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**From Banishment to Ascribed Residence:
Controlling Internal Movement in Socialist Bulgaria (1944-1989)**

The present paper seeks to address one mobility-preventing mechanism, namely restriction on internal movement in socialist Bulgaria (1944-1989). Through a series of institutions – ranging from banishment, to dislocation, and a residence legally inscribed in the passport, the Bulgarian state engaged in spatial stratification and geographic management of its population. Its legal officials had elaborated categories linking human rights to a specific geographical location, while state and local authorities implemented in practice human rights' successful territorialisation. In both cases, infringement on free movement was aimed at the cultivation of a perfect socialist society, where the moral recovery of unhealthy elements was achieved through removal and isolation, and individuals had equal access to the public goods produced by the socialist collective.

Post-1989 research on exile, banishment, forced displacement and internment in Bulgaria has viewed these practices as exercises of repression perpetrated by a totalitarian regime that was incapable of silencing and unable to deal with its enemies otherwise. Exile, banishment and internment sites were quickly likened to Nazi concentration camps and have been accounted for by the internal weakness of the socialist regime, which produced indescribable brutality, barbaric cruelty and irrational violence. Efforts were concentrated on documenting the true statistical extent of internment and exile – what

numbers, when, and where, as well as the true degree of suffering. Witness accounts of those exiled and interned had to serve the goal of remembering socialist atrocities as well as relieving their victims from the trauma of their experience.

In complementing the cataloguing and commemorative efforts, the present paper seeks to understand these practices better, by placing them in the larger context of socialist population policies, thus comparing them to other instances of controlling mobility, like ascribed residence or state placement of highly educated professionals. It is informed by the approach of Amir Weiner, who has suggested viewing Soviet population policies in the framework of the overarching Soviet enterprise, namely the unfolding revolutionary transformation of society from an antagonistically divided entity into a conflict-free harmonious body. Using the metaphor of the “gardening state”, coined by Zygmunt Bauman for the early 20th-century European transformative impetus, Weiner has shown how the vision of society as a malleable construct engendered continuous purification campaigns seeking to eliminate discordant and obstructive elements. Groups and individuals perceived to be hostile were continuously referred to in biological-hygienic terms, whether as vermin, pollution or filth, and were subjected to ongoing purge and purification. The unprecedented increase in the inspirations and capacities of the state went hand in hand with the view of society as a raw material to be moulded into an ideal image. In the light of this powerful reordering ethos, Weiner argues, violence and exclusion were not random or merely preventive police measures that delineated the boundaries of the legitimate and the permissible but, rather, integral parts of the ongoing community-structuring exercise. The transformation – or removal – of the individual or the community became the accepted goal both in Soviet welfare and punitive policies.

Weiner saw the desire for a comprehensive plan for the transformation and management of society - one that would create a better, purer and more beautiful community through the removal of unfit human weeds - as an aesthetic enterprise, too. Purges were not merely reactive or tactical - as Bulgarian historiography of banishment and exile would suggest - purification and reintegration were complementary components of the colossal project of building a new socialist polity. Violence was deployed within a well-defined ideological framework which earmarked certain groups based on preconceived biases, and was incorporated into an all-encompassing drive to purify the social body.¹

The article is informed by and could be situated in a larger framework, namely Giorgio Agamben's accent on the politicization of human life as such and his fusion of the perspectives of Michel Foucault and Hannah Arendt. According to Agamben, Foucault focused on the passage from the "territorial state" to the "state of population" and the resulting increase in the importance of biological life as a problem of sovereign power, while Arendt attributed the decadence of the political realm in modern societies to the primacy of natural life over political action. Yet both Foucault and Arendt worked separately, without establishing a connection between their research endeavours: Arendt missed the bio-political perspective of totalitarian power, whereas Foucault failed to deal with the exemplary places of modern bio-politics, the concentration camp and the mechanisms of the great totalitarian states of the 20th century.²

¹ A. Weiner, "Nature, Nurture, and Memory in a Socialist Utopia: Delineating the Soviet Socio-Ethnic Body in the Age of Socialism", *American Historical Review*, 104, 4 (1999), 1114-1155.

² G. Agamben, *Homo Sacer. Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Stanford University Press: Stanford, 1998), pp. 3-4.

Internal exile

Banishment and forced displacement as practices in Bulgaria were not a post-1944 phenomenon. They were not invented by the Communist Party and have been widely used since the 1880s, shortly after the establishment of an independent Bulgarian state in 1878. Article 27 of the Police Act of 1889 allowed the police, upon the approval of the minister of internal affairs, to expel an idle person from a given settlement and to prescribe his/her obligatory resettlement in his/her place of origin for the sake of preserving social order.

Initially designed as a punishment against indolent people who could not prove their means of subsistence, banishment (or internment) came to be applied as an administrative measure against political opponents as well. The police quite often resorted to it right before elections with the aim of isolating a political rival and preventing him from gaining public support.³ The application of forced dislocation was intensified after the mid-1920s, when it was directed mainly against the political left at a time when communists and anarchists multiplied both their underground activities and open terrorist attacks.

In 1944, when the communist-led Fatherland Front came to power in Bulgaria, not only did there exist a considerable tradition of resorting to internal exile, but many of

³ In June 1899, for example, the former police chief Ivan Iurukov, born in Panagiuirishte but living for more than 15 years in Sofia, was banished from the capital and sent forcefully to his home town. This measure triggered a parliamentary scandal when an MP from Panagiuirishte publicly requested explanations from the interior minister at the parliament and accused him of arbitrariness and disrespect of the rule of law. The interior minister answered that Ivan Iurukov “did not reside in Sofia” and had come there only to lead the criminal gangs organized by the political opposition, the People’s Party. The police expelled him “in order to prevent potential disorder”. See 10th Parliamentary Assembly, XXXI session, 28 June 1899, Question from Vulko Neichov, MP from Panagiuirishte, concerning the internment in Panagiuirishte of the Sofia resident Ivan Iurukov, <http://www1.parliament.bg/kns/Pkontrol/10%20ons/10ons-1is-3.htm>.

the newly promoted politicians had themselves been banished, some of them several times. More than 170 MPs elected during the first post-WWII elections in November 1945 had lived in internal exile before or during WWII.⁴ A host of the freshly-risen communist leaders – like Titko Chernokolev or Gocho Grozev, member and candidate-member of the Politburo of the Bulgarian Communist Party, among others – had experienced banishment for their political beliefs and acts prior to 1944.⁵

The existing tradition of forced dislocation in Bulgaria was exacerbated by the stringent control on the movement of large social and ethnic groups during WWII. In the course of WWII, the state elaborated a whole range of new practices designed to manage and operate upon the population, which were to survive the deep political transformations of 1944.⁶ The precedents of banishing individuals were supplemented by novel practices of displacing whole institutions (banks, factories, embassies, etc.), albeit not enforced and for the sake of preservation and survival. In addition to the exile of institutions, entire ethnic groups such as the Jews underwent compulsory immobilization. The anti-Jewish legislation of 1941-4 allowed the Jews to go outside their homes for only 2 hours per day, allocated particular provincial cities and towns where the Jews could settle and, within them, special districts which the Jews could not leave.⁷ Groups of Jews, defected soldiers, anarchists, communists and “foreign nationalists” were sent to forced labour as a combined instrument of isolating enemies of the regime as well as supplying much

⁴ Of the 90 MPs from the Agrarian Party, 30 had undergone banishment, while of the 251 communists, 144 had gone through internal exile. D. Ludzhev, *Grad na dve epohi* (UI “Sv. Kl. Okhridski”: Sofia, 2005), pp. 92, 94.

⁵ *Rabotnichesko delo*, No 245 from 24 October 1946, p. 3.

⁶ P. Holquist, “State Violence as Technique. The Logic of Violence in Soviet Totalitarianism”, in: A. Weiner (ed.), *Landscaping the Human Garden. Twentieth-century Population Management in a Comparative Framework* (Stanford University Press: Stanford, 2003), p. 24.

⁷ AMVR, f. 1, op. 1, a.e. 361, ll. 2-5, Report of the Central Jewish Consistorium in Bulgaria regarding the situation of Bulgarian Jews during the fascist regime and after 9 September 1944, May 1946.

needed workforce for a war-oriented economy.⁸ These massive war-time dislocations and population transfers provided the pool of sophisticated tools for controlling movement, which the communist state would further refine upon. Not only were some practices of managing movement carried over into the socialist period; some of the places of exile and internment were also a pre-1944 legacy. The village of Mikre, in the Lovech district, which served as a concentration camp for Jews during WWII, was used as a site of labour mobilization after the war. The notorious camp in Belene, which was used by the communists for imprisonment, internment and exile, had also been created in the course of WWII.⁹

The post-1944 practice of sending people into internal exile was not the preserve of the Bulgarian communists only. In fact, responsible for the first post-war instance of forced displacement in the country were the representatives of the Allied Forces, who acted in accordance with the rules of the armistice. In September 1944, the Allied Control Commission, which supervised the Bulgarian government as the government of a former Axis state, ordered the exile and internment of all Axis-countries citizens in Bulgaria, with their families. It sanctioned the establishment of the camp in Zelendol, in the Blagoevgrad district, where German, Austrian, Hungarian and other citizens (including ethnic Bulgarians who had acquired this foreign citizenship through marriage, as well as children) were kept immobilized until the end of 1945. In 1946, the Allied Control

⁸ Labour mobilization, however, had its predecessor in Bulgaria of the early 1920s, during the government of the Agrarian Party leader Alexander Stamboliiski.

⁹ P. Stoianova, E. Iliev, *“Politicheski opasni litsa”. Vudvoriavaniia, trudova mobilizatsiia, izselvaniia v Bulgariia sled 1944 g.* (UI “Sv. Kl. Okhridski”: Sofia, 1991), pp. 78, 88.

Commission prescribed also the internment of the White Army Russian émigrés to Bulgaria, who collaborated with the German army during the war.¹⁰

The Bulgarian Communist Party embraced the whole repertoire of extra-judicial measures for controlling and purifying the country's population. Post-1944 management of people's movement through such measures comprised three main practices: internment in a labour-correctional institution, labour mobilization, and banishment (internal exile). Although each of those was governed by different legislation and had its own specificity, they were often blended together and were applied in a combined form. Normative acts often referred to all of these practices, while reports of both the Politburo of the Bulgarian Communist Party and of the Ministry of the Interior analysed them in parallel. Since 1951 there operated a unified institution that regulated all of them - the Department of Internment and Resettlement of the Ministry of the Interior.¹¹ Although internal exile, internment and labour mobilization shared many similarities with their pre-1944 precedents, they displayed crucial deviations that marked them as distinctive for a communist regime.

One of the major differences that distinguishes internal exile and banishment of the socialist regime from similar practices at other times and places is their rationale. While pre-1944 internal exile was meant to isolate a political foe or a criminal in order to reduce his influence or restore social order, the accent of banishments in post-1944 Bulgaria was on the corrective function of distance and re-education. Human weeds that intruded on the harmonious garden were to be excised and deracinated, but for the sake of

¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 10, 11, 15, 84.

¹¹ It was closed in 1953 but reopened in 1956-7.

improvement. They were to be uprooted not through extermination but through redemption. From the first post-1944 legislation until the last normative acts at the end of the socialist regime, the underlying rationale of banishment and internment was re-education and self-improvement. The two laws of 1945 concerning labour correctional institutions for political opponents and criminals postulated that the aim of those establishments was to “teach [those settled there] to perform respectable labour and to improve their moral and intellectual status”. The interior minister, who presented the drafts to the Council of Ministers, commented that the “conventional measures against some anti-social people had proved ineffective; that is why steps are needed to be taken for their isolation but at the same time for their correction and re-education”.¹² The legislative acts provided for the availability of special teachers to lead “labour exercises with the application of the principles of cooperation, self-control and competition, with the participation of workers in the distribution of profits, and prizes awarded to the best”. The institutions had to organise educational and sport exercises and tourist trips. They also had to ensure the functioning of libraries, reading rooms, playing grounds and pools.¹³

Further reports of the interior minister to the head of the Council of Ministers of July 1945 emphasized that the envisaged effect was of “greater public and social significance”. In other words, the objective was to instil in the interned persons “love for labour and work habits, to make them understand their mistakes and better arrange their

¹² TsDA, f. 136, op. 1, a.e. 59, l. 11.

¹³ *Durzhaven vestnik*, No 15 from 20 January 1945.

lives afterwards by becoming useful citizens of their fatherland”.¹⁴ The internal order in the corrective institutions envisaged

no work on Saturdays and Sundays for this time will be used for rest, cleaning, learning and housing improvements. ... The reception of newspapers is allowed and their reading should happen in the leisure time. A library with diverse scientific literature and fiction has been founded. Our teachers deliver lectures targeting the re-education of the interned in the spirit of the new Fatherland Front government.¹⁵

In spite of the changes the practices of banishment and internment underwent throughout the 1950s, documents of the 1960s show that correction continued to be singled out as their ultimate reason and goal. When in 1962 the Politburo of the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party decided to close down the labour camp in Lovech due to the excess of violence and a multitude of deaths, it declared that its regime was “vicious and incommensurate with socialist morality and the rule of law” and recommended more efforts towards the re-education of the interned.¹⁶

One can see the dimensions of exile when looking at the numbers of people subjected to it, and the places they were sent to:

*Number of exiled in Bulgaria*¹⁷:

Year	Exiled - families	Exiled - persons
1945	184	
1946	62	

¹⁴ TsDA, f. 136, op. 1, a.e. 196, ll. 13-14.

¹⁵ AMVR, f. 23, op. 1, a.e. 117, l. 10. In her post-1989 memoirs L. Pirinchieva, interned in the female corrective labour institutions in the village of Bosna and later in Belene, remembers that at both places there were “quite good libraries, where, along with the regular propaganda books in the spirit of Stalinism, there were some good ones as well”. See *Tales from the Dark. Testimonies about the Communist Terror* (Sofia, 2003), published by the Assistance Centre for Torture Survivors, p. 62, www.acet-bg.org/pdfs/ENbook.htm

¹⁶ TsDA, f. 1, op. 6, a.e. 4749, l. 1.

¹⁷ TsDA, f. 1, op. 6, a.e. 1865, ll. 28-36, Report of G. Damianov, M. Neichev and G. Tsankov regarding the closure of the corrective labour institutions and the situation of banished families, 26 August 1953; Stoianova, Iliev, “*Politicheski opasni litsa*”, p. 102.

1947	68	
1948	1666	
1949	1595	
1950	1476	
1951	1299	
1952	556	
1953	34	
Total exiled in 1945-53	7025	24624
Exile ended	269	1234
Left in 1953	6756	23390
1954	-	
1955	-	
1956	-	
1957	384	
1958-60	1651	
Left in 1961	2035	~ 8000
1962	353	740
1963	-	
1964	?	754
1965	-	
1966	-	
1967	415	
Left in 1967	714	

Places of exile – 17 villages and towns for which there exists archival evidence¹⁸:

Belene village, Pleven district

Belitsa village, Tutrakan district

Gabrovnitsa region, near the village of Skobelevo, Kazanluk district

General Toshevo town, Varna district

Gorna Oriahovitsa town

Gurkovo village, Stara Zagora district

Ikhtiman town, Sofia district

¹⁸ Stoianova, Iliev, “*Politicheski opasni litsa*”, pp. 77-97.

Kranevo village, Balchik district
Krupen village, Tolbukhin district (nowadays Dobrich)
Milchina luka village, Vidin district
Mutnitsa village, Shumen district
Nozharevo village, Silistra district
Obrochishte village, Tolbukhin district
Rogozina village, Tolbukhin district
Samokov town, Sofia district
Cherni vit village, Lovech district
Cherni osum village, Lovech district

Hand in hand with remoulding personality, there went the meticulous categorization of the interned and exiled. Banishment and forced dislocation were not practiced against particular social groups, but only with the most irredeemable elements within them. The movement of workers and the urban poor could be equally controlled and managed as that of the bourgeois and of the rich peasants. As Amir Weiner has suggested, communist leaders, following Marxist sociology, fluctuated between the “objective” category of class origin and the “subjective” criteria of conduct and experience. Calling this flux a “tension between nurture and nature”, Weiner drew attention to the Marxist regimes’ belief in acculturation that had to be reconciled with the constant eradication of social strata supposed to be illegitimate.¹⁹ Out of the 7025 families exiled between 1945 and 1953 in Bulgaria, only 1754 were of bourgeois origin; there were 93 of workers’ origin, 784 of poor peasants’ origin, and 65 of poor urban origin, while the social group most substantially represented in the statistics of forced displacement was that of the medium-status peasants (2418 families). Archival documents show that some of the banished and interned were members of the Bulgarian

¹⁹ A. Weiner, “Introduction. Landscaping the Human Garden”, in: A. Weiner (ed.), *Landscaping the Human Garden. Twentieth-century Population Management in a Comparative Framework* (Stanford University Press: Stanford, 2003), pp. 1-18 /15/.

Communist Party, whose political belonging had not saved them from displacement. In the long process of sculpting a socialist society, acculturation prevailed over biology as a means of purification of the polity. The socialist state's optimistic belief that human beings can be perfected relied on a concept of distance and a regime of immobility that entailed a particular spatial fixation.

Social background of exiled families between 1945-53²⁰:

Workers' origin	93
Artisans	78
Clerks	210
Poor peasants	784
Medium-status peasants	2418
Kulaks	710
Poor urban origin	65
Medium urban origin	457
Bourgeois origin	1754

Within these social groups, there went a further detailed categorization that cut across social divisions. The laws of labour-correctional institutions of 1945 were directed against politically dangerous people as well as prostitutes, pimps, swindlers, gamblers, beggars and idle people. The law of labour mobilization of idle people and wanderers of 1946 targeted “young people and citizens of an active working age who spend their time idling and earn a living through the murky ways of the black market and speculation” or

²⁰ TsDA, f. 1, op. 6, a.e. 1865, ll. 28-36, Report of G. Damianov, M. Neichev and G. Tsankov regarding the closure of the corrective labour institutions and the situation of banished families, 26 August 1953.

who spent most of their time in bars, coffee houses and pastry shops.²¹ In 1948, the Politburo of the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party ordered

the banishment from Sofia, Plovdiv, Varna, Bourgas, Gabrovo and other bigger cities of dismissed army officers, former lawyers and owners of industrial enterprises, etc., some of whom – especially the most wicked – to be interned as well as the speeding of the cleansing of border regions from unreliable elements and above all from the families of those who have escaped to Greece and Turkey.²²

In 1949, the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party dedicated special efforts to elaborating a strictly differentiated approach to the exiled citizens. A report of A. Iugov and interior minister R. Hristozov entitled “Regarding the categorization of enemies of the people’s power, their banishment and settlement in special regions” listed 4 categories of undesirable citizens who could be forcefully displaced from their places of residence. The first consisted of the “most vicious and intransigent enemies, ready to act against the people’s power at any given moment”, who comprised former police and army officers, state security personnel, former owners of industrial enterprises, relatives of individuals sentenced to death by the People’s Court, White Army Russians and Turkish spies. In the second category there belonged those “who have seemingly repented” and whose families did not have evil thoughts about the people’s power. They were to be exiled to specific regions where they would receive land and build special villages. The third category consisted of those already banished from Sofia and other bigger cities. They were to be settled in villages in Northern Bulgaria (vacated by the ethnic Turks leaving for Turkey) and were to be encouraged to find work in agriculture, brickyards, small cooperations, textile enterprises, etc. The last category encompassed

²¹ Stoianova, Iliev, “*Politicheski opasni litsa*”, p. 52.

²² TsDA, f. 1, op. 6, a.e. 520, ll.1-3.

moderate former bourgeois circles, who had resigned themselves to the new political circumstances but were nonetheless inappropriate for work in their particular professions, such as dismissed army officers, students, lawyers, former owners of nationalized industrial enterprises, etc. Iugov and Hristozov believed they did not pose a threat to the government but recommended, for the sake of prevention, limiting their inclusion at places where they could sabotage the work process. Still, the last two categories were to be assisted in finding appropriate work lest their malevolence be stimulated and they drift into idleness, robbery, cheating and banditism.²³

After a brief interlude between 1954-6, where exile and internment were not practiced, a further thorough categorization complemented the already careful enumeration of those meant to be corrected, improved and perfected. Decree No 468 of the Presidium of the National Assembly concerning certain rights of the People's Militia of 4 December 1956 contained a single paragraph that entitled the police to undertake internment, compulsory resettlement (temporary or permanent), or to ban the following groups from leaving their residence for a certain period of time:

individuals sentenced for crimes against the People's Republic or individuals who – in view of their former or present anti-governmental acts – could pose a danger to social order; recidivists, individuals sentenced for crimes against private and public property, debauchery, forging of documents and money, violence against institutions of power or hooliganism, as well as individuals with no permanent residence, those who consciously refuse to engage in socially useful labour or systematically wander around the country.²⁴

The 1956 decision to resume the practice of exile exhibits one of the first rifts in the socialist state's belief in the remoulding capacity of movement's control. It was prompted

²³ Stoianova, Iliev, "*Politicheski opasni litsa*", pp. 60-1.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 46.

by the 1956 revolution in Hungary and the instant fear of socialist officials that former enemies and criminals might be stimulated for action. Bad human material might be revived too easily, and by an external event. Throughout the socialist era, this vague, implicit distrust in the transformative energy of socialist policies would accompany the building of the ideal society and the optimistic hope that human nature could be permanently perfected. The notion that human nature could indeed prove non-reformable lies also behind the big ethnic migrations of the late 1940s and early 1950s, when the Bulgarian Turks and Pomaks were either allowed to emigrate – thus leaving the body of socialist citizenry - or were resettled within the country.²⁵ The vague disbelief in the power of transformation and remoulding would resurface in the minute categorization of offenders, and later, in the consolidation of the rules for granting ascribed residence.

The socialist transformative drive possessed its own dynamics – new sites of excision appeared as the realms where the enemies were sought increased. Brutalities were committed as an ultimate expression of loyalty to the vision of a perfect socialist society. The “human weeds” were isolated but neither abandoned nor excluded from society, and at no point did the regime strive for the total physical annihilation of these social groups.²⁶ Not only were the categories of those destined for correction painstakingly delineated, but individuals once identified as pernicious stood the chance of redemption through labour and re-education. Engaged in an ambitious experiment in radical social engineering, communist officials seem to have believed that they could

²⁵ For the forced exile and mass expulsion of Bulgarian Muslims in the late 1940s and the 1950s, see M. Grouev, *Mezhdú petoluchkata i polumesetsa. Bulgarite miusulmani i politicheskiat režim (1944-1959)* (IK “Kota”: Sofia, 2003).

²⁶ A. Weiner, “Nothing but Certainty”, *Slavic Review*, 61, 1 (2002), 44.

mould – out of corrupted and sick material – healthy bodies and souls.²⁷ Yet in the places of exile and internment they proceeded by a careful filtering and sorting out of those who had responded to re-education from those who were less yielding and malleable. Despite the efforts, bad nature still persisted and withstood all attacks. P. Holquist has called this meticulous filtration “a detailed hermeneutics of individual selves”.²⁸ In a move dramatically different from Nazi concentration camp practices, Bulgarian communist officials repeatedly stressed the need for cautious examination and subsequent supervision of each exiled or interned individual. Every concrete case had to be screened for signs of transformation and recovery. Still, at the bottom of the transformed body of the interned, there were those whose human nature resisted improvement.

Since 1945, internment, labour mobilization and banishment occurred upon a motivated report for each individual case. In 1949, a special commission was created at the Interior Ministry with a view to “contributing to more objectivity and better political evaluation in decisions for internment and banishment of socially dangerous people as well as of processing complaints and protests against wrongly prescribed internment and exile”.²⁹ A 1951 secret instruction concerning the work of the commission that administered internment provided for a complex classification and cataloguing of all cases. It obliged the competent bodies to exercise assiduous documentation and inspection of all complaints of those interned, banished, or their relatives, as well as perform thorough verification of the existing facts.³⁰ The representatives of the special commission that had to review the practices of internment and forced dislocation in 1953

²⁷ L. Viola, “The Other Archipelago: Kulak Deportations to the North in 1930”, *Slavic Review*, 60, 4 (2001), 731.

²⁸ Holquist, “State Violence as Technique”, p. 28.

²⁹ TsDA, f. 1, op. 6, a.e. 665, l. 1.

³⁰ Stoianova, Iliev, “*Politicheski opasni litsa*”, pp. 136-7.

declared that they had determined their opinion on each case “by considering every concrete person individually” and had taken their decisions upon “scrupulous evaluation of every exiled family or particular member thereof”.³¹ A 1959 secret directive of the interior minister for the filtration of interned people ordered the regional police chiefs to form their firm opinion “individually for every person, on the basis of detailed examination and objective evaluation of each concrete case in full compliance with these directives which in principle are not novel for you”.³²

The process of filtration and the belief in the transformative power of labour and re-education entailed the release from the labour-correctional institutions and exile of those sufficiently improved, “cured” and perfected. At the end of 1945, there remained at the labour-correctional institutions 339 persons, the remainder of 3298 interned between 9 September 1944 and 25 December 1945, and 2958 of them subsequently released (some of them on the occasion of New Year’s Eve). Out of 184 families that were banished for the same period, only 4 families remained in internal exile, whereas 180 of them were allowed to return to their former places of residence.³³ The 1953 commission, which reviewed the situation of the interned and exiled, proposed the release of those who were no longer a threat to public order. It found out that certain families were wrongly banished, and recommended restoring their residence as well as that of families who had proven they had accommodated to people’s power. Also, the commission restored the rights of those who had condemned their own former counter-revolutionary activity, as well as the rights of their relatives and former ideological friends. Upon careful individual inspection, the commission discovered families “who had given up

³¹ TsDA, f. 1, op. 6, a.e. 1865, ll. 28-36.

³² AMVR, f. 23, op. 1, a.e. 97, l. 1.

³³ AMVR, f. 23, op. 1, a.e. 117, ll. 10-15.

entirely their illicit enemy activity and are now supporting the activities of the people's government".³⁴ The 1959 directive for the filtration of interned people required regional police chiefs "to assess extremely carefully those who stay at the labour-correctional institutions and sift them down so that there remain only the incorrigible and genuine class enemies and criminals".³⁵ In 1959, when the Politburo of the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party took a decision to close down the labour-correctional camp in Belene, all 276 people interned for counter-revolutionary activity had been released as well as 931 of the 1147 individuals interned for criminal activity, yet "there remained 166 more individuals as irredeemable recidivists, definitely dangerous for public security and order". The Ministry of the Interior pledged, however, to "study periodically the results of all measures for the correction of these individuals and to release those who show increased awareness".³⁶ When in 1962 the Politburo debated the closure of the correctional camp in Lovech – where a year before the most dangerous criminals had been isolated from society, it praised the efforts of the interior minister

to minutely select the interned, so that the group includes only the most dangerous and inveterate criminals. Extremely characteristic is the case of September 1961, when after a resolution of [interior minister] Mr. G. Tsankov the first group of 300 interned was released. (A second, more substantial group of 462 people was released only at the beginning of February this year).³⁷

After the institution in Lovech was closed down, the deputy minister of the interior ordered a series of measures for heightened educational effect on the released individuals,

³⁴ TsDA, f. 1, op. 6, a.e. 1865, ll. 28-36. As a result, the majority of the 6756 families found to be in exile in 1953, were allowed to return to their former dwellings.

³⁵ AMVR, f. 23, op. 1, a.e. 97, l. 1.

³⁶ AMVR, f. 23, op. 1, a.e. 95, l. 1.

³⁷ TsDA, f. 1, op. 6, a.e. 4749, ll. 1-3.

among which the provision of housing and appropriate work as well as their “settling in a healthy working environment while particular people or entire collectives take a public pledge for their permanent re-education, establishment of sound working habits and development of interest in culture”.³⁸

What is striking about the struggle of socialist officials to correct and redesign those not conforming to the ideal of a socialist citizen is that isolation in distant places was accompanied by collective efforts to transform the deviant. Although the errant were isolated and their movement restricted, they were never left alone, on their own, and were surrounded by the benevolent attempts of teachers, instructors and tutors to convert them and make them conform to the communist model of a perfect citizen. The institutions of internment and banishment were imbued with a collectivist ethos, and the reshaping of aberrant souls could only succeed as a joint, collective undertaking. In 1945 the labour-correctional institutions were renamed from labour-correctional villages to labour-correctional communities so as to put an accent on their communal character. In 1949, there circulated ideas to build special separate villages to host the exiled, yet they were not realized.³⁹ An appeal was launched in 1959 to involve more widely the public and professional organizations, the labour collectives of industrial enterprises, cooperatives and administrative organizations which had at their disposal the most effective means of influencing the offenders. In the 1960s endeavours were made to involve the public organizations more closely not only in the re-education of the interned and exiled during

³⁸ AMVR, f. 23, op. 1, a.e. 103, l. 2.

³⁹ This notwithstanding, the exiled were often placed together, and several families ended up sharing small houses of 2-3 rooms. Instead of complaining of isolation, they more often protested against their crowding and lack of privacy. See the memoirs of S. Gruev, *Moiata odiseia* (Obsidian: Sofia, 2002), the chapter “Izseleni v Dobrudzha”, pp. 118-28 or M. Riaskov, *Spomeni iz moia zivot* (UI “Sv. Kl. Okhridski”: Sofia, 1995), the chapter “Periodut sled 9 septemvri 1944”, pp. 121-55.

their banishment but also beforehand, at the stage of deciding who, where and whether to send.

Ascribed residence

Ascribed residence is another form of control of people's movement during the socialist period. Unlike internment and banishment, however, it did not target the socially deviant criminals and opponents of the political regime only, i.e. the "sick" part of society, outcasts and undesirables, the "human weeds" who needed to be excised from the beautiful garden of communism. Ascribed residence targeted the whole population of the country and was meant to strictly regulate admission to the big cities as well as the access to scarce public resources pledged to be distributed equally among the socialist citizenry. Through ascribed residence, the socialist state's ambition to assume ultimate responsibility for people's movement, and its drive to fix people to places, was extended to the entire civil population. Although the rationales behind internment and banishment on the one hand and ascribed residence on the other do differ, their effect on people's movement and choice of residence was similar. They both belonged to the sophisticated repertoire of the socialist regime for the management of human mobility in the name of building a perfect society, and their combined analysis can provoke fresh thoughts on the nature and mechanics of a totalitarian rule.

Scholars vary in their approach to this administrative instrument of regulating internal movement, emphasizing either its assault on individual liberty or accounting for its efficiency in hindering mobility. Some view it as an outcome of totalitarian ideologies' inherent distrust in big urban conglomerations, others emphasise the practical

difficulties of maintaining public welfare on an extended territory. A recent attempt has been made to investigate the aggregate influence of ascribed residence on migration. The attempt involves seeing the socialist state as substituting for the market in providing the linking mechanism between individual and collective rationality in migration decisions.⁴⁰ Yet few consistent attempts have been made to view ascribed residence in the context of socialist population management and compare it to other instances of controlled movement.⁴¹

Ascribed residence has its roots in the policy of limiting access to the capital in war-time Bulgaria. As internment and exile, it was not an invention of the communists, who adopted a practice whose origin was in the realities and deficits of a war-ridden economy. When communists started applying it there was nothing peculiarly socialist about it; it was widespread throughout post-war Europe ravaged by problems of reconstruction and endemic shortages. Until 1942 anyone could settle in Sofia or find work there; one only needed to register one's presence in the city. Limitations on settlement in the capital were introduced for the first time in July 1942, with the Decree for the Prevention of the Housing Crisis in Sofia, soon followed by the 1943 Decree for the Temporary Alleviation of the Housing Crisis and Preservation of Public Peace and

⁴⁰ C. Buckley, "The Myth of Managed Migration: Migration Control and Market in the Soviet Period", *Slavic Review*, 54, 4 (1995), 896-916.

⁴¹ Ivaylo Dichev for example discusses banishment and residence in its vision of the socialist city as status. Quoting 1966 statistics, showing that 47% of applicants acquire residence through marriage, 32% for production reasons, 16% because of sickness, old age, elective positions, and 5% for family reasons (adoption for example), Dichev concludes that the reproduction of the working class turns out to be of secondary importance to the regime, the primary outcome of the residence system being the distortion of the marriage market. See I. Dichev, *Prostranstva na zhelanieto, zhelaniia za prostranstvo. Etiudi po gradska antropologija* (Iztok-Zapad: Sofia, 2005), p. 71.

Order in Sofia.⁴² These acts prohibited settlement in Sofia and the registration of new citizens in the capital, and their motive was the lack of sufficient housing, but also food and other provisions, which might become the source of disorder. The 1943 act excluded from potential residence the political opponents of the regime, immoral persons and perpetrators of economic crimes, among them “those spreading harmful and disturbing rumours, those dangerous for the state order, security and public peace, prostitutes, pimps, people without a permanent job, blackmailers, gamblers and those sentenced for crimes more than once”. Temporary residence was permitted for business trips or guest visits and in case of illness. Yet these first restrictive measures – like all similar measures in subsequent periods – specified a circle of exclusion that was to grow bigger and wider over the next decades: people appointed to state or municipal public work, students, owners of property in Sofia, sick and old relatives of Sofia residents and those married to Sofia residents were exempt from the limitations. Communist officials did, indeed, inherit the practice of controlling residence, but they infused it with new content, transforming it into a powerful tool for social stratification and moulding movement and mobility into a privilege.

Institutionalisation of socialist residence

It is interesting to see how the war-time regulation of internal movement, which was explicitly seen as a temporary measure, managed to turn smoothly into a permanent and extremely sophisticated control over access to towns and cities that resulted in a complex

⁴² For a comprehensive analysis of war-time and post-WWII residence legislation in Bulgaria see A. Vezenkov, “Sofiiskoto zhitelstvo”, in: *Sofia: 120 godini stolitsa* (Izdatelstvo Marin Drinov: Sofia, 2000), pp. 237-44.

spatial stratification of the socialist population. It operated until 1955 with small modifications – workers were given the right to receive temporary residence in Sofia while the Minister of the Interior was given the discretion to grant residence for “very important economic, cultural or public reasons”.⁴³ These acts also remained the legal basis for banishment until the early 1950s, when internal exile was in its heyday.

In 1949, the state introduced for the first time internal passports for all Bulgarian citizens whereby it strengthened its monopoly on the legitimate means of movement of the population.⁴⁴ Control over people’s mobility gradually expanded in the mid-1950s, with a series of decrees about “planning, regularization and appointment” of young specialists with university or technical education. Massively infringing on their free choice of where to live and work upon graduation, the state began assigning, for a period of 3 years, highly educated specialists to particular places around the country, which experienced lack of qualified personnel. These social groups, which were conceived as one of the most precious assets of the socialist state, were immobilized not because of criminal behaviour or on the grounds of their questioning the ideological foundations of socialist power, but due to the regulating impulse of the regime that exerted a total control over movement in the framework of its specific population management.

Over the next decades access to urban residence was further reduced by adding new cities to the list of banned settlements. A 1955 decree postulated temporary limitation of the acceptance of new residents in the 5 biggest Bulgarian cities – Sofia, Plovdiv, Stalin, Bourgas and Rousse.⁴⁵ It virtually closed these cities to new residents

⁴³ Vezenkov, “Sofiiskoto zhitelstvo”, p. 238.

⁴⁴ J. Torpey, *The Invention of the Passport. Surveillance, Citizenship and the State* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2000), p. 1.

⁴⁵ *Durzhaven vestnik*, No 22 from 16 March 1955. Stalin was the name of the today’s city of Varna.

(even for marriages) but allowed residence only to people in a few select positions (mainly university professors and top party functionaries). In 1956 the decree was spread to 2 more cities – Stara Zagora and Plevna and the ban was lifted on newcomers for the purpose of marriage. Residence – as opposed to address – from now on was to be inscribed in the passport and became an instrument of stringent control of the access to scarce public goods such as housing (state and non-state alike), medical treatment, kindergartens, education facilities, etc.

New regulations, supporting the restrictive tendency in granting access to urban residence, were further introduced in 1962 and 1966. In 1962 a decree on establishing a better order in accepting new residents in the capital was voted, followed by a 1966 decree on temporary restriction of the admission of new residents in the big cities and certain other settlements. The 1966 document was preceded by a report by Todor Zhivkov himself, in which he required urgent action to be taken to limit the overpopulation of cities.⁴⁶ Residence should be given in extreme circumstances only, with a fixed term of 6 months for temporary residence for seasonal work, and in the majority of cases, after a personal proposal from a given minister.

As the number of banned cities increased, so did the number of social categories exempt from the restrictions. The climax of limitations came with the 1974 decree on the temporary limitation of residence in all cities in the country except for 30 small towns in poorer regions and areas populated with ethnic minorities.⁴⁷ Its rationale was the creation of conditions for the “correct demographic and economic development of cities and

⁴⁶ TsPA, f. 1, op. 6, a.e. 6118, ll. 84-86.

⁴⁷ *Durzhaven vestnik*, No 94 from 3 December 1974. This most exhaustive of all decrees regulating urban residence survived, albeit amended, until August 1990 when it was cancelled by the newly-appointed first non-Communist president Zhelio Zhelev, as unconstitutional. See Vezekov, “Sofiiskoto zhitelstvo”, p. 238.

limitation of the mechanical growth of their populations”. Besides closing virtually all urban settlements to new residents, this last piece of legislation featured an extremely detailed list of people who were allowed to settle in cities and towns, as well as a meticulous enumeration of reasons why residence – once gained - might be lost. In this sense, although predicated on the lack of sufficient housing for all newcomers, control on movement became a viable instrument of redistributing privileges among a host of entitled people. From a right and an explicit goal of early socialism, urban settlement became a privilege for carefully selected social groups. Top state and party officials (appointed by the State Council, the Council of Ministers or the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party), top officials at the People’s Councils or public organizations, judges or prosecutors, university and pedagogical staff, teachers in poor regions populated with ethnic minorities, artists, theatre- and film-directors and musicians, military personnel (army and police), workers in sensitive industries (like the metallurgical giant “Kremikovtsi”, the mining industry, and the nuclear power plant), construction workers, and workers awarded the honorary title of “Hero of Socialist Labour” or holding the medals “G. Dimitrov” and “People’s Republic of Bulgaria” – all received the privilege of urban residence, although some of them were also not allowed to settle either in Sofia or the 5 biggest cities in the country. It may only seem like a paradox that the last category granted the right to settle in cities – unconditionally – included individuals of Bulgarian origin who were given Bulgarian citizenship, i.e. Bulgarian emigrants who had decided to return to their socialist homeland.

It is interesting to observe the process of codification of this last comprehensive piece of socialist legislation regulating residence. When its first draft was proposed by the

Minister of Labour and Social Affairs to the Chairman of the Council of Ministers in September 1974, it contained restrictions harsher than any previous decree on residence. It “temporarily” suspended the granting of permanent or temporary residence for any person except for workers sent collectively to construction sites or major national investment projects. Accepting commuting workers with “non-deficit” professions or workers without permanent residence in enterprises was prohibited. Aiming explicitly at limiting workers’ mobility – estimated at around 1 million workers per year - the draft law envisaged grave sanctions for employers who breached the rules of the residence system: up to 6 months corrective labour, a fine of 400 leva, and dismissal from their job.⁴⁸ It listed no exceptions to the rules.

Yet while circulating among a range of interested institutions, the draft was revised to include two important additions: a list of social and professional categories exempt from the restrictions, and a list of cities and towns where the new limitations were not to be implemented. The changes came after a flood of requests from central and local institutions which campaigned for exempting their own workers and officials from the newly formulated residence rules. In a fierce competition for exemption, ministries, agencies, organizations and companies clashed in their desire to ensure the benefit of urban residence to their staff. Thus, the Ministry of the Interior wished to continue appointing sergeants and officers without residence, as did the Committee for Science, Technical Progress and Higher Education with respect to scholars and higher education specialists. The Ministry of Foreign Trade called for including graduates of the Foreign

⁴⁸ TsDA, f. 136, op. 59, a.e. 629, ll. 3-4.

Trade Relations Department of the University of Economics in the list of “deficit” specialists.⁴⁹

In October 1974, after the compilation of the two exemption lists – of categories of people and of categories of places to which restrictions did not apply - a new round of consultations brought new and even more numerous requests for exceptional status. Trade unions, the army, cultural and art organizations, transport companies, mass media, even the maritime authorities hiring sailors and ship technicians - all claimed their employees had a unique contribution to the socialist state; that is why they deserved to be exempt from the residence rules.⁵⁰ In a competitive bid to gain the power of granting residence, regional authorities attempted to add their cities and towns to the list of those where control on residence would not apply. The list grew longer – new towns and cities tried to secure a place there, such as Drianovo, Triavna, Plachkovtsi (Gabrovo region), Yablanitsa, Letnitsa, Ugurchin (Lovech region), Klisura, Kalofer, Suedinenie and Sadovo (Plovdiv region), Svilengrad, Shabla, Smolian, Luki and Chepelare, etc.⁵¹ At the same time, some local institutions petitioned for even more severe limitations on access to urban residence. Sofia City People’s Council demanded the right to grant residence on the basis of the candidate’s origin and public conduct, “in order to improve the social quality of the population in the capital”.⁵² The People’s Council in Svilengrad insisted on suspending the residence of those who had urban residence but lived in villages, which makes of them “fake urban residents” and “nothing connects them to the city”. The

⁴⁹ TsDA, f. 136, op. 59, a.e. 629, ll. 5-12.

⁵⁰ TsDA, f. 136, op. 58, a.e. 108, ll. 63, 65, 100.

⁵¹ TsDA, f. 136, op. 58, a.e. 108, ll. 121, 124, 131, 148, 150-1.

⁵² Sofia City People’s Council has campaigned for acquiring the right to banish offenders of public order such as hooligans, pimps and criminals since 1955, yet it was never allowed to do it. See TsDA, f. 136, op. 19, a.e. 826, l. 6.

District People's Council in Blagoevgrad went as far as to propose suspending the residence rights and banishing those who did not work for more than 3 months and did not take the job offered to them by the labour offices.⁵³ These claims have been declared by the central authorities "a propensity to overregulation" and were not included in the decree's final version.

The endeavour to obtain the right to grant privilege through the control on people's mobility represents a pursuit of power on the part of local authorities. If one understands the struggle around the categories of exemptions as a specific power struggle, a quest for accumulation of symbolic resources, one would be able to explain the seeming paradox of appeals for more exemptions combined with appeals for more brutal restrictions than the ones proposed by the centre.

Implementing the rules of residence

Ascribed residence could also be lost – it could be suspended mostly for quitting a workplace or in case of divorce. It thus served as a tool of promoting the state policy of binding workers to enterprises and reducing the constant instability and "fluctuation" of the workforce, a chronic problem of socialist industry. It became an instrument of socialist family planning by upholding the proclaimed values of family life and by sanctioning those who opted out of them. Ascribed residence could thus be a benefit as well as a sanction for particular behaviour. It was a powerful tool in the hands of directors of enterprises who were the people most responsible for proposing workers for

⁵³ TsDA, f. 136, op. 58, a.e. 108, ll. 145, 148, 175-187.

residence, as well as for reporting them to the authorities should they decide to quit the workplace.

Yet the numbers of those who lost their residence was not very high. Ivaylo Dichev quotes the following statistics for the capital Sofia: in 1955, 21 people lost their residence, in 1956 – 23, in 1957 – 11, in 1958 – 22, in 1959 – 15, and in 1960 – 8. He thinks those figures do not point at demographic engineering, assuming that not punishment but the conditions for acquiring residence had a better disciplining effect over the citizenry. Viewing residence management as “conditioned migration” – a modern form of mobility, related to specific conditions, Dichev calls this process a “layering” of civil rights in concentric circles and creation of motives in those inhabiting the outer circles to struggle to move to the inner circles.⁵⁴

Despite the fact that the majority of the denials of residence were due to the lack of work (“not exercising a ‘deficit’ profession”) or the lack of accommodation in the particular location, other reasons could also block a person’s way to urban status. “A sentence for severe and shameful crimes”, as postulated in the decrees, could be a reasonable motive for rejection of an otherwise impeccable application. In 1981, Dimitur Danov, who applied for residence in Sofia in 1979, was not accepted as resident, because of a sentence for grave and reprehensible crimes. A former Sofia resident (currently unregistered resident with his own accommodation), Danov was sentenced to permanent banishment from Sofia for “enemy activities”. After the abolition of the regime of permanent banishment, however, Danov did not restore automatically his former residence, but had to apply for it according to the existing residence rules, valid for all

⁵⁴ Dichev, *Prostranstva na zhelanieto*, p. 69. He finds a parallel in the way this “layering of civil rights” has been applied as a disciplining mechanism towards immigrant flows to Western European capitals and its communist variant of internal application, within the national territory.

citizens. Article 6 of these regulations allowed refusals if the applicant had committed disgraceful crimes. Thus he was caught up in a vicious circle of mutually exclusive pieces of legislation, and ended up with the unique status of non-resident, a person unable to register properly in any Bulgarian city or town.⁵⁵ In 1978, and twice in 1980, Sofia City People's Council rejected the application of Maria Benevrechka, long-term worker in the Kremikovtsi industrial plant, and mother of 3 children, one of them with hereditary illness, because her husband – who applied for residence together with her, had been a convict.⁵⁶

Former crimes could be a motive for refusal even to prolong temporary residence. In 1983, Vasil Krustev, born in the village of Chemish in North-West Bulgaria and temporary resident in Sofia, was called by the police authorities and informed that his temporary residence had been suspended. He was asked to leave Sofia, where he had a wife – permanent and working Sofia resident - a flat, a job, and a son. The reason for this was his 8-year prison sentence for theft in 1973, from which he was released in 1978 for “impeccable conduct and reverence to labour”. Shattered by this decision, Krustev complained to the State Council, claiming his marriage was “harmonious, one could even say happy” and that he “had begun a new life”. “Why then do the authorities keep referring to my sentence and why after so many years of countless proofs of my loyalty and absolute, active social integration am I still under suspicion; even more importantly, am I persecuted and punished without a verdict and for a deed I have already accounted for?”, he asked. Krustev managed to convince the police and Sofia City People's Council

⁵⁵ TsDA, f. 136, op. 71, a.e. 52, ll. 30, 32-3.

⁵⁶ TsDA, f. 136, op. 72, a.e. 54, l. 112.

to leave him in the capital, and he was given temporary residence with a 1-year probation term.⁵⁷

Ivan Stanev's case is also exemplary in showing how the socialist state kept fluctuating between a belief in the transformative power of its control on people's movement and the corroding suspicion that criminals and recidivists would remain a corrupt human material forever, unable to change. In May 1978, Ilija Stanev, a 58-year-old retired disabled man, living in the workers' dorm of the state Cement Factory "Volcano" in Dimitrovgrad, was informed by a district police officer that his stay at the dorm was illegal for he did not have right of residence in Dimitrovgrad. Ilija Stanev was officially resident of the Krushovene village (near the city of Pleven), and the police asked him to return there. From Stanev's handwritten complaint it becomes clear that in 1972 he worked at the "Karl Marx" chemical factory in Devnia, "the valley of grand chemistry". In 1973 – "for no apparent reason" - he was sent to forced exile in the village of Krushovene for failing to engage in publicly useful work and for lack of address registration. After several protests from the claimant and a request from the "Karl Marx" chemical factory, he was transferred back to Devnia, but again, with enforced residence. In 1975 he returned to Dimitrovgrad and started work at the "Volcano" Cement Factory where in 1977 he was diagnosed with a severe heart disease and retired as disabled. Ilija Stanev complained against the "forced suspension from residence in Dimitrovgrad" that happened during his forced exile in Krushovene. He requested that his previous residence in Dimitrovgrad be restored so that he could continue living at the "Volcano" factory dorm.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ TsDA, f. 136, op. 72, a.e. 56, ll. 67-71.

⁵⁸ TsDA, f. 136, op. 72, a.e. 50, ll. 21-22.

As the Ministry of Internal Affairs informed the Complaints Office at the State Council, Stanev was a criminal and recidivist. He was sent to forced exile in Krushovene for sex offences, thefts, falsification of documents and other crimes. In 1976 he was granted temporary residence in Dimitrovgrad with a 1-year term. During this period, Stanev left Dimitrovgrad without permission and went to work in Devnia. He was discovered by the police in Devnia and registered as a vagrant. Later in the same year, Stanev got a job at the “Volcano” factory in Dimitrovgrad and was allowed to live in the factory’s dorm. As a worker without residence but indispensable to the plant in Dimitrovgrad, he was granted temporary residence for the period of 1 year. In June 1978, the Ministry of the Interior advised the Dimitrovgrad Municipal People’s Council to restore Stanev’s permanent residence rights.⁵⁹

In too many instances, refusals to grant urban residence or its subsequent suspension were based on the social behaviour and moral stature of a citizen. Unlike former convictions, appropriate conduct was not listed among the explicit criteria for acquiring residence. However, it was often used as a motivation by the People’s Councils which possessed considerable discretion in judging on individual cases. Origin and publicly unacceptable manners figured nowhere in the legislation, but were often the justification of residence-granting authorities, which would not reconsider their decision even when prompted by district and supreme courts’ rulings to do so, or in the milder case of unofficial personal requests of ministers and top party functionaries. Parasites had no place in the body of the socialist city and would be punished by suspension of residence.

⁵⁹ TsDA, f. 136, op. 72, a.e. 50, ll. 19-20.

Thus, in 1978 Todor Hadzhiev applied for Sofia residence after he married a resident of the capital, but failed to obtain it because his father had been sentenced by the People's Court (the anti-fascist Bulgarian court of the late 1940s).⁶⁰ In 1980, Dora Penkova's temporary residence in Gabrovo was suspended after the police found she lived together with a married citizen of foreign nationality without "being engaged in publicly valuable labour". In spite of her pregnancy at the time and her declaration that she would marry the Zairian national, the 23-year old woman received a written warning to leave the city without the right to return. She managed to find various jobs in Gabrovo, from which she would be dismissed after a couple of days, when her employers learned about the police order.⁶¹ Granting residence to sons and daughters of "active fighters against fascism" was also a frequent event: it demonstrates that despite its transformative efforts, the socialist state failed to renounce its suspicion that human material is non-transformable. In a fight against human weeds, the crucial importance of origin and past behaviour continued determining a person's place in socialist society.

Refusal of residence would not have turned into a widespread instrument of moral pressure without its being supported by large sections of the citizenry, and approved by families, relatives, friends and neighbours of those blamed for moral decay. In the above-mentioned case of Dora Penkova, it was her family who denounced her to the Gabrovo police, her father insisting on the suspension of her temporary residence. Accusations of questionable morals blended with jealousy or revenge when divorced marriage partners asked the respective institutions to withhold the residence of their former husbands and wives. "There is no place for her in Sofia. She is a nurse and is not on the list of deficit

⁶⁰ TsDA, f. 136, op. 72, a.e. 52, l. 58.

⁶¹ TsDA, f. 136, op. 72, a.e. 52, ll. 70-74.

workers”, wrote Sasho Tabakov about his ex-wife in 1980 to the State Council, in one of his repeated attempts to chase her out of the capital.⁶² In 1983, the district prosecution in Sofia proclaimed as unfounded the charge of Ekaterina Hristova against doctor Hristo Hristov that a year ago he had received residence in Sofia by the help of a forged document.⁶³ Colleagues, neighbours and former friends sent anonymous letters to the authorities trying to expose wrong doings or simply ruin lives out of hatred. In 1979, a group of clerks from the border police unit in Liubimets denounced their fellow colleague Nikola Gospodinov of acquiring residence through forged papers.⁶⁴

On the contrary, lack of moral sins and positive personal qualities such as honesty, industry, modesty, and strictness were often quoted as a reason supporting particular applications for residence. In references given to applicants by their employers, one can read that the candidate “has a correct attitude to the political power”, or “has excellent theoretical and practical knowledge; able to work with the sick; disciplined and obeys orders”.⁶⁵ In 1978, Marin Marinov, a worker at the Pharmaceutical Company in the town of Vratsa, attached to his application for residence the following letter of approval from his director: “[The claimant] works diligently, and is attentive and helpful. He strives to be useful and ensures a correct and timely supply of medicines for the people in the town and the region. He is a member of Dimitrov’s Youth Comsomol and the trade union of the workers in the pharmaceutical industry. The leadership of the Pharmaceutical Company in the town of Vratsa gives a positive evaluation of the work of

⁶² TsDA, f. 136, op. 72, a.e. 52, ll. 35, 38.

⁶³ TsDA, f. 136, op. 72, a.e. 54, l. 91.

⁶⁴ TsDA, f. 136, op. 72, a.e. 51, ll. 11-13. Even though the papers were destroyed 5 years after the acquisition of residence, as stipulated by law, captain Gospodinov’s superior found out that he had been appointed resident without having the required 10 years of work at the border police unit and pledged to punish the guilty.

⁶⁵ TsDA, f. 136, op. 72, a.e. 53, l. 61.

comrade Marin Marinov ... and PROPOSES that he is granted permanent residence in the town of Vratsa.”⁶⁶

Subverting the control of movement

It was not impossible to avoid restrictions on movement and ascribed residence. To begin with, the very state provided some opportunities through the codification of two special categories. The first was the category of “temporary residence”, given to seasonal workers or to workers needed for a particular industry, the so-called “deficit professions”. Thus the directors of enterprises who were entitled to decide whether they needed a particular worker acted as powerful agents of mobility and subversion, as did the Committee of Labour and Prices, which decided on which profession is a deficit one at a particular period of time. With the advent of socialism, this category acquired a multitude of layers, with the introduction of the finer and subtler divisions between “temporary for a period of time” and “permanent temporary” residence, as well as between “temporary probational” and “temporary unconditional” residence. The multiplying classifications allowed a growing number of people who could not meet the stern criteria for permanent residence to remain legally in the cities, work there, rent state property, albeit not being able to buy their own flats or houses. In 1961 in Sofia, there were 63 130 temporary residents (11% of the population of the capital), while 11 680 of them obtained it in breach of the clauses of the residence decree.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ TsDA, f. 136, op. 72, a.e. 50, l. 66.

⁶⁷ TsDA, f. 136, op. 34, a.e. 70, l. 35. See also Dichev, *Prostranstva na zhelanieto*, p. 70.

The second legal category - the so-called “commuters” – allowed restrictions on residence to be bypassed as well. Commuters were permitted only to work in cities but not to reside there: such a status compelled the worker to travel every day between an out-of-town residence and an in-town job. The perimeter of moving back and forth for these purposes was steadily growing. In 1964, Apostol Pashev, Chairman of the State Planning Commission, developed the notion of satellite towns, citing the example of the USSR, Czechoslovakia and Poland, but also the USA and the UK. “Satellite towns must meet the following conditions:”, he said, “be in the vicinity of a big city that allows regular and easy connection between them. In our context, this means to be at a 20-40 km. distance from a big city, i.e. 20-30 minute train ride, or 15-20 minute bus ride, so that workers can commute every day.”⁶⁸ In order to persuade such commuters not to apply for residence in the big city, the state resorted to economic incentives as well. In 1966, a decree for limiting the mechanical growth of cities, towns and bigger villages was passed, envisaging measures to curb the unemployed population in the big cities, thereby preventing newcomers from finding work and settling there. It listed as a primary goal the employment of urban women, identified as the majority of the unemployed urban residents, through developing light industry enterprises in cities as well as the service sector, and through the introduction of flexible working shifts (half day, or every other day). The document appealed for the development of winter employment opportunities in the villages (such as production of packaging tools, souvenirs, baskets, small household appliances, etc.), and cheaper transport to big construction sites, with the tendency to match the prices of rail travel and public city transport.⁶⁹ All these initiatives constituted

⁶⁸ TsPA, f. 1, op. 6, a.e. 5540, l. 55.

⁶⁹ TsDA, f. 136, op. 42, a.e. 80.

stimuli for mobility as opposed to permanent migration, since through encouraging commuting, the state hoped to curb the overpopulation of cities.

Control on residence could be subverted in other ways too, namely in the multiple everyday practices of factory directors, residence-granting clerks, and the migrants themselves. Factory directors were thought to be the main culprits. Their most frequent “error” was the hiring of non-deficit workers, and then proposing them for either temporary or permanent residence, thus disregarding the official requirements. The directors of factories, organizations and administrative units would hire people who didn’t fit any of the privileged categories, such as shopkeepers, butlers, unqualified workers. Another grave mistake was their frequent failure to declare bad workers or report missing workers who had quit their workplace earlier than the legal rules for residence (3, 5, 7, 10 years in different periods of time), thus “forgetting” to request the suspension of their residence. Finally, directors of enterprises and companies could hire even workers without any permission to work whatsoever, normally during high seasonal pressures on production or a continuous severe lack of workers as in the unattractive heavy industries with hard working conditions.⁷⁰ That directors misused their position of control of residence at its primary ground - the workplace - is evident from the harsh and extremely severe punishments provided for them in the legislation limiting access to cities (with the intervention of the prosecution). Starting as a sanction of 200 leva, the fine quickly grew to 400 leva, with the possibility of forced labour of 3 to 6 months, and some proposals for immediate redundancy of heads of companies upon proving their negligence towards the rules of residence.

⁷⁰ TsDA, f. 136, op. 34, a.e. 70, ll. 14-15.

In addition to directors, residence-granting officials could also contribute to the proliferation of unaccounted for or fake residents. Sofia City Public Council had the dubious practice of adding names to the minutes of meetings where residence applications had been discussed and approved. During its session of 17 December 1959, for example, 17 people were accepted as residents, but the minutes contained the names of 26. Sometimes openly disregarding the negative position of the working groups that reviewed the applications, Sofia City Public Council granted the requested residence. At other times residence would be given without any review of the documents, or without submitted documents whatsoever. Such were the cases of clerks of the Ministry of Finance, school headmasters, students, etc. Between 1959 and 1962, more than 300 people obtained residence without proper review of their papers.

The restrictions on residence were furthermore subverted by ministers and top party functionaries, due to the lack of vigilance or for the sake of political protection. Some ministers delegated their right to grant residence in extreme circumstances to their deputies, without properly controlling these activities. Others lobbied for “non-deficit and politically unreliable” persons. In the early 1960s, the former Chairman of the Committee for Architecture and Public Works put up for residence in Sofia, and secured it, for architect Alexander Popov from Yambol, who turned out to be of a “rich enemy family”, had denounced anti-fascists to the police, had been dismissed from the university, and had misused his official position.⁷¹ In 1977, Elena Georgieva, a textile worker from the

⁷¹ Yet not all ministers were equally successful in ensuring residence for their protégés. The Minister of Domestic Trade, Roussi Hristozov, for example, had backed the application of Nikolai Sekunov, claiming he was a good specialist in the field of advertisement. Sofia City People’s Council, however, discovered that Sekunov had served the fascist authorities, and “his attitude towards the initiatives of the socialist government is negative”. He was not granted residence despite his high political protection. TsDA, f. 136, op. 34, a.e. 70, ll. 33-34.

village of Shiroki Dol, and her husband, Ilia Georgiev, a Greek-orthodox priest, were refused residence in Blagoevgrad, where both of them had had a job for more than 4 years and had started saving money for a flat in the city. Elena Georgieva asked for help Army General Ivan Mihailov, member of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party and of the State Council, and probably her acquaintance. The general found the refusal of residence “wrong and contrary to the existing relations with the Church” and recommended that action be taken. Owing to the general’s personal intervention in the case, Blagoevgrad Municipal People’s Council immediately revised its negative answer and decided to grant Ilia Georgiev residence in the city, “as an exception”.⁷²

However, appeals could prove successful even without political protection and friendship with representatives of the ruling elite. Thus they became another strategy of subverting the restrictions on residence and the control on people’s movement and mobility. The archives of the Joint Complaints Office at the Council of Ministers and at the State Council from the 1970s and 1980s contain numerous cases when people have decided to contest negative decisions on their residence applications and seek the restoration of their rights. As already mentioned, some complaints were unjustified, while the outcome of others remained unclear. What mattered, though, was that some of the complaints did result in positive decisions for the claimants, who could thus subvert not only some legal rules for granting residence but also the very work of the institutions entrusted with their everyday implementation.

As a means of bypassing the limitations on residence, ordinary workers learned to apply for “deficit” production branches, such as construction for example, get temporary

⁷² TsDA, f. 136, op. 72, a.e. 50, ll. 1-5.

residence, and then quit for a better job without working even for a day with their “deficit” status. As it had already become clear, another option open to them was to acquire residence with a false motive, forged documents or downright lies. In the end, the workers’ repertoire of subversion contained a weapon of last resort, the phenomenon of unofficial residence, i.e. living in a city without proper residence. Although it is hard to trace and measure statistically, it will take more careful research to see how institutionalized control of movement was negotiated on an everyday level. There were two types of unofficiality and irregularity, close to contemporary undocumented migration. The first form involved living somewhere without proper residence, the second - overstaying. Research on the Soviet Union demonstrates that large groups of people did survive like that – some estimates suggest these could reach up to 20% of the urban population.⁷³ The scarce data in Bulgarian archives point at a phenomenon of lesser magnitude. In October 1962, for example, out of a total population of around 150 000 in the city of Varna, there were 6 670 people living there without any registration whatsoever, or roughly 4.5% of the total population in the city.⁷⁴ In 1961 in Sofia, a check on the documents of a limited number of temporary residents revealed that more than 500 of them had overstayed the period of officially granted residence and lived illegally in the capital. Only in two dormitories belonging to construction plants in the capital, there were found to live 24 unregistered Bulgarian workers of Turkish origin, despite the fact that all of them had worked on the site for quite a long time.⁷⁵

⁷³ M. Matthews, *The Passport Society. Controlling Movement in Russia and the USSR* (Westview Press: Boulder, San Francisco, Oxford, 1993).

⁷⁴ TsDA, f. 136, op. 34, a.e. 526, l. 3. Because of the high number of unregistered citizens living in the city and the high number of cases of newly-granted residence rights, the Chairman of Varna City People’s Council was sanctioned by the Chairman of the Council of Ministers.

⁷⁵ TsDA, f. 136, op. 34, a.e. 70, ll. 36-37.

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Internal exile and ascribed residence entailed analogous outcomes – living in a particular city became impossible, while the choice of settlement was severely limited, above all to the rural areas of the country. After the mid 1970s, when almost all cities and towns were closed to newcomers and ascribed residence gained in importance, internal exile declined, for at a time of rising and more stringent control on settlement in general, its corrective and punitive value decreased. The consolidation of banishment and residence policies reveals a scrupulously targeted and assiduously planned control on human movement, part of a larger strive to cultivate society and each individual within it. The very desire to operate upon society as an artefact envisioned violence; no matter what their ideological colouring, grand schemes of social engineering possessed a tremendous capacity for violence. The socialist state put obstacles to people's mobility and regulated the movement of all – socially non-conforming as well as workers and communists. Each of these parts of society – the undesirables as well as the exemplary socialist citizens - was subjected to a meticulously elaborated policy involving both stimulation and restriction, positive as well as negative incentives which worked together towards the building of an ideal, homogeneous socialist society.

With its mechanisms for control of people's movement the socialist state exhibited its official hope in its ability to transform deviant people, be it through assigning them forcefully to a particular residence, through a ban on leaving a particular location, or through the disciplining effects of granting residence to morally sound

individuals. Yet this hope was never complete, the socialist regime being unable to rid itself of a doubt concerning its power to transform human nature. This lurking fear that bad habits, wrong deeds and criminal intentions could resurface even after years of transformative efforts led to a state of institutionalised hesitation, codified in the specific genre of the socialist CV. Individual complaints against sending people to forced exile and banishment or refusing them residence normally began with class origin, then listed minutely family relations with communist guerrillas, active fighters against fascism and even top communist party leaders. Oscillating between the belief in the transformative power of control of people's movement and the doubts in its actual effectiveness, socialist officials would swiftly proceed with isolating former enemies of the regime, as in the case when the 1956 Hungarian Revolution prompted Bulgarian authorities to restore forced exile and internment. The same combination of beliefs and suspicions would result in a warning to leave the city, if the police discover the criminal past of some urban resident. Both the practice of banishment and the implementation of the residence regime testify that the refinement of socialist people could never be entirely completed and irreversible but would be a continuous and permanent process.

The transformative obsession of the socialist state had a totalizing frame: it targeted society at large. The young highly-qualified specialists were also subjected to the same forms of mobility control. Thus the state's transformative drive embraced both the "high-quality" and the "low-quality" bodies. By placing highly-qualified young professionals to work and live in carefully selected locations, the regime not only ensured the human resources indispensable to a smooth production process, but also – as if by engrafting or transplantation – their beneficial re-educative presence for the local

population. Combined with the strict management of residence applications and internal exile, it aimed at improving the social quality of the population in towns, cities and the capital.

The effort to produce a harmonious society – the “gardening” effort of the socialist state - assumed new dimensions with the rise of nationalism in the Bulgarian state. Towards the last decades of the socialist regime, foreign bodies were increasingly defined in ethnic terms. The idea of the ethnos as a non-transformable body managed to displace the sick bodies of former fascists, ex-criminals and the morally corrupt, leading to the mass expulsion of the Turkish population out of the borders of Bulgaria in the late 1980s. The creeping uncertainty whether moral wounds might ever heal and human nature prove mouldable translated into campaigns to expel the ethnically different from the homogeneous body of socialist citizenry. Instead of transformation and cultivation, the “gardening” drive of the socialist state produced incision, eradication and cleansing.