BULGARIA: THE QUEST FOR SECURITY

Yulian Konstantinov
New Bulgarian University
and
Andrei Simić
University of Southern California

In many ways Bulgaria typifies the socio-cultural and political processes which are currently transforming Southeast Europe. Of particular note among these is the search for security and predictability within the framework of what constitutes both an actual and a metaphorical kinship-oriented system. This phenomenon has expressed itself to a pronounced degree in Bulgaria, as well as in other parts of the Balkans.[1] Two contrasting models can be conceptualized: a *kinship-scale quest for security* and a *communal, ethnically based quest for security*. These have had particular significance in respect to the post-1989 redrawing of the political, economic, and ultimately the socio-cultural map of Europe. This response is both symptomatic and derivative of the current tension between the dominant Euro-American center and the peripheral southeastern corner of the continent.

The fall of the former communist regimes in Southeast Europe and the implementation of structurally democratic governments and so-called free markets does not mean that they function as do such systems in the West. In this respect, it should be kept in mind that similarity of form does not necessarily signify similarity of underlying values and assumptions. As Eric Fromm (1951:18) has observed, there is a tendency to confuse "conventional symbols," that is, those restricted to a given group sharing the same traditions with "universal" symbols because of their superficial resemblance.

Positioned at the crossroads between East and West, and in the path of important cultural, economic, and demographic movements, the Balkan nations have not been left to resolve their own problems and conflicts as they see fit. These problems have proven quite intractable, and have prompted aggressive outside intervention as witnessed recently in Kosovo. Moreover, the justification for and the success of this interference in the internal affairs of the region can be seriously questioned. One of the major concerns of the West revolves around the free flow of trade through Southeast Europe, a concern which, however, goes far beyond this area to include the Caucasus, the Caspian region, and even Central Asia. At the heart of this matter are Euro-American expansionist policies in regard to East Europe, and the challenges and conflicts this evokes. Clearly, the explications of this tangled web of competing interests and potential conflicts suggest the need for a multi-disciplinary approach integrating the various social sciences. Among these disciplines, anthropology is especially well situated to contribute to the illumination of the socio-cultural roots of these problems.

Kinship and the Quest for Security

The following discussion will focus primarily on the relevance of kinship and family structure in Bulgaria (and to a lesser degree elsewhere in Southeast Europe) as grass-roots indicators of the political and ideological gulf between the West and the Balkans. Data for this study are derived largely from field work conducted over the past ten years by the principal author, Yulian Konstantinov, among both Bulgarian and minority families in diverse rural and urban settings in Bulgaria. In particular, this research has revealed the salient role played by the *neo-extended family*, a relatively new configuration which can be best described as a two-generational, bilocal family. A typical example consists of a parental couple living in a village and linked to the family of one of their children in a town or city. The two households are closely integrated in a system of economic reciprocity. For example, there is a constant flow of food products from the village to the town, while members of the urban family regularly visit the village to aid in agricultural work. These intergenerational links closely resemble those characteristic of the

traditional extended family as it was constituted before the 1950s,[2] that is, before the extensive rural-urban migration which has typified the past half century. However, this resemblance is only a partial one. For instance, the figure and authority of the patriarchal head of the family is totally absent, and the composition of rural families is frequently reduced to only grandparents or simply a grandmother (baba), while its urban counterpart may have a single child who only sporadically visits the village. Although closely interdependent, such families do not form single corporate households with their economies and daily activities autocratically controlled by "patriarchs" as was the case in the past .[3] Because of this, this type of kinship organization can be characterized as a *quasi-extended* o r *neoextended* family. Perhaps this latter term is most applicable because it emphasizes the very recent development of this phenomenon as a response to radical changes in the structure of Bulgarian society as a whole. In this respect, the neo-extended family has proven remarkably adaptive to the present depressed economic conditions in Bulgaria due to its ability to provide a nearly autonomous subsistence base while simultaneously drawing on urban resources. Moreover, such adaptations appear to typify other regions of Southeast Europe. For example, Simić (1973 and 1996) has described a very similar pattern of rural-urban reciprocity in Serbia associated with rapid urbanization, a pattern which appears to have taken on a new vitality in response to the recent civil wars, economic sanctions, and NATO military aggression against Yugoslavia.

The function of the extended family as a *place of refuge* in a hostile public space has a venerable history in Bulgaria. For example, during the Ottoman period, the role of the patriarchal family in both mountain villages and in the Christian quarters *(mahali)* of larger communities in the plains can be cited. The perception of security within such families is among the most powerful cultural images in the region. It reflects the perceptual opposition between the private and public spheres, the former conceived as a place of security and order, and the latter as a chaotic, hostile, and dangerous environment. This aspect of Bulgarian world view can shed light not only on the nation's more distant past, but also on the

contemporary period as well. For instance, it can explain why, during the socialist era (1948-1989), in contrast to the Soviet Union to which Bulgaria was thought to be identical in most respects, private ownership of residential space exceeded 80% of the total housing. In addition to peasant households, this private space consisted of stereotypical flats in "socialist" highrise blocks of apartments, the shabby exteriors of which belied their semiotic properties and cultural significance as places of order and security.

The Bulgarian familial ethos, what can be called the *mountain-village syndrome,* has influenced public life in a number of significant ways. The most important of these stems from the *atomism* of Bulgarian social life, a characteristic which has inhibited the achievement of larger-scale collective efforts. For instance, under the previous regime, the preference for private initiatives and endeavors contradicted the logic and reality of the contrived ideology disseminated by the propaganda apparatus of state socialism with its constant reiteration of the virtues of collectivism. As Simić (2000: 114) has observed regarding the failure of Marxism in Yugoslavia, in spite of the constant propaganda in the schools, the workplace, and the mass media, the moral authority of the ideological system was eroded by the evident realities of everyday life. Similarly, Bogdan Denitch (1994:127) has noted that decades of Communist rule have made evident the contrast between the system's "egalitarian and democratic rhetoric and the authoritarianism and privileges of the ruling Communist *nomeklatura. "*

The strong tendency for a group of close kin to constitute the ultimate place of refuge and to provide the only perceived dependable and trustworthy environment for the individual has had profound ramifications for behavior in the public arena. Thus, unless action in the civic or communal sphere is understood in terms of or analogous to kinship, success is problematic. In this way, society has come to resemble a loose aggregate of kin-like units, each dependent on its own subsistence base rather than on more universal, less particularistic social mechanisms oriented toward collective betterment and security. Although this particular variant of social

organization based on the neo-extended family began to emerge in the early 1950s, it represents a continuity with even earlier forms of the traditional extended family.

As previously mentioned, the ideology underlying this social system conceives of a circle of trust which does not extend far beyond kinship links. Phrased in another way, this circle circumscribes what Simić (1975:48-78) has termed a *moral field*. This form of social organization can be depicted as consisting of a number of mutually exclusive interactional spheres. the members of which behave toward each other with reference to shared ethically perceived imperatives, and who regard interaction with outsiders as not subject to the same moral imperatives. While this does not preclude wider collaboration, it renders such cooperation unpredictable since there is a presumed lack of trust between the parties so engaged. This reduction of the scope of trust can be observed in the degradation of public collective structures except when such structures are evocative of the dependencies and loyalties typical of the relationships between parents and children, husbands and wives, siblings, and other close consanguine and affinal kin. Consequently, important social, economic, and political activities tend to be conceivable only when they are structured in terms of kinship-like relationships. Such relationships are often referred to in Bulgaria simply as "our people" *(nashi* hora), that is, "those who can be trusted." This same behavior has also been observed in other parts of Southeast Europe. For example, Sampson (1996:140) in a study of NGOs in Albania noted that "the assumption by Albanians is that every NGO organization ...is the instrument of a kind of clan." Similarly, Simić (1983:221) has commented regarding the failure of the Yugoslav economy and bureaucracy to function in a "rational and universalistic manner" that "the greater the belief that such impersonal institutions are incapable of fulfilling their overt purposes, the greater will be the reliance on alternative social structures rooted in traditional ideas of kinship solidarity and personalism."

The Kinship Model and Ethnic Minorities

Another aspect of this familistic world view has to do with the position of the sizable ethnic minorities in Bulgaria [4] whose status can be characterized as *problematic* (cf.Konstantinov 1992b). The presence of these groups is the result of a variety of factors, the most important of which is a history of subjugation by foreign powers. One can site the approximately 600,000 Turks and the smaller Bulgarian Muslim (Pomak) population of about 200,000. The latter, like the Slav Moslems of Bosnia, Hercegovina and the Serbian Sandžak, are the result of religious conversion during the centuries of Ottoman occupation. In contrast, the Gypsies (Roma), appeared in Bulgaria before the period of Turkish rule, probably as early as the twelfth century (McDowell 1970:16). Their relatively large numbers, estimated at about 500,000, can be attributed for the most part to population growth and territorial expansion as is also the case of the Albanians in Serbia and Macedonia.[5]

Whatever other causes there may be for ethnic conflict in Southeast Europe, it is evident that there prevails an atmosphere of distrust and insecurity between the majority populations which control the nation-states and their ethnic and religious minorities. Moreover, there have been periodic efforts to demonstrate that such minorities either do not exist or that they are of minimal significance. For example, one can cite the Greek denial of the presence of significant Slavic and Albanian populations in Macedonia and Epirus, minorities which in the past have been identified as "Albanophone" and "Slavophone" Greeks. Such attitudes, of course, tend to provoke fear and resistance. One way that minorities such as the Albanians, Gypsies, Turks, and other Muslims have reacted is by demographic means, that is, by endogamy, high birth rates, and social and cultural encapsulation. This strategy, then, is to respond initially "with the cradle" before turning to armed insurrection. Nevertheless, it should be noted that passive and more aggressive responses have historically been of a cyclical nature.

In Bulgaria the strategies of minority groups have in many ways mirrored those of the majority population, i.e., to seek ultimate security in tightknit, self-sustainable kinship-like structures which, however, more resemble the pre-socialist rural extended family than the contemporary Bulgarian neo-extended rural-urban variant. Moreover, these minorities, to a far greater extent than their Bulgarian counterparts, rely on close residential proximity of family members, neighborhood solidarity and homogeneity, and segregation from other ethnic groups. Similarly, Simić (1973:203) has noted that in former Yugoslavia rural-urban migration tended to follow internal ethnic boundaries.

Bulgaria, like the former Yugoslavia, is an ethnically diverse country. Its principal "problematic" minorities are, as previously mentioned, Turks, Bulgarian Muslims (Pomaks), and a large but internally differentiated (between Muslims and Christians) Roma (Gypsy) community. In addition, there are also a number of much smaller minorities, including: Sephardic Jews, Armenians, Vlachs, Karakachans, Gagauz, Russians (so-called White Guards *(Belogvardeitsi)*, Ukrainians, Lippovans *(Nekrassovtsi--Old* Believers), Kazulbashs (Shiite Muslims), and Greeks. In contrast to the much larger "problematic" minority groups, these tend to share the lifestyles and attitudes of the Bulgarian majority. They have a similar demographic pattern and tend to have migrated to urban areas. Thus, they comprise an "invisible" sector of the society, and as such, they can be considered "non-problematic." In spite of this, any member of this category can be regarded as a candidate to become "problematic" should it ever constitute a bone of contention or a rationale for conflict between nation-states. This has in fact been the case with the Pomaks who have been the focus of tensions between Bulgaria, Greece, and Turkey (cf. Sarides 1987). More recently, the "Wet Vlachs," a Romanianspeaking minority on the northwestern shore of the Danube, have become "problematized" as the result of worsening relations between Bulgaria and Romania. [6]

The Kinship Model and the Public Arena

While the attitudes of the Bulgarian majority can be characterized by a mistrust of public space and a search for security in familial or parafamilial structures, this does not prevail to such an extent that people feel totally reluctant to venture individually into the domain of the larger community. One of the causes for this distrust stems from the fact that public life constitutes an arena for competition between kin-like interest groups. In many ways, those who venture to compete for power and resources in the public sphere assume at least symbolically the traditional role of the Balkan brigand *(haiduk)* who as an agent of plunder acted out the insecurity and resistance of villagers to domination during the Ottoman period. Recognizing this skepticism regarding public service, the President of Bulgaria, Petur Stoyanov, made the following very apt observation:

> The social contract makes sense when mutual trust between the ruling and the ruled ...motivates people to work in unison with their government, with their politicians, and not to perceive them as enemies *(dushmani)* who have arrived to climb on the backs of the Bulgarian people ,...to enrich themselves, and after that to leave the populace to the uncertainty of their fate. (Sega 2000: 11)

This statement accurately characterizes a situation in which the populace exists in a state of apprehension and insecurity, and where "marauding brigands" appear briefly on the civic stage to enrich themselves and their clans, and then to disappear. In fact, the situation has been much worse than is suggested by Stoyanov due to the unprecedented rise in criminality since 1989. In spite of these conditions, members of the Bulgarian majority still venture out into the public arena in stark contrast to those of the "problematic" enthnic minorities who increasingly seek refuge in ever larger, more closely knit groups surrounded by their own coethnics. They are also becoming more and more dependent on their own almost autonomous subsistence bases. It is not uncommon in more remote areas, for example, in Pomak mountain villages, that cash is

being used only for the purchase of salt, flour, and a few other staples (Cellarius 2000).

Among the "problematic" minorities individual initiative in the public sector has become quite rare, and most endeavors are of a collective nature. This was clearly demonstrated during the Turkish exodus of June and July of 1989 when over 300,000 people fled the country en masse (cf. Kertikov 1990; and Poulton 1991:153-163). Moreover, there is a strong tendency for these ethnic minorities to be geographically segregated with 80% of Turks living in well defined areas in the east of Bulgaria and 90% of the Pomaks in the Rhodope Mountains.

Other minorities, those whom we have identified as "nonproblematic," occupy a kind of intermediate position. These closely resemble the Bulgarian majority in that they do not evidence an enclavedemographic pattern and tend to be scattered throughout the community in individual flats or homes. Traditional urban minorities such as Jews, Armenians, and Russians, differ from much of the population in that they have never had any ties to the countryside, and thus they lack subsistence links to the village.

The model proposed here is structured around a gradient of perceived security/insecurity in regard to the opposition between public and private space. Phrased another way, it attempts to specify the degree to which a citizen feels safe in dealing with public institutions and their representatives. On such a spectrum the standard Western European and American model would be located very near the "secure" end of the continuum, while the problematic-minority model would fall at the opposite end. Mainstream Bulgarians and non-problematic minorities would be situated in some intermediate position.

Drawing on this paradigm, it is evident that one of the issues underlying the perceptual rift between Euro-American and Southeast European societies has to do with the signals people receive from public space and its official representatives, and how these messages are perceived. The invisible border of the Balkans soon becomes evident to anyone traveling from the West as soon as it is crossed. If one remains only in the public domain, the social landscape appears hostile, if not menacing. The origins and perpetuation of such attitudes and behavior in regard to public life are complex as is the answer as to how such problems may be overcome. Many of the root causes can be found in the experience of the socialist (19481989) and postsocialist period (1989-present), to which focus will now be directed.

Rural-Urban Migration (1950-1989)

Until the mid-1950s, villagers comprised about 80% of the Bulgarian population. Thirty years later, their proportion had dropped to about 30%. This was a momentous change which left behind a greatly depopulated countryside comprised of a predominately aging population. Thus, what had been an agricultural country was transformed within a relatively brief period of time into a land of urbanites. These new city dwellers found work in the mega-industrial projects of the socialist state, as well as in the administrative bureaucracy which, among other functions, regulated power and redistributed resources. This shift toward a state-socialist "modernity" was reflected in a vocabulary which echoed these new conditions of life. Among other such expressions can be cited: *rabota* (now signifying "work" in a factory or an office), *zhitelstvo ("urban* residence permit"), and *apartament* (an "apartment," usually understood to be located in a large block of apartments). These replaced what had been a rural-based vocabulary composed of such words as: nivi ("fields"), *dobituk* ("stock"), imot ("estate" or "rural holdings"), words which now had an archaic ring and signified backwardness for many. Nevertheless, in spite of such attitudes, pragmatic concerns, as well as the values of kinship solidarity, assured that rural-urban links would not be severed. Although its population was aging, the village continued to provide needed subsistence support to migrants in the city, and urbanites continued to commute to the village as often as possible to aid their parents with the heavier agricultural work. Moreover, this has not been a uniquely Bulgarian phenomenon, and this pattern of ruralurban reciprocity, as well as that of the *peasantworker,* has also typified other parts of the Balkans. For instance, Lockwood (1973) has described this in Bosnia as has Simi6 (1973) in Serbia.

The peasant-worker syndrome represents an adaptive strategy which takes advantage of the proximity of the work place and the rural holdings. Thus, it is possible to combine participation in the cash economy with private farming. This pattern is especially typical of Bulgarian Turks and Pomaks. In contrast, the situation is somewhat different in the case of the Bulgarian majority, many of whose villages tend to be relatively far from their urban residences, and therefore daily commuting cannot be so easily accommodated. In other words, the spatial aspects of Bulgarian urbanization reflect the differing roles of the various ethnic groups, and this in turn can explain, at least in part, why so much power resides with the Bulgarian majority. For example, the Muslim minorities tend not to venture out on an individual basis far from their own groups. Since they are largely rural-based, this means that they remain close to their villages of origin and therefore distant from the loci of national power. This predilection on the part of Muslims was well understood by the Bulgarian leadership which in the 1970s began to promote "work places" in the villages as extensions of urban enterprises (cf. Creed 1995).

The promotion of industry in rural and provincial areas during the period 1969-1989 also stemmed from a number of practical considerations. Urban centers had grown far faster than had their infrastructures which were now inadequate to meet the needs of their existing populations. In particular there was an acute housing shortage, a lack of adequate transportation, and poor public services in general. This situation was further exacerbated by a constant shortage of food and other commodity goods. Empty shops, long queues, and over-crowded buses were all signs of infrastructural deficiency The presence of employment in rural areas slowed urban growth, and enabled Muslim pastoralists and farmers to combine wage labor with subsistence agriculture. These peasant-workers were thus able to leave their homes early in the morning by the "workers' bus" *(rabotnicheski avtobus)*, and return in the late afternoon in time to look after their domestic animals and carry out many of the heavier agricultural chores. These tasks could not be left entirely to the women who, in addition to assuming the greater responsibility for the domestic sphere and the family's agricultural

holdings, often worked on collective farms, in factories, or at clerical jobs. However, a more important point is that this system, while responding to many practical considerations, also represents a response to the fear of venturing far from the security of one's kin and coethnics. To disappear into an anonymous block of apartments among mainstream Bulgarians in some big town is, for many Muslims, undesirable, risky, and even frightening.

Another characteristic of rural-urban migration by mainstream Bulgarians and non-problematic minorities has been that more women than men, and more young women than older women, have moved to cities and towns (Vassileva 1991:110). Moreover, this has been largely on an individual basis. A primary motivation has been to complete secondary education in a nearby town and then to seek career opportunities often supported by marriage to an urban spouse. Since the opening of Bulgaria's borders after 1989, external migration has followed essentially this same pattern, with more young women than men leaving the country on what may be called the "educational track." Like many internal migrants, these immigrants have sought legitimacy and advantage through marriage, i.e., "marrying for the passport." In contrast to the current freedom of movement, in Socialist Bulgaria, as was the case throughout the Soviet Block, there were devices to inhibit rural-urban migration and emigration abroad. For instance, since 1947 an official permit *(zhitelstvo)* was required for residence in Sofia (Vassileva 1991:104105). Similarly, during this period, migration to the more affluent Western countries was blocked by various screening mechanisms on the part of both the Bulgarian and foreign authorities.

It is in respect to the migration of young women that the Bulgarian majority and the non-problematic minorities, on the one hand, and the problematic minorities, on the other, most differ. While the former encourage their daughters to move to urban centers or abroad, the Muslim minorities (Turks and Pomaks) expect young women to return home after completing their secondary education and to marry within their own communities. The result of this extremely high level of endogamy has been the spatial segregation of these groups. For

example, approximately 80% of Turks, 90% of Pomaks, and almost 100% of Roma live in their own "ghettoes" (cf. Mincheva 1999). Moreover, when migration does occur among these minorities, it is usually familial or collective in nature and dependent upon extensive, well established kinship networks.

It is not entirely coincidental that the mainstream Bulgarian road from the village to the center of Sofia, the so-called *golden triangle, is* in fact the same route by which long-time dictator, Todor Zhivkov, who ruled from 1956 to 1989, came to power. The rise to power by this villagerbecomes-urbanite put a distinctive "peasant-worker" hallmark on the Bulgarian variety of State Socialism. Zhivkov came from a small village about 50 kilometers east of the capital, and from there he moved to the nearest provincial town, Botevgrad, then to the outskirts of the capital, and finally to its center (literally and symbolically).

Zhivkov can be regarded with some justification as representing an idealized model for Bulgarian rural-urban migration, that is, a route leading from the periphery to the center, from marginality to absolute power. This vision was shared by the majority of Bulgarians who very quickly created a huge urban housing problem. While obtaining an apartment in town became the main goal of most Bulgarians, at the same time, strict housing controls were introduced in an attempt to stem the flow of migrants into urban centers. These were imposed in Sofia in 1947, and nation-wide in 1955 (Vassileva 1991:105). Moreover, these regulations assumed an almost feudal character in that they specified that "one should live and work where born."

Other attempts to solve the problem of burgeoning urban populations included the mass-production of largely prefabricated blocks of apartments assembled quickly out of panels of reinforced concrete. These huge, boxlike structures *(paneleni blokove)* entirely changed the Bulgarian urban landscape within less than three decades after Zhivkov's rise to power. It is indicative of the prime importance attached to housing that when Zhivkov was removed from power by a coup on November 10, 1989 and put on trial, the most serious crime of which he was accused was "the unlawful giving of apartments to favored persons." In other words, the obsessive desire for an urban apartment on the part of former villagers became one of the pivotal points on which the entire Socialist society revolved.

As previously mentioned, a salient feature of mainstream Bulgarian rural-urban migration is that it has tended to be on an individual rather than a collective basis. Thus, the migrant moves to a place irrespective of whether or not other people from his or her village have already settled there. This choice then revolves around other considerations such as the availability of education, employment, housing, public services, and the like. There is a sense of remaining among one's own people and in their territory, that is, in a place where there is no need for the security and defense provided by those from one's own village or family. This appears to be true even of young women living alone in the city.

Another possible corollary of this sense of security felt by mainstream Bulgarian migrants is the instant drop in their birth rate upon settlement in the city. This, of course, can also be attributed to a number of other factors, including: the employment of both husband and wife, restricted living space, participation in the consumer culture, the achievement of a middle-class standard of living, and the desire to "be modern." However, at the same time, the building up of a large family does not constitute an effective strategy to obtain wealth and power in the urban context as had traditionally been the case in the countryside. In contrast, there is an interest in providing good educations and assuring employment and successful careers for a small number of children, one or two at the maximum.

The Structure and Function of the Bulgarian Neo-Extended Family

Although the neo-extended family first assumed a role of importance during the period of State Socialism (1948-1989), an era which saw massive rural-urban migration, it has been during more recent times that it has fulfilled its primary *raison d'être,* that of providing a place of refuge and survival in an uncertain and chaotic public arena. Its ability to assure a dependable and autonomous subsistence base combined with a strategy of reliance on informal economic activities has

prevented a complete social collapse in Bulgaria. Such a system based primarily on kinship-sized social units testifies to the inability of the larger, society-wide public and private sectors to respond to the most basic needs of the population. Moreover, when such groups appropriate positions and/or prerogatives in the public sector, they act as hostile agents toward everyone but their own kin and close associates with whom relationships are structured on the same familial basis. During the time of massive rural-urban migration, *vruzki* (connections) constituted the main strategy for acquiring access to power and wealth. In the post-Socialist reality, this same principle has evolved into a more extreme form, the salient characteristics of which are identified by the key terms *patronage, clientism, nepotism (shourobadzhanashtina) , and corruption.* All these terms reflect in one way or another the exploitation of the public domain, a predation that increasingly forces the majority of the population to retreat into the security of their individual kin-based social units.

As previously noted, an examination of the Bulgarian neo-extended family reveals a sharply reduced structure in comparison to the traditional, patriarchal extended family Nevertheless, the origins of this family type were in the village where in the 1950s momentous changes were taking place. At this time, peasant labor was mobilized, either voluntarily or forcibly, for the first great venture of the new Marxist government, the liquidation of private farming and the creation of collectives according to the Soviet pattern. These were Agricultural Cooperative Labor Farms (TKZSs) which were in almost all respects analogs of the Soviet *kolkhozy*. Also following the Soviet model, Machine-Tractor Stations (MTSs) were established. The agenda for these changes was set forth at the Fifth Congress of the Bulgarian Communist Party (December, 194$) which the "building of the foundations of socialism in Bulgaria by industrialization and electrification of the country, and the collectivization and mechanization of agriculture" (Vassileva 1991:44). These precepts were given concrete form in the First Five-Year Plan (1949-1953). However, the realization of this mega-project of "collectivizing and mechanizing" agriculture proved to be an arduous and ill-paid

effort for private farmers, especially during the initial phase. Expressions like "sacrifice," "heroism," "faith" (in the Communist Party), "building the future," and so forth did little to disguise the fact that the countryside had taken on many aspects of a forced-labor camp. Consequently, these conditions provided the "push" for migration to urban centers, especially on the part of young people.

In spite of generally deplorable conditions in the countryside, the parents of migrants tended to remain in the village. One reason for this was that they were reluctant to abandon their remaining assets: private plots of land up to 5,000 square meters, some small numbers of allowed livestock (sheep, goats, pigs, and poultry), and, of course, their homes. A further decisive rationale was found in the nature of the collective farm itself; it provided some significant compensation in the form of ample opportunities for various forms of theft, particularly of forage for privately owned animals. Thus, almost simultaneously with the advent of socialism, the cooperative farm became a kind of public domain, and as such fair game for plunder. This behavior continued well after the onset of reforms in 1989, and today little remains of these collectives except the skeletons of their farm buildings. This process has been aptly described by Creed (1998) as "domesticating the Revolution." This predation on public resources has also been given detailed treatment by Kornai (1992/1996) in his seminal monograph on the political economy of communism.

Thus, for middle-aged and older peasants, there were enough incentives to stay on the land in contrast to the risks and uncertainties of urban life in what would be at least initially a rented room in an unfamiliar environment. Also, this would provide support for their children whom they had encouraged to migrate for education and employment, and so that they would be freed from hard work on the land. In this regard, have quoted their parents in the following ways (Konstantinov MS):

Our parents used to say then [in the 1950s], 'Go to town so that you become people *(da stanete hora);'* and, 'Study so that you do not have to

toil in the fields like us (da *ne se muchite po nivite kato nas).'*

However, the supportive ability of the parental village household proved to be very limited in terms of the desires and ambitions imposed by the city milieu on newly arrived rural youths. Paralleling the megaprojects of industrialization promoted by the socialist regime were the values and demands of "modernity" which were eagerly embraced by this new class of urbanites. These included: one's own apartment, appropriate furniture, a family car (in part for commuting to the village for subsistence goods), education for urban-born children, better clothing and other consumer goods, holidays at Black Sea resorts, and, in general, all the accouterments of contemporary urban life which were unimaginable during their days in the village. Moreover, all of these desires soon came to be regarded as necessities.

In spite of the advantages of rural-urban reciprocity, the resources of village parents are severely limited, and having more than one city household to support has proven infeasible for most. Thus, in such situations, some children are excluded by means of "the family quarrel." In a typical case, parents complain that a child is "disrespectful," "does not listen," or is remiss in helping with village subsistence farming. In this way, the neo-extended family is reduced in size by excluding some members of the descending generation. Moreover, each succeeding generation has had fewer family members. The elder generation born in the 1920s and early 1930s, known as *dyado i baba na selo* ("grandfather and grandmother in the village"), came from families with four or more children. The next generation, which grew up during the difficult period of the 1940s and early 1950s, had only two or three urban-born children, while these, in turn, have had an average of only 1.5 children. Moreover, there is evidence of a continuing decline in the birth rate. Parallel to this reduction of family size has been a steady rise in the incidence of divorce. Thus, there has been a steady movement toward greater atomism in family values and structure.

Vruzki: A System of Nonkinship Urban Reciprocity

Among the Bulgarian majority, a dominant feature of the era of massive rural-urban migration, as well as that of the post-migratory period from 1989, was the ideological and numerical reduction of kinship social units. In contrast to the case in Serbia as reported by Simić (1996), previously existing rural kinship networks had not been extensively mobilized as part of the rural-urban migration process. This is rather surprising in view of the tenacity of traditional wisdom regarding the importance of the "strong Bulgarian family and its rural kinship base. The fact remains that it has been overwhelmingly young people who have left the village on an *individual basis* rather than a collective one, and who have cultivated in the city new nonkinship networks, vruzki, which are nevertheless structured on the model of kinship. Once again, drawing a comparison with Serbia, this time a parallel one, Simić" (1983:220) has noted that nonkinship ties based on the exchange of favors *(veze i poznanstvo,* "connections and acquaintance") operate according to the same rules which govern kinship reciprocity. For example, he has observed that "important extra-familial relationships exhibit the same intensity, the same requirements of constant revalidation through frequent contact and exchange of goods and services, and the same moral imperatives that characterize ties between kin."

The institution of vruzki functions both horizontally and vertically, that is, in the context of colleague or peer ties, on the one hand, and patronclient relationships, on the other. Colleague relationships are frequently established on the basis of residential proximity and are strongly reminiscent of the kinds of exchanges, which traditionally characterized village life. For instance, the majority of migrants have secured housing in high-rise blocks of apartments, which in many ways have come to at least superficially resemble rural neighborhoods *(mahali)*. Significantly, irrespective of obvious physical differences, their courtyards function very much like village squares, and it is here that reciprocal peer relationships are frequently negotiated. In respect to patron-client ties, previous rural or kinship links may be exploited for bureaucratic or economic favors. Perhaps the most

important of these is access to housing. Vruzki function very similarly to the way that Doder has described the role of *veza* ("connection") in former Yugoslavia (1978:75):

> *Veza is* influence, pulling strings, an alternative bureaucratic system ....If a man has *veza* , then everything is possible. He can get a low-cost apartment, a job for a distant cousin, he can fix and finagle things and obtain just about any service offered by society.

In short, in Bulgaria, as in most of Southeast Europe, informal networks of reciprocal exchanges and obligations based on particularistic and personalistic criteria act as the conduits for much of society's necessary business outside of official channels and irrespective of formal agreements and procedures. Thus, there exists a profound dissonance between the idealized Western model of a civil society based on universalistic principles and the sharply contrasting precepts which govern behavior in both public and private life in this part of the Balkans.

Demography, Ethnic Boundaries, and Security

Following the political changes of 1989 and the ensuing economic collapse of the following ten years, rural-urban family ties continued to play a salient role in supplying city families with food. This became even more vital due to the increasing unemployment and the hasty pensioning off of middle-aged people. Evidence for the revitalization of this system of rural-urban reciprocity can be observed in the return to the villages of "young pensioners" who have been replacing their very old or deceased parents, leaving their urban apartments to their children. However, this process evidences additional complexity when the ethnic factor is taken into account.

Migratory patterns during the socialist period reveal that rural-urban mobility was realized chiefly on the part of the Bulgarian majority. The largest minority, the Bulgarian Turks, was not characterized by this pattern except in respect to its large-scale migrations to Turkey. Similarly, the Pomaks have not been significantly represented among urban migrants. In the case of the Roma, they have not only expanded their traditional urban

ghettoes (mahaf), but have also settled in areas of the depopulated countryside. Thus, it was largely the Bulgarian majority, which reacted to the collectivization of agriculture in the early 50s by fleeing to the towns and cities. In contrast, the Turks, Pomaks and rural Roma readily joined the collective farms, and somewhat later, as previously mentioned, took advantage of available employment in mines or newly created industries close to their villages.

Because of these different responses to political and economic changes, three large minority population concentrations have resulted. These are the region of the Rhodope Mountains where over 90% of Pomaks live; the southeastern and northeastern areas where the Turks have formed homogeneous enclaves; and in the northwest along the Danube where the Roma are rapidly increasing in numbers. Other demographic trends have also affected the role of minorities in the Bulgarian countryside. Between 1989 and the present, the Bulgarian population has decreased by about one million. Approximately 700,000 Bulgarians have emigrated abroad, and most of these have been young and educated. During this same period, there have been about 300,000 deaths and only 150,000 births, the majority of which have been among the principal minorities, especially the Roma.

Another feature of recent demographic trends in Bulgaria has been the strengthening of ethnic boundaries. In this respect, the case of the Turks is particularly instructive. While in Bulgaria they have largely eschewed settlement in the cities where they would have been a minority among the Bulgarian majority, the opposite has been true of their migration to Turkey. In 1950 and 1951, when more than 150,000 Turks migrated to Turkey, the Turkish government attempted to settle them in sparsely populated villages in Anatolia. However, most of these eventually made their way to large urban centers like Istanbul, Ankara, Izmir, and Bursa (cf. Höpken 1992, 1994; Kostanick 1957). Similarly, a large number of Pomaks also emigrated at this time, and while they had been reluctant to leave their mountain villages in Bulgaria, in Turkey they settled largely incities. This behavior can be interpreted as a reflection of their perception of

contrasting geographic contexts of security and insecurity.

The generally peaceful coexistence between the majority Bulgarian population and ethnic minorities tends to obscure a deeper layer of mistrust and apprehension. These profound cleavages have been periodically brought to the fore by measures of the Bulgarian government which was prompted by its own sense of insecurity and its fear of disloyalty on the part of the larger minorities, particularly the Turks. One can cite, for example, the attempt by the Zhivkov regime for almost two decades to assimilate ethnic minorities. This policy included restrictions on the use of the Turkish language, the prohibition of Muslim religious practices, and the forcing of Muslims to take Bulgarian names (Konstantinov 1987, 1992b; Konstantinov and Alhaug 1995;). These actions resulted in a mass exodus of Turks during the summer of 1989, many of whom, nevertheless, later returned. In a period of less than two months, over 300,000 Turks left the country. This figure would have undoubtedly been higher had the Turkish government not closed the borders (cf. Creed 1990 and Poulton 1991:129163).

The mass exodus of Turks followed a decision of the Bulgarian Communist Party to discontinue repressive measures against the Bulgarian Turks and to allow them to freely emigrate. Paradoxically, instead of calming fears among the Turks, these liberal measures provoked a mass panic and a desire to leave at all costs. Moreover, the policy of issuing passports for foreign travel was not extended to mainstream Bulgarians, and these reforms sparked anti-Turkish demonstrations in January of 1990 (Creed 1990:13). In respect to the Turkish flight, a report by a research team of the Institute of Sociology of the Bulgarian Academy of Science (Kertikov 1990: 13-108) described "a particular mental derangement and a general lowering of rational motivation by the fleeing masses" (27). The report further notes that people deserted their houses, domestic animals, and belongings "prodded by a collective impulse" by which tens and hundreds of thousands left the security of their native regions and impulsively opted for total uncertainty (27).

Another indication of this atmosphere of distrust can be discerned in the ethnically driven policies of the military. Turkish, Pomak, and Roma conscripts are usually assigned to heavy-duty labor in the Construction Corps rather than in fighting units. In much the same way, these same minorities have only a token representation in the officer corps of the army and police (cf. Nelson 1991: 66-70).

Other insecurities among mainstream Bulgarians are rooted in apocalyptic images of demographic disaster, that is, the fear that in a couple of decades the country will be overrun by "Gypsies" (Roma) and Turks, both of whom are characterized by very high birth rates (cf. Creed 1990: 13). Moreover, this apprehension is heightened by recent disturbing demographic data regarding the Bulgarian majority, specifically, the massive emigration of young people of reproductive age, a rapidly aging population, a decreasing life expectancy associated with a rise in the incidence of fatal diseases, and an increase in suicides.

What has occurred in Bulgaria is an accelerating spiral of mutual mistrust and fear, creating a widening gulf between the majority population and the principal minorities. Expressions of ethnic distance have been reinforced in a variety of ways ranging from demographic characteristics to patterns of rural-urban migration. A central premise of this paper is that major ideological projects of both the State Socialist Era (1948-1989) and the current period of transition to democracy and ostensibly "free markets" have resulted in significant reinterpretations of traditional family structure and ethnic relations. Patterns of both rural-urban migration and interethnic relations can be conceptually coalesced in terms of the opposition between *centrality* and *peripherality,* in other words, in terms of the contrast between *power* and *weakness.*

In a broader context, Bulgaria and the Balkans in general can be seen as both peripheral and weak in relationship to more distant centers of power such as Western Europe and America. Nevertheless, the periphery, despite its weakness and poverty, has the compensating virtue of providing spaces of security and refuge even though these may be to some extent illusory when viewed in the perspective of the

overwhelming military and economic power of external forces.

Two types of *refuge* have been discussed here, which may be labeled *the private cave* and the *enclave.* In the former case, security is sought by the Bulgarian majority within the circle of family relations and in the context of similarly structured nonkinship ties, while in the latter; security is found within ethnically homogeneous enclaves. In both cases, attempts to construct a civil society based on more universalistic principles are inhibited by a general lack of confidence in the institutions of the state the functioning of which has remained opaque and at odds with its claims of impartiality and evenhandedness. Thus, without a reformulation of the public arena as a guarantor of security and prosperity, it will be very difficult to eradicate existing ethnic rifts or to countermand the prevailing ethos of particularism, which dominates the public and private arenas alike.

References

Cellarius, Barbara. MS. "You Can Buy Almost Anything with Potatoes: An Examination of Barter During Economic Crisis in Bulgaria." (In *press-Ethnology).*

Creed, Gerald W. 1990. "The Basis of Bulgaria's Ethnic Policies." *The Anthropolpogy of East Europe Review* 9 (12): 11-17.

1995. "Agriculture and the Domestication of Industry in Rural Bulgaria. *American Ethnologist* 22: 528-548.

1998. *Domesticating Revolution: From Socialist Reform 'to Ambivalent Transition in a Bulgarian Village.* University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press.

Denitch, Bogdan. 1994. *Ethnic Nationalism and the Tragic Death of Yugoslavia.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Doder, Dusko. 1978. *The Yugoslavs.* New York: Random House.

Fromm, Eric. 1951. *The Forgotten Language.* New York: Grove Press.

Höpken, Wolfgang. 1992. "Emigration und Integration Bulgarien-Turken seit dem Zweiten Weltkrieg" (Emigration and Integration of Bulgarian Turks since the Second World War). In Seewan, Gerhard (ed.), *Minderheitenfragen in Sudosteuropa* (Minority Questions in Southeast Europe). Munich: Sudostinstitut, R. Oldenbourg Verlag. pp. 359-377.

1994. *Die Ungeliebte Minderheit: Die Turken Bulgariens, 1878-1993* (The Unloved Minority: The Turkish Bulgarians, 1878-1993). Munich:

Kaser, Karl. 1995. *Familie and Verwandtschaft auf dem Balkan: Analyse einer untergehenden Kultur* (Family and Kinship in the Balkans: An Analysis of a Ruined Culture). Vienna,Cologne-Weimar: Bohlau Verlag.

Kertikov, Kiril. 1990. "Masovata lzselnicheska Psihoza, June-July 1989" (Massive Emigration Psychosis, June-July 1989). In Petkov, Krustyu and Georgi Fotev (eds.), *Etnicheskiyat Konflikt v Bulgaria 1989* Ethnic Conflict in Bulgaria 1989). Sofia: Institut po Sotsiologiya pri BAN. Pp. 13-108.

Konstantinov, Yulian. 1987. "Nyakoi Vuprosi ns Bulgarskata Antroponimiya v Sotsiolingvistichen Plan" (Some Questions about Bulgarian Anthroponymy in Sociolinguistic Issues). *Sopostavitelno Eziko,-nanie* 12 (36): 3644.

1992a. "An Account of Pomak Conversions in Bulgaria (1912-1990)." In Seewan, Gerhart (ed.), *Minderheitenfragen in Sudosteuropa* (Minority Questions in Southeast Europe). Munich: Sudostinstitut, R. Oldebourg Verlag. Pp. 343-359.

1992b. "Minority Name Studies in the Balkans--the Pomaks. *Folia Linguistica XXVI* (3-4): 403-433.

MS. "Food from the Village, Friends from Town: Current Health of the Bulgarian Rural-Urban Quasi-Extended Household." Paper presented at the Department of Southeast European History, University of Graz, March 18, 1998. http://www.nbu.bg/lafr

Konstantonov, Yulian and Gulbrand Alhaug. 1995. "Names, Ethnicity , and Politics: Islamic Names in Bulgaria." *Tromso Studies in Linguistics (Oslo)* 15: Novus Press.

Kornai, Janos. 1996. *Sotsialisticheskata Sistema: Politicheka 1konomiya na Komuni:ma* (The Socialist System: The Political Economy of Communism). Sofie: Prof. Marin Drinov.

Kostanick, Huey Louis. 1957. *Turkish Resettlement of Bulgarian Turks 1950-1953.* Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Lockwood, William. 1973. "The Peasamt-Worker in Yugoslavia.' *Studies in European Society 1 (1):* 91-111.

McDowell, Bart. 1970. *Gypsies Wanderers of the World.* Washington, D.C.: National Geographic Society.

Mincheva, Stiliana. 1999. "Mixed Marriages between Bulgarians and Bulgarian Muslims: An Undesirable Event. In Konstantinov. Yulian (ed.), *In and Out of the Collective Papers on Rural Communitoes in the Former Soviet Bloc. Virtual Journal 2* (January). http:nbu.bg/iafr

National Statistical Institute. 1994 *Rezultati* of *Prebroyavaneto na Naselenieto (Tom I)-- Demografski Harakteristiki* (Results of the Population Census--Vol I--Demographic Characteristics). Sofia: National Statistical Institute.

Nelson, Daniel. 1990. Political *Dynamics and the Bulgarian Military.* Bonn: Berichte des Bundesinstituts fur ostwissenschaftliche and internationale Studien.

1991. *Balkan Imbroglio: Politics and Security in Southeastern Europe.* Bolder: Westview Press.

Poulton, Hugh. 1991. *The Balkans: Minorities and States in Conflict.* London: Minority Rights Publications.

Sega. 2000. "Obrushtenie na Petur Stoyanov" (The Address of Petur Stoyanov) (February 4 issue).

Sampson, Hugh. 1996. "The Social Life of Projects: Importing Civil Society to Albania." In Haann Chris and Elizabeth Dunn (eds.), *Civil Society: Challenging Western Models.* London: Routledge. Pp. 121-143.

Sanders, Irwin T. 1949. *Balkan Village.* Lexington: University ofKentucky Press.

Sarides, Emmanuel. 1987. "Ethnische Minderheit and swischenstaatliches Streitobjekt: Die Pomaken in Nordgriechenland (Ethnic Minorities and the Object of Interstate Dispute: The Pomaks in Northern Greece). *Ethilitaat and Gesellschaft 11 (Occasional* Papers)--Berlin: Das Aribische Buch.

Simie', Andrei. 1973. "Kinship Reciprocity and Rural-Urban Integration in Serbia." *Urban Anthropology* 2 (2): 205-214.

1975. *The Ethnology of Traditional and Complex Societies.* Washington, D.C.: American Association for the Advancement of Science.

1983. "Urbanization and Modernization in Yugoslavia: Adaptive and Maladaptive Aspects of Traditional Culture." In Kenny, Michael and David I. Kertzer (eds.), *Urban Life in Mediterranean Europe.* Urbana.: University of Illinois Press. Pp. 203-224.

1996. "Bogdan's Story: The Adaptation of a Rural Family to Yugoslav Urban Life." In Gmelch, George and Walter Zenner (eds.), *Urban Life: Readings in Urban Anthropology.* Prospect Heights, Illinois: Woodland Press. *Pp.* 210-227.

2000. "Nationalism as a Folk Ideology: The Case of Former Yugoslavia." In Halpern, Joel M. and David A. Kideckel (eds.), *Neighbors at War: Anthropological Perspectives of Yugoslav Ethnicity, Culture, and History.* University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press. Pp. 103-115.

Todorova, Maria. 1997. *Imagining the Balkans.* New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Troxel, Luan. 1997. "Bulgaria and the Balkans." In Danopoulos, Constantine P. and Kostas Messas, (eds.), *Crises in the Balkans: Views from the Participants.* Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press. Pp. 195-210.

Vassileva, Boyka. 1991. *Migratsionni Protsesi v Bulgaria sled Vtorata Svetovna Voina* (Migration Processes in Bulgaria after the Second World War). Sofia: Sofia University.

Zhelyazkova, Antonina (ed.). 1995. *Relations of Incompatability between Christians and Muslims in Bulgaria.* Sofia: International Center for Minority and Intercultural Relations.

End Notes

1 The terms "the Balkans" and " Southeast Europe" will be employed synonymously in this essay. However, Todorova (1997:1-37) has been very critical of the usage of the former, which she has described as a *nomen nudem,* that is, a "taxonomical term used to denote a name 'which has no standing beacause it was introduced without publication of the full description demanded by the rules governing botanical and zoological nomenclature" (37).

2 See Sanders (1949) for a description of the traditional rural Bulgarian family.

3 The traditional three-generational, patriarchal family was already in decline during the decades before the Second World War, and finally disappeared with the onset of State Socialism (cf. Kaser 1995:417-471).

4 For a detailed discussion of interethnic and interfaith relations in Bulgaria see Zhelyazkova (1995).

5. These figures are extrapolated from the 1992 Bulgarian census and are based on evidence of population increases among Muslim and Gypsy minorities since that time (National Statistical Institute 1994:195).

6. Regarding Bulgaria's relations with her neighbors see Troxil (1997:202-203).

*