

“Our Best for Four for Five”: Slogans as Party Propaganda in the Totalitarian State

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Abstract

The article focuses on how the Communist Party in Bulgaria used slogans in the physical environment as party propaganda. An account of the historical context in the country after the Second World War is provided that led to the establishment of a Communist regime and the drastic changes it brought in all spheres of life. The books of two Bulgarian philosophers written before the democratic changes in 1989 are commented on – an inside criticism of the inherent flaws of the Communist ideology and its practices that countered the innumerable official laudatory appraisals of the system. In the text, a distinction is made between Marxist-Leninist ideology and ideologies in liberal democracies. Discussed are the repetitiveness, the omnipresence and the key signifiers used in the slogans. Structurally, slogans are viewed as single-sentence texts whose communicative function is explained in terms of speech acts. Analysed are their most frequent topics and linguistic features.

Keywords: communist ideology, communist propaganda, linguistic features of slogans, communicative function of slogans

Streszczenie

„Nasze najlepsze pięć w cztery”: hasła polityczne jako narzędzia propagandy partyjnej w państwie totalitarnym

Artykuł koncentruje się na tym, jak partia komunistyczna w Bułgarii wykorzystywała hasła polityczne umieszczane w środowisku fizycznym jako środki propagandy partyjnej. Przedstawiono kontekst historyczny w kraju po drugiej wojnie światowej, który doprowadził do ustanowienia reżimu komunistycznego i drastycznych zmian, jakie przyniósł we wszystkich sferach życia. W artykule omawiane są książki dwóch bułgarskich filozofów, napisane przed przemianami demokratycznymi w 1989 roku, które stanowią krytykę nieodłącznych wad ideologii komunistycznej i jej praktyk, dokonaną z wewnątrz, która przeciwstawiała się niezliczonym oficjalnym pochwałom systemu. W tekście dokonuje się rozróżnienia między ideologią marksistowsko-leninowską a ideologiami w demokracjach liberalnych. Omówiono powtarzalność, wszechobecność oraz kluczowe elementy używane w hasłach. Z punktu widzenia struktury hasła są jednozdaniowymi tekstami, których funkcja komunikacyjna jest wyjaśniona w kategoriach aktów mowy. Analizie poddano ich najczęstsze tematy oraz cechy językowe.

Słowa kluczowe: ideologia komunistyczna, propaganda komunistyczna, cechy językowe haseł, funkcja komunikacyjna haseł

1. Introduction

The present article is the first in the Bulgarian research space with a focus on totalitarian slogans. Several Bulgarian authors have studied how political slogans were used by different parties in parliamentary-election campaigns from 1999 to 2011 (Митев/Mitev 1999; Христов/Hristov, Кутевски/Kutevski 2005; Сталянова/Stalyanova 2011); slogans express the parties' political beliefs and strategies for future political action, as well as their stance to their political opponents. Undoubtedly, political slogans in a liberal democracy also encompass (an) element(s) of propaganda in the sense of winning public support and persuading citizens to vote, nevertheless the two types of slogans differ markedly in the external/internal-enemy versus the political-opponent distinction. The two types are diametrically opposed: they are motivated by different ideologies, aim to attain different communicative goals and first and foremost refer to two different political systems. Political slogans in a liberal democracy deserve special attention that is beyond the scope of the article. There is no written collection of totalitarian slogans either before or after the democratic changes in Bulgaria in 1989 up to the present. Obviously, official slogans in the physical space were considered less important than underground political jokes, which were secretly written down by two professors of philosophy at Sofia University under the communist regime and published right after the changes (Василев/Vasilev 1990; Славов/Slavov 1991).

For the present analysis, a corpus of 140 totalitarian slogans was collected from two internet sites¹ (the quotes of Bulgarian authors in English, slogans included, are translated by the author) indicating the physical location of each slogan. The [decommunization.org](https://www.decommunization.org) site from which most of the slogans were excerpted is the most comprehensive site about communism in Bulgaria with uploaded documents, personal recollections and books in Bulgarian and in English on the subject. The present account assigns equal deliberation on the historical background of the period, the propaganda concept and the communicative functions and linguistic features of totalitarian slogans in the physical environment. The method of analysis adopted in the text is a discourse-analytic approach complemented with speech act theory: totalitarian slogans are conceptualized as single-sentence texts since their interpretation requires a broader political and

¹ https://bg.wikiquote.org/wiki/Лозунги_-_Призиви_-_Апели
<https://www.decommunization.org/Communism/Bulgaria/Documents/Lozungi.htm>

social context compared to ordinary utterances. At the same time, as single utterances, they are interpreted as speech acts. The analysis section aims to give an answer to the following research questions in relation to totalitarian slogans:

1. What are the slogans about?
2. What is their communicative function?
3. What are their linguistic features?

2. Communist regime in Bulgaria

Marxism as an economic, political and social theory is about the class struggle between the ruling class that owns the means of production – the bourgeoisie - and the working class that doesn't. Its foundational assumption is that the obliteration of private property would eradicate classes and this in turn would eliminate the exploitation of the second by the first. Vladimir Lenin developed the theory claiming that in order to end the inequality between the rich and the poor, the working class, led by a “vanguard party”, is historically destined to overthrow the capitalist class through revolution, establish the “dictatorship of the proletariat” and “build” a society in which property and wealth are collectively owned: socialism first as an intermediary stage and communism² as an ultimate goal, where money and state would become superfluous.

After the Second World War, in the countries in Central and Southeastern Europe political power was taken by Marxist and Leninist governments with the assistance of the Red Army. In Bulgaria political, economic and social changes began on September 9, 1944 when the Red Army entered the country and the government of the Kingdom of Bulgaria was overthrown and replaced by a government of the Fatherland Front, a coalition of parties led by the Bulgarian Workers' Party (communists): the coup d'état was carried out by pro-Fatherland Front units of the Bulgarian Army and some partisan detachments. After the coup d'état the two most important ministries – the Ministry of Justice and of the Interior were headed by communists. In the first few months after the Red Army entered the country, political cleansing began in which between 25 000 and 30 000 (another source gives a lower figure - up to 10 000) high-ranking army officers, civil servants, clergymen, industrialists, intellectuals, public figures and activists of nationalist and fascist organizations were killed and murdered, many of them brutally, by communists, their supporters, Fatherland-Front local units and criminals released

² In the article, *totalitarian state*, *communism* and *communist regime* are interchangeably used because of the monopoly of a single party and its control over all spheres of life. After 1989 in Bulgaria, left-oriented historians and other social scientists, also left-oriented, use the term *state socialism* for the 1944-1989 period and the term *totalitarian state* only for the Stalinist era in the former USSR.

from prison without court trials with the excuse they were “fascists”, “traitors” and “enemies of the people”. Ministers, parliament members, army generals, police officers, the headquarters of the gendarmerie, journalists, public prosecutors, judges, financiers, etc., were taken to the People’s Court that functioned from December 1944 to April 1945: a special court whose aim was to condemn all those responsible for the participation of Bulgaria in the Second World War as a member of the Axis Alliance³. The court sentenced to death, with no right of appeal, 2 730 defendants and 1 305 to life imprisonment⁴ and their property was confiscated. Many were sentenced to death not because of crimes punishable by death but because they were not considered loyal enough to the new political system by the communists. Many spent years in labour camps and all those who survived the repressions but couldn’t adapt to the “new way of life”, were classified in their dossiers as “former people” (бивши хора). The repressions after September, 9, revealed in documents after the democratic changes in Bulgaria in 1989, according to historian Evelina Kelbecheva, speak about “the full-scale lie in which we lived ... [that] made our society cynical, individually and collectively. For me, this is the truth about the Communist regime in Bulgaria: terror, fear, endless impudence and lies”⁵.

In September 1946 the monarchy was abolished by referendum and Bulgaria was declared a People’s Republic. A new constitution was ratified by the Constituent Assembly modelled on the Soviet constitution from 1936. By 1948 the opposition was done with and the Bulgarian Communist Party gained complete control on political power, the only political party up to 1989 with its loyal supporter - the Bulgarian Agrarian People’s Union. Loyalty was favoured over competence in all important positions in all public spheres, such as the economy, the army, the education and the media. After 1948 a two-year period of forcible nationalization of private property over the means of production followed: factories, banks, insurance companies, small and medium-sized businesses – about 7 000 altogether. The process of land collectivization or the replacement of small farms by collective ones took longer - from 1945 to 1959 - and was more painful for the farm owners than the nationalization of the means of production because of small-scale landownership in the predominantly agrarian Bulgaria. The state imposed first

³ In the Second World War Bulgaria kept neutrality until March 1, 1941, then it was part of the Axis Alliance until September 8, 1944. In spite of the Axis membership, no Bulgarian Army units were sent to the Eastern Front and there were only about 22 000 German soldiers stationed in the country. After September 8, 1944, Bulgaria joined the Allies and kept alignment with them until the end of the war.

⁴ For comparison, only 12 were sentenced to death in the Nuremberg trials: ten were executed by hanging and two committed suicide before the execution date. In monarchical Bulgaria, only 199 were sentenced to death for activities against the state.

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https://www.dnevnik.bg/intervju/2022/02/27/4317238_prof_evelina_kelbecheva_kritichen_pogled_i_prosveteno/

limitations on the amount of land farmers could own, gave the surplus land to landless or impoverished peasants and set unattainable quotas on agricultural produce. In 1948 a law was passed that gave the state the right to buy all the agricultural machinery and equipment at very low prices. In the middle of the 1950s the process of the collectivization of the land intensified and over 92% of agricultural land became collectivized, that is, controlled by the state. The collectivization was often carried out by force and repression, crushing private initiative and private agriculture; many ex-landholders moved to cities and found a better-paid job in the industrialization of the country – a process more successful than the collectivization of the land. Put differently, the idea that the modernization of agriculture through consolidation of the land and the use of modern equipment and methods to increase agricultural produce didn't work as planned.

In the totalitarian state, individual rights were very limited. The one-party state tolerated no political dissent or criticism of the system, citizens were subjected to mass surveillance by the secret police and their informers and there was no freedom of expression and no rights of assembly or association outside of the organizations approved by the state. The state expected complete political loyalty, dividing citizens into comrades (friends) and enemies. Into three types of enemies, in fact, especially in the first ten years after the implementation of the “dictatorship of the proletariat”: the “class enemy” or the bourgeoisie and the land owners, the “internal” enemy” or every citizen who dared to oppose the system in words or action, including the “enemy with a party card” and the “external enemy” or liberal democracies that were constantly suspected of plots whose aim was to weaken and destroy the new “classless society”. The citizens repressed by the system could be placed at one end of the loyalty/disloyalty scale, the Party functionaries at the other end and all the rest with a different degree of approval or disapproval of the system on a continuum between the two. The positioning of the repressed and the Party functionaries at the two ends is formal since amongst the repressed there were ardent supporters of the official communist ideology and members of the Communist Party who had fallen from the Party's favour, yet continued to believe the Party's policies were right, whereas some chose to be Party functionaries first and foremost for privileges and material gain, especially so in late communism. Among the privileged were the “active fighters against fascism and capitalism”, a status officially given for real (or claimed) resistance against the tsarist regime before September 9, 1944 whose number increased over the years, contrary to expectations. Those who disapproved of the communist regime but didn't oppose it openly resorted to different adaptation and survival strategies, such as inner immigration, political indifference, resignation and apathy.

Along with the implementation of the Soviet model of industrialization of the country and collectivization of the land, a major goal of the Communist Party was the eradication of all bourgeois traditions and individualistic pursuits and the indoctrination of a collective sense of community. The ideology postulated a homogeneous society in which the individual was subordinated to the collective: it prioritized equality for all over freedom for all, equality understood as the levelling of the material and individual needs and interests of citizens as well as sacrifices in the name of the common good. Labour was conceived of as a supreme social right and value, placed above all other values: a collaborative, socially-useful and creative activity of the new man. A black-and-white representation of reality was imposed: socialism versus capitalism, freedom versus oppression, the proletariat versus the bourgeoisie, friends versus enemies, the future versus the past, collectivism versus individualism, etc.

Why did the implementation of the theory fail to achieve a classless and democratic society? Several inherent deficiencies are pointed out in the literature: the supremacy of only one party – the Communist Party - over state institutions as a consequence of which governance decisions at all levels were taken by Party representatives, the central planning and regulation of the economy that made the system very rigid and the collective ownership over the means of production and the land that deprived the social agents from competition and innovation in their strive for profit inherent of a market economy. In reality, citizens were condemned to a life of queuing because of constant shortages of goods of necessity in shops in spite of the Communist Party's policies in Bulgaria in the 1980s for the “more thorough satisfaction of the growing material and spiritual needs of the working people”. People often resorted to backstairs influence for everyday commodities and the black market for goods missing on the market or goods smuggled from the West. It wouldn't be far from the truth to claim that the new political system improved the standard of living only of the poorest people in monarchical Bulgaria. Instead of the proclaimed dictatorship of the proletariat, the new political elite “had installed itself as a new ruling class, exploiting the workers and peasants” (Robertson 2015: 115).

3. Communist ideology and intellectual dissent

Many monographs and publications, critical of the Communist regime, were written after the democratic changes in Bulgaria in 1989. However, only two philosophers dared to write a book about the inherent flaws of the Communist ideology and its practices before the changes. In 1982 Zhelyu Zhelev's book *Fascism. A Documentary Study of the German, Italian and Spanish Fascism* was published in Bulgaria and in 1985 Assen Ignatow wrote *Psychologie des*

Kommunismus as a political immigrant in West Germany, translated in Bulgarian in 1991. The original title of Zhelev's book was *The Totalitarian State. A Documentary Study of the German, Italian and Spanish Fascism* that he finished writing in 1967. The title was changed to mislead censors and guarantee publication. Troubles began when the Party functionaries realized that the book wasn't the usual propaganda book on fascism. Zhelev claims totalitarianism is an essential feature of fascism and that the fascisms in Germany, Italy and Spain are approximations and modifications of the totalitarian fascist state. He points out five essential features of the fascist totalitarian state: the establishment of a one-party political system by force, the fusion of party and state, the encompassing of every aspect of the public and the private sphere, an authoritarian worldview with a pronounced cult for the Party leader and concentration camps (Желев/Zhelev 1982). Allusions to the political system in Bulgaria were intentionally sought by the author to make it easier for readers to find similarities between a fascist regime and their life under a Communist regime - the life they knew so well. Aware of its "detrimental" influence on readers, by order of the Central Committee of the Communist Party the book was banned and all its copies were confiscated. Nevertheless, the sold copies were passed from friend to friend and discussed and appreciated by many. According to cultural anthropologist Ana Luleva, "Zhelev's book made the first breakthrough in censorship and its great importance [...] is not its theoretical depth or contribution to the theory of totalitarianism, but in the fact that it met the interests and needs of the people to reflect on the system they lived in, even only if it was done by comparison and in the mirror of other totalitarian regimes" (Luleva 2020: 237).

Assen Ignatow, in *Psychologie des Kommunismus* offers an in-depth socio-anthropological analysis of communism. He gives arguments for the totalitarian nature of communism, on the one hand, and the similarities between "classical communism" and "classical fascism", on the other. Among them are "the repudiation of democracy, the annihilation of political opposition, the rejection of individual rights [...] hate (towards capitalists or Jews)" (Игнатов/Ignatow 1991: 150). Ignatow finds similarity between the Russian nationalism under Stalin - nationalism the communist ideology connected with the "exploited and progressive class" and not with the entire nation - and fascist nationalism. Another intrinsic feature of communism is its "irrationality": it is an "irrational model" of society that "presents the desirable for reality" (ibid.: 19). Irrational is the duplication or "parallelism" between state and Party structures that makes the organization of the economy inefficient and bureaucratic. The communist ideology sets the frames within which political decisions are to be taken leading, paradoxically, to the adaptation of life to the communist dogmas and not the other way round (ibid.: 33).

Furthermore, fear of being accused of breaking the ideological doctrines makes Party functionaries passive, inactive and shifting the responsibility for making decisions to the ones above in the Party hierarchy.

Ignatow reveals convincingly the ambivalent position of the Party nomenclature and functionaries towards liberal democracies; the explicit denial of cybernetics and genetics in the former USSR first followed by their tacit rehabilitation or taking loans from Western banks and Western know-how in late communism. Here I would add Stalin's unexpected rehabilitation of the Russian Orthodox Church in the Second World War in stark contrast with the professed atheism and the persecution and execution of over 100 000 clergymen and believers in the 1920s and 30s; the demolition of the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour in Moscow and the conversion of many churches into storehouses. The immutability of the political system and the irrationality of its ideology lead to "chaos in the economy, suspension of elementary lawfulness, partial suppression of cultural values. In their actions communists resort to the most primitive and direct means: violence, bans, terror and political pressure" (ИГНАТОВ/Ignatow 1991: 157). The "collectivistic-bureaucratic peculiarities" of the system are the reason for the "low productivity rate, the technological lagging behind" in relation to Western countries, "the low-quality products, the bad commodity distribution and the irrational organization of production" (ibid.: 161). Zhelev and Ignatow lost their job as university professors at Sofia University and together with other scholars are telling examples of how the totalitarian state silenced and suppressed, intellectually and psychologically, all those who tried to dissociate science from the doctrines of the Marxist-Leninist ideology. It's worth noting that from the middle of the 1980s the grip of the Communist Party in the ideologically loaded domains, such as philosophy and history at Sofia University loosened as a result of the conflict between the two tendencies within the Party: the neo-Stalinists and the liberally-oriented. It was enough for scholars to refer formally in their writings, once or twice, to the expected ideological works and feel relatively free to express their thoughts and opinions (Знеполски/Znepolski 2014: 137, втора част/second part).

In Bulgaria in the 1970s and 80s, the communist ideology began to make a distinction between The Big Truth and The Little Truth. The Big Truth is indisputable and without an alternative – the "building of socialism" and the attainment of the communist ideal - whereas The Little Truth is about deviations in the implementation of the ideology and the "anachronisms of the past", such as bourgeois bureaucracy, social climbing, greediness and individualism, the only "truth" that could be the object of criticism. Regardless of the Party's licence for criticism, in Bulgaria and in the other former Eastern Bloc countries "by the late

1980s, most of those condemned to live under the system were clear in their minds that its defects were not in contradiction with, but *consequences* of the basic principles of its socio-economic organization” (Gellner 1993: xi, italics in the original). As a result, dissident movement in Bulgaria began in 1988 and 1989, focusing on human rights and environmental problems but not on problems in the economy. The movement was initiated by party member reformists who aimed to change certain practices but not communism as a socio-political system. Communism ended on November 10, 1989 with the deposition of Todor Zhivkov, the state and party leader, at a plenum of the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party by the reform-minded members of the Committee. Paradoxically, “the order set up by the Russian revolution was dismantled by the members of the very movement created for its protection” (Gellner 1993: xii) first and foremost because many in the Party elite realized that the system didn’t work economically. The Union of Democratic Forces was the first real political opposition in Bulgaria founded on December 7, 1989 as a union of several political organizations. The country’s transition to a market economy was delayed and took place in the late 1990s.

As already stated, in the countries of the former Eastern Bloc there was a single ideology – Marxism-Leninism - with class conflict as its core concept; the doctrine about a revolutionary party that downthrows the existing order, seizes political power and constructs a new classless society free from the exploitation of man by man. For Emilio Gentile Communism as a totalitarian ideology is “a holistic ideology of a revolutionary party that considers itself to be the unique and exclusive vanguard of its own reference group—the proletariat, the nation, the racial entity—and as such demands for itself a monopoly of power in order to establish a new order, modelled on its own conception of man and politics” (Gentile 2013: 90). Karl Bracher is more radical in his conceptualization of totalitarianism in singling out an element of quasi-religion and of muted coercion in the form of total approval: it is an ideologized political system that “requires not only a unification that is at odds with the reality of the situation, but also a quasi-religious total obligation of political values and goals, and indeed the population’s active and devout participation in the government’s actions: total approval as coercion towards permanent participation” (Bracher 1985: 113-114, qtd. in Gentile 2013: 90).

The post-Marxist trends in the study of ideologies set aside their negative connotations of being “totalizing, doctrinaire and dogmatic” and look upon them as both positive and negative: liberalism, feminism, anti-racism and environmentalism, racism, nationalism and sexism. The perspective on ideologies in liberal democracies places them at the centre of political theory along “with political philosophy and the historical articulation of political ideas” (Freeden 2022:

21). To think “ideologically is an inevitable subdivision of thinking politically – that is to say, all thinking politically is embedded in ideological frameworks that showcase thinking *about* politics; and the manner in which ideologies encapsulate such thinking about politics will always conform to the basic features of thinking politically” (ibid.: 69, italics in the original). From top to bottom, political ideology sets the agenda for decision-making and “*the ranking of priorities and the distribution of significance* for collectivities – another omnipresent trait of thinking politically” (ibid.: 71, italics in the original) and its function is to reform the existing social order. Liberals assign a preferential status to individual freedoms. On the one hand, they prioritize the “spontaneity of markets” and “individual initiative” and on the other aim to secure a certain level of social justice and welfare (Freeden 2022). From bottom to top, ideologies “are the outgrowths of understandings and perceptions that permeate societies and that emanate from them, albeit often in a mutually competitive mode and usually articulated and refined by intellectual and political elites” (ibid.: 22). Ideologies are discernible in the “behaviour, routines and practices” of political and social agents, of a group or society in general. Moreover, as a social and conceptual phenomenon, the ideological is ubiquitous, inevitable and is always expressed in language as one aspect of a text or talk, according to Freeden.

For Teun van Dijk ideologies are a special form of social cognition: they are belief systems that are socially conditioned and socially constructed and are based on norms and values and not on ‘true’ beliefs or facts. Ideologies are general – liberalism, conservatism, socialism, etc., or they can represent the interests of different social groups. In addition to norms and values as core concepts, group ideologies rest on other fundamental concepts, such as group identity, goals set and activities used to attain the goals, ingroup and outgroup relations, as well as material and symbolic resources used to express and spread shared beliefs (van Dijk 1998). Ultimately, ideologies are about power, action and interaction. Ideological biases are endorsed, reaffirmed and challenged in the production of discourse: in the linguistic choices group members make, such as topic of discourse, lexical selection, syntactic structure (active or passive voice), discourse coherence, foregrounding or backgrounding of information, explicitly conveyed meaning and meaning in context over and above meaning verbally stated and use of non-literal language in the form of metaphor and metonymy. The same biases figure in the reader’s/ listener’s comprehension of discourse: left, centrist or right, racist or anti-racist, feminist or sexist, pro-immigrant or anti-immigrant, globalism or anti-globalism or neutral to any or all of these.

4. Totalitarian slogans and Party propaganda

Propaganda, in the sense of “a form of communication that attempts to achieve a response that furthers the desired intent of the propagandist” (Jowett, O’Donnell 2012: 1), like ideology, can be negative and positive, the latter, for example, in advertising. The propagation of ideology in the totalitarian state has only a negative connotation because of the total control of the state over the print and electronic media: the propaganda is in the form of books, films, television and radio programs, slogans, posters, pamphlets, badges and symbols. In the indoctrination of a one-sided view of the world, the totalitarian propaganda uses messages consisting of simple and familiar words. Text and talk is clichéd, evasive and manipulative; its aim is to evoke emotions rather than to stimulate critical thinking. Propaganda’s influence is enhanced through repetition and pervasiveness, slogans in the physical environment included.

In Bulgaria, massive communist propaganda began in schools at an early age: there was an organization (Chavdarcheta) for children from the age of 6 to 8 (grades 1 to 3), the Pioneer Organization for children between the age of 9 to 14, followed by the Communist Youth Organization (Komsomol, an abbreviation of the Russian Communist Youth Union). Overtly, the organizations were expected to instill in children and teenagers diligence, discipline, love for the motherland and friendship. Covertly, the main objective was to disseminate the Party’s directives and foster loyalty to the Communist Party and the Soviet Union with a strong emphasis on the subordination of the individual to the group. The attributes and symbols of the Pioneer Organization, even the name and the ritualistic appeal *Be prepared!* and the response *Always prepared!*, were borrowed from the Scout Movement but loaded with the new communist ideology and compulsory membership. The Party invested massive resources in different programs and events, such as summer camps at the seashore or in the mountains and organized sports events, games, theatrical performances and concerts as recreational activities. At the same time secondary school children and students were used as cheap labour force on cooperative farms and canning factories in the summer and autumn to compensate for labour shortages. The Komsomol organization had an analogous hierarchical structure to the one of the Party: town, district, regional and Central Committee and many of its cadre were perceived as future replacements in the Party.

According to the author’s personal life experience, the life experience of many of her generation and the two internet sites cited that indicate the physical location of the totalitarian

slogans, they were omnipresent: in big letters to catch the eye, they were on the inside and outside walls of industrial plants and factories, cooperative farms and other workplaces, state and public institutions, such as schools, hospitals, public libraries, prisons, cafes, workers and pensioners clubs, stadiums, in the streets, on the side of roads, etc. Because of their repetitiveness, pervasiveness and distractors in the physical environment, citizens knew the slogans were there, yet many often ignored them and paid attention to them when they evoked a second unintended interpretation, usually not favourable for the sender - the Party and the Party functionaries in most cases. For example, in the slogan *25 years of victory* (25 победни години) in Bulgarian instead of the noun *victory* an adjective in the plural is used (победни) that is phonetically homonymous with по-бедни or poorer in English, leading to the unintended interpretation *25 poorer years*. Or, for instance, when the slogan appeared in an unusual context - on a box of matches – then, undoubtedly, it would draw the viewer/reader's attention. Comments on slogans were infrequent, whereas telling underground political jokes was an incessant activity in the family, among friends or at the workplace, especially in the 80s, for the reason that, as bottom-up creations, they spoke the politically unspeakable and were a substitute for the freedom of speech (Genova 2014).

5. Totalitarian slogans as discrete texts and speech acts

Neal Norrick views proverbs, aphorisms and epigrams as discrete texts. Even when they are used as an integral part of a larger text, spoken or written, they still retain their independent meaning, contributing at the same time to the meaning of the entire text. They are interpreted as evaluative or instructive comments in relation to what is being talked about when used in conversation (Norrick 1985). Many proverbs, like metaphors, cannot be interpreted literally, for example, *Lock, stock and barrel* (the whole of anything). There are two more single-sentence texts: one-line jokes and, in my view – (totalitarian) slogans. Why are one-liners viewed as discrete texts as well? In spite of the fact that they consist of a single sentence (*A computer is perfectly reliable until the moment you switch it on*), they have the same structure as the other joke types, such as question-answer jokes, conversational jokes and story jokes, namely, set-up part and punchline. Moreover, one-line jokes have the same global communicative goal as other jokes – to amuse and less often to offend. Jokes, like proverbs, make use of hyperbole and paradox. They, like proverbs, are allusive in the messages they convey (Genova 2011: 123).

Slogans, when they are not based on intertextuality, are interpreted independently in the sense that they don't presuppose a preceding discourse fragment that is usually the case with proverbs, aphorisms and epigrams. At the same time, as stated in the **Introduction** section, (totalitarian) slogans are conceptualized as single-sentence texts since their interpretation requires a broader political and social context compared to ordinary utterances. Slogans as single-sentence texts differ in their communicative function: the goal of the sender of slogans in the totalitarian state is to express and inculcate an ideology, whereas the ultimate goal of an advertising slogan is to praise a product. On the macro-level, the goal of the two types of slogans is to influence the behavior of the receiver. The slogans in the totalitarian state under study have the structure of other single-sentence texts in the physical environment, such as *Keep off the Grass!* that are not ideologically loaded.

Because slogans are single-sentence texts, the only way to interpret their communicative function is in terms of speech acts. Speech Act Theory as an approach to the study of language use concentrates on the action-like properties of language and knowledge of speech acts is viewed as part of the speaker's and listener's communicative competence. A speech act is considered to be the basic unit of linguistic communication. The doctrine with this view is: "The saying is the doing." (Austin 1962).

According to John Austin, in the use of a sentence three kinds of speech acts are simultaneously performed:

- Locutionary act – the act of uttering a sentence with a given sense and reference;
- Illocutionary act – the performative function of an utterance or how the speaker intends the utterance to be interpreted, whether as a statement or an assertion, as an offer, a promise, a command, a praise, a warning, a threat, an invitation, etc.;
- Perlocutionary act – the perceived effect on the listener in uttering a sentence, for example, frightening, forcing, checking one's action.

Perlocutionary acts are less numerous than illocutionary acts since not every illocutionary act results in a perlocutionary act. Within the framework of the Speech Act Theory, the illocutionary act is considered the most important one, so when we say "speech acts", we mean "illocutionary acts".

John Searle's contribution to the theory of speech acts ([1969] 1987) has to do with the further elucidation of the illocutionary force of speech acts, their felicity conditions as a defining feature as well as a detailed classification of the types of speech acts. Searle distinguishes between regulative and constitutive rules. Regulative rules control preexisting

activities – for example, traffic lights - whereas constitutive rules are at the basis of games and it is the rules that make the game. Similarly, the felicity conditions of a speech act constitute the act. *Doing X counts as Y* is the standard representation of a speech act. By *illocutionary force* Searle means the particular intention the speaker has in mind in the production of an utterance or the illocutionary act he/she is performing. The illocutionary force has to do with what is meant by an utterance; it is a pragmatic aspect of meaning that complements semantic or propositional meaning - what is said or stated – the locutionary act. By *felicity conditions* are meant the appropriate circumstances for the performance and the recognition of a speech act.

Most frequently, the totalitarian slogans under study are used as assertions (*We dig coal – we build socialism!*), promises (*Our best for four for five!*) and commands (*Speaking foreign languages is forbidden!*). Others are used for thanking (*Thank you, dear Party, for our happy childhood!*), for wishing (*Long live the USSR – the all-time builder of socialism!*) and few for questioning (*What did you do for the fulfillment of the Five Year Plan?*). As is known, assertions are about existing state of affairs, whereas in promises the speaker commits himself/herself to perform a future act. In official Party documents and speeches communist discourse focused either on past achievements – new dams, new electric power stations, new schools and kinder gardens, etc., or on the “bright future” and less so on the present. Slogans are only about the present and the future. What speech act they express is dependent on, among other considerations, on the social identity of their initiator; that is, different senders assign different meaning to the same slogan that makes it pragmatically ambiguous.

At first blush, the situational context and the content of the slogans in the totalitarian state support the presumption that their sender are workers, miners, cooperative farmers, institutions, professional people, school children, etc., yet for those familiar enough with the system, it was Party functionaries from the Propaganda and Agitation Department at every level of the Party hierarchy who were their initiator and agent. If we assume that the initiator of *Our best for four for five!* about the fulfillment of the Five Year Plan for four years are the workers of a factory, then it is to be interpreted as a promise (*We promise to do our best to fulfill the Five Year Plan for four years*) but if the initiator of the slogan are the local Party functionaries or Party secretary, then it is to be interpreted as an implicit demand (*We demand that you fulfill the Five Year Plan for four years*). The ambiguous sender of the slogan is not resolved even if we were physically present in the then-and-there life situation and reading the slogan. Whereas, most probably, the sender of *From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs* are Party functionaries quoting Karl Marx. I take it for granted that the sender of *No matter how hard you work, it's not enough!* are Party functionaries and interpret the slogan as an implicit

order. In this context workers as a sender are excluded because this would lead to interpreting it as workers' complaint that other workers don't work hard enough – an unacceptable option since workers' complaints in the totalitarian state usually were not made public. Regardless of the frequent ambiguous interpretation of their sender, the slogans aim to present the people and the Party as a single whole.

6. Frequent topics and some linguistic features of totalitarian slogans

A frequent topic of totalitarian slogans is the “building” of the new social order and, more specifically, the transformation of Bulgaria from an agricultural country into an industrial one. The slogans prod the reader into action:

- *Communism is inevitable!*
- *Deeds, deeds and only deeds.*
- *Our best for four for five!*
- *What did you do for the fulfillment of the Five Year Plan?*
- *Let's fight for each stotinka, each gram, each centimeter, each minute!*
- *We dig coal – we build socialism!* – a slogan in a coal mine.
- *Efficient economy – the responsibility of each citizen!* – a slogan from the 1980s.

Labour perceived by the Party as a supreme social right and value is also a frequent topic that is inseparable from the central five-year planning in industry and agriculture. Model worker (ударник) or a highly productive worker was an honorary title given to those who surpassed their production quotas and were used by the Party propaganda to promote competition among factory workers. Furthermore, the portraits of model workers were on constant display in front of factory buildings:

- *Work is the new way of life.* – a slogan in a workspace.
- *For hard work – honoured prize!*
- *Not words but hard and efficient work!*
- *No matter how hard you work, it's not enough!*

Faith in the ideological doctrines, loyalty, thankfulness and glorification of the Communist Party and the Soviet Union are expected topics in slogans. The average citizen though, who was suspicious and distrustful of the system, would have doubts about their sincerity:

- *Thank you, dear Party, for our happy childhood!* – a slogan in the corridor of a school building.
- *To the Party – loyalty, to the people – clear water!* – a slogan in a water supply station.

- *For the Fatherland Front – for our happiness!*
- *Glory, unending glory to the Soviet Union – the world beacon of socialism!*
- *The Soviet Union opened a new era in the advancement of mankind.*
- *Long live the USSR – the all-time builder of socialism!*

The “external enemy” is also a frequent topic, referred to not only generally - *imperialism, imperialists, aggressors and enemies* - but personally as well: *the American president or Kennedy*, referred to as *enemy number one*. The opposition *us* versus *them* in the slogans is clearly stated:

- *We breed hens and grow tomatoes, they produce weapons.*
- *Vigilance – the most reliable weapon against the subversive activities of imperialism.*
- *Topolovgrad – town at the forefront of the fight against imperialism.* – a road sign.
- *The American president – enemy number one of the town of Topolovgrad.* – a slogan in the centre of the town.
- *Each egg – a bomb, each hen - a flying fortress against the aggressors!* – a slogan in a poultry farm.
- *Each egg will turn into a bomb in the ranks of the imperialists.* – a slogan in a cooperative farm.
- *Each can of fruit – a fist in the face of imperialism.* – a slogan in a canning factory.
- *Each tomato – a pin in Kennedy’s bed.* – a slogan in a cooperative farm.
- *Each poor grade is a friend of our enemies.* – a slogan inside a school building.

Many slogans are about the education of the new man and the denunciation of bourgeois habits, for example, tipping. Often they were inscribed on rectangular or square metal plates in big red or black letters against a white background and placed on the outside walls of buildings:

- *Throwing litter, eating seeds and spitting in the streets is a sign of low culture.* – an inscription on a plate on the outside wall of a building.
- *Cleanliness is a measure of culture and good manners.* – an inscription on a plate on the outside wall of a building.
- *Tipping is equally offensive for the one that gives and the one that takes.* – a slogan in a barber’s shop.
- *A healthy spirit in a healthy socialist body.* – a slogan in a town stadium, a transformation of the Latin *Mens sana in corpore sano*.
- *When I eat, I am deaf and dumb.* – a slogan in a school canteen (in Bulgarian *deaf and dumb* rhyme).

The Party’s propaganda through slogans is made obvious in most unexpected locations:

- *The mountain is a source of progressive ideas.* – a slogan in a mountain chalet.
- *Each vaccinated citizen – a pillar in the building of socialism!* – a slogan in a pharmacy.
- *More leather for the Party.* – a slogan in a tannery to commemorate September 9, 1944.
- *All mentally ill patients – in the fight for peace and world communism!* – a slogan in a psychiatric ward.

In some slogans, lexical meaning, sentence meaning or situational context create semantic, syntactic and pragmatic ambiguity. The ambiguity is unintentional having an unintentional humorous effect:

- *25 years people's power – 25 years circus!* – a neon slogan on a circus dome from 1969. The ambiguity lies in the negative connotation of *circus* whose dictionary meaning is “not to be taken seriously, an event that provokes laughter”.
- *35 years socialist Batak.* – a road sign before entering the town of Batak from 1979. Batak as a place name is a phonetic transformation of Batevo, related to *brother*, whereas *batak* as a common noun means *mess, chaos, disorder*.
- *All communists under the ground!* – a slogan in a coal mine. The intended meaning is an appeal to members of the Communist Party to become coal miners and dig coal in the coal mine and the unintended meaning is all communists are to die and be buried in the ground.
- *Under capitalism man exploits man, under communism it's just the opposite.* The intended meaning of the slogan that man is not exploited under communism is overridden by the unintended meaning that man, in fact, is, when the reader recovers the elided syntactic elements to get *Under capitalism man exploits man, under communism man exploits man*, a syntactic structure implicated by the phrase *it's just the opposite*.
- *Party, we learn from you!* – a slogan in a prison. It's the situational context that makes the slogan ambiguous, namely, the implication that prisoners follow the Party's good example in fraud, embezzlement and other crimes.
- *Before September 9, 1944, Bulgaria was on the edge of an abyss and then it made a great leap forward.* – where the unintended interpretation is that Bulgaria leaped into an abyss triggered by background knowledge.

The content analysis shows the predominance and the equal importance of the following key signifiers: *socialism, communism, the Party, the people, bright future, friendship, Party loyalty, the Soviet Union, freedom, peace, enemy, imperialism and aggressors*. In many slogans there are no verbs and adjectives and some are used metaphorically. In the cases when there is a verb, it often is in the subjunctive mood. The opposition *us* versus *them* is made obvious only

in slogans featuring the “external enemy”, in the rest the people – men, women and children identify themselves with the Party. In spite of the fact that slogans are single-sentence texts, they have the potential of being dialogic. The key metaphor in the slogans is the conceptualization of socialism and communism as a building. Also, conceptual metaphors figure in slogans targeting the “external enemy”, usually the US. Innocent items, such as an egg, a tomato or a can of fruit in the slogans are incongruously conceptualized as weapons. Following the theory of conceptual metaphor and metonymy and the target-and-source structure of conceptual metaphor (Lakoff, Johnson 1980), the above-mentioned conceptualizations will be formally represented as: COMMUNISM (target) IS BUILDING (source), EGG (target) IS BOMB (source), TOMATO (target) IS PIN (source) and CAN OF FRUIT (target) IS FIST (source).

7. Conclusion

The Communist Party in the totalitarian state used slogans in the physical environment as a powerful propagandic instrument in the dissemination and inculcation of Marxist-Leninist ideology. With their visibility, pervasiveness and contiguity, slogans affected the everyday life of many citizens’, reminding them constantly of the Party’s vigilance over its subjects. Other citizens, skeptical of the system, ignored them or made fun of them. Seemingly, the situational context and the content of the slogans support the presumption that their sender are the people, yet for those familiar enough with the system, it was Party functionaries at every level of the Party hierarchy who were their initiator and agent, beginning from the smallest Party organization up to its Central Committee. As single-sentence texts, slogans were easily imprinted on the reader’s mind and then easily recalled. Most often, their communicative function is to prod the reader into action, to express loyalty and gratitude to the Party or condemn the external enemy. Among the most frequent topics are the “building of socialism”, liberal democracies as the external enemy and the moral personality traits of the “new man”. Many of the words used in the slogans are ideologically loaded and metaphors are the prevalent rhetorical figure. In many slogans there are no verbs and adjectives and nouns are the most frequently used content words. Some slogans reveal lack of enough education and knowledge on the part of the Party functionaries leading to undesirable ambiguity and unintentional humorous interpretation.

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