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**HIDDEN ORDER:
AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL APPROACH
TO LEFTIST/RIGHTIST AFFILIATIONS
IN BULGARIA AND GREECE¹**

The question of social trust in the legitimacy of law-producing and law-implementing institutions is closely related with individuals' experiences especially in countries with state-sponsored regimes of repression and violence. In Bulgaria and Greece, memories of past repressions, in the first case during a long-established totalitarian regime, and in the second after several episodes of authoritarian regimes, contributed to creating distrust in public authority and its legal institutions that is endemic to this day. I will focus on present political schisms inherited from experiences of radical changes, political instabilities and discontinuities. At a certain level, they explain the structural distrust towards the legal systems and the politics in these countries.

In this project, I wish to approach the problematic of the hidden order and social distrust by studying a dichotomy instrumentalised at all levels of social life between 'people from the Left' and 'people from the Right'. In both countries, the Left/Right denomination appears as a strategy of (re)presentation of the Self in everyday life. In this process of labelling, individuals and groups are classified as either 'ours' or the 'other's'. This approach considers the phenomenon as both a heritage of past political cleavages (family experiences of exclusion, political fights and repression) and as a collective and individual identification that confers, or else dispossesses, rights and privileges in social life.

1 I would like to thank Rossitza Guentcheva for her careful reading and helpful comments on an earlier draft.

I hope to contribute to the understanding of sets of components of ‘cultural intimacy’ in both cases, and to underline common and diverging features. Following Michel Herzfeld’s definition, ‘cultural intimacy’ can be defined as ‘advantages social actors find in using, reformulating and recasting official idioms in the pursuit of often highly unofficial personal goals and how these actions – so often in a direct contravention with state authority – actually constitute the state as well as a huge range of national and other identities’.²

POLITICIZATION OF SOCIETY AND LACK OF LEGITIMACY

In contemporary Greece and Bulgaria, analysts point out similar handicaps in the process of democracy building. For them the keywords are over-centralized state, patron–client system, inefficient and corrupted civil servants, legal system ‘embedded’ within political parties, especially in the Bulgarian case, where structural corruption³ of the governing apparatus is endemic. There are of course historical explanations for this permanent crisis of confidence. J. Iatrides notices that in recently created states, where political violence often determines who governs,⁴ it is a way to overthrow or preserve a regime and to intimidate or eliminate its opponents. In both cases in the 1920 and 1930s, politics revolved mostly around personal vendettas, military takeovers and endemic government instability⁵. In a context of officially sanctioned lawlessness and violence, the institutions of government came to be viewed as mere instruments for partisan politics and personal aggrandizement, ‘to be seized and manipulated by whatever means possible, thus preventing the emergence of a consensus’.⁶

In pre- and post-communist Bulgaria as well as in the Greek case, people often join political parties hoping to assure a position in the administration that otherwise would be inaccessible to them. The public office attracts less with its material rewards but for the sense it conveys of entering the circle of the powerful few, ‘leaving behind the world of the impotent and vulnerable’.⁷

2 Michael Herzfeld, *Cultural intimacy. Social poetics in the Nation-state*, 2nd ed. (Routledge, 2005), 2.

3 On the discourse on corruption in Bulgaria and Eastern Europe see Иван Кръстев, ‘Антикорупционни настроения в Източна Европа, Една икономика на морала’ [A Moral Economy of Anti-Corruption Sentiments in Eastern Europe]. *Социологически проблеми*, [Sociologicheski problemi], N, 1-2, 2003: 20-36.

4 See John Iatrides J. L. Wrigley (eds.), *Greece and the Crossroads: The Civil War and its Legacy*, Pennsylvania State University Press: 1995, 24.

5 In Bulgaria during the interwar period, two military coups took place on 9 June 1923 and 19 May 1934, accompanied by political murders and large-scale repression against the Agrarians and the Left-wing. In Greece between 1926 and 1936, after several unsuccessful military coups, the general Metaxas coup finally established a harsh dictatorship, which lasted until his death in 1941.

6 For the Greek case, see J. Koliopoulos and T. Veremis, *Greece: The Modern Sequel. From 1831 to the Present* (Hurst & Company, London: 2002), 58.

7 T. Veremis and J. Koliopoulos, 58.

Obviously, there are important differences between the two historical experiences from the 20th century: in the Greek case authoritarian regimes are sequences by ruptures, and fundamental democratic institutions are never completely annihilated as in the Bulgarian case after 1948. However, we observe today similar perceptions of social order and political legitimacy. Despite very different political histories after WWII, a common sentiment of distrust is dominating.

Let us enumerate some of the stereotypes pertaining precisely to the lack of trust in political institutions.⁸ In a chronological order, first comes the stereotype of the ‘Turkish rule’ that kept Bulgarians and Greeks in the dark, their nations-states being then too young (in the first and second half of the 19th century), without an aristocracy or a bourgeoisie, and without an industrial revolution and well-delimited class interests. Once emancipated as nation-states, they have to deal with internal ethnic and religious diversity and to fight for territories considered as unjustly belonging to others. The stereotype of inherent instability and loss of territory in both cases appears often as an explanation of the numerous armed conflicts during the first half of the 20th century.

Another leitmotif is the critique of the traditionally ever-inflexible and overly centralized state bureaucracy, the structural nepotism found in all state-run enterprises, as well as the lack of civil society and dysfunctions of the public services. Another stereotype is the idea that, if the two people are victims of a specifically ‘unfortunate’ history, this is because they have always been the victims of foreign geopolitical and economic interests. There is a common feeling in the two countries that someone from the outside – British and Americans in the Greek case, and Russians in the Bulgarian case – decides and, even worse, secretly sponsors some internal enemy (communist/fascist in the past, communist/anti-communist, or ‘Blue’ or ‘Red’ in today’s Bulgaria).

The takeover of the public domain and the legal system by political patrons and their clients enhances the common representation that there is no clear separation between executive, legislative and judicial authorities, and that they are all run by ‘the same’ interest group. There is a widespread conviction that the *politikos kosmos* (Greece) or *politicheska klasa* (Bulgaria) is a distinct world whose members share common interests and control the whole of society from above.

8 I prefer to avoid bringing the whole list of nationalistic stereotypes that are often in contradiction with those considered here (for example, ‘young and weak corrupted state, under menace’ *versus* ‘too much state, a tradition of millenary state that has brought democracy to others’, etc.)

THE LEFT, THE RIGHT AND THE INTERNAL ENEMY

During my work in Greece and Bulgaria, in a situation of meeting and introducing my informants in everyday life, I was always told either before, during or after the meeting that *he/she is from the Right or from the Left*. For my informants, this is necessary ‘information’ about the ‘nature’ of my new acquaintance, which is supposed to help me identify the person as being one of ‘ours’ or of ‘the other’s’.

Indeed, this current fundamental cleavage operating within the two societies – the one between ‘people from the Right’ and ‘people from the Left’ – seems today particularly relevant for a comparative anthropological approach. This crystallization of two *a priori* irreconcilable identities deeply divides the society and aims at fixing a border between *our* territory and that of the *others*. Individuals, families, colleagues, neighbours, social institutions, trade unions, actors and intellectuals, all interact under those ascriptions.⁹

In the Greek case, this schism between ‘the two Greeces’ crystallized as a result of the ferocity of a large scale bloody Civil War (1946–1949). It opposes, on the one hand, the left wing and communists – the leading forces during the Resistance – and on the other, the governmental forces defending the British-sponsored monarchy in Athens. This schism was to prolong the agony of the occupation until the end of the decade.¹⁰ For the new generations today, being from the Right is no longer synonymous with anti-democratic thinking.

In the Bulgarian political experience of communism/post-communism, we can find the same dichotomy between Communist ‘Red’ and Anti-communist ‘Blue’, and, more recently, between the ‘normalizing’ ‘European’ political epithets of Left and Right. But the roles of the Bad and the Just are reversed, considering the very different political histories in the second half of the 20th century.¹¹ After the fall of the regime, most of the ‘democrats’ viewed them-

9 Much more complex political identities behind the Left/Right structural opposition may be pointed out. Being aware of this, I choose nevertheless to focus on this common feature, which remains particularly strong in both countries. About the contemporary Bulgarian context, a recent article exemplifies the attractiveness of the usage of kinship, blood, and biological metaphors in politics. Presenting the coming of a new generation within the Bulgarian Democratic Right, the article introduces six young activists who are describing themselves as ‘genetically from the Right’, ‘genetically blue’ (the symbolic colour of the party), ‘biogenetically anti-communist’, and ‘by heredity and birth’ (*semejstvo i rod*). I can notice here similar phenomena as in ethnicity and nation-building processes when essentialising and naturalising semantics come to reinforce internal solidarities and group belonging. See, *Капитал* [Kapital], ‘Новите лица в политиката’ [New faces in politics], 20 March 2009, n. 11.

10 For a social history approach to what Mark Mazower called ‘the bloodiest conflict between WWII and the break-up of Yugoslavia’, see M. Mazower, *After the war was over: Reconstructing family, nation and state, 1943–1960*, (Princeton University Press, 2000).

11 In September 1944, the Soviet army entered Bulgaria, enabling Bulgarian communists to seize the power. The purges were rapid and brutal: from March 1945, 2138 death sentences were pronounced. In 1946, almost all universities, academies and secondary educational institutions were purged of non-communist elements. See, Вера Мутафчиева, В. Чичовска, Д. Илиева и др. *Съдът над историците. Българската историческа наука. Документи и дискусии 1944–1950* [The trial against historians. Documents and discussions 1944–1950], т.1, БАН, 1995.

selves as ‘naturally’ affiliated with the Right. Still nowadays, ‘socialist’ or ‘leftist’ is a bad word and even the Socialist party avoids employing it.

In Bulgaria, every village or town is identified as either Red, meaning former communist (more often villages¹²), or Blue, meaning democrat, and mayors are likewise identified as Red or Blue; during the ‘Blue years’ (between 1997–2001) the Red label sounded almost accusatory.¹³ In Greece during the authoritarian and transition periods, political repression was systematically directed against the Left. In the Greek society today, being labelled as Rightist still provokes suspicions of sympathies with the past dictatorships. In Greece as well as in Bulgaria, people refer to the feeling of *fear* from the secret services or the police while narrating their family experiences in the village, in the town, at work or in a public place. The fear of state surveillance, the feeling that someone is covertly watching and listening, the fear of denouncement by a neighbour who can compromise one’s career, or simply the interiorized censorship over what is correct to say in public: these are topics still relevant in most social milieus and regions in both Greece and Bulgaria.

THEORETICAL APPROACH

Dealing with national stereotypes in Greece, Herzfeld focuses on metaphors and images that bureaucrats and their clients activate while interacting with each other. Blood and kinship metaphors are widely employed by social actors as we learn from the important anthropological literature on honour and patronage, beginning with John Campbell.¹⁴ Herzfeld, indeed, is far from underestimating the political and historical processes that have led to the reinforcement of kinship and blood solidarities. He makes clear that the patron–client system, as well as the endemic state inefficiency, are not the consequence of some ‘innate Greek character’, but, in fact, are ‘the result of specific political circumstances in relation with international powers on which its survival as state has always depended’.¹⁵

Nevertheless, in Herzfeld [1993], as in other authors on modern Greece, the reference to the concept of culture makes political identities appear as though they are sub-products that derive from a general cultural feature. The problem with this approach is that it does not help us acknowledge the *structuralizing power* of a very real political dichotomisation within society. Herzfeld, whose

12 About a ‘Red’ village, see Alik Angelidou, ‘Identités en transition: Communisme agraire et appartenance locale dans un village bulgare post-communiste’, *Divination*, 27 (2005), MSHS, Sofia, 139–60.

13 See my article, ‘La Bulgarie: L’avenir par l’Europe et par l’OTAN’, *Nouveaux Mondes*, 9, CRES/Genève, Paris, (1999), 267–91.

14 See for example, John K. Campbell, *Honor, Family, and Patronage. A study of institutions and moral values in a Greek mountain community* (Oxford, 1964).

15 M. Herzfeld, *The Social Production of Indifference: Exploring the Symbolic Roots of Western Bureaucracy* (Chicago University press, 1993), 44.

focus is on the interaction between the state, the local level, and how bureaucracies are perceived, writes: ‘When state’s efficiency fails to materialize at the local level, or is impaired by powerful mediating interests that protect local solidarities, the emotive symbolism of blood, body and patriline may get far more play. It divides states from more intimate social entities’. If I were to further develop Herzfeld’s idea, I would not put political identities into the category of ‘intimate social entities’. Instead, I would argue that there is an actual social stratum, which one never stops encountering when interacting with local citizens (groups, institutions, bureaucrats).

Examples referring to historical episodes of extreme political violence in Greece and Bulgaria can illustrate this contemporary phenomenon. The data for Greece are taken from recent fieldwork I did in a region still bearing the burden of long fights and memories of persecutions performed by rightwing regimes. Within Greek society, political identities are inherited from long family traditions of political fights, and everyone identifies the other as ‘coming from’ either a Communist/Leftist or a Conservative/Rightist family. Almost 40 years after the end of the Regime of the Colonels, a little village can testify about the still ongoing – ‘Leftist’ or ‘Conservative’ – cleavage between individuals, social groups and families. These notions of ‘us’ and ‘them’ are holding mutually exclusive political memories that took root in the period of the Civil War.

The Bulgarian case is an anthropological reading of a past situation of extreme violence –purges among teachers in 1923–1939.¹⁶ Initially, it included the three important periods of political purges in Bulgaria. The first two were carried out during the interwar period after the two military coups, one on 9 June 1923 and another on 19 May 1934, were directed against the so-called Leftist–Communists. The third period was from November 1944 to December 1949 and targeted teachers who were supposed to be ‘undoubtedly guilty of supporting fascism, and for whom it was proven that they actively conducted, before as well as now, a fascist activity’.¹⁷ In this last period, non-communist teachers were purged mostly under the label ‘rightist–fascists’, ‘oppositionists’ or ‘unaffiliated’ (*nepriobshteni*) – the last epithet including teachers with leftist affiliations, mostly sympathizers of the Agrarian Party. What these regimes had in common was their instrumentalisation of these radical political epithets in order to identify, harass, and eliminate those who did not agree with the government politics, who showed their disagreement

16 The Bulgarian case described here is part of a larger research I conducted in the framework of a fellowship from the Institute for the Study of the Recent Past, which focuses on the political purging of teachers in 1923–1949, which will appear in a book in Bulgarian.

17 Наредбата-закон ‘за прочистване на учителския и преподавателския персонал в народните основни и средни училища, учителските институти и в университета и висшите училища и академии.’ [Law-ordinance on ‘cleansing the educational personnel at the people’s primary and secondary schools, the teachers’ institutes, the universities, high schools and academia’], *Държавен вестник*, [Darzhaven vestnik], 3 November 1944, N. 243.

or simply thought differently. To prove their innocence, individuals had to demonstrate their full and unconditional support for the particular authoritarian regime in place.

In order to better emphasize comparable situations in the Greek and the Bulgarian contexts, I have chosen to exclude the period of political purges in Bulgaria after 1944. I will focus on structural opposition rather than on discourses and values. The question is not so much what are the possible meanings of the signified (Leftist, Rightist, Fascist etc.) but rather the social uses of the signifier and the place and role it attributes to individuals and groups in a given moment of their interaction. This formal dualism is a methodological tool to perceive similarities between the two cases, in the lived experience of extreme politicization, rather than a systematic comparison between two identical situations in time and space.

PART I

POLITICAL PURGES WITHIN THE TEACHERS' MILIEU IN BULGARIA (1923–1938)

The first period of purges we are considering here follows the coup d'état of 9 June 1923, whereby a rightwing coalition was installed under the leadership of Aleksandar Tsankov. The regime undertook a large-scale repression against the leftists. This was the so-called 'white terror', under Martial Law, that occurred especially after the September uprising of 1923, which had been initiated by the Communists and later was supported by representatives of the Agrarian Party and by anarchists. In November 1923, Tsankov passed the Defence of the Realm Act (DRA), which prohibited the existence of all organizations, groups, and associations that 'employed revolutionary methods'.¹⁸ In April 1924, the Court of Cassation banned the Communist Party, disbanding its trade unions and confiscating its properties. In March and April 1925, seven new articles were added to the DRA, including the article stating that political opponents would face maximum punishment: the death penalty. Thus, the DRA provided lawful instruments with the purpose of eliminating political opponents. This type of 'legal' civil war permitted the elimination not only of political adversaries but also of whole groups of the population, or at least those who resisted integration into the 'new' political system.

After this wave of massacres, a period of purges began among civil servants in the state and regional administrations. Within the Ministry of National

18 See *Държавен вестник*, [Durzhaven vestnik], 16 March 1925, N. 278.

Education, the army of teachers entered the spotlight. As a whole, this group was often suspected for being non-supporters of authoritarian methods and for championing leftist ideas. It is certainly not a coincidence that, during his leadership, Tsankov appointed himself both Bulgaria's Prime Minister and the Minister of National Education.¹⁹ In his role as the latter, he made it his personal agenda to reform the teaching population. Thus, there are hundreds of reports documenting various state investigations conducted on teachers, who were then pursued for leftism, communism, and anti-state activity. Not surprisingly, many of these documents are sanctioned by Tsankov's handwritten verdict and signature. During the autumn of 1923, under the Defence of the Realm Act, Tsankov's regime fired more than 1500 teachers without giving them a fair trial. Teachers were accused and dismissed mostly under Article 20 of the DRA, but also under Articles 40 and 80 of the Law of the Ministry of National Education.

The second period of purges occurred after another military takeover on 19 May 1934. This incited a new wave of purges against leftist and communists. In July, modifications were made to the DRA; these new laws sanctioned even more terror for defectors. For example, all political parties were abolished, and all free trade-unions and associations were suspended; subsequently, strikes were prohibited. The government began to nominate prefects; likewise, elected mayors were replaced by centrally appointed officials. In the school system, the regime introduced more centralization that allowed the government more ways for policing teachers. This type of repressive legislation grew during the period 1939–1944, thanks to a variety of new articles and amendments that allowed for the implementation of novel disciplinary procedures.²⁰

By special decree, the government created a single union for all educational employees known as the Union for Popular Instruction, and over 27,000 employees were directed towards membership. In an internally circulated directive the regime set the curriculum, including the values, which were to be taught at school: *'the teacher has to champion the diffusion of the values such as the state, the nation, the anti-class discourse, the Monarchy, and the religion'*.²¹ Suddenly, state propaganda saturated the educational curriculum, and it became the teacher's duty and professional obligation to deliver the message. As records reveal, any teacher who seemed to be less-than-zealous in delivering the curriculum easily became suspected as a 'leftist–communist–anarchist'. For the authoritarian governments, the teacher was often viewed as a possible opponent: as an intellectual, he had the potential to criticize the government or, even worse, engage in liberal thinking. Therefore, once an individual was accused, he remained under suspicion throughout his career

19 He is again Minister of National Education from 15 May 1930 to 29 June 1931.

20 See Никола Балабанов, А. Манев, *Зборник с отбрани окръжни от Освободителната война до края на 1942 г.*, [Selected circular letters from the Liberation until 1942], Sofia: 1943, T.1.

21 Балабанов, Манев (1943), 450–52.

and was constantly under surveillance. Even after restitution of his teaching rights, accusations could always be reactivated. As a public servant, he was, in a sense, more vulnerable than the average citizen.

AFTER THE PEASANT INSURRECTION IN SEPTEMBER 1923

As the Ministry's archives show, there are numerous files containing accusations against teachers for being disloyal to the government. Additionally, immediately after the insurrection and its failure, there appears to be a proliferation of denunciations against communism formulated by individual citizens. This occurred because firstly the law itself broadly defined the notion of guilt. Additionally, governmental procedures adhered to practices that were based on extreme subjectivity. Such practices gave not only government officials but also every citizen legal means to denounce, intimidate, question, accuse, and persecute anyone who seemed to be derailing state goals.

From this point in the text, I am specifically referencing articles found within the DRA in order to illustrate how the law itself promoted – even ‘opened the door’ for – a spree of persecution and intolerance. This might be the reason why many accusations that were documented in the Ministry's archive seem arbitrary, random, and ill founded.

Article 3

Article 3, added in 1925, delineates the notion of a ‘guilty person’ as someone ‘who *provides resources, facilitates, conceals, supports or helps by giving advices, or in any other way,*²² the aforementioned in the Article 1 organizations, groups, their annexes or their members’.

Article 4

This article charges those who ‘accept, dissimulate, transport, collect or produce guns, objects or explosives *willingly*, or if established after considering the circumstances (those) who *must have known* that these could be employed for activities mentioned in Articles 1, 8 and 13’.

Article 6

This article charges those who, ‘in an oral or written way, or by publishing in print, are citing propaganda or suggesting a regime change, either political

22 Emphasis mine in all italicised phrases in the articles discussed.

or economical; these persons are committing crimes and performing violent, terrorist activities’.

Article 7

This denoted even more situations within which one could be identified as public enemy. It is applied to those who ‘*in an oral or written way, in printed issues, books or in any other type of publications are encouraging hostility or committing crimes against particular classes or segments of the population, or against the authorities and by doing this...[they] can put in jeopardy the social and the legal order in the country*’.

Article 20

Article 20, which was introduced in January 1924 and was later modified in March 1925, directly addressed the issue of teachers as public servants. During twenty years, this ‘damned article’, as it was called later, was known for harassing and dismissing of hundreds of teachers. Many teachers were investigated two or three times between the period 1923–1938; once investigated, even if the subject was proven innocent, he or she remained listed as suspect.²³

The article specifies that anyone ‘who is either member or gives assistance to organizations, groups, or associations forbidden by the law, as well as for anyone who is *sympathizing with communists and anarchists or is supporting violent methods of social and political contest, cannot occupy a public position of the state, regional or local level or in the National Assembly, etc. If this is the case, he must be fired. If the person is elected as national deputy, regional or local representative or councillor, he loses his mandate*’.

Indeed, key words such as ‘sympathizer’ were widely employed in accusations. Such descriptors were not only vague notions but also proved to be flexible, making the measurable parameters of the notion of ‘guilty’ become *indefinite*. What did it mean to ‘provide any kind of support’? How could the person in charge of the investigation (the inspector from the ministry, the police, etc.), identify situations of ‘helping’ or of ‘giving support’? What could be measured as a proven act of ideology against the state and the social order? Even though these concepts were subjective, numerous cases were considered, demonstrating how easy it was to make, produce, and, more often, fabricate a state enemy. For example, having someone to one’s home

23 This article was suspended in 1944 along with the entire DRA, only to be replaced with Article 2 from the Ordinance on ‘cleansing the educational personnel at the people’s primary and secondary schools, the teachers’ institutes, the universities, high schools and academia’, found guilty of supporting fascism. See *Darzhaven vestnik*, 3 November 1944, N. 243.

for dinner or sharing a drink in a café could be interpreted and used later as evidence ‘for providing life resources, helping, and giving advice’. Officials needed little in order to initiate an investigation. In villages, the inspector, the police, and other officials conducted interviews with witnesses, who were not only local officials but also relatives, friends, neighbours, and colleagues of those accused.

*THE INVESTIGATION PROCEDURE:
THE MINISTRY BETWEEN ADMINISTRATIVE AUTONOMY
AND POLITICAL DEPENDENCY*

Different archival documents outlined the methods in which individuals were investigated. During these political purges, the majority of them were dismissed without trial. Most of the records presented cases of teachers who were already dismissed by special decree under Martial Law, which means that they were not investigated properly. Those dismissed generally proclaimed their innocence and demanded the right of an objective investigation from their Ministry, which had the obligation to respond.

An investigation starts, generally, after receiving a letter of accusation that was sent to the minister or with a letter from a dismissed teacher demanding rehabilitation. Next, the minister ordered the regional inspector to open an investigation and the school director ‘to give opinion’. Further, the regional inspector assigned the district (*obshtinski*) inspector to make inquiries around the village or town. After inquiring, at the end of the report, the two inspectors had to give their ‘personal opinion’ (*lichno mnenie*) deeming innocence or guilt. In most cases, the regional inspector accepted the opinion of the investigating district inspector and reproduced the text, using the same wording, later submitting that report to the minister. The minister, following in the same vein, generally approved all recommendations from his inspectors. While the local district inspector was the individual to conduct the interviews in the village, the regional inspector investigated other institutions that could have been involved. Finally, regional police submitted information, which was added to the report.

In parallel with the Ministry of National Education, a police investigation was often undertaken hastily, especially during the period of Martial Law. The Ministry of Interior would often convince the Minister of National Education to uphold a sentence of guilt, demanding the dismissal of the accused from his job and pronouncing the teacher as ‘leftist and communist’, without conducting a proper investigation. In any case, despite the conclusion of the police inquiry, the Ministry of National Education had always conducted an independent investigation, which was carried out by inspectors from the Ministry, all of them former teachers with long and respected careers. If an

inspector discovered that a police officer had forged documents, incriminated a witness, or bribed locals, then the minister could decide that the teacher be granted a process of rehabilitation.

*THE 'LETTER OF ACCUSATION' OR THE PORTRAIT
OF THE TEACHER AS INTERNAL ENEMY*

The letter of accusation opening the process of investigation is, of course, an essential piece we find often as document number one in an individual's files. The reading of hundreds of letters shows common structure, semantics and even scenarios in producing accusations. The semantics of accusation appear to be identical to the last period of purges that has not been considered, namely 1944–1949. In reading any letters denouncing someone for being an 'active fascist', one has the impression that someone is telling the same story – only the accusing political epithet is reversed (the Bad is not anymore leftist–communist, but rightist–fascist); thus it seems as if the past begins to repeat itself.

Hereafter, I will list a selection of excerpts taken from letters of accusation. The accuser's rhetoric shows how much words, metaphors, and expressions are at stake when they are to convince the reader of the truthfulness of their claim. My selection of key words and sentences gives examples of invariable language. Even though these letters are written at different times, throughout different historical periods and regimes, there is a haunting echo:

- 'Everybody knows', 'people say'; 'I have heard that X is a convinced/true Communist'; 'he has always been a state enemy but until now he has successfully managed to hide it. This is why this comes to light only now'; 'he is malicious, smart'; 'he is conspiring'.
- He often says: 'Be careful, because you expose yourself to big dangers'; One day he said to me/to someone: 'I'm afraid of possible investigation; you know what they suspect about me. We have to be united now...'

The denounced teacher is portrayed as someone dangerous and menacing towards 'others' (*drugite*), who are innocent and loyal to the government-supporting colleagues. He is all the time busy criticizing the colleagues 'who defend the true values', either in the school corridor, in the café, or on the street. In the rhetoric of accusation, these kinds of anecdotes seem important, certainly because they do emphasize the menacing determination of the activist: he is working in a hidden anti-regime organization. This makes it more plausible that he would be the object of purges, rather than if he was simply a 'thinker' or 'sympathizer'.

- ‘All my hopes are in you!’ This key statement was made to schoolchildren as a way of recruiting them for anti-government activities. Here, the teacher as the true state-enemy has begun recruiting students in order to change their minds to oppose the current regime.
- ‘He is having friendships with people who are well-known communists/fascists/ enemies of the regime. This is why people think he is also such...’ This leitmotif can be found in cases when the teacher is lucky enough not to have some close relative who is an ‘established’ communist/fascist. In the last case, the accusers generally report that ‘the whole family is viscerally, purely, from bygone times leftist–communist/rightist–fascist’. Often, the accuser uses popular proverbs to work against the accused, making the behaviour seem organic—what else can someone be, ‘born from the same tree’ or ‘carrying the same blood’?²⁴
- ‘*He/she sometimes addresses students with “comrade”*’. This sentence characterizes those individuals reported to be leftists–communists. In this case, the accuser, or ‘everybody’, at some moment, wears a red ribbon on their shirt, often stating their disloyalty to ‘this’ regime.
- ‘He is in correspondence with a communist/fascist’ from another town/village/country.
- ‘He divides children in two fractions: “ours” and the “other’s”’.
- ‘His house is headquarters for secrete meetings between communist/fascist conspirators’.
- In the end, some personal characteristics make the accusation look even more convincing: The teacher–traitor is often an ‘idiot, brutal, pervert and bohemian’. Occasionally, he is even portrayed as a ‘very bad teacher,’ as one who ‘children do not like’.

The following section describes individual cases in order to show the complex way in which every member of society could have been dragged into accusatory situations, either as accuser or accused. We see how interactions between the state and those accused involved all levels of society, including relatives, colleagues, and friends.

24 See for example the case of Velyo Mandulov, a teacher in Koprivshtica, 65 years old, member of the Radical-Democratic party. Close to retirement, in 1925 he is denounced for hiding at his home his two sons who were being pursued by the police for ‘being communist criminals’. ЦДНА, Фонд № 177К, оп. 3, арх. ед. №. 92А.

Vasil Petrov

Petrov²⁵ was a teacher in the village of Kopilovtsi, located in the district of Berkovica, which is in the region of Vratsa. He was dismissed instantly on 29 April 1924, under Article 82 of the Law of the Ministry of National Education and Article 15 of the Defence of the Realm Act, without investigation, 'for participation in the communist insurrection in September 1923'. The accusation read as such: 'pronounced and active communist, in the September insurrection he was leading a band of 30 persons from the village to the warfront near the town of Ferdinand. He is against the current regime and the state'.

Petrov falls victim to a wave of accusations, which occurred after the insurrection of September 1923. During this period of time, a single allegation could result in an instant dismissal without investigation.

The teacher was fired after a letter, authored by a border guard living in the village of Kolpilovtsi. As administrative procedure required, the minister demanded that the school director in the village write a report documenting his 'personal statement', describing the teacher's political profile and 'past and current activities' (*otnosno minalata i nastoiashta dejnost*). The school director sent the letter back, via the Regional Inspection, simply by repeating the same charges that had been posed against Vasil Petrov (later we will learn that the content of the letter was falsified). One month later, the regional inspector in Vraca, Ivan Sankov, sent the director's letter to the minister in Sofia. His 'personal statement' read: 'I recommend (*hodatajstvam*) the dismissal of the teacher as participant in the insurrection; he is still today a pronounced communist'.

Five days later, Minister Alexandar Tsankov ordered the immediate dismissal of the teacher *even though* the police investigation was still ongoing. Soon after the pronouncement was given, the teacher wrote to the minister, proclaiming his innocence and demanding the right to a 'fair investigation'. A first inquiry was conducted in the beginning of June 1924. The investigation revealed inconsistencies within the accusations, specifically that documents had been falsified. In May 1930, a second investigation was conducted, which produced the same verdict as that of the inspectors: innocent – must be rehabilitated. Despite these two final reports, both of which revealed facts proving Petrov's innocence, he still was not rehabilitated. Additionally, from this archive we are not given any information concerning the end of his story.

– *First inquiry: 10 June 1924*

The first report of investigation (*sledstven protocol po anketa*) describes an inquiry that was conducted on 10 June 1924 in the village of Kopilovtsi by the

25 ЦДНА, Фонд № 177К, оп. 3, арх. ед. №.1158.

assistant inspector of the district of Berkovitsa, Georgi Aleksiev. The inquiry aimed ‘to establish whether or not Vassil Petrov participated in the insurrection of September 1923 and whether he remains an active communist’. The documents, totalling some 19 handwritten pages, contained the inspector’s report, which was approximately three pages long, a five-page protocol, which contained written statements given by a total of 25 interrogated persons, a letter of ‘explanation’ (*obyasnenia*) authored by Vassil Petrov himself, a letter of ‘explanation’ of another teacher who found himself accused by the same person from the village; three official letters written by representatives of the ruling party coalition *Democraticheski sgovor* (Democratic Alliance), and two letters signed by the mayor and other local deputies from the municipality of Kopilovtsi. The last page was the letter of regional inspector Sankov, giving *this time* the opposite verdict, which reads: ‘not guilty, innocent’. The final recommendation was: ‘Restitution of the teaching rights’.

– *Second inquiry: January 1930*

Six years later (in January 1930), a second investigation was carried out by the same district inspector, Aleksiev. This time the protocol appears shorter: ‘only’ ten people gave written testimonies. In the annex is the teacher’s letter demanding rehabilitation, which is dated November 1929. The teacher writes that he does not understand why after being exonerated on the basis of two inspectors’ recommendations for rehabilitation in June 1924, this order has never been executed. He narrates how difficult it has been for him to live with false blame, while remaining suspended from all public and state jobs. The minister then orders a new ‘meticulous verification of the current activities’ of the teacher in his native village of Botevo, where he now resides. The local inspector then gives the same opinion as the former: ‘he did not participate in the insurrection in September 1923; he is respected greatly by the people in the village. Now he is financial secretary in the Municipality of Botevo’. Again, we do not see the final decision of the minister, which is usually written on the first page of the final report.

There is no explanation as to why the minister did not follow his inspector’s recommendations. We do not know from this document if the teacher was kept out of the school system and state employment for political reasons, for bureaucratic reasons, or because of someone’s personal vendetta. Nevertheless, from this new inquiry we understand that the police inquiry did not confirm charges against him as an ‘active communist’; it also noted that he was not involved in the insurrection. What we do learn is that he has acquired the position of financial secretary of the village of Botevo; certainly, a position of that level denotes that he was an important and respected person.

– *The ‘version’ of the accusation*

In this archive, we do not have the letter of accusation produced by the officer. The only ‘document’ charging the teacher with criminal political activity is a letter signed by the school director. From this, we understand that this accusation was taken seriously enough to order the dismissal of a teacher. Later, after the inspector’s investigation, we know that the school director did not write the letter; instead, his signature was forged. Nonetheless, this letter is of interest because it contains all of the ingredients needed for someone to fabricate an ‘ideal’ enemy of the state. In this letter, which is dated 12 March 1924, the officer gives the following account of the criminal activity of the teacher:

‘During the insurrection, he occupies the position of battalion chief, leading a group of locals out of the village to the town of Ferdinand. All this “remains unknown for the authorities” because he managed to escape from the hands of authorities by pure chance. Back in the village he started teaching again. However, after the events, Petrov did not break with his communist engagement and, worse, he was now a much more frenetic supporter of this destructive idea. Immediately after his return to the village, he subscribed to two new communist magazines; he ordered all recently published books by the editorial house Bakalov (a leftist one). He exchanges letters with extremist elements from all over the country, even from Serbia. He tried to help some of his comrades flee through the border of Serbia, and, for this act, the authorities arrested him. He was then released by the police for unknown reasons despite the strange disappearance of a box with compromising letters’.

– *The teacher’s version*

Vassil Petrov claims his innocence and denounces a serious calumny against him by a ‘self-interested person’. He relates the following facts: he came in the village as teacher only two days before the insurrection; he did not know anybody before, as he was appointed to teach there for the first time. He cannot reasonably become a leader of a band of 30 persons in a place that he had travelled to for the first time in his life. How could partisans rely upon someone they had never met before? He left the village because of the state of emergency; when school is not in session, he does not have a place to sleep, money, food, or clothes, as his family was supposed to arrive a few days later with his luggage. In this way, he left Kopilovtsi during the emergency and was trying to reach his native village. On the road, because of the dangerous situation, he stayed in the town of Ferdinand at a friend’s place until the local commander delivered him a pass to take the road back to Kopilovtsi and return to his teaching post. From October to April he conducted his duties as a teacher when, suddenly, he received a letter announcing his dismissal from all schools and state positions in the Kingdom. He writes, ‘I couldn’t be a par-

tisan of destruction, as I'm the founder of the youth organization of the party *Democraticheski sgovor*. I have always been an active member of the party. I have been giving all my free time and energy to this group'.

– *The inspectors' verdict*

The inspector's report helps clarify the case. The interrogated persons confirm the teacher's version of the events. Except for one, none of the 25 inhabitants of the village, who were questioned by the inspector, can confirm any of the charges that were made against the teacher. He is not a communist; he did not participate in the insurrection; he did not lead a band; he is not against the state or the regime. The people report the opposite behaviour: Vassil Petrov is well known as active supporter of the ruling party's coalition, *Demokraticeski sgovor*. Most of the witnesses attest that villagers support the accused and denounce 'the defamation and calumny fabricated by the officer'. The principal accuser did not even appear during the inspector's stay in the village; in fact, the only other accuser, when asked to identify at least three of the thirty rebels from the village that Vassil Petrov was supposed to lead, was not able to name more than one name.

First, the inspector argues that it is strange that an accusation claiming active participation in an insurrection was not reported until so late, nearly six months after the event. Indeed, the documents reveal a complex intrigue, one that is far from political and ideological distrust: 'If the teacher had not been nominated for school principal in this village, then these accusations would not exist', writes the inspector. What is at stake for the officer, interestingly, is his wife's career. In fact, he, himself a stranger in the region, was appointed to the border area some years ago. At the time, his wife was serving as a teacher and school principal in Kopilovtsi until the academic year 1923–1924 when Vassil Petrov was nominated 'in her place'. The officer's wife found herself downgraded 'for lack of competence'. The officer then became furious and turned all his anger towards Vassil Petrov. For six months, 'he tried everything to convince the school director to dismiss Petrov', writes the inspector. 'When pressure, harassment, and physical means did not work, feelings of vindictiveness and malice' ensued. The officer was inspired to make false accusations, thereby falsifying the signature of the school director who never, in fact, wrote a letter addressed to the minister. Last but not least, writes Inspector Aleksiev, the officer's case is 'also interesting'. He had recently served time in prison, and, during the insurrection, was liberated by a rebel party, which the prosecutor of the region confirmed. Towards the end of the document, the inspector added six letters from local officials in support of Vassil Petrov's innocence.

The only documents we can read from the accusation might have appeared suspicious to an inspector before the start of an inquiry. What kind of un-

reasonable person could this ‘convinced communist’ be, who, ‘immediately after the insurrection’, facing accusations of terrorism, would subscribe to two new communist-like newspapers or accept deliveries from a well-known leftist editor? Thus, the whole list of criminal charges sounds naïve and exaggerated from the onset. However, upon closer look, after analyzing the structure of the letter and the type of accusations produced, we can see a clear logic. Each accusation directly responds to one of the articles described in the DRA; thus, the reader begins to get the feeling that the individual writing this letter has kept the DRA in front of him or her during the writing in order to align all parts of the fabrication with the respective articles. Thus the subject is guilty to the highest possible degree of guiltiness (Articles 1, 2, 3, 13, 14, 15, 16, 18, 20). For at least three of the crimes, the punishment is the capital sanction: death.

The teacher was neither executed nor imprisoned, meaning none of the accusations was proven in the military court. Yet, six years later, he was not rehabilitated despite the results of the second inquiry. While he does gain the position of secretary of the municipality, his reputation is still compromised forever, as the minister never formally expunges his guilt.

This is the method by which Bulgaria’s judiciary and legal system became an instrument that had the power to regulate relationships between individuals; this was particularly evident in a context where governmental authoritarianism sought to mobilize society, crushing the supposed ‘internal political enemy’. In this way, the accuser who is also a single individual can hold infinite power when the law gives him or her the means to manipulate the system.

Mara Ikonomova

Mara Ikonomova²⁶, a 45-year-old woman with 20 years of teaching experience, was teaching history in the high school of her native town, Dupnitsa. In 1938, she was accused of ‘being a leftist–communist’ for the third time in her career. Like Vassil Petrov, she was accused and dismissed without investigation in October 1924, following a letter that was written by a ‘well connected’ person. Like Petrov, she was investigated the following year, but, unlike Petrov, she was quickly rehabilitated the second time, until... her third inculcation in 1938.

The archive mentions three inspectors’ reports from 1924, 1935, and 1938; however, only the last one is available. Basically, after the September uprising, Mara Ikonomova was teaching at the secondary school in Gorna Dzhumaya (today Blagoevgrad) when she was dismissed without investigation for the first time. One year later, after the intervention of her father, the former

26 ЦДНА, Фонд № 177К, оп. 3, арх. ед. №.1214

mayor of Dupnitsa, the Ministry of National Education investigated her. In this report, the inspector proclaimed her innocence, and she was rehabilitated. With her husband and three children, she even managed to obtain a nomination for employment in her native town, Dupnitsa. Ten years later (in 1935), however, she was again accused of being communist after a single letter of accusation was submitted to the minister. At that time, she was transferred to another school in the town of Gorna Dzhumaya. A few months later, after undergoing a regular investigation, she was again proven innocent and she returned to her teaching position in Dupnitsa.

In 1938, for a third time, she became the victim of yet another accusation; this time, the report was based on a falsified document: a postcard, which was supposedly written by Ikonomova and addressed to a political prisoner in Sliven. On the back of the postcard, the note was signed with her name, expressing her affection and support for the prisoner – including his political ideas. In his report to the minister, the inspector described his methods of investigation: he had appointed a ‘commission of experts’ (the school director, the regional inspector, and the teacher of painting from the same school) to examine the handwriting on the postcard in comparison with the handwriting of the accused woman. The sentence was made easily: not guilty. The inspector then wrote an account detailing complex local intrigues combined with his personal interpretations of the events.

Inspector Krachunov’s report gives us a lively description of this local intrigue: he delicately shared his own feeling that the investigations of Ikonomova were a waste of time. As with many other cases, he found that interpersonal conflicts were at the roots of all complaints; in fact, the teachers were not active communists or engaged in anti-state activities. In the case of Inspector Krachunov,²⁷ we can admire the writing style of the inspector’s report, which relates his own research on the town and the region. He describes current events and their local outcomes as a sociologist would, sketching various social profiles and identifying competing social groups. At the same time, Inspector Krachunov works like a psychologist, trying to understand the teacher’s psychological profile. Last but not least, he reflects like a philosopher on the events of ‘our time’ and the mentality of the people.

‘*O tempore, o mores!*’ he exclaims on the first sentence of his report. ‘Lucky we are with our mission of national instruction!’ he adds ironically. Here, he seems to have felt rather exhausted from his efforts to recount five typed pages concerning the intricacies of the Ikonomova case. Finally, he describes the misunderstandings that have ensued between people from rival families and opposite camps. In this case, the accusers themselves had been accused of being communists; thus, the reader gets the feeling that none of the involved

27 Inspector Krastyo Krachunov is a famous intellectual, writer, publicist and translator from French.

participants believe what was said. What about leftist/communists then? If we follow the argument given by the inspector, the explanation is simple: the teacher is not an active communist, as she has already been twice rehabilitated. Again, in this case, the incriminating document is forged; the people interviewed do not incriminate her as a state enemy.

Inspector Krachunov agrees with the very positive evaluation that is given about the teacher's personal character and teaching qualities. Colleagues describe her as being 'erudite in history and literature; she loves her profession and students, has a lively temperament, and is a gifted orator'.

Despite her innocence, the inspector seems to wonder why Ikonomova would be involved in so many conflicts. Why is she so often a victim of bad-intentioned people, within her native town? He found four plausible reasons: her famous and heroic family history; her cultural and social activism, which might be considered 'too dynamic'; her individual character; and her husband who might demonstrate 'some communist' behaviour.

Indeed, Mara Ikonomova comes from a powerful and well-to-do bourgeois family. Her father was considered a hero because of his actions during the Bulgarian-Serbian war in 1885. For many years he served as the mayor of the town. Her brother was also a famous lawyer; he led one of the factions in the local structure of the governing coalition, *Demokraticeski sgovor*. Mara Ikonomova herself studied history at the University of Sofia, and she had a very strong knowledge of German and French. In the town, she was the founder and sponsor of the local Society for Historical Studies, and had authored many publications on historical subjects. The inspector noted that her work had a 'patriotic emphasis'. Finally, her husband was both a magistrate and an officer; he himself had been charged in the past as being leftist/communist.

'She also has difficult character', thought Krachunov. 'She has somewhat high self-esteem (*samomnenie*) and focuses on herself with a little touch of megalomania which is often the case with people socially active and full of energy. She can be a little impulsive and this psychology could easily embroil her in personal conflicts. Therefore, I can imagine many people jealous and envious, even capable of feeling of detestation'.

In describing the intricacies of the case, the inspector does not forget to complete his mission: establishing the fact of whether she is innocent or guilty. In the paragraph on 'personal opinion' he pleads as a defender does in front of the judge:

'If we accept as true the accusation against her husband for active communism, does it logically mean that she is communist also and therefore she has to endure the same sanction? On these delicate questions, Your Excellency, you have already been the best judge when sometime ago, following a recommendation of mine, you restituted teaching rights to Tsanka Koleva and now

she is a successful teacher in Suhindol. Maybe Ikonomova was sometime ago with “communist inclinations,” as some people put it. Does she have to pay for it now? Because if we follow this logic, many intellectuals and politicians known for their past leftist/communist and socialist ideas shouldn’t be free and running in elections but must be now in prison. Therefore, in the present case it is important to clarify whether Ikonomova demonstrates anti-state activities NOW and this must be positively established, with facts’.

– *The teacher’s version*

Mara Ikonomova recounts her own version of the incidents in a letter of explanation addressed to the inspector. After the coup d’état in June 1923, internal fights broke out between the two factions within the ruling party coalition, *Democraticheski sgovor*. Her brother became one of the leaders. His ‘personal enemy’ was the leader of the other faction, Dimtchev. Willing to do anything to take over the party’s leadership, Dimtchev ‘attacked’ by writing anonymous letters, which falsely accused the sister and her husband. Ikonomova thought he had succeeded at the time because he had maintained good relationships with powerful people in Sofia. She expressed her disappointment that even though she was proven innocent, the evil accusations had followed her throughout her life.

Ikonomova claimed that she was not leftist; in fact, she had fought throughout her life against the left of the Social Democratic Party within the Bulgarian Teachers’ Union. As a very active member of the Independent Teachers’ Union, she often organized events in the region on ‘historical and patriotic themes’. Perhaps, she thought, this was why she was ‘hated’ and ‘harassed’ by Unionists from the Bulgarian Union. At that time, in 1934, the source of false charges was the ‘broad socialists’ milieu in the town and some of its ‘old leaders’ that ‘were not yet purged by the current regime’; moreover, they were well placed in the ministry. They forged the accusation against her, she wrote. Some time ago, she had to organize with members of the Independent Union a conference in the village of Boboshevo on the topic, ‘Formation of Bulgarian Nationality’. In order to ruin her initiative, the Bulgarian Union organized an alternative event exactly the same day in Dupnitsa. Thus, she described herself as being a ‘victim of broad socialists’ (*zhertva na shirokanstvoto*); their goal was to take over the whole power in the syndicate; their methods were ‘Jesuit’, and they ‘employed intrigues’. These people were ‘residues’ of the ‘broad socialist disease’; they had to be ‘liquidated until the last remnant’. They ‘represent mortal ulcers in the body of the Bulgarian school education’. In conclusion, she appealed to the minister stating that now was the time for the ministry to respond to the appeals of school teachers all over the country and to ‘help them more actively in their fight for liberation from the broad socialist yoke’ (*shirokansko igo*).

GROUP ANTAGONISMS: OFFICERS VERSUS TEACHERS

Reports on investigations raise the veil on tensions and conflicts between rival social groups. During authoritarian periods, antagonist relations increased between the teachers' association, which was always suspected of leftism, and the so-called officers' guild, which together were considered to be the pillars of the regime. As we will see, officers and police enhanced surveillance on teachers' everyday lives. For instance, the officers considered themselves to be guards of the regime; thus, they personally addressed the Ministry of National Education and used their privileged positions to give opinion. Ultimately, they began controlling cases of accusation and dismissal against those they deemed to be communist.

In the authoritarian period, pro-government officers were not only highly privileged but also untouchable by the law. Specifically, the Ministry of National Education sanctioned with 'reprimand' teachers who were heard criticizing officers in a public place. Oral statements that contained criticism against officers became illegal. Traditionally, teachers had complained about their salaries, especially when seeing how officers, whom they deemed had 'nothing to do all day', were highly compensated by the state. Reports, especially between 1934 and 1938, contain letters from the State Security (the Bulgarian Secret Service) addressed to the Minister of National Education; these letters describe activities of teachers who were suspected of being leftists/communists.²⁸

Dimitar Georgiev

Dimitar Georgiev²⁹ from the village of Protopintsi, Belogradchik region, was teaching in the village of Chernopole in the same district. In July 1934, he was accused by an anonymous source in the form of a letter. This person presented himself as simple peasant who talked on behalf of 'all villagers who feel exhausted by Georgiev's provocations'. He described the teacher as being a 'deeply perverted person', 'an inveterate, depraved', 'born with an instinct to corrupt people'. In this letter, he also characterized Georgiev as having 'anti-state ideas, [as someone who] doesn't stop in appealing for another regime, and who has Bolshevik ideas'. He concluded by saying that this teacher

28 See, for example, the investigation report written about the teacher and writer Stoyan Daskalov in 1937, who was teaching in the district of Vratsa. His report contains a letter from the secret services classified as 'strictly confidential' (ЦДНА, Фонд № 177К, оп. 3, арх. ед. №.1153). See also the report on teachers who used to publish in two newspapers that were printed in the town of Lom. The principal inspector, Serafim Mankov, describes his anxiety at the existence of two newspapers that could negatively impact the community, particularly since one of them was considered to be rightist (*desnicharski*) *Strazh*, and the other, *Sever*, was considered to be leftist (*levicharski*). This, he writes, 'divides teachers, pupils, citizens between "Rightists and Leftists"' (ЦДНА, Фонд № 177К, оп. 3, арх. ед. №.1898).

29 ЦДНА, Фонд № 177К, оп. 3, арх. ед. №.497.

was someone ‘who menaces with “*one day it will be my day, which means I will be you butcher*”. This person cannot be re-educated, he cannot resurrect in another man’.

Through such a serious accusation, we understand that the accused teacher spent four years in jail as political prisoner. This occurred after he was accused following the September uprising in 1923. After liberation, he recovered his teaching position. This restitution of the teaching position did not seem to be acceptable for the accuser. In creating a portrait of Georgiev, he added, ‘additionally, people in the village say he is afflicted with venereal disease’. For the anonymous accuser, this information was serious; he cited the source as the teachers’ daughter-in-law herself. He even demanded that the minister should have Georgiev examined by a medic.

The rest of the document does not confirm this theory. There appears a letter signed by ten officers of the reserve from the village of Cherno Pole, addressed to the chief of the garrison and to the chief inspector at the Ministry of National Education. They write to ‘guarantee that the teacher is a good Bulgarian’. The letter protests against the anonymous writer, whom they believe to be a person ‘motivated by private interests’. A letter with similar content, mailed also in November 1934, is documented as arriving from two neighbouring villages Izvor and Shipot, both near the town of Lom, where the teacher taught from 1931 to 1933. It is a group of non-commissioned officers from the reserve, which writes also confirming that the teacher, when he was in their village, ‘did not hold any leftist convictions at all. He demonstrated that he had broken with the past, and now he takes a new way’.

The district inspector notes in his report, which was created without having a full investigation, that the same teacher was already investigated the previous year for ‘anti-state activities’. We are told in the report that ‘in the past, Georgiev was a communist, and he was condemned for four-and-a-half years in strict imprisonment for his beliefs’. Then, ‘he was released early because he showed good behaviour and worked hard in the prison’s collective farm. Since then, as a teacher, he did not proclaim himself to be communist anymore’. The inspector also notes that the police did not rely solely on the opinion given by officers, who were not members of one of the well-known patriotic unions: ‘This makes their opinion less reliable and thus the military authority does not support the teacher. Therefore, the officers’ opinion cannot have the same weight that it would have had if they had been members of a prestigious union of officers. This was the reason why the teacher was not given a teaching position for that academic year’.

Authoritarian regimes generally found any intellectual and cultural activist suspicious. Participation in clubs or reading publications was considered to be particularly questionable. Many investigations were subsequently pursued after officers ‘read’ signals concerning teachers whom they deemed were not

engaged in the socio-cultural life. In January 1937, Serafim Munkov, the Principal Inspector, reported the case of a teacher, Stoimenov, who taught history in the high school of Lom: 'He goes often in the library of the city'. The inspector noted: he was a 'solitary person, who likes to stay alone, reading books'; 'he doesn't socialize with others'; 'he doesn't have friends; he keeps his distance from others; he doesn't go out', and 'he doesn't have a good relationship with his wife'. This particular report also contains a letter from the Secret Service attesting to the fact that 'he has leftist ideas, as proven by the fact that he visits very often the library of the bookseller G. Georgiev, who is a well-known leftist' (1938).

In another investigation from December 1937, Inspector Krastyo Krachunov investigates the high school in the village of Gorna Oriahovitsa. There, he displays his rhetorical skills when trying to absolve the teacher Stoyan Georgiev, who was close to retirement. This particular teacher was teaching French and German and held a university degree in Slavic and French languages. Georgiev also served as a French translator, often publishing in the newspaper *Bulgarie*. In his report, the inspector defends the teacher, who is accused of being a leftist/communist. He attempts to dismantle the accusation that has been made by a police agent, describing the man as one who 'gets too much involved in the school life and produces unfounded accusations'.

Many of the accusations were made against members of the Agrarian Party after the party system was abolished in 1934. These former members, or sympathizers of the Agrarian Party, were then widely persecuted. In this case, the notion of 'zealously taking care' (*se prestarava*) of the school cooperative proved to be enough to provoke suspicion, which resulted in enhanced police surveillance. This, for example, was seen in the case pertaining to the secondary school in Lovech (in April 1937). In this case, a certain teacher of philosophy, Dimitar Anguelov,³⁰ was reported to have given money to help the school cooperative. This, of course, could not be tolerated by a regime that was looking for good reasons to dismantle any cooperative structure that had been implemented by the regime of the Agrarian Party. In this spirit, Inspector G. Stoitsev writes to the minister:

'We [referring to a police representative and himself] did not realize that Anguelov was giving money to the cooperative [...] My conviction is that the teacher is overzealous in providing support to the school cooperative, what gave us reason to suspect that he has other motives [...] What his motives are is difficult to guess, as the students are very prudent and discreet. I personally think that Anguelov works for the communists, but we don't have evidence yet. There have been testimonies given by the leader of students whom we trust, for he was nominated by the director. It appears that life in the coopera-

30 ЦДНА, Фонд № 177К, оп. 3, арх. ед. №.111.

tive is far from normal. This student says that the teachers who are members of the cooperative mostly belong to leftist groups and that nationalists are a minority. It looks to me that there is some kind of leftist tradition in this cooperative. My opinion is that this existing suspicion is reason good enough to close the cooperative’.

I have chosen to present these individual cases in order to have a glimpse of the everyday life of the accused teachers and all other actors involved in the accusation process. Here, we see common ingredients that make everyday life in a village or town more than difficult, particularly during a time of political purges. Once accused, no matter what the verdict, the accused could hardly restore his or her social position and reputation. This type of post-revolutionary situation in Bulgaria around 1923 and under Martial Law made it frightening for the teacher. It is at this moment in Bulgarian history when the militarized state was executing people without trial; at the same time, such chaos permitted opportunists to fulfil their personal ambitions.

The importance of personal connections (friendship, kinship) and social interests is striking. The historical cases demonstrate how arbitrary some decisions of the ministry were – for example, sometimes people were rehabilitated, and sometimes they were not. In the Bulgarian authoritarian context, officers became the privileged members of society. Thus, they became a type of corporation that negotiated a patron–client relationship with the governing party; this gave them elevated status and important privileges at the expense of others.

On the other hand, the bureaucrats (inspectors, ministers, and government functionaries) found themselves to be overwhelmed by an insurmountable amount of letters and accusations they were expected to investigate. Numerous reports made by inspectors from the ministry show that they felt pressured, too. What we learn from these investigations is that bureaucrats were not happy with the situation. They had to deal with enormous quantities of inculcation, and they often complained that their time was wasted with cases that had nothing to do with politics. Simultaneously, the regime created its enemies. After the so-called ‘sweep of the revolution’, the immediate dismissal of more than one thousand teachers without trial became a huge burden on the shoulders of state administration. As internal documents show, the sweep after the September uprising of 1923 left the country almost without teachers. At that time, in spite of political pressure, every application for rehabilitation had to be taken seriously. In its turn, the wave of purges generated a subsequent wave of inquiries for rehabilitation, which happened simultaneously with the opening of new cases mostly based on accusations written by members of the mainstream society.

PART II

LEFTIST/RIGHTIST CLEAVAGE IN GREECE.

THE CASE OF THE VILLAGE OF ORIO IN GREEK MACEDONIA

This part of the paper will focus on the left/right bipolarity, as social cleavage still characterized the Greek sequel inherited from past political violence. I have conducted research on a project that examines trans-border relations between the Slavic-speaking population in Greek Macedonia and the Macedonians from the Republic of Macedonia. During the Civil War, most Slavomacedonian inhabitants were expelled from the country along with other Greeks who were fighting on the Communist side against the national army. At the time of the expulsion, many were forced to leave their relatives on the Greek side. Often these were very close relatives (children, parents, sisters, and brothers).

THE VILLAGE OF ORIO

The village of Orio is situated in a mountainous area, close to the border of the Republic of Macedonia. The village is inhabited mostly by *Dopii*, or Locals, a word denoting Slavic speakers of the region. Today, there are not more than 20 inhabitants in the village, most of whom are elderly, except for two young families engaged in agricultural activities. From the spring to the end of the summer, however, children and grandchildren living during the year in cities come to spend some vacation time there. Meanwhile, relatives and visitors arrive, most of whom are from Western Europe, Australia, the United States, and Canada. There are also visitors from the Republic of Macedonia, here prudentially called 'inside' (*messa*), as the name of the Macedonian state still poses political problems for Greeks. The village and its central square come alive during that time of year. One might describe it as parade of 'passing by' visitors, who bring with them gifts, different memories and narratives. Coming from different generations and countries, they talk on various subjects, including political topics that were long considered taboo; they revive discussions on the past, displaying different and conflictual memories transmitted by their parents.

In the past few years, a new element has arrived among this summer landscape: visitors from the Republic of Macedonia, who are travelling now more easily to visit their relatives.³¹ Considering the linguistic configuration of the

31 There are also Albanians, mostly illegal workers, who belong to the Macedonian minority in Albania and who work on family farms and in the construction business during the farming season from March to October. As Macedonian speakers, they contribute to the reactivation of what I call 'the hidden language' in an area where local Greeks, native speakers, are also bilingual. It is interesting to note that Greeks from older generations also give their instructions to Albanians in Macedonian (whether they like it or not).

border populations, during the summer season, the village becomes a Macedonian speaking one, at least between May and September.

The ethnic composition of the village consists predominantly of Macedonian speakers. The village also comprises one family from the group of the so-called 'refugees' (*prosviges*), namely the descendants of Greek Orthodox Christians (Greek and/or Turkish-speaking) from Asia Minor, who settled in the region following the Treaty of Lausanne (1923). There are also descendants from the Vlach population, who originated from Albanian Epirus. This particular group settled in the village during 1953, when the state gave to the formerly nomadic population houses and land that had been confiscated from the locals who fled during the Civil War.

The story of this village is the same as that of many others in Western Greek Macedonia. During the Civil War, the village was split between Partisan-Communists and 'Monarcho-Fascists', the latter supporting the government army.

SUMMER, FIVE O'CLOCK IN THE AFTERNOON, THE VILLAGE SQUARE

After their 'siesta', men over fifty-years-old return to their benches where they usually sit and chat; they have done so everyday 'since forever'. They either chat or sit in silence, but more importantly, during the summer season, they act as the receiving 'court' while the visitors, both relatives and tourists, introduce themselves. This ritual requires that a visitor must present himself in the square soon after his arrival. The elders also respond to questions – general inquiries about the village, nothing personal. The reason that conversations are kept shallow is that this village used to be under police surveillance some years ago, thus open dialog with visitors on history and politics is certainly a new ritual for the locals.

In the centre of the village is the plaza that is crossed by the single village street. There is also a shop that seems to sell 'everything' as well as a small restaurant. Inside the plaza and under the two large shade trees, there are three long benches that face one another. Two other benches are to be found on the other side of the square, nearby yet far enough from the centre to function as a separate space. Every day about ten men sit down there, often very tightly, as if they were sticking to each other; each man occupies the same place on the same bench. It is a plaza of ritual.

Using this as my field for direct observation, I started every day drawing sketches of the configurations of grandfathers sitting on the benches. My two questions were always the same: Who are they? How are they related to one another?

One could be satisfied by questioning the relationship between the 'Dopii' and the 'Greeks', by scrutinizing which of cultural elements can be called either Greek or Macedonian, or by negotiating how the people of the village

deal with their different national and ethnic identities. These are the questions often asked by anthropologists studying this region. The results of the direct observation in the square, however, inspired me to take another direction; I have decided to look at the notion of 'political partisanship' and to question its influence over the village.

OBSERVATIONS

During one week, after 5 o'clock, I joined the group in the square in order to observe relations, discussions and circulations in this space. I was interested in who sits with whom, who discusses with whom and what kind of relationship characterizes the two groups in the two sets of benches. These observations led to the following general points: first, the ethnic composition of the 'bench population' does not reflect that of the village. From the total of 10–15 men who sat on the benches, only four of the six were locals. In fact, there were proportionally more *Prosviges* (six to ten of them) and no Vlachs. Furthermore, five of the members of the group came from the neighbouring village that has a different ethnic composition, because after 1923 the state settled there more Greek families from Asia Minor. Orio, however, remained almost 'pure', meaning that it was populated mostly by Macedonian speakers and three Vlach families.

Second, there are two distinct groups: the larger of the two sits on the three benches under the trees; the smaller contains no more than four or five men, who sit away and face the street. These two groups rarely address each other and never mix. Moreover, the benches are not set in an equal position. Three are well situated under the shadow of the trees and face each other; the two others sit facing the street and are more exposed to the sun. Taking a closer look at the interactions of the men holding the more desirable spots under the shadow of the trees, we can see that they are all related, either by kinship or by friendship, to the owner of the shop.

The shopkeeper is a man in his seventies, and, as a proud Macedonian, he is considered to be the most charismatic person in the neighbourhood. The people from the two separated, however, apparently do not have a close relationship with Petros; instead, they make only formal salutations to him. In contrast, the men under the trees are actively engaged in the shopkeeper's life; they frequently move back and forth from shop to the benches. In addition, Petros, his daughter, and his son-in-law join them from time to time on the benches. Thus, the central place of the village is both literally and symbolically possessed by those people closest to the owner of the shop. In terms of this group's ethnicity, the dominant population in the square is Greek, namely descendants of the refugees from Asia Minor. Of course, after 5 o'clock, visitors stroll into the village square and have chats with the bench dwellers.

What kind of relationships make the same ten people sit down every day together on the same benches? Why do these men never mix with the rest of the population or with those on the two little benches that hold another group of men a little further away?

I sat more often in the centre of the village with the ‘majority’ group. Sometimes I tried to join the other group. It was not easy; initially, people stayed silent. They considered me as someone who belonged to the ‘other’ group.

The benches under the trees that faced each other were always occupied by individuals who, during the Civil War, fought on the Communist side. The benches positioned under the sun were inhabited by ‘rightist’ locals, mostly Vlachs who were more willing to classify themselves as coming from anti-communist families. In the first group, the eldest members had fought together as members of the Communist guerrillas. The youngest members of the group were the refugee children who had been evacuated in March 1948 by partisans with Yugoslav assistance and were settled in Communist countries.³² Two of these men were together for eight years in Poland; in 1956, they were repatriated by the Red Cross. At that time, one was sent to Czechoslovakia and the other to his father, who was residing in the USSR (Tashkent, Uzbekistan). Three more men on the bench belonged to families who sympathized with Communists, but they themselves were too young to participate in the war. However, three of them had at least one relative who had been deported to a political prison camp on the islands of Ikaria and Mikronesos.

Today, these men consider themselves to be leftists – although this does not mean that they are constantly engaged in leftist party activities. In addition, some of them have never voted for the Communist Party but for PASSOK. For reasons that could be attributed to the local conjecture, some of them have voted for the rightist party, *New Democracy*, a traditional winner of the local elections.

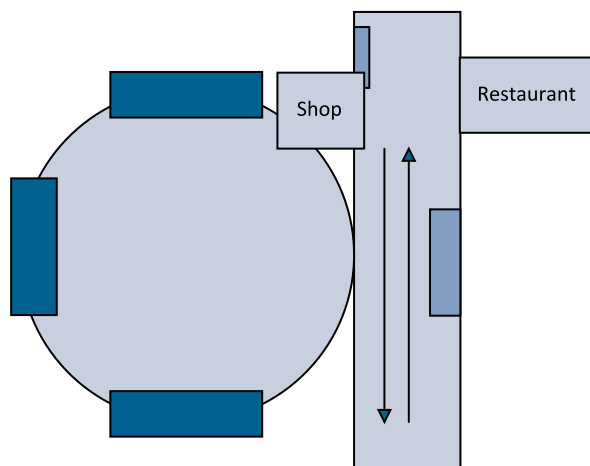
In looking at the bench dynamics, it is clear that the men’s Communist affiliation is based more so on filial ties, which gives them common origin and creates a political genealogy whereby the men have created a set of values and share common experiences. This, in fact, makes them a community with a collective memory.

Elders originating from the village confess they are not close to *all* people from the villages: ‘You know, people here do not like each other. There was so much of hatred’. Informants describe how, even though they feel ‘freer’ in this day and age, they still do not talk often ‘about the past’. The notion of ‘us and them’ keeps them hovering in the past: ‘You see some people there

32 It is estimated that between 28,000 and 32,000 children were evacuated in the years 1948–1949. The official Greek position was that these children had been forcibly taken by the Communists to be reared under a socialist system.

and you know THEY have reported me or some of mine to the police. I know who has been watching me at the time of the Junta, listening to talks at home under the window. You see that man there? I know he wrote an anonymous letter against me during the dictatorship. This is why we don't speak to each other – only hello, goodbye'.

This example demonstrates how the so-called 'ethnic conflicts' can be read through the lenses of other dichotomies, such as political vs. ethnic ones. In the case of Orio, there is a political agenda that is rooted in a past, which is something that people try to forget. Through this filter, the configuration in the square allows us to easily read conflicts and tensions within local communities. These are political divisions that do not specifically coincide with ethnic ones.



Orio is situated in an area within a beautiful natural park: there are lakes, rivers, mountains, and picturesque villages; however, most of the houses have been abandoned for decades. While important architectural sites can be found in the villages (and it is important to note that within Greece these types of Byzantine churches attract a plethora of visitors), in Orio many similar sites are overlooked, as it is not easy to travel throughout the region. In fact, 50 km of narrow, mountainous roads wind around the natural park, connecting the eleven villages. A public transport company services the district only three times per week in the summer.

As do many others, I travel from village to village by hitching rides, often with the local police; these public officials keep themselves busy by shuttling walkers so that the pedestrians do not have to endure the summer heat. From time to time, after the sun has set, the police catch illegal Albanian workers bus-hopping after having crossed the Greek border. As part of their official duty, they accompany the workers to the border, yet everybody knows that they will be back the next day. These workers are called by the villagers 'locals' or 'our Albanians' – the idea being that illegal workers typically arrive every spring, reside in abandoned houses for the season, while the police tolerates them. Whereas the police try to abide by the laws, they also have been known

to show compassion for this workforce, which often helps the relatively poor and struggling local farmers.

Regional landscape reveals much about the past and present. There is one little village that is still depicted on maps, but has been totally empty since 1949. An important number of abandoned houses that sit in ruin belong 'to nobody', which, here, means that they were once owned by families of Communist fighters, who left the area for 'abroad' in the years 1946–1949. These houses cannot be demolished, nor have they been restored.

'THERE WAS SO MUCH OF HATRED, YOU KNOW...'

Everybody knows Tanassis, a sixty-five-year-old man. They know that 'he is not from here'. Instead, he arrived in the region in the early 1970s from another part of Greece because 'he fell in love' with the area. In order to make a living, he started running a tourist business. Tanassis drives me often with his car and shows me interesting sights. He pretends to know the history of the region and he claims that he knows the stories better than anyone else. Learning that I had an interest in discovering the local political history, he became more inspired by my visits and began telling me stories, including his own. As it turns out, Tanassis, like many other citizens of the area, was from a family who 'fought alongside the Communists'. He is quick to clarify, however, that he himself is not Communist and vows that he never would have been. He originates from a village near Volos, but he does not visit his hometown often, nor does his mother, who fled the city in 1945. His father, a member of the Resistance, was killed after the liberation during the period of the 'white terror'. Tanassis, however, does not remember him. Sadly, his father's body was never found; Tanassis believes that 'they' captured him, or maybe someone denounced him.

According to Tanassis, the citizens of his native village near Volos were subject to massive killings aimed at Resistance fighters during the period after WWII and the Civil War. This occurred perhaps because of the area's 'geographical position'. Tanassis notes: 'At the time, in my village, partisans like my father had less chance of surviving than the people here did. This is because, in the East, we were very far from any border and did not have the means to escape. Here, if a governmental army were to take over, one could always escape across the border. In northern Greece, for example, people fled to Yugoslavia, Albania, and Bulgaria'.

Tanassis does not know many details about his family story. In fact, they don't often talk about it. What he does know is that his mother left their village during the war and has returned only once, in 1986. His father had five brothers, and, as he knows from other relatives, the oldest one 'had brought Communism in the family'. This particular brother was a soldier in Turkey

during the Greco–Turkish War. Tanassis notes, ‘he came back from Turkey a devout Communist’. Another of his brothers served in the governmental army during the Civil War, but ‘he was working in technical stuff, he didn’t shoot against us’. I asked him why his mother did not return to the village until the mid 1980s. He said that ‘she just didn’t want to. I understand. She knows the house of the neighbours who gave my father up to the police. *They* stayed in the village. For a long time, my mother said that she would never return. There was so much hatred, (*polly missos*) you know?’.

LANDSCAPE AND HIDDEN MEMORY

One day, we were again driving in Tanassis’s car, visiting the region. On the only crossroad, where all travellers must pass when visiting the most attractive sites in the region, stands an impressive chapel. This structure occupies at least five square meters and was constructed to memorialize a lieutenant aviator whose plane was shot down during the last battle at the end of the Civil War (1949). In fact, this battle took place nearby. At the time, the Communist forces were fleeing in the direction of the Albanian border by swimming through the lake as they were being chased by the Air Force. The chapel was built recently, constructed of marble with walls painted yellow and black.

In the monument, a photo of the lieutenant in his uniform is posted along with a short inscription indicating his place of origin (Athens) and the day of his ‘death for the fatherland’. Another inscription can be seen in the corner at the bottom of the monument, informing all visitors that the monument was constructed by the lieutenant’s son.

It is not unusual to find a chapel in Greece standing alongside a road. Typically these are built either to honour the memory of a person or to evoke the blessing of an Orthodox saint. In fact, anyone can get permission from the municipality to build such a monument after paying the required fees.

The chapel in the road, however, is a site of debate among the locals, signalling a conflict of memory. Tanassis stops the car to explain: ‘You see this chapel here? This soldier was killed during the Civil War; this was traumatic for his family, of course. But this chapel does not belong here. To put it here, in a region where people like him came to kill hundreds of *ours*, is blasphemous! He is from Athens; he should have his chapel there. *They* built this here, specifically, because they wanted to provoke us. *They* want to tell *us* that they won, and we should never forget it’.

I have chosen this apparently anecdotal situation because it is a powerful demonstration of a social world in which the dichotomy between descending from the so-called Communist and anti-Communist sides is operating. The landscape is politically codified. Tanassis is not originating from the region of

Orio but he recognizes signs, symbols that permit to identify what is ‘ours’ and what is the ‘other’s’. Individuals, locals or not, share the same knowledge and use this common social code for mutual recognition.

CONCLUSION

In Greece as well as in Bulgaria, in different moments of their history but in similar ways, people were compelled to make radical choices – or at least pretend to do so – in order to fit into one of the two political identities, perceived as mutually exclusive and irreconcilable. On the scale of extremes between Leftist/Communist and Rightist/Nationalist/Fascist, there was nothing left in between.

The Bulgarian case shows how authoritarianism creates disorder and irrationality by providing an incommensurable number of instruments of repression and by multiplying the meanings of ‘facts’ used for accusation. This starts an endless process of investigation that endlessly expands the scale of culpabilities and guilt. Through its very mechanism of functioning, the system constantly produces new enemies and resurrects old ones.

The contemporary political language has changed, and today most Greeks and Bulgarians do not systematically employ political epithets such as Communist, anti-Communist, or Fascist when they situate their individual trajectory in a family narrative. Indeed, peoples’ representations are much more heterogeneous and shifting than the signifier attests. More plausibly, the informant trying to explain the family story would use the binary opposition leftist/rightist. However, the binom We/They, ‘Ours/the Other’s’ is the most often employed. Its significance doesn’t reside in the actual form of the label but in its spontaneous usage as a delimitating line, as a border between two groups with different memories.

Thus, political identities as ethno-national ones are constructed, performed, transformed and annihilated. Nonetheless, political affiliation or the feeling of belonging can be a potent source of core identity as well, such that individuals can feel greater ‘kinship’ with those with whom they are sharing common political experiences. It creates a kind of relatedness that shapes solidarities just as ethnicity and kinship do.

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