

Cultural Transformations

Inhabiting Culture on the Frontiers of Socialism (Gorna Džumaja, 1944-1948)*

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On June 3 and 4, the čitalište “Concord” projected the film How the Steel Was Tempered [Kak zakalialas’ stal’ in Russian, by Mark Donskoy, 1942]. A curious and attentive public filled the open-air theater. The desire to see this masterful work by Nikolai Ostrovsky transformed into moving pictures was so great that dozens of spectators had to remain standing. But to the surprise and disappointment of all, the voices were indistinct, the translation was written in pale, illegible characters, and the film reel was torn; according to the projectionist, more than 600 meters of film were missing ...

On several occasions, the spectators were surprised by the interruption of images, which seemed to “jump” from one scene to another...; in the end, instead of being enchanted by a film that was supposed to transport them, the audience left grumbling, rightly indignant that so little was made of their money, and protesting that such a situation should not be tolerated. ... It gives Soviet films a bad reputation.¹

This article was translated from the French by Katharine Throssell. In keeping with the original French text, Bulgarian words and proper nouns are given according to the simplified version of the international transliteration standard ISO9.

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1. Collection (*fond*, hereafter “f.”) 1, inventory (*opis*, hereafter “op.”) 1, archival unit (*arhivna edinica*, hereafter “ae.”) 96, page (*list*, hereafter “l.”) 1, State Archives (Dăržaven Arhiv, hereafter “DA”), Blagoevgrad.

This letter, sent by the regional inspector of information and the arts of Gorna Džumaja to the minister responsible (the former minister of propaganda) on June 4, 1947, evokes the edifying mission ascribed to Socialist cinema. The work in question was the adaptation of a novel by the same name, often considered to have helped shape the 1930s ideal of the positive Soviet hero, a noble soul passionately committed to justice. But, above all, this extract reveals the multiple ways in which a narrative may be simultaneously seen, heard, and read. In doing so, it retraces the uncertain material paths by which spectators assimilated the new order.

This article examines such material cultures under Socialism by constructing “as a historical object the relationship between the urban fact and the [cultural] fact” of film and theater performances.² The “re-population”³ of visual and real-life representations aims to shed light on a Socialist project with the Promethean ambition of recasting both man and town through culture. Cinema and theater are treated here for the dual examination of the disciplinarization of behavior and political subjectification.⁴ Performance spaces are a form of active materiality that are remodeled over time and constitute a site for social production through their very architectures, which cannot be reduced simply to revealing preexisting social divisions.⁵

Having been the object of rare studies in history, geography, and political anthropology in the 1970s and 1980s, urban spaces have, since the 1990s, been considered a key site for observing Socialist domination.⁶ Writings on architecture, urbanism, housing, leisure activities, and symbolic politics have also provided glimpses of Socialist urbanities, without the city necessarily being constructed as either subject or object.⁷ Similarly, while the arts have offered an exceptional approach for examining Socialist orders,⁸ the spatially embedded culture that formed urban cartographies has only occupied the periphery of these studies. Considerations based on other area studies and influenced by the spatial turn

2. Laure Gauthier and Mélanie Traversier, eds., *Mémoires urbaines. La musique dans les villes d'Europe (XVI^e-XIX^e siècles)* (Paris: PUPS, 2008), 11.

3. Emmanuel Grimaud, *Bollywood Film Studio ou Comment les films se font à Bombay* (Paris: CNRS Éditions, 2003), 454.

4. On this approach, see Jean-François Bayart and Jean-Pierre Warnier, eds., *Matière à politique. Le pouvoir, les corps et les choses* (Paris: Karthala, 2004); Jean-Pierre Warnier, *Construire la culture matérielle. L'homme qui pensait avec les doigts* (Paris: PUF, 1999); and Romain Bertrand, “Autour d'un livre,” *Politique africaine* 76, no. 4 (1999): 181-95.

5. Roger Chartier, “Le monde comme représentation,” *Annales ESC* 44, no. 6 (1989): 1505-20.

6. See, in particular, the pioneering work by Stephen Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

7. Bernard Lepetit, “La ville: cadre, objet, sujet. Vingt ans de recherches françaises en histoire urbaine,” *Enquête. Anthropologie, Histoire, Sociologie* 4 (1996): 11-34 and online, <http://enquete.revues.org/document663.html>.

8. Sheila Fitzpatrick, *The Cultural Front: Power and Culture in Revolutionary Russia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992); Catriona Kelly and David Shepherd, eds., *Constructing Russian Culture in the Age of Revolution, 1891-1940* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998); and Nadège Ragaru and Antonela Capelle-Pogăcean, eds., *Vie quotidienne et pouvoir sous le communisme. Consommer à l'Est* (Paris: Karthala, 2010).

in history⁹ have nonetheless emphasized the heuristic value of exploring urban cultural production.¹⁰

Working from within this perspective, the following study is limited to the cinema and the theater, which dominated the cultural landscape of Gorna Džumaja.¹¹ Both housed in the *čitalište*, an institution dating back to the Bulgarian “National Renaissance” of the nineteenth century, these two art forms offer complementary perspectives on urban cultural construction. Between the two poles identified by Antoine Hennion (“the musical, temporal, and dynamic object, requiring the procession of its intermediaries” and “the stable object of visual arts, behind which its mediators disappear”¹²), theatrical productions represent an intermediary situation occurring in the shared presence of spectators, actors, and characters—as well as stage hands, lighting technicians, costume and makeup artists, and prompters in the wings. Cinematographic work—even recomposed through editing, subtitles, and the oratory style of presenters and MCs—remains less contemporary in the representations it offers. Above all, while the theater was erected as the institution of the national imaginary¹³ in the nineteenth century, the cinema had a singular status as an “epiphanic window on the world”¹⁴ at a time when attending the cinema (above all) meant viewing foreign fiction.¹⁵ Their local situations also stood in contrast. In Gorna Džumaja, the cinema had occupied a distinguished place in urban leisure and the local economy since the 1930s, one that the theater—which was more frequently marked by the metropolitan touring companies than the intermittent performances by local amateur ensembles—could by no means challenge. A final difference concerns how the new cultural authorities perceived these spectacles. As a means of mass communication, the cinema was appreciated for its accessibility, since “the cinematographic moving image does not require any particular training to be understood by all, peasants and city-dwellers, educated or not.”¹⁶

9. Angelo Torre, “Un ‘tournant spatial’ en histoire? Paysages, regards, ressources,” *Annales HSS* 63, no. 5 (2008): 1127-44.

10. Christophe Charle, ed., *Le temps des capitales culturelles, XVIII^e-XX^e siècles* (Paris: Champ Vallon, 2009); Mélanie Traversier, ed., “Quartiers artistiques,” special issue, *Histoire urbaine* 26, no. 3 (2009).

11. This study is part of a book project that combines the inhabited cultures of Socialism of two urban field sites on the national margins: Gorna Džumaja and Oradea, respectively situated in Bulgaria and in Romania. This article focuses solely on the Bulgarian case.

12. Antoine Hennion, *La passion musicale. Une sociologie de la médiation* (Paris: Métailié, 1993; repr. 2007), 15.

13. Christophe Charle, *Théâtres en capitales. Naissance de la société du spectacle à Paris, Berlin, Londres et Vienne (1860-1914)* (Paris: A. Michel, 2008); Jeanne Moisand, “Madrid et Barcelone, capitales culturelles au miroir de leurs théâtres (vers 1870-1910)” (PhD diss., EUI, Florence, 2008); Loren Kruger, *The National Stage: Theatre and Cultural Legitimation in England, France, and America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992); Philipp Ther, “Teatro e ‘nation-building.’ Il fenomeno dei Teatri nazionali nell’Europa centro-orientale,” *Contemporanea* 6, no. 2 (2003): 265-90.

14. Hans Belting, *An Anthropology of Images: Picture, Medium, Body*, trans. Thomas Dunlap (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 54.

15. Between 1915 and 1944, national production, which was both artisanal and irregular, counted forty-five fictions: see Aleksandăr Janakiev, *Cinema.bg* (Sofia: Titra, 2003), 9-165.

16. *Kino i foto* 12, October 15, 1946.

By contrast, the theater maintained a certain prestige and aura, making it a vector of social distinction despite the egalitarian discourse. Enumerating these dissimilarities, however, does not exhaust the connections between these institutions, which were both considered vectors of education and traveling materialities. The goal was not simply to attract socially diverse audiences to the *čitalište*. Through the cinematographic worlds that projectionists brought to the most remote hamlets as well as the traveling troupes of actors who—recently initiated into Constantin Stanislavski’s method—rehearsed their lines between the jolts of the uncovered wagons on which they rode, the “Socialist town” was being projected onto the social, rural, and ethno-cultural periphery.

There are several advantages to situating our study in a peripheral city bordered by the frontier with Macedonia to the west (the former People’s Republic of Macedonia, part of the Yugoslav Federation) and where the river Struma flows to the Greek border in the south. The first of these advantages is that it shifts the perspective from narratives of Socialist urbanity, which have long focused on major cultural metropolises or on the alleged exemplarity of new model Socialist towns.¹⁷ Secondly, this change in perspective invites the denaturalization of relations between the center and the periphery, which are generally handled from the center and based on the assumption that both terms are stable and familiar. In this instance, the trajectory of a frontier town shows the uncertain divisions that traverse changing state, political, and national ambitions. Gorna Džumaja—a former Ottoman city briefly liberated by Russian troops and promised to Bulgaria in 1878, before falling back under the control of the Empire until 1912¹⁸—is situated in the region of Pirin. It is an area where Bulgarian, Serbian, Greek, and Macedonian national dreams have long met and clashed and where confrontation between East (Bulgaria), West (Greece), and the third way (non-aligned Yugoslavia) developed during the period studied here. Thirdly, the exploration of a border space provides the opportunity to envisage the local not as a fixed point, but as an instrument for varying the spatiotemporal focus, thus providing depth to connections both near and far.¹⁹

The choice of the “1944-1948 period” can be justified by the crisscrossing rhythms of the Cold War, Bulgarian political mutations, and the recently introduced control over cultural institutions. Each of these moments, however, must be understood as irregular and only roughly overlapping. Beginning the narrative in the

17. Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain*; Mark Pittaway, “Creating and Domesticating Hungary’s Socialist Industrial Landscape: From Dunapentele to Sztálinváros, 1950-1958,” *Historical Archaeology* 39, no. 3 (2005): 75-93; Katherine A. Lebow, *Unfinished Utopia: Nowa Huta, Stalinism, and Polish Society, 1949-56* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, forthcoming); and Christophe Bernhardt, “Un modèle social en milieu industriel. Les villes nouvelles en République démocratique allemande,” *Les Annales de la recherche urbaine* 98 (2005): 127-35 and online, http://www.annalesdelarechercheurbaine.fr/article.php3?id_article=468.

18. At the end of the Balkan Wars of 1912-1913, “geographical” Macedonia—which had, up until then, been part of the Ottoman Empire—was divided between Vardar Macedonia (Serbia), Aegean Macedonia (Greece), and Pirin Macedonia (Bulgaria).

19. Christian Topalov, “Présentation,” “La ville, catégorie de l’action,” special issue, *L’année sociologique* 58, no. 1 (2008): 9-17, here 15; Jacques Revel, ed., *Jeux d’échelle. La micro-analyse à l’expérience* (Paris: Gallimard/Le Seuil, 1996).

autumn of 1944 seems straightforward if one follows a strict military and political chronology (the September 9 coup d'état, the invasion-liberation of the country by Soviet troops, etc.). Broadening the focus to the world of art interrupts this division, providing a glimpse of how preexisting bureaucratic know-how was transmitted as well as the relative continuity of the personnel.²⁰ The material and architectural structures promoting these local art worlds paint an even broader picture, associating the political timing of exit from the Empire and the rhythm of technical innovations.

One should be equally prudent concerning the year 1948. The renegotiation of East-West relations, in a competitive and contentious mode, can be observed in the region of Gorna Džumaja in the 1948 split between Josip Broz Tito and Stalin and the ensuing abandonment of the project for a Balkan federation between Bulgaria and Yugoslavia, on which the national and state future of Gorna Džumaja hinged. On the internal Bulgarian political scene, Communist influence was confirmed by the abolition of the monarchy (September 1946), the elimination of political opposition (the Nikola Petkov case in August 1947), the adoption of a new constitution, and the departure of Soviet occupying troops (December 1947).²¹ The institutional structure of the cultural sector appeared to be temporarily stabilized: etatization of the film industry was decided in April, following the nationalization of film distribution in September 1946, while the *čitalište* was converted into a state theater.

Three questions underpin our research focus as we have thus defined it. The first relates to the articulation of pre-Communist and Communist temporalities. Time in the Socialist town appears multilayered: a study of these layers contributes to the “methodological normalization” of a “historiography too often lacking sociological weight.”²² Secondly, the observation of this urban site calls for an articulation of how the town was constructed as well as of the nationalization process and the production of Communist orders. The formerly Ottoman town was made denser by the arrival of Macedonian refugees between the two world wars and became Communist at the very moment when it became the object of rival state-identification policies. Combining these three dimensions—urban, national, and Socialist—enables one to interrogate the ways in which Socialism manifested itself at a local level as well as the role *limes* play in the production of Communist worlds. The attention paid to the latter aspect feeds into a third element of the study, one that relates to Sovietization. The research on early Socialism that employs this

20. In March 1941, the state created Bălgarsko delo, a private foundation, to serve the war effort. It was closely linked to the Direction of Propaganda. It was active after September 9, 1944, with a new director and board, but often the same employees. See Marjana Piskova, “Iz dokumentalno nasledstvo na fondacija ‘Bălgarsko delo,’” in *Izvestija na dăržavnija arhiv* (Sofia: GUA pri Ms, 2000), 90-205.

21. On the year 1948 as seen through the staging of power, see Liljana Dejanova, *Očertanija na mālčanieto. Istoričeska sociologija na kolektivna pamet* (Sofia: Ik Kritika i Humanizăm, 200), 241-84.

22. Jay Rowell, “La ville socialiste introuvable: une catégorie d'action et de signification en RDA,” *L'année sociologique* 58, no. 1 (2008): 143-67.

term as an analytical category is often trapped within the organic metaphor of the transplant, embedded in Eastern Europe through violence, adaptation, and resistance.²³ Yet in the analysis of the development of Socialism—not from the “imperial” center but from a marginal urban space—one can observe rationalities that cannot be reduced to the relations between the Soviet Union and the Allies. Nor can they be simply deduced from the military occupation of Bulgaria or the return of Communist leaders from exile. “Sovietization” also took place through the Bulgarian, Macedonian, and Serbian investment of legitimate political vocabularies and cultural products serving national competitions with their own historicity.

Undertaking a narrative of this effervescent and violent period means encountering certain methodological difficulties and challenges concerning sources. Although the archive is by definition “lacking” and must be “rendered through questions,”²⁴ the objects are nonetheless unequally structured by the (lacunae in) administrative, historical, and fictional writings, as well as in audio and visual sources. Compared with other urban centers, there are few traces of postwar Gorna Džumaja in the archives; historians were rarely interested in the town, which was the subject of very few secondary texts.²⁵ The primary pitfall relates to the way the town was put into words and inventoried. Whether in the archives—central or regional—of the Party, the State, the cultural services, the militia, the censorship office, or the Inter-Allied Commission of Control (SKK), the documents waver between the display of a satisfactorily accomplished project and calls for increased control. In these documents, which emphasize discipline and the rallying of the masses, human lives appear either perfectly disciplined or resistant to any framework. Sifting through the archives of the *čitalište*, the theater, and the (unsophisticated) regional press in addition to consulting visual archives (maps, photographs, cinematic newsreels, and films), autobiographical writings, and oral testimonies allows for a more polished reconstitution of the past.

The Urban Structure of Performances under Socialism

The Uncertain Geographical and Political Coordinates of the Postwar Period

Speaking of September 10, 1944, one eyewitness recalled: “The air was electric. We were expecting the partisans of the Gorna Džumaja units to descend upon the town from the surrounding villages at any moment. There was already no trace of

23. E. Arfon Rees, “Introduction. The Sovietization of Eastern Europe,” in *The Sovietization of Eastern Europe: New Perspectives on the Postwar Period*, ed. Balázs Apor et al. (Washington: New Academia Publishing, 2008), 1–27.

24. Arlette Farge, *Le goût de l'archive* (Paris: Le Seuil, 1989), 71.

25. The warmth and professionalism of the director of the State Archives in Blagoevgrad and his team is all the more remarkable for this, as is that of the librarians of the regional library, who made this research possible. Many thanks to them, along with A. Koleva, L. Bengjuzova, E. Ilieva, A. Janakiev, P. Kărdžilov, and J. Spasova.

the former power.”²⁶ The Fatherland Front, a heterogeneous coalition dominated by Communists and left-wing agrarians, managed to take this frontier town with surprising speed. The local garrison showed no resistance; the interim administration was entrusted to a Communist who had been exiled in the Soviet Union.²⁷ This apparently easy conquest—which did not prevent bloody disputes following the return of partisans and former political prisoners—was made possible by the USSR’s September 5 declaration of war on Bulgaria, which had been a member of the Tripartite Pact since March 1941. The military intervention, which allowed the Fatherland Front to control the main institutions of power (the army, the justice system, and the militia),²⁸ established the Soviet Union as a key postwar actor. The Moscow Armistice (October 28, 1944) preceded the creation of a three-way SKK dominated by the Soviets.²⁹ In Gorna Džumaja, the Commission’s representative was housed in the orthodox bishop’s luxurious residence, suggesting the extent to which political fractures can turn into paradoxical continuities. H., then a high-school student, remembered: “We welcomed the [Ukrainian] captain Smirnov and his entourage on the main square. One of our comrades read a rousing speech. She was often called upon for official celebrations because she spoke so well in public. She was the one who gave the speech in the honor of the Germans, and it was again she who, a few years later, cried ‘welcome, brothers (*bratuški*)!’”³⁰

In the space of a few weeks, Gorna Džumaja and the surrounding region witnessed the withdrawal of German forces—against whom Bulgaria had declared war on September 8 and who sent planes from their bases in Macedonia to bomb the town. Bulgarian troops returned from their occupation of Vardar Macedonia, Greek Aegean Thrace, and the Pirot region in Serbia where they had been active since 1941, and were redeployed to Yugoslavia. Under the close supervision of the Third Ukrainian Army and Yugoslav partisans, they were called to “liberate” segments of the country that they had only until recently occupied before turning their attention to the Hungarian and Austrian fronts. This military engagement was all the more ardent given that the Bulgarians, who had refused to send troops to combat the Russian people to whom they were historically attached, hoped to

26. “Kak zagina šefät na bälgarskija ‘Times’?,” *Standart*, October 11, 2009.

27. These poorly documented first days were recounted in ideologically impeccable autobiographical accounts by former partisans, which were gathered between 1960 and 1980: see *Spomeni* 144, 146, and 207, DA, Blagoevgrad. In 2009–2010, a team of Bulgarian researchers requested and transcribed the memories of inhabitants of Pirin who were subject to Communist violence: see Mihajl Gruev et al., *Nasilie, politika i pamet: komunističeskijat režim v Pirinska Makedonija - refleksij na sävremennika i izsledovatelja* (Sofia: U. I. “Sv. Kliment Ohridski,” 2011).

28. The contributions of Red Army partisans constitute an object of historiographical controversy. See: Vesselin Dimitrov, *Stalin’s Cold War: Soviet Foreign Policy, Democracy and Communism in Bulgaria, 1941–1948* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008); Evgenija Kalinova and Iskra Baeva, *Bälgarskite prehodi* (Sofia: Tilia, 2000), 13–51.

29. Officially responsible for seizing German assets and de-Nazifying the army, the Commission played a decisive role in establishing the new order up until the Paris Treaty (February 1947).

30. Interview conducted by Lalka Bengjuzova in Blagoevgrad, July 14, 2012.

efface their image as a member of the German-led “enemy” Alliance. In the wake of the Bulgarian withdrawal, refugees flowed in from Macedonia and northern Greece, which was soon in the throes of a cold winter.³¹ Most of the 674 Jews who had resettled in Gorna Džumaja following their expulsion from Sofia as part of anti-Jewish state policies³² left town. This was the same town that several thousand Jews from Greek Thrace crossed on their way to the Treblinka concentration camp in March 1943.³³ Subjected to the German war effort, the economy was drained dry. Food was rationed. Prices soared. The Nazi predation of Bulgarian “black gold” (tobacco) soon gave way to that of the USSR, of which Bulgaria was committed to financing the military deployment.³⁴

These human movements seem to reflect the shifting spaces that would not be confirmed by state organization until 1947. In 1941, the alliance with Germany had enabled the construction of a “Greater Bulgaria,” glimpsed in San Stefano in April 1878 before being marred four months later following the Berlin conference. In autumn 1944, the Bulgarian governing elites no longer knew if “little Bulgaria” would even be left to them. Great Britain’s support for Greece led to fears of Greek territorial claims to southern Bulgaria. Tito, Stalin, and the Bulgarian Georgi Dimitrov, former secretary general of the Komintern still in Moscow, bitterly negotiated a project for a Bulgarian-Yugoslav federation. Was it to be a dual federation (of which Bulgaria would be one of the two components) or made up of seven entities? Would the region of Gorna Džumaja be detached from Bulgaria to join a unified People’s Republic of Macedonia?³⁵ Since 1878, the town had continuously seen its geographical coordinates shift as a result of successive territorial divisions: as a strategic northern border of the Ottoman Empire against the Bulgarian Principality (1878-1912), it was converted into the western fringe of a vast region of Macedonia briefly (re)conquered by Bulgaria during World War I before once again forming the southern limit of the Bulgarian state. The period between the two wars was haunted by the hope that Macedonia would be reconquered and unified, whilst perception of the distance from Sofia (ninety-two kilometers) varied according to the various attempts to gain autonomy for this poor but rebellious area. In 1943, the territorial upheavals brought about by World War II promoted the area to the rank of prefecture in a new administrative region encompassing several municipalities from the “newly liberated lands” of Yugoslav Macedonia.

31. Tchavdar Marinov, *La question macédonienne de 1944 à nos jours. Communisme et nationalisme dans les Balkans* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 2010), 263-64.

32. Rumen Avramov, “Spasenie” i Padenie. *Mikroekonomika na dăržavnija antisemitizăm v Bălgarija, 1940-1944 g.* (Sofia: U. I. “Sveti Kliment Ohridski,” 2012), 239.

33. The “instructions pertaining to the means of the abduction of Jews to temporary camps, their embarkation on trains and their transport to the former territories of the Kingdom” are preserved in the Bulgarian National Archives: see f. 656 K, op. 1, ae. 3, ll. 1-4 (Police Commander of Drama, Greece), Central State Archives (Central Dăržaven Arhiv, hereafter “CDA”), Sofia.

34. Veselin Angelov, *Tretata nacionalna katastrofa. Săvetska okupacija v Bălgarija (1944-1947)* (Sofia: Aniko, 2005).

35. Marinov, *La question macédonienne*, 47-53; Branko Petranović, *Balkanska federacija 1943-1948* (Belgrade/Šabac: IKP Zaslou, 1991).

Cultural Crystallizations of Urbanity

“Before becoming one town, it was often a multiplicity of towns,”³⁶ wrote Christian Topalov in an expression that is remarkably appropriate for the Ottoman history of this old market (Friday markets are *cuma* in Turkish, which led to *džumaja*), where the products of the Ottoman *çifliks* (large private domains) were exchanged against wool, skins, and various utensils. In the nineteenth century, urban segmentation followed religious and professional lines. The *čitalište* was first built in 1867 in Varoša, a community of orthodox and Jewish artisans on the slope of the mountain. At the time it was a school with a library near the church. Following the October 1912 “liberation” and the exodus of the Ottoman administrative, military, and civilian elites, the *čitalište* was moved across the Bistrica River to the old Ottoman center with its radial streets. Ironically named “Concord” (*Sāglasie*), it took up residence in the great mosque with its demolished minaret.³⁷ This marked the beginning of the symbolic appropriation of urban space by those in power. Through the naming of places, commemorations, and political meetings, the liturgy of power was proclaimed in the Makedonija central square and in the *čitalište* at its very heart—merging this border region’s violent political history and discovery of the pleasures of entertainment.

During the interwar period, an urban network quietly grew around this center, marked by the background noise of shoe, fur, and fabric shops, and the military music played in honor of the 14th Macedonian Infantry Division of the Bulgarian army as well as the petty merchant bourgeoisie, be they Bulgarian, Vlach, or Jewish. The town was saturated with the smell of tobacco escaping from the imposing private factories, where hundreds of workers sorted the dried leaves for ten to twelve hours a day. The old Turkish baths became “municipal baths.” The residence of the Ottoman governor was transformed into a military club, a key institution in this garrison town. The Makedonija Hotel sat alongside establishments whose names—Sofia, Salonica, London, Paris, Splendid³⁸—also reflected the symbolic representations of an imagined future for Macedonia and European modernity. Once predominantly Muslim,³⁹ the locality grew as Macedonians from Serbia and Greece sought refuge there (during the Balkan wars of 1912-13, during World

36. Christian Topalov, “Langage, société et divisions urbaines,” in *Les divisions de la ville*, ed. Christian Topalov (Paris: Éd. de l’UNESCO/Éd. de la MSH, 2002), 345-449, here 396.

37. Dimităr Serafimov, *140 godini narodno čitalište v Blagoevgrad* (Blagoevgrad: ONČ N.I.Vapcarov, 2006), 23.

38. Kamelija Grānčarova, *Grad Gorna Džumaja (Blagoevgrad) v starite snimki, 1912-1943* (Blagoevgrad: Istoricheski muzej, 2009), 11.

39. In 1900, its (non-military) population was composed of approximately 6,000 inhabitants, of which 4,500 were Ottomans (*turci*), 1,300 Bulgarians, and 200 Vlachs in addition to a few Greek, Jewish, and Roma families: see Vasil Kānčov, *Izbrani proizvedenija* (Sofia: Nauka i Izkustvo, 1970), 160. Less than twenty years after the emancipation from Ottoman rule, there were only 420 Turks in a town of 9,820 inhabitants: see Vasil Šarkov, *Grad Gorna Džumaja. Minalo i dnes* (Blagoevgrad: Yuzo, 1930; repr. 2005), 177.

War I and after the Treaty of Neuilly-sur-Seine in 1919).⁴⁰ As these impoverished peasants built semi-legal buildings, which were established in the long term by the assenting silence of the authorities, human labor progressively effaced the uncertain boundaries between town and countryside.⁴¹

In September 1923, the *čitalište*—where amateur theatrical practice had existed since 1916—lost several of its actors, including the poet, teacher, and postman Todor Čopov. This was due to an aborted uprising organized by Communists and left-wing agrarians in response to the coup d'état of June 1923 and the assassination of the agrarian prime minister Aleksandăr Stambolijski. The Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization (VMRO) played an active role⁴² in the repression, and the river ran red with mutilated bodies.⁴³ Communist activists, agrarians, and anarchists entered illegally or emigrated, while the sentences of the “white terror”⁴⁴ echoed in the auditorium of the *čitalište*. Until its official prohibition in 1934, the VMRO ran a “state within a state,” taxing commercial and agricultural activities as well as the profits of film projections. The Communist Georgi Džibrilov retrospectively noted that “the *čitalište*'s only activity was the cinema because part of the revenues went into the pocket of one of the leaders [of the VMRO] through the printing of tickets or falsifying sales.”⁴⁵

In the meantime, the cinema had become a part of urban life, one of the most popular and also the most lucrative pleasures. Attendance, which quadrupled between 1931 and 1939,⁴⁶ made the cinema the principal source of income for the

40. In 1923, refugees represented 16.7 percent of the population of the Pirin region: see Dimităr Tjulekov, *Obrečeno rodoljubie. VMRO v Pirinsko, 1919-1934* (Blagoevgrad: MNI, 2011), 8.

41. This imbrication between urban and village life manifested itself administratively: a network of villages (13 for a total population of 18,098 in 1934) was dependent on the municipality of Gorna Džumaja. By 1945, the number of inhabitants had fallen to 17,826, in a country with an overall population of 7.2 million people (according to the 1946 census). The spatialization of ethno-cultural divisions, over the medium term, relegated the Roma to the town fringes and Bulgarian-speaking Muslims to the neighboring village of Cerovo: see f. 1, op. 1, ae. 85, l. 32, DA, Blagoevgrad.

42. The Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization (first VMORO, then VMRO, the acronym of *Vătreshna revoljucionna makedonska organizacija*), founded in 1894 in order to liberate Ottoman Macedonia by military means, turned into an organization engaged in protection rackets in the interwar period. Supporters of unification with Bulgaria and proponents of an independent united Macedonia resolved their disputes through gunfire.

43. This atmosphere is portrayed in epic form in the autobiographical novel by Svoboda Băčvarova, *Po osobeno măčitelan načın. Dokumentalen roman* (Sofia: Zhanet, 2008), vol. 1.

44. The repression (1923-1926) allegedly caused some 16,000 deaths: see John D. Bell, *Peasants in Power: Alexander Stamboliski and the Bulgarian Agrarian National Union, 1899-1923* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), 245.

45. F. 1576, op. 1, ae. 18, ll. 1-13, DA, Blagoevgrad.

46. In 1929, 128 films were projected in 342 screenings: the figures were 125 and 358 in 1930, 105 and 306 in 1931 (for 26,680 spectators), and 126 and 460 in 1939 (with 104,427 spectators). See: f. 18, op. 4, ae. 15, l. 36, DA, Blagoevgrad; f. 18 K, op. 1, ae. 8, l. 7, DA, Blagoevgrad; f. 18 K, op. 1, ae. 9, l. 15, DA, Blagoevgrad; and Mihaela Stojanova,

čitalište before the war (73.4 percent).⁴⁷ Thanks to sponsorship by tobacco companies, tradesmen, and wealthy hotels and restaurants, in 1928 this urban emblem gained an architectural structure intended to “proclaim and monumentalize the urban fabric”⁴⁸: its imposing white facade housed a series of oblong arches supported by slender columns, extended in 1934 by a Modernist-style semicircle housing a rich library with luminous bay windows.⁴⁹ Alongside a lottery-café-buffet area, the setting also included an Italian-style auditorium of 376 seats comprising stalls, a balcony, and two series of side boxes.⁵⁰

The first private projections, during which a talented pianist emphasized the surprising or burlesque moments, were replaced in 1930 by the cinematic operation of the recently electrified *čitalište*. Incarnating European modernity, from which the provincial polite society of Gorna Džumaja felt vaguely distanced, the cinema did not prompt the same reservations here as it had elsewhere in Europe—where it was deemed a “popular” pastime, liable to increase the “intellectual misery of the working world” and/or alienate the masses.⁵¹ A newly emerged bourgeoisie of traders and artisans came to acknowledge the authority of military officers and police chiefs; they mingled with a small intelligentsia of teachers and public servants as well as the diverse worlds of employees, penniless apprentices, and even the occasional tobacco worker, dazzled by the essentially American, French, English, and German romances, comedies, and adventure films.⁵² More affordable than the theater⁵³ and viewed either standing up or sitting down,⁵⁴ the cinema attracted new urbanites who had until then been more familiar with the amusements of village fairs and festivals.

Spectators were attracted into the monument-theater from the street by the music and the spectacle.⁵⁵ Since leaving the Ottoman Empire, town activities

“Kinematografāt i mjestoto mu v žīvota na Gorna Džumaja,” in *Izvestija. Izsledvanija za minaloto na Blagoevgrad* (Blagoevgrad: Istoričeski muzej, 2001), 228-36.

47. F. 63 K, op. 3, ae. 9, l. 110, DA, Blagoevgrad.

48. Charle, *Théâtres en capitales*, 37.

49. F. 18 K, op. 1, ae. 17, ll. 61-63 and 143, DA, Blagoevgrad.

50. F. 1, op. 1, ae. 77, l. 66, DA, Blagoevgrad.

51. Dominique Kalifa, *La culture de masse en France, 1860-1930* (Paris: La Découverte, 2001), 95-108, especially 98; Alain Carou, “Cinéma narratif et culture littéraire de masse. Une médiation fondatrice (1908-1928),” *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine* 51, no. 4 (2004): 21-38; and Dimitri Vezyroglou, *Le cinéma en France à la veille du parlant. Un essai d'histoire culturelle* (Paris: CNRS Éditions, 2011), 49-54.

52. The 1939 repertoire was dominated by Anglophone (forty-eight) and French (forty-one) works, followed by German (twenty-one) and Russian (ten) fictional works: see f. 63 K, op. 3, ae. 9, l. 110, DA, Blagoevgrad.

53. In 1939, the price of a movie ticket was approximately three times less than the price of a theater ticket: see f. 63 K, op. 3, ae. 9, l. 58, DA, Blagoevgrad.

54. The auditorium contained fifty to sixty standing-room places: see f. 63 K, op. 3, ae. 9, l. 47, DA, Blagoevgrad.

55. This movement is evocative of that described for Italy at the turn of the century by Gabriella Turnatori, “Les métamorphoses du divertissement citadin dans l’Italie unifiée (1870-1915),” in *L’avènement des loisirs, 1850-1960*, ed. Alain Corbin (Paris: Flammarion, 1995), 223-49, especially 225.

organized around secular or religious holidays combined military fanfare and choirs, performance, and popular song, ranging from parades to prayers and speeches. The inauguration of a public garden in the 1920s provided the additional pleasure of Sunday afternoon walks, consolidating interpersonal connections and notable socialities, while the young listened to the radio news broadcast from the loudspeakers. The arrival of talking cinema and the Victoria VII B projector in 1938—with its “clear rendition of speech and natural retransmission of music and singing, genuinely satisfying the spectator”⁵⁶—did not dissolve the intimate ties between visual performance and music. The theater—the posters for which occasionally mentioned the names of artists from the capital or major towns—continually changed its image along with the “dramatic peregrinations”⁵⁷ or performances by the local choir set up by a “white Russian” emigrant. Musical and/or dance performances, sometimes interspersed with scenes from operettas, competed with the black-and-white pastimes for space in the single red-velvet room. Its size and elegance also meant that this space was favored for conferences in praise of the nation, the arts, or public health. Professional corporations organized their general assembly there; some even ordered the projection of films praising their accomplishments. While “social orthogenesis”⁵⁸ was familiar to the local intelligentsia—certain members were part of the local temperance league—commercial, patriotic, and didactic interests combined to make performance a matter of both entertainment *and* politics. When the *čitalište*'s board of directors had “progressive” leanings, certain Soviet films were projected in between conferences by Trotsky and Lenin.⁵⁹

Initially, the outbreak of World War II only caused a small rift in the urban cultural landscape: it disrupted neither the ambitious renovation project of the facade, undertaken in the name of “architectural modernity,”⁶⁰ nor the opening of spaces reserved for smokers. As German officers strode through the town, the dismantlement of Yugoslavia and the entry of Bulgarian troops into Macedonia in April 1941 seemed to offer Gorna Džumaja the prospect of a new cultural influence in these “Bulgarized” territories under close state supervision.⁶¹ The time had come, however, for tougher police control. In November 1939, “given that in recent times Soviet films have been projected in the cinema... through which Communist propaganda is spread and which feeds feelings of hatred against the current state structure amongst spectators,” Petăr Goleminov—president of the *čitalište*'s board of directors, cinema manager, and lawyer—was summoned before the chief of

56. F. 63 K, op. 3, ae. 9, l. 109, DA, Blagoevgrad.

57. The expression was coined by Christophe Charle, “Paris, capitale théâtrale de l'Europe (1820-1929),” in Charle, *Le temps des capitales culturelles*, 241-276, here 255.

58. This objective traversed Europe in the 1930s: see Anne-Marie Thiesse “Organisation des loisirs de travailleurs et temps dérobé (1880-1930),” in Corbin, *L'avènement des loisirs*, 418.

59. The first projection of a Soviet film dates back to 1929. In 1937, the program included six out of a total of fifty-eight: see f. 63 K, op. 3, ae. 9, l. 10, DA, Blagoevgrad.

60. *Ibid.*, l. 113.

61. Thus, the choir of the *čitalište* organized a tour of Macedonia in June 1941, with the police force's consent: see *ibid.*, l. 26.

police and told that, “in instances of frenetic or unconditional applause,” “Soviet or other” films would be withdrawn, the cinema would be closed for two weeks if the behavior was repeated, and definitively closed after the third infraction.⁶² With the prohibition of American, English, and Soviet productions in December 1941, showings of German, Hungarian, and Italian fictional works increased. The theater offered occasional performances by the local branch of the “Work and Joy” organization (*Trud i radost*), which—along the lines of Mussolini’s Italy (*Dopolarovo*) and Nazi Germany (*Kraft durch freude*)—was responsible for preserving morale and physical fitness among the working classes as well as organizing their leisure activities.⁶³

The main division in terms of cultural policy occurred in the spring of 1944 with the creation of a regional theater subsidized by the state and towns of the new administrative region of Gorna Džumaja. This theater was to be responsible for the cultural and patriotic education of the populations of Bulgaria and Macedonia. Nikola Koluški, one of the promoters of the radio theater in Varna, was made the director. A set designer was sent from the National Theater in Sofia, and professional actors were scheduled to be recruited.⁶⁴ Between April and July 1944, the director-translator-organizer had to work with the local amateur troupe during hasty rehearsals organized around the curfew. One month after its inauguration, the theater embarked on a tour, at a time when Yugoslav partisans galvanized in opposition to the Bulgarian occupying forces (including their traveling spectacles). With the railroads saturated and carts requisitioned to deliver food and equipment, the delineation of planned performances⁶⁵ (rarely accomplished) provides a striking imaginary visualization of the nation. The professional artists did not eventually reach Gorna Džumaja until August 1944, just in time to prepare a theatrical season that would be canceled by the Fatherland Front on September 27, the eve of its opening night.⁶⁶

The New Cultural Biographies of Performance Spaces

The regional public theater folded a few weeks before the abolition of the administrative division of 1943.⁶⁷ As if viewed in a distorting mirror, the withdrawal of theatrical ambitions was reflected in the twofold reduction of Bulgarian state territory and that of the Gorna Džumaja region. More than ever, the effigy of power had to be exhibited in this confined space. Beginning in the autumn of 1944, the Fatherland Front worked to reshape the town center. The political shift made itself felt in the urban environment through the surveillance over the *čitalište*, of

62. Ibid., I. 50.

63. Ivan Elenkov, “Trud i odih, Văvedenie v istorijata na ideologičeskoto modelirane na vsekidnevieto prez epohata na komunizma v Bălgarija,” (Sofia: unpublished, 2010).

64. F. 304 K, op. 1, ae. 1, ll. 1-2, 5, and 11, DA, Blagoevgrad.

65. F. 304 K, op. 1, ae. 2, ll. 4-6, DA, Blagoevgrad; f. 304 K, op. 1, ae. 1, l. 44, DA, Blagoevgrad.

66. F. 304 K, op. 1, ae. 2, ll. 50-52, DA, Blagoevgrad.

67. F. 304 K, op. 1, ae. 1, ll. 51-52, DA, Blagoevgrad.

which the board of directors⁶⁸ and the members were replaced.⁶⁹ The emerging order was also expressed through monumental and lexical symbolization: while the monument (erected in 1933) to the unknown Macedonian soldier with its VMRO colors mysteriously disappeared one night, local authorities rushed to identify Yugoslav or Soviet martyrs likely to incarnate the “Slav brotherhood” and the fight against “great bourgeois Nationalism.”⁷⁰ The *čitalište* itself was encouraged to elaborate a new history⁷¹: one learns that it “provided fifteen political prisoners, thirteen prisoners sent to concentration camps and ten soldiers” to the subsequently triumphant cause.⁷²

Toponymy was part of this spatial and temporal reorganization, droning out the list of notable faces.⁷³ Although the *čitalište* did not adopt the name Nikola Vapcarov (in honor of a young left-wing poet from Ottoman Macedonia killed by the police in 1942) until 1952, the theater troupe chose Todor Čopov as its patron beginning in the autumn of 1944. Čopov had the advantage of combining both Macedonian and progressive identities; as the nephew of a hero of the Macedonian cause, he was close to the left-wing faction of the Macedonian movement in the 1920s. The new imagined pantheon conjured a reluctant “small” Bulgaria, which opposed any reverence toward royal, religious, and former VMRO elites.

The names of the major routes to the north (the “Tsar Boris III” road became “September” [1944]), the south (the trade route “Serska” took the name of the agrarian leader “Stambolijski”), and the west (the “Carevoselsko” road, a village in Macedonia, was once again in Bulgarian territory, celebrating the local Communist “Metodi Aleksiev,” then “Stalin,” before becoming “Aleksiev” once more) all testify to this spatio-historical anchorage. But the reattribution of identities did not reach its peak until May 1950, when Gorna Džumaja was renamed Blagoevgrad in honor of the founder of the left wing of the Socialist Party, Dimităr Blagoev, who originated from a town in Macedonia accorded to Greece in 1912, and whose surname evoked prosperity (*blago*).⁷⁴

68. The left-wing lawyer P. Goleminov, who had presided over the *čitalište* since 1936, occupied this position until March 1947, when illness obliged him to cede it to the Communist Mirčo Jurukov. Elected honorary president, he died a few months later: see *Pirinsko delo*, March 27, 1947, p. 4.

69. The number of members of the *čitalište* increased from 244 in 1944 to 1,738 in 1947. There were 967 new memberships, 159 departures (“people who have left town”), sixty-seven unpaid, and three deaths in 1947 alone.

70. F. 115, op. 1, ae. 9, l. 11, DA, Blagoevgrad.

71. In October 1945, each *čitalište* was invited to “create in its library a ‘September’ archive, where the memories, accounts, and other materials of participants and witnesses of the events of September 1923 and September 9, 1944, would be preserved”: see f. 18, op. 1, ae. 2, l. 28, DA, Blagoevgrad.

72. *Ibid.*, l. 22.

73. F. 1, op. 1, ae. 54, l. 5, DA, Blagoevgrad; Petăr Vodeničarov and Anastasija Pašova, “Preimenuvaneto na ulici v grad Goce Delčev i novata publična pamet,” (Blagoevgrad: unpublished, 2012).

74. F. 115, op. 3, ae. 161, ll. 1-18, DA, Blagoevgrad.

Cultural Projects and Repertoire: Socialism on Stage

The Missions of Socialist Culture

Cinema and theater of the postwar period were focused on education, moral upbringing, and political socialization. Culture invested each and every space: “[Before September 9,]” one could read in the pages of the *Pirinsko delo*, “we thought that the prisoner just had to serve his sentence. Today in prisons, they receive cultural, political, and economic instruction so that tomorrow they may become good citizens of the Republic, after having paid for their mistakes—voluntary or involuntary.”⁷⁵ The value of this activity, in which education and politics were inextricably linked, was such that the new regional inspector of information and the arts sent an almost surreal letter to the Direction of State Security (the political police) in July 1945. “The Gorna Džumaja Regional Direction of Propaganda,” he wrote, “requests that you indicate whether propaganda action can be carried out on Germans, Czechs, Hungarians, and other foreign citizens interned in the camps on the riverbanks of the Struma-Gorna Džumaja. Can these people be authorized to come to the town cinema?”⁷⁶

The objective of organizing daily labor and leisure undoubtedly preceded Socialism, particularly under the influence of the international circulation of ideas relating to virtuous work, healthy pleasures, and athletic bodies that crystallized in the 1920s and 1930s.⁷⁷ The influence of Germany, but also Hungary—in 1941, the Bulgarian minister of education suggested adopting the Hungarian model of educational cinema for children⁷⁸—can be seen in the aspiration to instruct and bring order to society.⁷⁹ However, in predominantly rural Bulgaria, these bureaucratic practices remained in the planning stages. The change brought about by the Fatherland Front lay in the voluntarism and the extent of this supervision, which forbade downtime and individual laziness. This was manifested in the systematic attention paid to the countryside, which was on the verge of experiencing the radical upheaval of land collectivization.

Beginning in the autumn of 1944, the actors of the *čitalište* theater were called upon to bring the new political messages to life through a series of “matinees, diversions, and propaganda sessions to be directed at society, the student youth,

75. *Pirinsko delo* 27, July 5, 1948, p. 4.

76. The camp of Zelen Dol, a village of the municipality, was used by the SKK. State Security responded nine days later: see f. 1, op. 1, ae. 51, ll. 1 and 2, DA, Blagoevgrad.

77. Similarly, the desire to prevent the potentially harmful effects of the new cinematographic industry led public authorities to adopt a system of visa censorship as early as 1915. The objective was to outlaw “immoral” works, or those that encouraged “base instincts,” “rebellion,” or “banditism.” Under the terms of the 1930 law on cinema, the censorship was carried out by a Cinematographic Commission under the Minister of Education, whose responsibilities were transferred to the Direction of Propaganda in 1941: see Janakiev, *Cinema.bg*, 146–65.

78. F. 177 K, op. 5, ae. 130, ll. 111–15, CDA, Sofia.

79. Pascal Ory, *Du fascisme* (Paris: Perrin, 2003), 175–97, especially 197.

and the military. Many hours were devoted to the celebration of the most important events. In October, they prepared a production of the play *V navečerieto* (*On the Eve*) by Hristo Petrov, a member of the BPR/K (Bulgarian Workers/Communist Party) “who was horribly killed by the Fascist police.”⁸⁰ Soon the verdicts from the People’s Tribunal (February–April 1945)⁸¹ resounded on the stage that had, in more carefree times, also produced a surprising combination of bourgeois spectacles (from the Austro-Hungarian author of comedies and operettas Gustav Kadelburg and the Hungarian playwright of the interwar years Otto Indig) and Soviet indoctrination (Leonid Karasev, Anatolii Glebov, and Aleksei Arbutov).⁸² As the new image of the class traitor was emerging (the “speculator,” the tobacconist, and the factory manager), preparation for the November 1945 elections led to an exceptionally intense campaign for political and social mobilization.

The political shift was also marked by sudden departures—as the lists of *čitalište* members who “left town” demonstrate—in addition to a number of quiet disappearances. One such disappearance was that of the assistant projectionist, mentioned by the director of the establishment in a letter addressed to the chief of the militia in August 1946: “His wife, in order to provide for herself and her young child, continues to receive an advance from the *čitalište*, having assured us that her husband would return very soon, any day now. Since the reasons for his detention remain unknown along with the date of his return..., tell us what Georgi Štengerov’s real situation is at this time.”⁸³ At the understaffed theater, where the actors who had taken part in the Koluški experiment still formed the core company, adjustments can be read in the administrative writings, which are full of barred text and euphemisms. One *čitalište* report, for example, states that “in April [1945], the theater prepared the Soviet play *Baštin dom* by V[alentin] Kataev but was unable to perform it because some of the actors were prevented from doing so for reasons beyond their control” (under this segment of the phrase one can still read the barred text “refused to participate”).⁸⁴ The new regulations of 1945 introduced a hierarchical system of decision-making and strict discipline and ordered the “liquidation of old working methods and relations between colleagues,” opposing collective realist expression to the old style of bourgeois performance based on poses and mannerisms.⁸⁵ However, former amateurs were enthusiastic about the emerging professionalization of the theater, since the regime change provided the opportunity to obtain the status of artists.⁸⁶

80. F. 18, op. 1, ac. 7, DA, Blagoevgrad.

81. In Bulgaria, 11,122 people were judged before the People’s Tribunals. 2,730 of them were sentenced to death, 1,305 to life imprisonment, and 5,119 to up to twenty years imprisonment; 1,516 were acquitted: see John D. Bell, *The Bulgarian Communist Party from Blagoev to Zhivkov* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1986), 85.

82. F. 1, op. 1, ac. 75, l. 2, DA, Blagoevgrad.

83. F. 18, op. 1, ac. 3, l. 45, DA, Blagoevgrad.

84. F. 1, op. 1, ac. 75, l. 11, DA, Blagoevgrad.

85. *Ibid.*, l. 18.

86. The professionalization that began in the summer of 1945 promised “amateur-professional” artists a generous monthly remuneration (between 3,500 and 8,000 lev) funded by the *čitalište*: see *ibid.*, ll. 11, 14, and 15.

Beyond these proclamations, cultural institutions were in fact less frequently asked to (socially) “re-educate” artists and audiences than to “educate” them (politically and culturally). This configuration can be understood in light of the area’s social history. The spatial co-existence of the cinema and the theater reflected a local society in which the narrowness of elite milieus, which had only recently come into existence, limited the possibilities of social distinction. Beyond the separation between stage and audience that the lowering of the curtain had institutionalized, the actors mirrored a public that was primarily composed of public servants from the town council or the police in addition to newly trained teachers.⁸⁷ This was not so much about renewing the codes of theatrical attendance (even though the interwar period produced the first sketches of them) as about inventing them. However, the social reprofiling of the audience was not exactly a non-existent objective for public policy. Attendance (“spontaneous” or increasingly “organized” with the assistance of the heads of schools, factories, and barracks), the differentiation of movie showtimes (Thursday afternoon for school students, early evening for workers, market day for the peasants), and pricing policies (reduced rates for soldiers, militia members, children, and poor families) attest to the emergence of different priority groups. These included specific generational (young people), social (peasants and workers), gendered (women, notably in Muslim milieus), and professional groups (soldiers, who were both celebrated and constrained). Dominant representations (past or redeployed⁸⁸) of divisions running through Bulgarian society were also reflected.

However, the main issue in this border region lay in the incorporation of rural and ethno-cultural peripheries. Theater and cinema were conceived of as traveling institutions, charting space shaped by the Socialist gaze. The movement of actors and scenery bouncing across the lacework of remote mountain towns was doubled by the motorized movement of the roaming cinemas that brought fiction, documentaries, and uplifting cinema news to villages, some of which lacked electricity. Mobilization in favor of the soldiers and then for the Fatherland Front and the collectivization of lands⁸⁹ on the one hand and the introduction of numbered targets in terms of audience from 1949 on the other encouraged the extension of the tours. The cinema saw itself as responsible for “modernizing” Bulgarian-speaking Muslims, who were considered to be “fanatically religious,”⁹⁰ and offering them a repertoire of documentaries about hygiene, atheism, and agricultural collectives.⁹¹

87. The troupe was composed of thirteen actors—two-thirds of whom were active before September 9—a prompter, and a technician. Their educational and professional profiles (two with higher degrees, four with university degrees, three teachers, a librarian, three administrative agents, a student, three technicians, two laborers, and a housewife) reflected the local social structure: see *ibid.*, I. 14.

88. The practice of reduced-price tickets for poor families, workers, and soldiers dates back to the interwar period: see Stojanova, “Kinematografāt i mjestoto,” 231.

89. F. 2B, op. 12, ac. 8, ll. 39-42, Party Regional Archives (Okrāžen Partien Arhiv, hereafter “OPA”), Blagoevgrad.

90. F. 1, op. 1, ac. 9, ll. 21-26, DA, Blagoevgrad.

91. Sergej Vučkov, “Kinefikacija na mjusulmanskite sela v Jugozapadna Bālgarija prez 50-te i 60-te godini na XX vek,” in *Da Poznaem komunizma: izsledvania*, ed. Ivailo Znepolski (Sofia: Siela, 2012), 371-446.

This network of the arts aimed to align rural hearts with urban ones, which meant morally elevating and politically subjugating them. Thus, as will later be examined here, during the year 1947-1948, the theater questioned even more dramatically the uncertain crossovers between borders and boundaries.

Controlled Edification: Recasting Film Repertoires

What works should be presented to those who were caught up in the whirlwind of the Fatherland Front's meetings and demonstrations? Three priorities emerged in the cinematographic repertoire: prohibiting "Nazi" art, promoting Soviet cinema, and promoting nascent national production. In 1945, the Inter-Allied Control Commission inventoried and collected "Fascist" books and films, with the help of the Regional Inspection of Information and the Arts, and the militia.⁹² German, Italian, and Hungarian fictional works disappeared from the screens, while Soviet and American films were given more exposure following heightened competition between private distribution companies. In Gorna Džumaja, the arrival of Soviet works was not new, for their importation had been ensured by the Bulgarian-Soviet company Mosfilko (based in Sofia) after the establishment of diplomatic relations between Bulgaria and the USSR in 1934. However, those newly responsible for promoting culture aspired to an ever more Soviet repertoire, for which the realities of 1945-46 were disappointing. In 1945, the regional inspector complained to the minister of propaganda that "the verification that I have carried out in the cinemas of the region has led me to observe that many old films are sent there.

Table 1: Fiction and Cinematographic News in Gorna Džumaja (1944-1947)

Nationality	1944	1945	1946	1947
German	79	0	0	0
Italian	35	7	9	18
Hungarian	6	0	0	7
French	6	16	12	34
Spanish	1	0	0	2
Russian	7	52	59	70
Danish	0	0	0	7
Swedish	1	0	8	6
Bulgarian	0	0	2	3
Czech	1	0	16	–
English and/or American*	7	73	51	1
Total Fictional Works	143	148	145	148
Cinema News	82	n.d.	142**	n.d.

Source: f. 18, op. 1, ac. 7, l. 4, DA Blagoevgrad.

* In 1944, works identified as being "English" were included in this category. The terminology referred to "English (or American)" films in 1945 and "American (or English)" fictional works in 1946.

** Of these, fifty were Russian, fifty Bulgarian, and forty-two English.

The villages of the Gorna Džumaja region are far from each other and only the cinema is of widespread interest to the people. I beg you..., send us contemporary films, especially Soviet films.”⁹³ This penury authorizing the redistribution of “bourgeois” works from the interwar period was progressively overcome after the nationalization of film distribution in September 1946 and the allocation of provision for Soviet fictions to the public foundation *Bălgarsko delo*. The consequences were drastic, since American and English cinema purely and simply disappeared from the film schedules in Gorna Džumaja in 1947. On the other hand, countries like France and Italy, where local Communist parties were powerful, managed to reestablish or consolidate their presence on the local market.⁹⁴

Tracing the origin of imported films, however, provides a partially misleading image. Notwithstanding the creation of regional inspections in autumn 1944,⁹⁵ the monitoring of scheduling remained inefficient due to the lack of personnel and means of transportation, rivalry between competing authorities (Regional Committee of the Popular Front, the local People’s Committee, the militia etc.),⁹⁶ the number of projections, and the *čitalište* printing its own tickets (until the nationalization in 1948). Unable to preview the reels in advance, the regional inspector was often limited to basing his authorization or prohibition on a careful reading of the typed dialogues translated into Bulgarian and therefore remained unaware of the context created by sound and pictures, which influenced their reception.⁹⁷ Relations with private distribution companies prior to the war, in addition to the film reels supplied by Soviet soldiers and Western diplomats, contributed to the diversification of the images that were actually seen.

Studying the trajectory of the French musical comedy *Les trois valses* (*The Three Waltzes*, 1938) sheds some light on the role of coincidence, erroneous expectations, and imperfect adjustments to changing rules, which affected the cinematographic supply. An adaptation of Oskar Straus’s famous operetta starring Yvonne Printemps and Pierre Fresnay, the film was shown to an audience of school students in March 1947, angering first the school director and then the regional inspector, who viewed it as a work “full of pornography.”⁹⁸ Following the publication of an article in *Otečestven front* (*Fatherland Front*), it also upset the minister of information and the arts. The *čitalište*, clearly concerned, defended itself in the following terms:

During the week of February 3-9, the čitalište scheduled “The Heart of the Hussar” and “Dr. Oh I’m Sore.” The first film was shown on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday.

93. *Ibid.*, I. 25.

94. *Ibid.*, I. 82.

95. F. 18, op. 1, ac. 3, I. 58, DA, Blagoevgrad.

96. The Regional Inspection of Propaganda, established in October 1944, was renamed the Regional Inspection of Information and the Arts in 1945, and closed at the end of 1947. Its responsibilities were transferred to the departments of culture within the People’s Municipal Council and the Regional Committee of the Popular Front.

97. F. 1, op. 1, ac. 75, I. 15, DA, Blagoevgrad.

98. F. 18, op. 1, ac. 4, I. 49, DA, Blagoevgrad.

On Thursday afternoon at 4:30 p.m., “The Three Waltzes,” which was not part of our program, came to us from the village of Brežani. As we had not received “Dr. Oh I’m Sore,” our cashier chose to show that film rather than close the cinema. In the meantime, the director of the čitalište contacted the cinema in Brežani. Late in the evening, they established that the film had been sent by mistake and asked that it be sent back to Sofia the very same night, which we immediately did ...

Considering that such a mistake is exceptional in our history, that the čitalište has often abstained by its own initiative from showing films to students that, although authorized, are considered unsatisfactory from an ideological and artistic point of view, considering, finally, that the employee behind this involuntary error has been a loyal and experienced anti-Fascist since before September 9, this cannot be deemed intentional. It is clear that the film was not shown with the simple goal of making a few more lev.⁹⁹

Throughout the year 1947, the alleged venality of those who headed the cinema was denounced with increasing frequency, revealing tension between the ideological and commercial forces behind the *čitalište*, as the following report revealed:

Certain people who are ill-disposed towards the čitalište (there are only a few) are spreading rumors in town, outraged, accusing the cinema of being transformed exclusively into a commercial enterprise at the expense of its cultural-educational activity. “The dogs are barking—the procession advances...” [these lines were crossed out by hand]. The čitalište continues to be enthusiastic about running the cinema, [which] constitutes the only source of revenue enabling the maintenance of the library, the auditorium, and the production of cultural initiatives.¹⁰⁰

The contradictory pressures on the *čitalište* were all the more intense given that it was henceforth asked to play a role in the edification of Socialism, and the cinema provided 83.74 percent of its income in 1946.¹⁰¹ The regional branch of the Fatherland Front, Pirinsko delo (100,000 lev), the lottery of the Workers Party (57,000 lev), the Red Cross (15,230 lev), the May 1 Festival Organization Committee (5,000 lev) all benefited from the *čitalište*’s generosity in 1945.¹⁰² In June 1946, the cinema set aside “five lev of every ticket for a month,” at the mayor’s request, in order to finance a monument in honor of the left-wing Macedonian revolutionary Jane Sandanski.¹⁰³ In October 1947, it organized for “the benefits of at least one performance to be paid to the ‘Monument for the Soviet Army’ fund,” and also financed literacy classes for the Roma population.¹⁰⁴

Out of these injunctions and constraints emerged a program that combined the old and the new depending on the day, one that paired newsreels and films

99. Ibid., I. 58.

100. F. 18, op. 1, ac. 7, I. 5, DA, Blagoevgrad.

101. F. 18, op. 1, ac. 9, DA, Blagoevgrad.

102. F. 1, op. 1, ac. 108, ll. 1, 2, and 3, DA, Blagoevgrad.

103. F. 18, op. 1, ac. 3, I. 108, DA, Blagoevgrad.

104. F. 1, op. 1, ac. 83, I. 9, DA, Blagoevgrad.

and showed the social lives of Bulgarian fictional works (which were hastily “touched up” in order to compensate for the weakness of the production). Anton Marinovič’s *Šte dojdāt novi dni* (*New Days Will Come*), scheduled for October 31, 1946, was among the “divided films.”¹⁰⁵ Originally entitled *Slānceto ne ugasva* (*The Sun Never Dies*), which scarcely evoked the revolutionary shift, this melodrama (on which filming had begun before 1943) tells the story of a young conscript who, back from the front, shoots his girlfriend’s brother, attempts to kill himself, and befriends a “Progressivist” employee in the hospital. In June 1945, a review published in *Narodna vojska* (*The People’s Army*) had violently denounced the similarities between “partisans” in the film and members of the fascistic youth organization *Brannik*.¹⁰⁶ Unaware of these political quarrels, this film’s fate in Gorna Džumaja one year later demonstrates—if there was any need to—the elusive pathways of such prohibitions. The projection was canceled at the last minute, not because of the content of the film but in order to allow for the planning of the new theatrical season.¹⁰⁷

Monitoring the theater turned out to be significantly more straightforward, given the small number of performances (seventy-one over the course of the 1944–1945 season¹⁰⁸) and narrow repertoire (eight dramas and four comedies at the beginning of 1946). The institution, however, was the object of a Promethean enterprise in national engineering between 1947 and 1948. An overview of this brief experience (one season and five plays) makes it possible to incorporate into this story the transnational modalities behind the production of Bulgarian (and Macedonian) Socialism as well as the winding paths of the Sovietization of the theater.

Theater at the Service of which Nation?

On November 7, 1947, the *čitalište* theater was consecrated the “Macedonian National Theater,” entrusted to a director from Yugoslav Macedonia¹⁰⁹ with a repertoire in Macedonian, and inaugurated in the presence of Bulgarian and Macedonian dignitaries. This Macedonianization followed the attribution of cultural autonomy to the Pirin region in August 1946¹¹⁰ and the authoritarian handling of the December 1946 census, in which 63.6 percent of the population

105. Petăr Kārdžilov, “Filmi razdelni. Bālgarsko igralno kino v navečerieto na socrealizma (1944–1948),” *Literaturen vestnik* 38, November 21, 2007.

106. *Narodna vojska* 220, June 1, 1945, p. 2.

107. F. 18, op. 1, ae. 3, l. 51, DA, Blagoevgrad.

108. The authors would like to thank Elena Ilieva for providing these figures.

109. The director Milčin was joined by the Skopje actor and assistant stage manager, Stojanov. In interviews, he also mentioned the arrival of P. Prličko and T. Nikolovski, guest actors from the Macedonian National Theater. See Vančo Meandžiski, “Gorna Džumajski ot teatar e so makedonski koreni,” *Makedonija* (1996): 29–31.

110. It is worth noting that the Hungarian-Romanian competition over Transylvania was also played out in the terms of (Soviet) autonomy: see Stefano Bottoni, *Transilvania rossa. Il comunismo romeno e la questione nazionale (1944–1965)* (Rome: Carocci, 2007).

had declared their nationality (*narodnost*) as “Macedonian.”¹¹¹ It seemed to reflect the acceleration of the Bulgarian-Yugoslav federation project and the unification of the Pirin and Vardar Macedonias in a single (Yugoslav) republic, following the Bled agreement (August 1, 1947) between Tito and Dimitrov. The invitation for the inauguration read: “One of the greatest cultural accomplishments of the Macedonian people in the Pirin region of Macedonia since September 9 is the creation of the Macedonian National Theater. For the first time, the Macedonian language will ring out freely onstage.”¹¹² In fact, the decision was presented as both an act of recognition on the part of the inhabitants of Pirin’s Macedonian national identity, and as being destined to advance this identification through the “popularization of the Macedonian language and helping in the creation of a Macedonian national culture.”¹¹³

In order for the Macedonian linguistic code to accomplish the task of national conversion/conviction with regard to the general public, the actors of the *čitalište* were asked to adopt it. Concerning this laborious acquisition, Ilija Brăčkov—who entered the amateur troupe in 1923—recalled: “They sent us Ilija Milčein as director. ... Learning the ‘Macedonian’ language had been introduced into the school system, and they did the same thing with the theater. Every day teachers came to give us lessons.”¹¹⁴ Actors acquired and gave voice to the literary canon in just a few weeks, its conspicuous strangeness increased by the fact that the Macedonian language is largely understood in Bulgaria: the proximity of Bulgarian and Macedonian means the differences that separate them appear somewhat dissonant.¹¹⁵ The local press released an ever-increasing number of theatrical reviews evaluating the actors’ renditions in light of their linguistic ability and confirming the didactic mission of live performance. The review of the American play *Deep Are the Roots* by Arnaud d’Usseau and James Gow (1945), which describes the conditions of African-Americans in the United States, read as follows: “The artists of the Macedonian theater showed how quickly they have progressed to the highest level of mastery of the Macedonian literary language. It is not an exaggeration to say that no artist was uncertain in his mastery of his role, nor did anyone stumble when pronouncing the most difficult phrases.”¹¹⁶

111. On the instructions for the organization of these “voluntary” declarations of identity, see Marinov, *La question macédonienne*, 57-60. At the time, the local sense of self-belonging ranged from (rare) Macedonian national identification to Bulgarian identification refuting the designation of Macedonian (because the term was associated with the right-wing faction of the VMRO) as well as the (dominant) expression of a sense of regional Macedonian belonging, which was non-exclusive and even mediated Bulgarian national identity.

112. F. 1, op. 1, ae. 75, ll. 9, 10, and 11, DA, Blagoevgrad.

113. *Pirinsko Delo*, November 3, 1947, p. 4.

114. Ilija Brăčkov, *Avtobiografija* (Blagoevgrad: Dramatičen teartăr N. Vapcarov, 1995), 11-12.

115. Tchavdar Marinov stresses that the chosen literary codification was perceived in Bulgaria as a “Serbianized” variant of Macedonian: see Marinov, *La question macédonienne*, 64.

116. *Pirinsko delo* 20, May 17, 1948, p. 4.

Making connections with the public, even so that it could be remodeled, nevertheless requires being understood. The Macedonian director and actors thus endeavored to “translate” the texts of plays with only the slightest variations by choosing terms that bridged and were understandable in both languages, carving a notch in the impeccable structure of norms that they were required to diffuse.¹¹⁷ The actress Ana Taseva reported that “Milčin found ways to paraphrase, adding another word here and there that was closer and easier for our public to understand.”¹¹⁸ This was in a region where speech, rich in regional vocabulary, corresponded neither to the Macedonian canon nor fully to the Bulgarian literary standard.¹¹⁹ An additional level of complexity is revealed when one realizes that the objective of Macedonianization took the company to Muslim villages where the language—up until then celebrated in official discourse for its pure Bulgarian authenticity—was also considered socially inferior, a reflection of its modest population.¹²⁰ This social and symbolic structure, along with the specificities of how this minority spoke, add a layer of unreality to the following account in *Pirinsko delo* of the theater’s visit to the predominantly Muslim neighborhood of Jakoruda in May 1948: “On May 1, the Macedonian National Theater of Gorna Džumaja came to town. ... The population attended the performances in droves, all the more happy with the actors’ renditions because they could listen to them in their own literary mother tongue, a situation the public seemed to rejoice in.”¹²¹

In a movement that was not without its paradoxes, the border-crossing of this Macedonian language, which had just obtained a certain literary status, thus contributed to fashioning Macedonian national identity. Indeed, just when the People’s Republic of Macedonia (formerly “South Serbia”) was engaged in subordinate relations with Belgrade at the heart of the Yugoslav Federation, its engagement toward Bulgaria enabled it to claim the status of a parent-state. It appeared to be the opposite of the period when the “Bulgarization” of Macedonian land (during World Wars I and II) had consolidated the national power of the Bulgarian state (as well as creating a clearer separation from Bulgarians among the Macedonian people). The trajectory of the Macedonian drama *Pečalbari* (1935) by Anton Panov (1906-1967), is an example of this. The play, in Macedonian, opened the theatrical season in Gorna Džumaja: it recounted the bitter experience of peasants cast by

117. Bulgarian historiography insists on the actors’ and spectators’ resistance to this policy. See: Veselin Angelov, “Za dejnostta na taka narečeniija ‘Gorno Džumajski oblasten makedonski naroden teatar’ prez 1947-1948,” *Istoričeski pregled* 3, no. 6 (1994-1995): 148-62; Elena Ilieva, “Makedonskata dramaturgija na Blagoevgradska scena,” 2009, <http://lenieldorado.blog.bg/fizkustvo/2009/10/13/makedonskata-dramaturgiia-na-scenata-na-blagoevgradskii-tea.415000>. Milčin proposed another reading in an interview with Meandžiski, “Gorno Džumajskiot teatar e so makedonski koreni.”

118. Bračkov, *Avtobiografija*, 89.

119. *Pirinsko delo*, 34, August 23, 1948, pp. 1 and 4.

120. On the intersection between social and linguistic hierarchies on other margins see Susan Gal, “Codeswitching and Consciousness in the European Periphery?,” *American Ethnologist* 14, no. 4 (1987): 637-53.

121. *Pirinsko delo*, 22, May 31, 1948, p. 4.

poverty onto the roads of exile.¹²² As though through a telescoping effect, this cross-border narrative had already traveled between Bulgaria, Macedonia, and Serbia. Between 1942 and 1943, as Bulgaria was planning to make the theater in Skopje the center from which the Bulgarianness of “newly liberated” lands radiated, *Pečalbari* was proposed in literary Bulgarian by actors from the Bulgarian National Theater who had come to spread history, culture, and “shared” languages—supported by a few Macedonian actors.¹²³ Included in the 1942 repertoire of the Sofia National Theater, where it was considered a “Bulgarian play,”¹²⁴ the drama was performed in the mother-capital in December 1942,¹²⁵ while the playwright was recruited as assistant director in Skopje and sent to perfect his training in Sofia.¹²⁶ (Over)loaded with the diversity of such a past, *Pečalbari*, directed by Milčin, reached Gorna Džumaja as part of a distribution redeploying the Skopje-Sofia-Gorna Džumaja triangle.

The theater’s “Macedonian season” attests to the transnational production of Socialism through another unexpected channel: the development of connections with Macedonia indeed constituted one of the vectors of the Sovietization of theater. When he arrived in Pirin, the director Milčin had just returned from six months of specialized study in Moscow at the famous State Institute for Theater Arts (GITIS). During this period, he had made friends with the likes of Aleksei Dikii (1889-1955) and Igor Iliinski (1901-1987), actors and directors who had passed through the famous *Mal’i teat’r*.¹²⁷ It was Milčin who first introduced the semi-professional troupe in Gorna Džumaja to the work of Stanislavski. As a smuggler of translations, Milčin was also behind the first production of Maxim Gorky’s (1868-1936) play *Esnafi* (1901) in the capital of Pirin. In light of this, the “Sovietization”—which

122. On the trajectory of this play and the light it threw on the intersecting Bulgarian and Macedonian productions of Socialism see Nadège Ragaru, “A Transnational Production of Bulgarian Socialism? The (Time) Travels of Gorna Dzhumaya’s Theater in the 1940s,” (conference paper presented at the conference “Visions of Socialism(s) in Eastern Europe: Visual Cultures and the Writing of History”, CERI-Sciences Po, Paris, December 13-14, 2012).

123. F. 177 K, op. 2, ae. 1405, l. 1 and ae. 1853, l. 1, CDA, Sofia.

124. F. 177 K, op. 2, ae. 1401 (second microfilm), l. 20, CDA, Sofia.

125. Milčin suggested that this production in Bulgarian—performed by the Skopje Theater on tour and not by the National Theater of Sofia—provoked indignation in Macedonian intellectual circles then residing in Sofia, which apparently convinced him to stage the play in Macedonian at the cooperative theater in Sofia. He had a 1939 edition of the work, which had been awarded by the Serbian Royal Academy and which he had translated into Macedonian by Blaže Koneski, an important figure in the literary codification of Macedonian. “When I read the text,” said Milčin “Mother of God, I thought, my actors, all workers or students in Prilep, Veles, Skopje, how will they speak this language? No way! A mix of bits of dialects thrown together, that Panov had heard in Belgrade ... Even I could not speak it, so how could I direct it? I remembered that Blaže Koneski was here. I said to him ‘... Write me [the three last acts] in a language the actors can speak.’” Cane Andreevski, *Razgovori so Milčin* (Skopje: Matica Makedonska, 2001), 141-42.

126. F. 177 K, op. 2, ae. 1401 (second microfilm), l. 43, CDA, Sofia.

127. Andreevski, *Razgovori so Milčin*, 178-79.

was, in many respects, a process of closing off—also took the form of an opening, specifically an opening onto “high” culture.

However, in the summer of 1948, the theatrical display of Macedonian identity came to a brutal halt with the abandonment of the federation project following the split between Tito and Stalin, a project that had led to reservations in certain segments of the Bulgarian Communist elite (particularly at the regional level). Cultural exchanges between Bulgaria and Macedonia were suddenly frozen.¹²⁸ Gorna Džumaja was thereafter represented as a border outpost at the crossroads of opposing ideological and national orders. This representation was eloquently illustrated by the following newsreel in 1952:

*Blagoevgrad... the populations of Pirin Macedonia have responded to the provocation by the Tito-Koliševist gang with a powerful electoral result. This demonstrates yet again that a wall of granite stands between the two worlds, just as the hero who has diverted Monarcho-Fascist provocations and Greek adventurists more than once stands at his post along the border.*¹²⁹

We will now explore how these cultural public policies were inhabited and/or hijacked by their targeted audiences.

The Arts of Making Public and Performance

*News of Hitler's capitulation made the whole town jump for joy. Old women who had not been part of a celebration in years ran with families and grandchildren in the streets and on the square Drums, bells, and cars commissioned for the occasion, overflowing with young people brandishing flags and posters, all spread the joyous news to the most remote areas of town.*¹³⁰

Even as the bells sounded the end of the war and Soviet and Bulgarian anthems resonated in the *čitalište*, the town of Gorna Džumaja was not in a total state of lighthearted festivity. The soldiers, still on the front, wrote letters published in the press: “When I come home... I will tell you of the beautiful Hungarian plains, the silent Danube, the bloodied Drava, the battles and everything you wish to know.”¹³¹ Food shortages and the black market were everyone’s lot, leading the *Uspeh* (Success) cooperative to make shoes out of old tires at the same time that the state punished—with exemplary severity—anyone found trading requisitioned food-stuffs.¹³² Peoples’ lives were constricted by the imposed rhythms of “donated”

128. They stayed that way until the mid-1950s.

129. “Otečestven kinopregled n° 426/1952” (newsreel), in *Otečestven kinopregled 426 (1952)*, *Virtualna Gorna Džumaja* (Blagoevgrad: 2011), DVD.

130. *Pirinsko delo* 16, May 14, 1945, pp. 1 and 2.

131. *Ibid.*, p. 3.

132. Boris Keremičiev, *Njakoga v Gorna Džumaja* (Blagoevgrad: Strimon Press, 1994), 69.

hours of labor, political meetings, and organized cultural activities. The loud speakers spewed “propaganda materials, dances, poems, and short plays”¹³³ on a daily basis, reminding people how much the power of sound was the “power to deafen” and establishing a monopoly on what was said and heard.¹³⁴ The local press was full of revolutionary slogans, such as: “If tyranny is violence, then revolution is violence against tyranny” (Goce Delčev).¹³⁵ The ways in which the performing arts were appropriated during this postwar period cannot be dissociated from the context of uncertainty, deprivation, and aspiration to better days.

Due to the lack of oral or written testimonies or secondary sources, one can only attempt to “untangle the absence” by indirectly inferring the sensibilities and experiences of these performances.¹³⁶ The correspondence of the *čitalište*’s director with the regional inspector of information and the arts, the regional director of the militia, and the (Soviet) representative of the Inter-Allied Control Commission nonetheless provides particularly dense material. The regional inspector was a reputable local lawyer with “progressive” beliefs, whose rhetorical skills are evident in his often caustic writing; his correspondents incarnated the institutions whose authority was progressively affirmed as the political climate became tougher. On one level, these sources suggest the desire of Socialist officials to culturally police the newly urbanized areas by organizing the use of space and objects while at the same time revealing the public’s ability to use voices and postures to signify their enthusiasm, boredom, or weariness. The written correspondence established the *čitalište* auditorium, boxes, and seats in addition to its tickets (paid for or free) as a secondary site for the crystallization of new political hierarchies. In these letters, power is expressed in the form of rights and favors, drawing on shared pre-Communist representations of domination, ease, and deference. Finally, archives and memoirs contribute to reconstructing how the tours of film and theater performances simultaneously participated in the production of urban space by demarcation and the insertion of the pleasures of performance into the moral economies of villages.

Coercion and the Technology of the Self: The (In)Discipline of Body and Gaze¹³⁷

Those who were responsible for culture sought to democratize access to performances. Notwithstanding the (rare) visits from companies from Skopje, Sofia, and Pernik, the theatrical supply remained limited. Moreover, it was a risky profession, since the narrow space of the makeup/rehearsal room required the director/

133. F. 1, op. 1, ae. 9, ll. 25-26, DA, Blagoevgrad.

134. Alain Corbin, *Les cloches de la terre. Paysage sonore et culture sensible dans les campagnes au XIX^e siècle* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1994).

135. *Pirinsko delo* 13, April 23, 1945, p. 1.

136. Arlette Farge, *Essai pour une histoire des voix au XVIII^e siècle* (Montrouge: Bayard, 2009), 281.

137. Michel Foucault, “Technologies of the Self,” in *Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault*, ed. P.H. Hutton, H. Gutman, and L.H. Martin (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1988), 16-49.

makeup-artist/actor to make up each of the actors in turn and the costume changes—improvised either onstage or in a booth accessed by a ladder—could hardly disguise the poor quality of wardrobes or the meager sets built right in the street.¹³⁸ The calendar distribution of the *čitalište* auditorium worked in the cinema's favor.¹³⁹ In 1948, the theater troupe gave forty-eight performances and two new productions, which only attracted 15,489 spectators.¹⁴⁰ The cinema, on the other hand, was regularly sold out, including periods when the building could barely stave off the winter cold with its roaring stove. In 1947, it attracted 160,519 spectators (163,850 in 1944), some 272 per session, over the course of 549 projections (607 in 1944).¹⁴¹

The relative stability of the overall figures masks a significant increase in the number of school students, which rose from 581 in 1944 to 12,755 in 1945 and 36,000 in 1947. Although these statistics do not offer any insight into the gendered structure of the public, it is also possible to hypothesize an increase in women's attendance at a time when, having recently gained the right to vote, they were establishing their political and social power. It was more difficult to interest workers in (essentially Soviet) cinema, if one is to believe the following letter that the director of the *čitalište* addressed to the district's Union Council in 1948:

*Based on the two screenings already conducted [with reduced ticket prices, on Saturdays at 4 p.m. and 5 p.m.] through the district's Union Council in the town of Gorna Džumaja (the Department of Workers' Instruction), my feeling is that the objective to accustom workers who do not usually attend the cinema to go in order to increase their individual culture has not been achieved. In both cases, the spectators were public servants or employees, therefore already regular attendees. For this reason, I think that the distribution of tickets should be entrusted to the secretaries of the union organizations, who will focus on the most culturally backward (izostanali) comrade-workers.*¹⁴²

Although it did not meet the culture officials' expectations, the arrival of more socially diverse audiences made the discrepancies in behavior, gaps in attention, and sound of emotions more visible.¹⁴³ In a letter addressed to the president of the *čitalište* on September 19, 1945, the regional inspector expressed his alarm at this, and called for the reintroduction of (public) order within this new (social?) disorder.

138. Bráčkov, *Autobiografija*, 65-6.

139. From January to June 1946, approximately twenty evenings a month were allotted to the cinema, two or three to the theater and two or three to music: f. 18, op. 1, ac. 3, ll. 35-7, DA, Blagoevgrad.

140. F. 326, op. 1, ac. 30, l. 7, DA, Blagoevgrad.

141. Despite inflation, tickets remained accessible (an average of 25 leva in 1945, 40 in 1946, when a book was more than 250): see f. 1, op. 1, ac. 77, l. 23, DA, Blagoevgrad.

142. F. 18, op. 2, ac. 9, l. 8, DA, Blagoevgrad.

143. An article in the *Jugozapad* dated March 22, 1937, had already suggested the "deleterious" role of the presence of women and children in the cinema prior to the war. See Stojanova, "Kinematografät i mjestoto," 234.

*In the most solemn or tragic moments, one can hear without pause the cries and laughter of children, the jumping, moving, running, and other noises... I beg you, please stop letting mothers—and more generally parents—accompanied by babies attend these theater performances.*¹⁴⁴

The socially self-confident reply (this was 1945) was not devoid of irony.

It is true that, in the cases mentioned, the necessary peace was not respected in the auditorium of the čitalište. However, in spite of all our efforts and enthusiasm, we have not managed to tame the appropriately named “little gangsters” responsible for the sniffles or whistling... If the militia had come to our aid, it probably would not have been necessary to write these lines

*Regarding the mothers who come to the cinema with their young children, we would have to employ brute force if we wanted to stop them because otherwise they would not understand. We cannot yet allow ourselves to behave in this way.*¹⁴⁵

The “olfactory silence of the environment”¹⁴⁶ was not respected any more than that of words and gestures, even though the directors of the čitalište were intent on trying to develop hygiene policies.¹⁴⁷ In September 1945, the regional inspector denounced the uncontrolled proliferation of animals in the auditorium.

*Many citizens, regular clients of the theater-cinema and its festivities, rightly complain about the lack of cleanliness in the auditorium and, more generally, the čitalište. Fleas and bugs crawling around have covered everything. Regular maintenance of cleanliness and monitoring the smell of the toilets are indispensable in our town’s only cultural institution. I beg you to take action to address these shortcomings in order to preserve the reputation of the čitalište.*¹⁴⁸

To this, the director placidly gave the following reply:

*There are, it is true, fleas and bugs in the auditorium of the čitalište. But it is almost impossible to get rid of them during the warm season because we lack wood oil and caustic soda. For the moment, only winter will bring a favorable outcome to this situation. The toilets are regularly cleaned every day. Sometimes, when the auditorium is very full, the odor is noticeable. Such a situation is inevitable due to the uninterrupted flow of users.*¹⁴⁹

Management of the flow of people constituted another site of privileged intervention for the new powers. The archives repeat the leitmotiv opposing the incivility

144. F. 1, op. 1, ac. 77, l. 30, DA, Blagoevgrad.

145. *Ibid.*, l. 31.

146. Alain Corbin, *Le miasme et la jonquille. L’odorat et l’imaginaire social, XVIII^e-XIX^e siècles* (Paris: Flammarion, 1982), ii.

147. *Pirinsko delo* 18, May 28, 1945, p. 3.

148. F. 1, op. 1, ac. 7, l. 4, DA, Blagoevgrad.

149. *Ibid.*, l. 5.

and impatience of spectators—accentuated by the experience of the war, violence, and disorder—to the orderly wait in line. “Everyone knows that tickets are sold at the ticket booth, where a strict order is respected. The vast majority of our public is used to this order and shows the necessary discipline. However, there are people, certain individual cases, who have no sense of order and demand their tickets as soon as they arrive at the booth.”¹⁵⁰ The confusion usually spilled over onto the steps of the building, which constituted the center of urbanity filled with rurality: “Every day, dozens of donkeys, horses, and oxen are loaded and unloaded in front of the *čitalište*; traces of straw and hay and animal droppings sometimes cover half the square.”¹⁵¹

The local press and censorship reports describe a town center marked by the proliferation of posters stuck up randomly,¹⁵² where “great portraits of Slav leaders” were forgotten “for weeks,”¹⁵³ and where lay an abandoned plane “that children climb over and have completely disfigured; for the last few days it has been missing parts of the motor that drivers have ‘used.’”¹⁵⁴ These all suggest the space’s chaotic adjustment to the frenetic ways in which it was used in those bustling postwar years. Cars and bicycles zigzagged into the city center. The *Pirinsko delo* recounted: “These days, we see motorized transport cross the town at high speeds. Collisions have been recorded, and a car almost fell off a bridge..., from morning to evening, children and adolescents weave about on bicycles, before they often end up on top of their fellow citizens.”¹⁵⁵ This buzzing indocility, however, did not necessarily amount to incivility. It also covers the cleavages and conflicts that ran through the emerging political and social order, of which the cinema-theater provides a miniature reproduction.

Wars of Authority and the Renegotiation of Hierarchies

Countless correspondence sought to establish how the new usage regulations for the auditorium of the cinema-theater should be applied, quarreling about primacy or outlining the order of precedence. Each in turn, the Regional Inspection of Information and the Arts, the excise service (dependent on the Ministry of Finance), the militia and the representatives of the SKK all enforced their rights, in other words, their authority. For a year and a half, the inspector demanded that not one but two free seats be reserved for him, and what’s more in the boxes. A moral code was discussed and debated in these exchanges by correspondence. The dense flow of letters required the mediation of the regional leaders of the Communist Party, along with the minister of information and the arts, in a dialogue between an ever-increasing number of participants. This correspondence demonstrated the importance awarded to this miniscule materiality: a free ticket became an emblem of

150. F. 18, op. 1, ae. 7, l. 15, DA, Blagoevgrad.

151. F. 18, op. 1, ae. 2, l. 55, DA, Blagoevgrad.

152. F. 1, op. 1, ae. 7, l. 29, DA, Blagoevgrad.

153. *Pirinsko delo* 26, June 2, 1948, p. 2.

154. *Pirinsko delo* 21, May 24, 1948, p. 2.

155. *Pirinsko delo* 25, June 21, 1948, p. 2.

power. Further intense discussions, requests for mediation (by the minister of information and the arts), or even denunciation (to the militia) were brought about by the application of new tariffs (how can minors who cheat by slipping into the darkness with the help of the cashier be sanctioned?) and the attribution of boxes reserved for the administration (can subaltern employees occupy seats reserved for their superiors?).

The deferential tone adopted by the director of the *čitalište* in June 1945 when he wrote to Captain Smirnov, the Soviet representative of the Inter-Allied Control Commission, reveals the eminence of the Red Army. Requesting better coordinated, if not more parsimonious, use of the cinema-theater, he wrote:

You know that if need be, the auditorium of the čitalište and the projectors have always been at the disposition of Soviet soldiers, whether because their theater troupe was preparing entertainment, projecting their own films or wanting to watch one of ours... In these instances one hundred of the two hundred seats are attributed to them, or even the whole theater. We are of course proud and particularly happy to have survived up until the liberation and that we now have a chance of being of service, however modest, to the Red Army, and our brothers the Russian people.

There are, however, certain habits that in our view must cease. For example, during the screening of a given film, for which the Russian commander has not requested tickets, we order that they all be sold. In the meanwhile, Russian soldiers and officers enter the theater and sit in the places that have been sold. When the members of the audience arrive, they find the seats taken. A very disagreeable situation results, some members of the audience go away surly and indignant, and others remain standing, but very bad tempered...

The circumstances described here have already given ammunition against the Red Army to fascist gossips, who exaggerate the events as they please and spread propaganda.¹⁵⁶

Hastily assembled from former partisans, socialized in the harsh realities of the field, and reconverted tsarist policemen, the militia aimed to translate the force that it sought to embody into favors. In January 1946, the board of directors of the *čitalište* called for the (in)subordinates to be controlled:

The board of directors of the čitalište, during its meeting of the 19th of this month, discussed certain disagreeable skirmishes that have arisen between the militia—both civilian and in uniform—and the doormen of the cinema... the former, having entered without tickets and without their position entitling them to do so, put pressure on the latter to contest this situation.

Other than the two places accorded to them ex gratia, we, on our own initiative, invite the militia to attend for free the films that present a greater political and artistic value... In order that there be no possibility for reactionaries to compare the militia with the former police, and to protect the prestige and authority of our people, we ask you to stop these wrongs.¹⁵⁷

156. F. 18, op. 1, ac. 2, l. 31, DA, Blagoevgrad.

157. F. 18, op. 1, ac. 3, l. 27, DA, Blagoevgrad.

While the reference made to the filiation between the display of power by the militia and the former police may have had a tactical dimension here, it nevertheless revealed the existence of shared categories of meaning. In these early years of Socialism, it was in mobilizing the former authority figures, in this instance the differentiated production and administration of irregularities by the police, that the new institutions sought to make their mark. Finally, retracing the path of traveling cinema and theater—urban projections of culture in rural environments—will also allow us to underline the contribution of pre-Communist knowledge and imaginaries to this, incidentally unparalleled, enterprise of cultivating interest for cultural performances in the countryside.

Mobile Performances: “Conquering” Villages or Urbanity by Demarcation

Both encouraging peasants to come to performances and bringing culture into the remotest areas were introduced with unprecedented energy by the leaders of the Fatherland Front after September 9, 1944. In 1947, the exploration, at the request of the minister of information and the arts, of time slots during the day coupled with reductions in ticket prices, met with limited success. The *čitalište*'s annual report noted that “several attempts were made to propose free films adapted to peasants on market days, but to little avail. Our grandfathers cannot get used to the idea of spending time on such activities, even when they are free.”¹⁵⁸ Assuredly, the life rhythms of the agricultural population, then organized around daily temporalities that were diurnal (the rise and the setting of the sun), seasonal (sowing, haymaking, and harvesting seasons), and religious (Easter, Christmas, etc.), did not lend itself well to an organization dividing time between “work” and “leisure.”¹⁵⁹ Already subject to compulsory work and celebrations of power, some rural people saw being invited to a performance as just another form of the “state control of time.”¹⁶⁰

The fact that farmers and shepherds, with their rudimentary dress, hesitated to cross the threshold of the urban cinema-theater cannot be taken to mean a lack of curiosity, or even fascination, on their part for the spectacle of moving images. The place of the cinema in the cultural landscapes of rural areas did not emerge according to the rhythms of power, but through its insertion in the local moral economy. The development of a network of mobile cinemas helped this appropriation. Certain well-worn copies of films dated back to the silent era. Subtitles set up a wall of words before a village audience often lacking in education. The oratory qualities of the projectionist, who added his commentaries on the plot, thus constituted a much-appreciated mediation.¹⁶¹ Above all, watching the actors play on white sheets

158. *Ibid.*, I. 32.

159. See: Corbin, *L'avènement des loisirs*, 17; Jean-Claude Farcy, “Le temps libre au village (1830-1930),” in Corbin, *L'avènement des loisirs*, 302-61.

160. Katherine Verdery, “The ‘Etatization’ of Time in Ceaușescu’s Romania,” in *What Was Socialism, and What Comes Next?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 39-57.

161. On the Soviet case, see the excellent article by Valérie Pozner, “Le bonimenteur ‘rouge.’ Retour sur la question de l’oralité à propos du cas soviétique,” *Cinemas. Revue d'études cinématographiques* 14, nos. 2-3 (2004): 143-78.

spread out in the night took place (and meaning) among the singing and dancing rituals of village fêtes that were full of wonder. In November 1945, the Mayor of Drjanovo wrote a faltering letter requesting the presence of the mobile cinema, which attests to how it was inscribed in village life:

*In the name of the village of Drjanovo... we who do not have the possibility to see films, theater or other entertainment outside of the horo [traditional dance] of the village, we ask you, we would be very grateful and very happy if you would see that the mobile cinema comes to present some contemporary films in our town. It would be of great usefulness when the village comes together in a great assembly for the eve of Saint Dimitri to celebrate the people's fête in the free Bulgaria of the Fatherland Front.
... The people would be very happy and would thank you from the bottom of their hearts. You would be welcome to attend. Salutations from the comrade-Mayor of the village of Drjanovo.*¹⁶²

In this period, when the images and sounds were surrounded with mystery, it was possible to applaud the virile action in the stories of the Soviet wars and the European melodramas of the interwar period with the same enthusiasm. The experience of the film session extended both before and after the screening, in the joy of being among a crowd assembled in the unusually lit up night.

The theatrical performances were also adapted to rural milieus in the particular form they took when on tour. The actor and director Vladimir Davčev, who was one of the first graduates of the Conservatory of Dramatic Arts and named theater director in 1952, described the way that the troupe took hold of unfamiliar spaces to transform them into theatrical stages, subjecting the “projected” performances to surprising transformations:

*We had the hospitality of the village of Gabrene [one kilometer from the Greek border]. The director of the border post had invited us: “come, our people have never seen theater!” But how could we go when the town was so tiny and didn't have a hall? They promised to “organize” one... in the corridor of the House of Culture. The space was so narrow that when one of us came on “stage” his body took up all the room. There were lots of people, all standing, some on one leg; during the whole performance, they never stopped commenting out loud on the portrayals of the actors, on their moustaches, on the plot. We couldn't hear each other.*¹⁶³

Like other testimonies brought together in a book entitled *Autobiography of a Theater*, published in 1995, these comments are not without social condescension. Yet the actors gave an enchanted retrospective account of these early years, in spite of the materially difficult conditions. They described the joy of contributing to the

162. F. 1, op. 1, ae. 77, l. 35, DA, Blagoevgrad.

163. Brăčkov, *Autobiografija*, 21.

spread of enlightenment and culture, mixed with the pleasures of a notoriety to which the sometimes extravagant rites of hospitality paid homage. In so doing, they suggested the production of a certain ease in these forays into rural life, where the links that were made with local people were as divisive as they were binding, and where the warmth of human relations was the counterpart to hierarchical social transactions. An anecdote where one audience member, a Mayor, brandished a pistol in an actor's face reveals the ways in which these performances confirmed the very distance between city-dwellers and rural people that they were supposed to abolish, whilst serving to confirm the (sometimes recent) urbanity of the artists.

Ilija Bračkov, the son of one of the founders of the theatrical tradition in Gorna Džumaja, second generation urban dweller and former amateur actor, recalls his own experience in these terms:

[In Skrebatno], the population is made up of half Bulgarian-Mohammedans [sic] and half very progressive Bulgarians. In this village they have always welcomed us with good will and pleasure. After the performances, we organized small dancing parties in order to set up friendly relations between the theater and the people. We all participated, we danced, that's how it was, what can you do?

But my words concern the Signali performance. The actor Nikola Milušev was playing a negative character—a Serbian agent who had come to sabotage a TKZS [a cooperative]. The Mayor of Skrebatno, Botev (I can't remember his first name, even though we became friends afterwards) was also at the performance. In the middle of the action, just as Milušev came on stage, the Mayor took out his pistol and cried "what the fuck are you after?" He had let himself get so carried away by the play that he almost shot the "agent."¹⁶⁴

This narration is telling: Bračkov considers the local official's attitude to be proof of his ignorance of theatrical conventions. However, the actions of the spectator-Mayor could be interpreted differently, especially given that an amateur theater group had emerged in the village in 1946.¹⁶⁵ As an expression of support for the Socialist project, this armed intervention could have served to confirm the local authority of a loyal official. The anecdote reminds us that, in order to offer an account of the experiences of film and theater productions in the early days of Socialism, we must combine a number of elements: the full range of mediations and gazes at play, the effects of shared presence in small spaces, where sharing does not rule out conflict, and the mobilization of traditional ways of doing things that acquire new significations.

164. *Ibid.*, p. 14.

165. *Pirinsko delo* 6, January 13, 1947, p. 4.

At the end of this study, three paths of reflection can be drawn out. The first concerns the material mediations through which the Socialist project manifested itself in the redeployment of former historicities. The second relates to the cultural modeling of the Socialist town and the third deals with the transnational production of Socialism as reflected on the urban level.

First, examining the “objectification” of spectacles has revealed a Socialist project that, beyond reestablishing institutions and repertoires, took form and meaning as it took shape, color, smell, and sound. Individuals were molded through the state control of time, the new symbolization of space, and, particularly, the endeavor to discipline both the body and the gaze. But beyond this “subtle coercion” (as Michel Foucault might call it), the theater auditorium is also a valuable locus for observing how power relations were renegotiated. The struggles for precedence that took place on this stage sketch the new outlines of authority, for which ostentation was a condition of possibility, by using pre-Communist material and symbolic resources. Taking these former dispositions into account is fundamental here, both in order to avoid reducing the experience of these performances to the aims of cultural officials—the audience was able to mobilize sound and their bodies to refute or simply to ignore state engineering—and to refine our understanding of how novelty was produced. These actors, whom the Fatherland Front had asked to break away from “fascist” theater, and then to contribute to the Macedonian identity of the Pirin region, used their experience on stage to give form to the new prescriptions, by improvising around the text and accentuating their gestures. Moreover, in taking to the road to spread the enlightenment of the new Socialist order, the actors took their inspiration from an imaginary surrounding the role of the intelligentsia that was formed during the nineteenth-century “National Renaissance.” The hospitality that the village populations showed them also redeployed the art of the gift and counter-gift, which had earlier mediated relationships with notables and foreigners. One of the merits of looking at material culture is precisely that it brings to light objects and knowledge which, bridging the gap between pre- and post-1944, went hand-in-hand with exceptionally intense transformations.

The second contribution of this study concerns the production-projection of the Socialist cultural town. Stemming from the open-air cinema of the *čitalište*, this study has led us to suspend conventional definitions of performance spaces and to be attentive to the ways in which these occur not only in the closed space of the cinema-theater, but also over the course of the movements of actors whose constricted bodies can transform the hall of a House of Culture into a stage. The contours of the total-object of the *čitalište* were also reshaped as it was taken over by the Fatherland Front and the People’s Tribunal, each influencing the ways in which the public inhabited culture. In the same way, the study has suggested the variety of Socialist ways to “make a town.” As a fractal object, the local space emerged in comparison with the countryside and other urban spaces, according to its national and transnational inscription, influenced by state-controlled identity assignments. Gorna Džumaja was first defined by the pre-Socialist administrative delimitations, which institutionalized the relations between the town and the municipality of villages around it. It was then produced through the toponyms that

defined changing spatiotemporal anchor-points. Finally, it also emerged in the network of relations that were woven by the mobile theater and cinema, on the one hand, and by the visits of theaters from Skopje, Sofia and other provincial towns to Gorna Džumaja, on the other. The move towards the peasants' worlds bought city-dwellers and rural people closer together, and yet also introduced a separation between them, while the transnational circulation of works and artists linked the provincial city to the major urban centers of Skopje and Sofia. In analyzing these movements, this article has endeavored to break with the axiom of cartographic immobility and to argue that topographic coordinates only make sense in context, depending on the relations drawn by social agents between various reference points.

This brings us to the third contribution, the way in which the study of performances at the urban level provides a telescopic instrument to embrace much wider horizons.¹⁶⁶ Local drama worlds are indeed a marginal object, if ever there was one, in the historiographies devoted to the establishment of Communist orders. Yet examining them sheds new light on the effects of social processes that are scarcely visible when focus is primarily concentrated on the reverberations of the geopolitical games of the Cold War, or on political and military scenes. This approach reveals Sovietization, for example, to be the result of the embedded spaces and intersecting nation-building ambitions that have punctuated the region's history since the exit from the Ottoman Empire. For these competitions—between Bulgaria and Macedonia, Bulgaria and Yugoslavia—Sovietization provided the resources and language of a new time in which to formulate existing rivalries and claims. In 1947-1948 both Macedonian and Yugoslav artists occupied the *čitalište* in a gesture attesting to their own "Socialist" rectitude, while dissociating themselves from the actions of a Bulgaria recently allied with Hitler. Their biographies as partisans on the right side of the border of good and evil during the war, also allowed them to legitimize the pursuit of the Macedonian project of national affirmation, including through the mediation of theater plays imported from the Soviet Union.

For certain social groups (amateur actors, whose status was reevaluated through professionalization, in addition to part of the public), Soviet references opened up a horizon stretching beyond the USSR. It was thus in the form of a Soviet adaptation that Jules Verne appeared on the screens of Gorna Džumaja in Vladimir Vainstok's film *Deti kapitana Granta* (*The Children of Captain Grant*), screened in 1946. The Soviet association—which itself had a complex relationship to pre-Communist Russian grandeur—sometimes provided access to "European high culture," which, in the Communist rhetoric of the cultural Cold War and in certain European discourses, was opposed to "popular"¹⁶⁷ American culture. Sovietization

166. Christophe Charle, "Peut-on écrire une histoire de la culture européenne à l'époque contemporaine?" *Annales HSS* 65, no. 5 (2010): 1207-20.

167. Annette Vowinckel, Marcus M. Payk, and Thomas Lindenberger, eds., *Cold War Cultures: Perspectives on Eastern and Western European Societies* (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2012); Gordon Johnson, "Revisiting the Cultural Cold War," *Social History* 35, no. 3 (2010): 290-307; and Greg Castillo, *Cold War on the Home Front: The Soft Power of Mid-century Design* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010).

thus can neither be limited to the oppressive production of borders (in which it was also involved) nor to the promotion of discourses freed from “bourgeois chauvinism” (since it willingly coexisted with national rhetoric). It also developed through a diversity of trans-bloc circulation, dependent on the historicity of relations with Russia.

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