and pluralism typically espoused in both liberal and decent societies<sup>3</sup>. To curb the threat of Islamic militancy, in 1998 the Oliy Majlis enacted the Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations to restrict the activities of virtually all religious denominations<sup>4</sup>.

I. Karimov's attempt to achieve a transition from Soviet totalitarianism to liberal society has resulted in, as Gerald M. Easter wrote, 'a nontraditional form of authoritarianism in which power resides as much in the person of the president as in the office' (Easter, 1997: 209.)<sup>5</sup>. It might be more correctly be perceived as a non-competitive, authoritarian regime than with the constitutional democratic governments of liberal societies (see Levitsky and Way, 2002: 54–55). A disastrous consequence of such political system based on *de facto* concentration of powers and operated by elites from the Soviet era is the continual use of brutal methods and intimidation typical for that epoch. It appears that the Uzbek state has in effect nationalized one version of Islam, thus marginalizing all other interpretations to the point of persecution and, finally, has undermined own promise and prospect of civil society itself.

## CUBA: LONG AGONY OF AN ESCAPE<sup>6</sup>

In theory, in a communist country such as Cuba, all are equal and provided with the basics of life, including housing, education and health. Once these primary

living costs are covered by public funds (is it necessary to explain that they are accumulated by solid deductions from the income of enterprises and all employed), then for all other needs wages is not necessarily to be high. So the average Cuban official, from engineers, doctors (in ordinary, non-hard currency paid medical facilities) and teachers to drivers get an equivalent of about 10-20 dollars monthly. Prices of locally manufactured products are generally low, and food – with coupons, while choice of goods is more than scarce and consists of poor quality products and services. A two currency system was established: one for average mortals, the other one supposedly only for foreign tourists. But as a matter of fact, it covers the privileged class too, including both working in the sector of tourist services and the higher nomenclature. Thus, in a society that allegedly is moving towards a classless one, in fact social disparities become more compelling. “Convertible” pesos, (“CUCs”), are approximately equal to the US dollar, while the “normal” ones – 25 times less. For some things, such as entrance to museums, foreigners pay 25 times more than the Cuban citizens; for another (e.g. intercity bus, taxi, restaurant) the price is the same, making them inaccessible to all but the most wealthy Cubans<sup>7</sup>. The contrast between the haves and have-nots is often quite drastic.

Cancellation of the many years subsidies to Cuba<sup>8</sup> forced communist apparatchiks to seek how to survive. From 1968 on there has been several waves of introduction and rejection of limited economic freedoms and after the economy stabilized, prohibitive taxes were imposed, and tolerated activities were curtailed (see, for more details, Pérez-López, 1995; Peters and Scarpaci, 1998; Ritter, 1998, 2006). Individuals were arrested for a bag of cement or even a cake (i. e., more than the permitted through rationing amount of eggs, milk and flour, and therefore, a crime, which led to detaining).

Cuban private sector includes also informal, grey part, as well as illegal workers after the official working hours in enterprises and possibly even a larger segment of the population, referred to as the GESPI (*civil servants who receive a substantial private income*, least equal to the meager State salaries), engaged in various activities. We see them delivering bread, soft drinks, fruits, etc. in the homes, accommodating tourists. In total, at the beginning of 2013, the private sector in Cuba was estimated at nearly 2 million enterprising Cubans (40% of total employment), and probably even more (Feinberg, 2013: 8-9; Oficina Nacional Estadística; Piñeiro Harnecker, 2013; Espina Prieto and Togores González, 2012)<sup>9</sup>. “Now in Havana practically no one works for the state; and those who still do that also have a private business on the side.” – writes Marc Frank, journalist and longtime observer of processes in Cuba (Frank, 2013).

Non-state sector in the near future will likely continue to expand to include numerous chronically inefficient small- and medium-sized units into cooperatives

for producing and selling goods and services<sup>10</sup>. No data exist also for the private property of citizens, in particular about the ownership of homes and cars<sup>11</sup>. By 2010, only 19% of Cubans possessed either stationary or then only introduced in the country mobile phones, compared, for example, with 97% in Costa Rica (Peters, *op. cit.*: 8)<sup>12</sup>.

Cuba's achievements in the fields of health care and education are prominent, but latest quality of medical services' data show nearly critical condition: lack of the most needed drugs, poor equipment, inadequate emergencies. Malnutrition and the use of low quality products, absence of sanitation aggravate situation, creating outbreaks of nearly uprooted earlier serious diseases – beriberi, plague, tuberculosis and leptospirosis. Life expectancy, once approaching US indicators, sharply dropped (quoted according to Esperanza Hernandez Truyol, 1994: 28). Investing significant funds in hard currency clinics, where cured are paying customers from abroad – at the expense of the general health – is cynical...

Almost same in education, which is entirely part of the all-embracing propaganda and indoctrination effort (see, for more details, Horowrrz, 1993: esp. 68-70)<sup>13</sup>.

Currently, the definitely historical changes that came with the spectacular reconciliation between the Presidents Obama and Raul Castro in early December of 2014 serve limited political purposes and benefit only a thin layer of already privileged in Cuba. They got what they dreamed about – status of the capitalist middle and upper class, keeping their party membership. As for the at least two generations who suffered woes of an absurd revolution, they remain once again deceived. The real changes are still ahead, and it seems that will be very painful. Let us hope that it will not be bloody...

## BULGARIA: LOST IN A NEVER ENDING TRANSITION?

Many of the problems in Bulgaria today stem from the corrupt and undemocratic way in which the 1989 transition was carried out. According to Jürgen Habermas (Habermas 1990), while E. European countries experienced very different revolutionary changes, under the mixture of appearances all these events of change followed a general pattern shaping a process of a singular revolution. What is distinguishing all these countries, for Habermas, is that the totalitarian regimes were not instituted by a successful and independent revolution, but as a direct consequence of the WWII and the occupation of the Soviet Army. As such, “the abolition of the people's republic has occurred under the sign of a return to old, national symbols, and, where this was possible, has understood itself to be the continuation of the political traditions and party organizations of the interwar years” (Ibidem).

An EU member since 2007, Bulgaria is still struggling with corruption and democratic consolidation. Accession to the EU was presented largely as a milestone in enhancing socio-economic development, fostering prosperity and democracy, and overcoming poverty. Some analysts even stated that the transition to democracy and a market economy is over. However, years later, the country seems to be failing to provide basic rights and freedoms, and is stressed with unfinished reforms.

Since the beginning of the transition in 1989, Bulgaria has been in a spiral of deep political, social and economic disorder – demographic predicament, brain drain, poverty, lack of basic subsistence means, and of opportunities for the youth. Most of the values, principles and procedures of democracy exist only on paper, while the political elites and administrative institutions persistently undermine them, creating favorable conditions for nepotism and corruption generally yielding chances for improvement.

The case of the Bulgarian transition has a reality of its own, other than in most E. European counterparts. As wrote Richard Crampton, one of the best Western connoisseurs of Bulgarian history, “[Bulgarian authoritarian leader from 1954 to 1989] Zhivkov’s fall was the work of the party hierarchy; it was a palace coup rather than a revolution, and ‘people power’ in Bulgaria was to be more the consequence than the cause of the change of leadership’ (Crampton, 2005: 212). Thus, the democracy, freedom are in fact *not* genuine, but granted by those who perpetuated the totalitarian regime. Bulgaria has turned into an arena where the rule of law was virtually replaced by corruption; instead of sustainable civil society – clientelist interdependence, undercover political deals instead of transparent debates prevail. Apathy and distrust has been the long-term explanation of lack of engagement and participation.

A six-year investigation conducted by the Commission of Inquiry into the dossiers of the former communist state security services, announced on 26<sup>th</sup> November 2013 that about 8,000 former agents have been in high level positions during the researched period (some of them are still in power). According to the investigative journalist Khristo Khristov, members of the former communist state security have infiltrated all parliaments since the 1990 and virtually all governments (Khristov, 2013).

According to the Constitution, Bulgaria is a parliamentary republic, but most of the policy-making depends rather on the personal over-centralized will of the government and the prime minister. This leaves the political elite practically invulnerable to any measures of accountability and civilian control. Problematic and difficult transition in the country was strongly accompanied by the dormant annoyance and disappointment. Levels of interpersonal trust and trust in the institutions of the representative democracy, according to Alpha Research data in

June 2015) are among the lowest in Europe<sup>14</sup>. Low levels of participation (81.5% would not take part in any action or initiative, Bulgarian Sociological Association, 2008), civic activity and citizens' engagement have plagued societal relations, leaving society fragmented.

The 'Bay Ganyo'<sup>15</sup> style in politics further alienates people from joining political parties and fosters disgust toward policy making as a deceitful, dirty dealing and bargain, and this when challenges facing Bulgaria are bigger than ever.

Given the vulnerability of civil society together with defying conditions for public discourse, institutional discrepancies are leaving too little room for greater participation in policy making, which additionally deepens frustration, apparent or alleged lack of transparency and accountability. With this unpredictability of the public dialogue and overall political process grows, which makes civic organizations and individuals to refrain from exercising pressure and influence (see Nikolov, 1996, 2000; Kabakchieva, 2011). Methods that the political elites employs recall those of the former communist regime. Freedom of the media continued to gradually deteriorate, where Bulgaria dramatically declined from 80th to 87th in 2013 and to 106 rank in 2015 of the Reporters without Borders. Delyan Peevski, who became symbolic by word for the darkest side of politic, openly or allegedly controls a large share of the press. They are also using a libel campaign against the protesters and for political propaganda, which ultimately leaves the fourth pillar of democracy in the hands of the ruling elite.

Social movement that burst out in Bulgaria further divided society and exposed the deceitful nature of the fundamental institutions of democracy, justice, and freedom. Hopes were high since it was the prospect that are at stake. Expectations that protests would give birth the civil society in Bulgaria faded again. And it is only experience of the neighbor Romania with its decisive actions against corruption (a dozen of former ministers, incl. a prime minister, were jailed) gives some hope that not everything is so hopeless on the Balkans.

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Currently, these three countries are copying very differently with the post-communist realities. Bulgaria joined one of the most affluent international alliances, European Union, and after being a loyal member of the USSR-led military-political treaty, the Warsaw Pact, is now part of its main rival, NATO. This amazing shift in its formal political and economic status, however, changed almost nothing in Bulgaria's welfare standing – this country is undyingly lagging behind most of Europe. Freedom of travel, earlier only dreamed as in every communist country, appeared to be an extreme painful experience that sent off about 2 Mln Bulgarians, mainly young and skilled people, to seek better lives in W. Europe, Greece, and as



far as in the USA, Canada, and South Africa. Dire situation of the Uzbek economy causes similar exodus – after most of Russians, Ukrainians, and other former Soviet nationals, even after second or third generation local residents, quitted, now a great number of Uzbeks supply cheap, often illegal, working force for Russia, Kazakhstan and beyond. Cuba, where travel restrictions still exist, is not yet part of this flow to more affluent countries, but this most probably won't last for long anymore – with expected returning to the island of former exiles to claim their nationalized once property, new wave of deprived Cubans will seek their chance far of the calamitous fatherland.

### *Notes*

#### *(Endnotes)*

<sup>1</sup> Recent re-election, with 90.39% of votes, of Islam Karimov, former First Secretary of the Uzbekistan branch of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, confirmed that blatantly. He is on the top since declaration of independence in 1991, even though the Constitution allows only two-term limit on the presidency. And this even though some observers vowed more real contest after the family feud with placing of President's capricious daughter Gulnara under house arrest.

<sup>2</sup> As P. Blackmon wrote, it should have come as a surprise to no one that Karimov, trained as a Sovietstyle economist, would have continued the state controlled economy. He had stated very early in the reform process that his country would follow limited political and economic reform. However, she concludes that 'It would be a mistake for future research to continue to focus solely on the political categorization of a leader (former-communistor authoritarian) because that is a narrow and unpredictable indicator in determining reform (Blackmon, 2005).

<sup>3</sup> For instance, Hizbut-Tahrir ('Party of Liberation', an international pan-Islamic political organisation), asserts on replacing all corrupt societies where Muslims live, with an Islamic society, which should proceed in accordance with the laws and solutions of Islam. Party performs acts in accordance with the Shari'ah rules and solutions (See Grabowski, n.d.). It was namely Hizbut-Tahrir that first demanded creation of an Islamic Khaliphate and Islamic state. With regard to Uzbekistan, Hizbut-Tahrir criticizes the secular nature of the constitution, esp. 'the separation of religion from state' and contradicting 'the doctrine and ideology of the Qur'an'. See, for more details, Pottenger, 2004: 69; Karagiannis, 2006). Inquisitively enough, Hizbut-Tahrir adherents in Central Asia are almost exclusively ethnic Uzbeks.

<sup>4</sup> Under this law, in addition to outlawing proselytism, all religious organizations must be registered with and approved by the Uzbek government before they may conduct worship activities and religious rituals as well as conduct other social programs. With regard to registered Islamic organizations, the primary target of the legislation, only those imams, mosques, liturgy and publications are permitted that have been approved by the Spiritual Directorate for Muslims (the Muftiate), a government agency with members appointed by the president.

<sup>5</sup> The Constitution of Uzbekistan with its subsequent amendments and respective laws had in effect shifted the state's separated powers (as it formally exists in constitutional democratic regimes) to the executive branch, through the president's control over the personnel composition of the ruling People's Democratic Party that provides most of the candidates for the Oliy Majlis, the judiciary, the hokims (local governors), and both administrators and councils of the mahallas.

<sup>6</sup> For my own long years approaching Cuba, literally and plausible, see Nikolov, 2015.

<sup>7</sup> Cubans who work with tourists – waiters, bartenders, guides, hotel staff, musicians and doctors in foreigners servicing hospitals, and some other categories, receive income in convertible pesos, in addition to their normal salary. Another group of favored – are Cubans with relatives living abroad, mostly in the US and Spain that send hundreds of dollars to their families in Cuba. Authorities' attitude toward them abruptly changed in recent years – instead of being prosecuted, humiliated and harassed, they are now labeled with the euphemism “supporting the Socialist Government” (which recalls the one-time “understands and supports the activities of the people's power”, used in communist Bulgaria – i. e., the distinction between “bad” and “good” capitalists). Just because they dispose with the despised by the Communists resource, money (real money, not the paper ones, “provided with all the resources of the Central Bank”), they buy the favor of the authorities on the official and unofficial tariffs as well as a relatively decent standard of living.

<sup>8</sup> By some estimates, about 1 bln dollars a year, mainly in the form of military supplies, construction of industrial objects, and basic necessities. Shelving of the Soviet subsidies led to a nearly 40% decline in income per capita in 1989-1994. That forced Cuba to reorganize its economy, de-criminalizing the US dollar use, legalizing farmers' markets, liberalizing self employment and encouraging new economic activities, incl. exports, etc. See Ritter, 2010.

<sup>9</sup> An important place in the Cuban Government's plans for development occupies tourism, termed officially as “the heart of the economy”. And this against the apparently desperate state supply network in Cuba, where scarce food products, mainly potatoes, are offered together with pieces of meat covered with flies far from any refrigerators. That means that

provision is obviously a case of landlords' resourcefulness and connections. It is virtually not necessary to mention, that such trade apparently means black market, impossible to be carried out without the knowledge and quiet approval of the local activists of the so-called "Committees for defense of the revolution", the official authorities' eyes and ears.

<sup>10</sup> As disclosed Cristina Mendiondo, subdirector of economy and planning, Villa Clara province, in her presentation in Jibacoa, Mayabeque, September 16, 2013 'Retos y Perspectivas del Desarrollo Territorial Local en Villa Clara' (Challenges and perspectives of local territorial development in Villa Clara), quoted in Feinberg, op.cit.: 11. During the first three quarters of 2013, the Council of Ministers of Cuba approved 271 cooperatives (created by the former State enterprises, commercial sites, as well as in construction, hospitality and transport – "Continúa avanzando...", 2013). According to optimistic expectations cooperatives would overcome the negative outcomes of state-owned enterprises, to implement initiatives of municipalities for the provision of services – e.g., care for children, collection and recycling of waste. There are the increasingly overt trend TPC (*trabajadores cuentapropistas* – petty urban enterprises) to officially merge in a larger enterprise (see Piñeiro Harnecker, op. cit, 2013, esp. the foreword, 1-45.). As senior functionaries say, in 2015, such enterprises will cover over 35% of employees, and by 2017 will produce 40-45% of GDP (quot. in Peters, 2012: 8).

<sup>11</sup> According to the recent changes in legislation, the citizens shall be allowed to have an urban apartment house/villa in the countryside, but in addition to that few can afford even one house, there are a number of restrictions – de jure property is available only for use and may be taken away by the state, it is forbidden to sell real estate, though even for a visitor it is very easy to spot the impromptu "residential exchanges" in the Havana down where handwritten classifieds offer housing.

<sup>12</sup> And here the most disturbing illustration of this economic condition is the purchasing power of Cubans compared with that of other countries. A study of the Institute for Cuban and Cuban-American studies at the University of Miami shows, for example, that for a purchase of less than 500 g milk powder, the average Cuban worker should work 57.5 hours, while for the same purchase the average worker in Costa Rica – only 1.7 hours. Comparable differences are contained in other analyzed positions from the basket of the study (Azel, 2013). More and more Cubans, in particular in Havana and Santiago de Cuba, display a quest for consumer behavior – something that apparently departure from the design of ideologues of the reforms. As an young man ironically noted, quoted in one of the recent books about the changes in Cuba, "we're not Communists, we're consumists" (Quoted in Caistor, 2013: 140). On the author's question of his goals in life, another young Cuban blithely replied: "Of course, we all want the same thing: a car that can start immediately, smart phone, PC with an access to internet, and a decent home". Even if they can't afford

that, surprisingly many Cubans recognize global brands ranging from Nike shoes to ice cream Nestlé (Morales and Scarpaci, 2012). Contrary to the former pursuit of freedom, currently the common motivation for emigrating is associated mainly with the desire to experience a typical middle class way of life associated with consumerism.

<sup>13</sup> Even before the revolution Cuba's performance in these areas were better compared with the average for Latin America. For example, as for the indicators of life expectancy at birth in 1960, Cuba was the 4<sup>th</sup> in Latin America (63,8 years), and in 1990s for short time was on the first place (75,3 years), the infant mortality rate up to 5 years of age – 3<sup>rd</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup>, respectively, and so on., see UNDP, Human Development Report, 1990: 133; 1992: 135-36.

<sup>14</sup> Parliament is still the institution with the lowest rating (10% confidence against 52% confidence). President Rosen Plevneliev retains its position of two months ago: 24% approval against 37% disapproval. Invariably, a strong negative attitude is preserved towards the institutions of the judiciary: court (60% negative), investigation (57% negative), prosecution (60% negative), Attorney General (40% negative). Police, which in recent years was among the least trusted by people, now also collect more critical assessment than positive: 18% trust against 44% distrust (quoted from Dnevnik daily, June 18 2015). More than 80% of the citizens in the European Values Study (EVS) 2008 claim that they do not trust others.

<sup>15</sup> A fictional character created by Bulgarian author Aleko Konstantinov(1863-97). Sometimes perceived as a stereotype of the uneducated, ignorant, egoistic, ruthless, profit-driven Bulgarian, he is often seen just as a social stereotype, member of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century's newly formed lower middle-class. In his political feuilletons, author depicts the extreme forms of electoral fraud and scam, which remind some present day way methods in the politics.

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