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The Pioneer Organization and the School in Bulgaria: an Attempt to Discipline the Individual

The article presents and analyzes the approaches, used by the Dimitrov's pioneer organization (DPO) 'Septemvričje' in Bulgaria to obsess and control the students and teachers' school life (and in some aspects even their personal life), in order to prepare and discipline the future loyal citizens of the socialist society. The emphasis here is on Foucault's concept of the 'exam' (in the broadest sense of the term) as a form of disciplinary control that should make the individuals visible and readable for the Authority. At the same time, I refer to Dejan Dejanov's critical thesis about the double public gaze which allows the Authority to control both the examinees and the examiners. My research is based on a study of official documents of DPO 'Septemvričje', school documents, biographical interviews and my own memories.

Key words: childhood, school, pioneer organization, socialism, Foucault's concept of the 'exam'

Пионирска организација и школство у Бугарској: покушај дисциплиновања индивидуе

У раду су представљени и анализирани приступи који су били примењивани од стране Димитрове пионирске организације (ДПО) „Септемвриче“ у Бугарској, с намером да се школски живот ученика и наставника (а у неким

аспектима чак и њихов лични живот) надзире и контролише, те да се тим путем припреме и дисциплинују будући лојални грађани социјалистичког друштва. У раду је акценат на Фукоовом концепту „испита“ (у најширем смислу те речи) као облика дисциплинске контроле која би требало да учини појединце видљивим и читљивим за власт. Уједно се позивам на тезу Дејана Дејанова која критикује двоструки поглед јавности на контролу коју власт спроводи како над онима који полагају испит тако и над онима који испитују. Истраживање се заснива на проучавању званичних докумената ДПО „Септемвријче“, школских докумената, биографских интервјуа и сопствених сећања.

Кључне речи: детињство, школа, пионирска организација, социјализам, Фукоов концепт „испита“

INTRODUCTION

Dimitrov's pioneer organization (DPO) 'Septemvričje' used some approaches (like ideological rhetoric and didactics, rituals of pioneer events, content of textbooks, school curricula and calendar, organization of the class and extracurricular life at school) to control and obsess the school time-and-space. Thus, DPO was able to ensure the ideological education of the future generations and to control the students, teachers and their families' lives. In this article I rely on Dejan Dejanov's critical thesis on Foucault's concept of the 'exam'. Dejanov accepts that the 'exam' aims to provide information about how the individual has assimilated the ideological suggestions, the propagated 'correct' ethical postulates and behaviour and whether he/she has or has not succumbed to the *shifting* control of the Authority. In the studied situation the Authority is expressed through the image of the school institution and the obsessing pioneer organization. The 'exam' testifies to what extent the knowledge acquired in the personal/family time-and-space has been replaced by the only recognized as legitimate knowledge, 'educated', prompted and acquired by obligation in the school time-and-space.

My research is based on a study of official documents of DPO 'Septemvričje' and school documents (chronicles and pioneer diaries). The chronicle books (*letopisni knigi*) were official documents of the school management, which had described chronologically the most important moments in the school's life each scholar year. They were written down by teachers. In the period of socialism, this type of documents testified that the school leadership defended the ideologically correct positions. The events were

reflected from the ideology and Authority's point of view and did not show how they were experienced by the participants in them, i.e., by students and teachers. Pioneer diaries were also school documents that reflected the lives of pioneer detachments (*otrjad*) and *družinas*, but they were written by students under the supervision of the teachers. However, diaries were also subjects to the obsessive ideological discourse.

In this publication I refer primarily to my personal memories of my experience in the pioneer organization. I also use personal conversations and interviews with my peers and other schoolmates, as well as memories of users/authors on the site-forum 'Our Childhood' (Našeto detstvo 2007), in which I myself participate. On this site, users share memories and impressions from their childhood in the form of personal stories, discussions and illustrative material about various objects, etc. In addition to their memories on the site, I conducted some questionnaires and interviews with the most active users. The whole empirical material is considered in Foucault's interpretation of the 'exam' as a possible point of view. My work on this research is still at the beginning, so I use only memories of former students. My next step is to do some interviews with teachers.

RESEARCH ON CHILDHOOD IN BULGARIA

The first modern study on childhood was Philippe Aries's *Centuries of Childhood*, first published in 1960. Its author reflects on the 'socio-historical conditionality of childhood' and reveals how the modern concept and idea of childhood as a 'protected period' within the individual's life was established (Popova 2010a, 9). Aries's research marks the beginning of a new field of study in social history and anthropology. The main conceptions of childhood in both fields are presented in an overview by Kristina Popova (Popova 1999; Popova 2010a, 8–14). In another study, she presents the activities of the Union for Protection of Children in Bulgaria in the period 1925–1944 and the emergence of modern policies for children and mothers in Bulgaria (Popova 1999). The publications in the volume *Childhood under Socialism* (Elenkov & Koleva 2010) respond to three main topics: the centralized political projects for childhood imposed by the socialist government in the early and late period of the regime in Bulgaria, the implementation of some institutional practices for children according to the ideological framework and various aspects of the memory on childhood during socialism. Kristina Popova's publication in the volume is of particular interest for the present text,

as it outlines the ideological construction of childhood through the institutional integration / adhesion and interaction of the school system and the pioneer organization through the image of *družinen rākovoditel*¹ (Popova 2010b: 18–51). A similar task is set by Svetlana Paunova's article, which, however, analyzes the ideological image of the pioneers (Paunova 2003).

Nadežda Gālābova (2010) and Georgi Gospodinov's (2017) texts reflect the opposite perspective in considering children and adolescents during socialism – not as passive objects of processing, education and manipulation in the Authority's attempts to form the new socialist personality, which was expected to be loyal and subordinate to the regime, but as active subjects who managed to escape, and even resist the manipulation and socialist education. In another of my publications I present an overview and analysis of the main characteristics and changes in the children and young people's institutional and personal lives in the second half of the twentieth century in Bulgaria (Jančeva 2016).

GENESIS OF THE DIMITROV'S PIONEER ORGANIZATION (DPO) 'SEPTEMVRIJČE'

The youth political organizations in Bulgaria were formed in the early twentieth century as divisions of the most political parties. In the first half of the 1940s, organizations that were affiliated with or patronized by the authorities connected their activities to the school. After the September 9 coup, the political opponents of the Bulgarian Workers' Party² were removed from the government and banned (including their youth organizations). On December 21–22, 1947, the youth organizations of the parties represented by the government of the Fatherland Front (*Otečestven front*) merged and established the Union of People's Youth.³ It became the

¹ This was the teacher at school, who was a representative of DPO and the ideological leader and organizer of the students at school. With absolutely rare exceptions, they were predominantly women and their only job was the ideological and political education of pioneers. For the essence and mission of the profession of *družinen rākovoditel* and for the activities, related to it, see Popova 2010b. Here I also use the notion 'pioneer leader'.

² Since December 1948 it had been renamed to Bulgarian Communist Party, and since 1990 it has been renamed to Bulgarian Socialist Party.

³ The first youth socialist organization was established in 1912 and over the years it had experienced splits, mergers and several renamings. After its establishment in 1947, the Union of People's Youth was renamed twice so since 1958 it was known as the Dimitrov's Komsomol Youth Union (*DKMS or Komsomol*).

only legitimate, mass youth organization under the control of the Bulgarian Communist Party.

Dimitrov's pioneer organization (DPO) 'Septemvriječē' which united children between 7 and 14 years of age, was established on September 23, 1944. In 1945, the organization was declared as a 'free public organization', 'non-governmental', 'non-political', and 'a division of the Fatherland Front organization'; it was decided "the foundations of the children's organization to be transferred to school, without copying its methods and means of education and upbringing" (Marinova, Šopova & Šejnova 1984, 20–21). The organization was under the leadership of the Central Youth Commission of the National Commission of the Fatherland Front (Marinova, Šopova & Šejnova 1984, 20–21).

Svetlana Paunova marks the genesis of DPO and notes that despite its origins in the communist youth organization, it was conceived as the "children's equivalent of the Fatherland Front organization" (Paunova 2003) and therefore needed to be recognized by all parties in the government of the Fatherland Front. That is why the organization itself and its members had the name 'Septemvriječē', which was not "the object of symbolic struggles" between the individual parties (Paunova 2003).

As Kristina Popova points out correctly, despite being declared non-political, from the very beginning the organization was perceived by the party leadership as "a political reserve of the authority" and its members children were used for political purposes, including in the election campaign of the Fatherland Front (Popova 2010b, 21). On this occasion in a letter dated 02.08.1945 to Dančo Dimitrov, the head of DPO 'Septemvriječē', G. Dimitrov wrote:

"The children *Septemvriječeta* can really do a lot of useful work in the election campaign. And for them this will be a kind of school of considerable importance" (Dimitrov 1966, 184).

After 1946–1947, the DPO 'Septemvriječē' became the only and a bit later – obligatory children's organization subordinated to the Bulgarian Communist Party, closely connected with the school system and a conductor of the communist doctrine among adolescents. The political commitment of DPO is confirmed by the programme articles of the organ of the organization – the *Septemvriječē* newspaper. There, the individual member called *Septemvriječē*, and later – a *pioneer*, was defined as a "politically active child" (Paunova 2003), i.e. the wish-assignment (*poráčenie*) to become a good communist was addressed to him.

THE IMAGE OF THE SEPTEMVRIJČE / PIONEER IN THE IDEOLOGICAL RHETORIC

In his addresses and greetings to the DPO 'Septemvrijče' members, Georgi Dimitrov outlined the party and the government's expectations towards them, calling them 'future members of the society' or 'our tomorrow's vigorous shift' (*bodra smjana*). He repeatedly reminding them of their duty:

to "be active fighters for the work of the working class, worthy [prepared] builders of the [new classless] socialist society. Always be ready to fight, standing next to the adults for the final victory over fascism, for the triumph of communism in the whole world!" (Dimitrov 1966, 53, 58, 120).⁴

Children were indebted to the Party for its 'daily care' for them and "their development and future"; "To learn better and better, to develop comprehensively⁵, strengthening the spirit and body, to love our dear Motherland and to be ready to give all their strength for its construction, for its freedom and independence."; "Pioneers need to excel in success. The one, who is not excellent at school, is not a good pioneer" (Dimitrov 1966, 120, 162, 192, 204, 384).

All these qualities that every *Septemvrijče* child member was expected to possess outline a perfect, impossible and unbearable image of the socialist super child ('all-round (comprehensively) developed child') to be the successor and 'vigorous shift' of the heroes, the anti-fascist fighters and the builders of socialist Bulgaria. For example, in the earlier textbooks pupils and secondary students were depicted as all-round (comprehensively) developed children who study, help, work, play sports and create. When one turns the pages, he / she gets the impression that it is impossible for children to combine all the depicted activities in their daily lives (Bukvar 1958).

The fulfillment of these covenants and expectations put every child – a member of the organization – in a state of a constant examination. They were expected to prove with every action that they were worthy and decent members of the organization. The 'examiners' were the heroic ancestors to

⁴ Since Dimitrov used identical invocations with separate different phrases, I add the additional variations to the main text in square brackets in order to avoid repetitions.

⁵ For the Marxist pedagogical theory of the all-round comprehensive development of the personality, see Sotirova 1994.

whom the children were expected to address their gratitude through their 'pioneer feats' or achievements; the current party leadership at all levels and the whole society, which according to the ideological suggestions was monitoring the pioneers to take their place in it as worthy future members.

Ana Luleva notes that "norms such as asceticism, sacrifice and devotion to party work and the great goal – building the communist society which were instilled in the first years of the regime" (Luleva 2021, 50), were gradually abandoned in the 1970s and 1980s (Luleva 2021, 50).

The documents of the pioneer organization, as well as publicists, ideological publications and fiction for children and pioneers, show that DPO 'Septemvrijče' continued to use these values in its effort to ensure their ideological upbringing. However, these norms were so totally, constantly and endlessly used that they became clichés – everyone quoted them to prove their loyalty to the regime, but whether they believed in them was questionable. For example, the absence of the pioneer's identity and organization in children's personal time-and-space and emotional world is eloquently shown in Georgi Gospodinov's article on lexicons (Gospodinov 2017).⁶

HOW THE PIONEER ORGANIZATION OBSESSED THE SCHOOL INSTITUTION

Kristina Popova points out that the pioneer organization achieved "ideological construction of childhood" (Popova 2010, 18), as its organizing presence in people's lives was the most tangible, and I would add – the longest (if we consider the youth Komsomol organization) compared to all other mass organizations (Popova 2010, 18–51). Through the many rituals and events at school like gatherings, assemblies, meetings, excursions, mountain trips, marches, pioneer assignments, manifestations, celebrations and more, it comprised and institutionalized the extracurricular activities and time of the children and adolescents, as well as their families and teachers' time. At the same time, the network of pioneer houses organized adolescents' personal free time, where in addition to learning pioneers' values, they participated in many clubs and activities of inter-

⁶ I provide two examples of memories from the site 'Our Childhood', in which their authors emphasize the lack of enthusiasm for attending pioneer rituals as well as the lack of sense of belonging to the organization itself: a man from Sofia tells about the ceremony of becoming a member of DPO (Našeto detstvo 2012) and a woman from Burgas describes the atmosphere of the gatherings (Našeto detstvo 2009). The comments below the texts also carry interesting information.

est – technology, science, art, folklore and others. Pioneer camps were organized in the summer.

In my opinion, the pioneer organization with its political ideology, ethical concepts, prompts and didactics penetrated and completely obsessed not only the extracurricular, but both children and teachers' whole school time-and-space. All textbooks (including mathematics and science) 'preached' pioneer and socialist values, told the BCP's history and stories of the heroism of 'its faithful sons' and workers, educated children in devotion and loyalty to the Party and its leaders, 'promised the bright future', possible only under the leadership of the Party. The content of the school curricula and calendar was completely subordinated to the calendar of the pioneer organization. Most pioneer rituals and events were held at school and organized with the assistance of the class teachers and the school management under the supervision of the *družinen rākovoditel*.

THE REGIME'S AIM TO FORM A NEW SOCIALIST PERSON

The all-encompassing and monopolistic presence of DPO 'Septemvrijče' in the children's lives undoubtedly affected also their parents' lives, which aimed to provide political education in the family and was an expression of the social engineering of the socialist state (Popova 2010, 18–51). This process can also be perceived as *seduction of the masses* (according to Ivajlo Znepolski 2008, 76–79), implemented through propaganda pressure, activation and provoking the enthusiasm of the younger generations, and thus of their parents. The approaches, used by the pioneer organization and the dependence in which it placed the existence of the children and adolescents, i.e. the youngest members of the society, those who were the least burdened by previous experience, knowledge and suggestions, the most naive and dependent members of the society, made them most susceptible to *forced ideological processing*, to instilling *the myth of a just classless society*, as well as the promises of the 'bright future' and the privileges it brought, but only in the presence of the 'correct' behaviour or biography (Znepolski 2008, 76–79).

Concerning the massification of the Bulgarian Communist Party and the mobilization of the masses, Ivajlo Znepolski writes:

"...Entirely new generations, who had no memory of the beginning of the regime, were growing up and due to the complete isolation and lack of information they were socialized in the new conditions as in a natural, only known social environment. The generation of the par-

ents accepted the partial mitigation of the regime as conjunctural, so in order to preserve the youngsters and to help them survive and realize in the existing conditions, they wrapped the past in silence. This broke the continuity in the life experience of generations” (Znepolski 2008, 221).

Ana Luleva also emphasizes that the regime was based on relations between the Authority and the citizens, expressed in “political passivity, acquiescence, ritual demonstration of loyalty and ostensible trust in the party and the state” (Luleva 2021, 49), also in consent and obedience in exchange for satisfying their standard of living (Luleva 2021, 49).

DPO ‘Septemvrijče’ and DKMS had to create this new social environment in the school time-and-space, where children, adolescents and young people would grow and develop in isolation from their parents’ experiences. Through textbooks’ content, homework preparation, new socialist rhetoric, pioneer rituals, literature, art and publicism for children, pioneer assignments (*porāčeniĵa*), camps, manifestations, extracurricular activities, etc. this new ideological environment was also able to penetrate the personal time-and-space of the family, the circle of friends and the neighbourhood community. Ana Luleva points out that “ideologizing everyday life, evaluating it in accordance with Marxist and Leninist ideology, according to the official rhetoric, and in fact – according to the ‘party line’, was one of the most significant changes and signs of the new public life” (Luleva 2021, 46).

Through these measures children were exposed to a constant ideological ‘irradiation’. By putting them in a state of constant examination and proving that they were a ‘worthy and decent future shift’, they were involved in relationships based on trust and mistrust, which aimed to strengthen their sense of duty, devotion and belonging to the Party and the Authority, which in turn strengthened the legitimacy of the authoritarian regime.⁷

The aspiration of the Authority, respectively of the Communist Party, for control over families and their private / intimate world was defined by Katherine Verdery as socialist paternalism, in which the state appropriated the right to decide on the distribution of the social product and social benefits among the members of the society (Verdery 1996, 64). This

⁷ For the regime of trust and distrust in the period of the state socialism, see Luleva 2021, 25-29.

definition perceives the state as a state – *zadruga*, i.e. an extended family consisting of all nuclear families that were bound with each other and headed by the patriarchal management of the wise and caring Father-Party, head of the family.⁸ Analyzing the relations between the state and the people, Verdery perceives the latter as subjects of the paternalistic socialist state, who were expected not to be politically active (unlike the citizens), but to be “grateful recipients – such as the young children in the family – for the benefits that their rulers provided them” (Verdery 1996, 63–66). The main goal of this paternalistic policy was to achieve a homogenized socialist society. Through the Pioneer and Komsomol organizations, the Authority had taken away some parental functions, especially the ideological and political education / modeling of adolescents, and was seeking to ‘raise’ obedient, loyal and *grateful subjects*. In this way, relations of subordination of the future members of the society to the paternalistic power were presupposed.

THE PIONEER RITUALS AND THE STRUCTURE OF DPO, CONSIDERED THROUGH THE CONCEPT OF THE ‘EXAM’

Organizing the children in the pioneer *družina* overlapped their organization at school. This means that each class was a separate pioneer detachment (*otrjad*), and all detachments were part of the pioneer *družina*, which included all the students from the school. Each detachment was headed by detachment’s chairman (*otrjaden predsedatel*), each *družina* – by *družina*’s chairman (*družinen predsedatel*) (Marinova, Shopova & Sheinova 1984, 25–53)⁹. They were students who should be elected by their schoolmates, but very often the elections were done with the recommendations or the insistence of the *družinen rākovoditel* or the class teachers.

The reason I mention all this is related to the following considerations. I accept most of the essential elements of the rituals of the pioneer organization, directly related to the school, as a kind of an exam. Such were

⁸ In Bulgaria, the Party proclaimed itself the ‘mother’ of the people, which is widely echoed in the official literature and art, and in the unofficial folklore of the socialist era. However, the paternalistic image of the party was not alien to the official rhetoric, either. For example, Petār Balkanski, a Deputy Chairman of the Central Committee of the DPO ‘Septemvrijče’ spoke about the “strong hand and fatherly caress of the Blagoev-and-Dimitrov’s party of the Bulgarian Communists” (Balkanski 1976).

⁹ The same or similar hierarchy existed in the organization of summer pioneer and Komsomol camps, labour brigades, including the brigade movement in the 1940s – 1960s (Ivanova 2003; Raeva 2010)

the solemn admission to the pioneer and Komsomol organizations, the reports and the annual reporting gatherings, the ceremonial inspections of the attending members (*raportuvane*) of the detachments and *družinas* during solemn or more everyday events.

Other forms of the 'exam' were the pioneer assignment (*poráčenie*) and the report (*otčet*). Every autumn, at the beginning of the school year, the pioneers reported to their detachments on the implementation of their pioneer assignments which they had signed at the beginning of the summer vacation. This was usually related to reporting work done – picking herbs, handing over secondary raw materials for recycling, participating in an activity – helping a library, a farm or a light industry enterprise, reading books, studying and researching the history, the heroic past and the nature of the homeland / town, sport or scientific or technical achievements, attending competitions, Olympiads and other forums.

The students, teachers and the schools themselves as institutions were involved also in competitions (*sărevnovanija*). The competitions were related to participation and achievements in contests and labour brigades, annual marks of the students, recycling secondary raw materials, picking up and handing over herbs etc.

Competitions, solemn promises, the fulfillment and overfulfillment of the plans represented a significant part of the social life during socialism. They ritualized it and functioned as a tool for achieving the tasks set by the Authority and for mobilizing the consciousness of the people. They were a kind of exam in the sense of a supervisory and normalizing gaze that classifies and qualifies individuals. According to Foucault, if the disciplining Power / Authority remains invisible, through the 'examination' it imposes on the examined subjects the principle of the obligatory visibility (Foucault 1998, 169). The competition and the struggle to implement the plans made the people visible and readable, compared them to each other within the organization or the group. The competition aimed to keep them in constant tension and distract them from political life. At the same time, they allowed the Authority to be able to observe to the lowest levels of the society. Through the competitions, the disciplining Authority simultaneously homogenized and individualized the individuals. They stimulated the development of a collective consciousness in the participants and accustomed them to the collective work.

The competitions in all their forms and the pioneer assignments, in my opinion, put the students, the teachers and even the parents in a situation to constantly and publicly prove their 'love for the Party' and the Authority, i.e. their loyalty to the regime, to prove their readiness to 'fight',

to perform labour feats for 'constructing the socialist homeland', for 'defending it against the capitalist enemies'. They 'weigh' quantitatively who did, what and how much he / she did for the Motherland, for the Party, for the victory or, as Dejan Dejanov says, they show who knows what, what they do not know, and most importantly 'how they do not know' (Dejanov 1994). An unsatisfactory performance of an individual in a competition or in the performance of a pioneer assignment reflected this person's disengagement, disloyalty and disregard for the Regime, which inevitably raised suspicions of possible 'enemy' sentiments.¹⁰

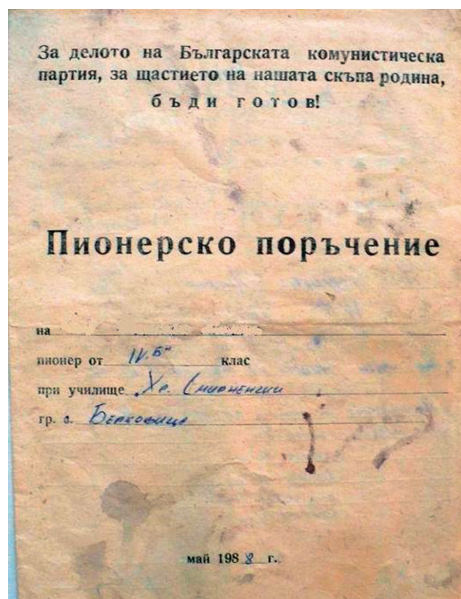
On the other hand, at the time when I was a pioneer, in the second half of the 1980s, more and more students and parents were inclined to show disregard for taking these 'exams'. For example, more and more often students appeared to pioneer gatherings and meetings in incomplete uniforms – without the red ties or hats, even without white shirts and dark pants. And the most disobedient students were even systematically skipping pioneer events. The enthusiasm on handing out paper or herbs was decreasing over the years, or even the assignments were disregarded by some students. The students participated in most of the pioneer activities under duress, reluctantly. All the pathos and the enthusiasm of the earlier generations were lost to the pioneer generations of the 1980s.

My opinion, which is shared by many interviewees, is that a double game of deception was being played. I will apply two examples from my childhood that reflect this state of deception. One of them concerns the execution of the assignments. As I mentioned, at the end of each school year, the pioneers had to make promises in the form of pioneer assignments about what work they would do in the summer. As a rule, the pioneer organization should assign the tasks to individual pioneers, but this was not always the case.

Looking at my fourth-grade assignment, I remember, I chose some of my tasks for the summer on my own, according to what I could or would enjoy or tolerate to do. But the teacher who was the *družinen rākovoditel* supplemented my assignment with more tasks and increased the quantities on the grounds that I should set an example to my classmates in my capacity as a detachment chairman. Thus, in the summer of 1989 I had to perform five tasks: to work 10 days in the cocoon seed production plant (too unpleasant), to hand over 20 kg of herbs (difficult, almost impossible), 30 pcs. bottles and 10 kg of paper (the quantities depend on the con-

¹⁰ About the regime of public distrust, see Luleva 2021, 34–74.

sumption of our family) and to study ‘the participation of our town in the heroic battles of our people’ (my proposal, formulated by the class teacher or the *družinen rākovoditel*). I remember when I got home, I shared with my parents my concern about the first two tasks, but they reassured me that they would find a solution. And at the beginning of the fifth grade, as seen in the assignment paper itself, I over fulfilled my assignment by handing over 40 kg of strawberry leaves – thanks to my grandfather, who was growing strawberries with my parents in our household, 50 pcs. bottles and 11 kg of paper – thanks to my mother, who was working in a kindergarten and together with other colleagues, mothers of pioneers, had shared the paper and the bottles from the kindergarten to help their children to fulfill the pioneer assignments; I reported 10 days work in the cocoon seed production plant, without actually working there, thanks to our neighbour, who was an employee of the plant and signed my assignment. The only activities I did on my own were my participation in the International Philately Camp School and the research on the topic mentioned at the beginning. The fulfillment of my assignment was approved at the beginning of the next school year and no one ‘examined’ me whether and how I picked up the herbs, collected the bottles and the paper, what kind of work I did in the cocoon seed production plant. Thus, I pretended that I had done a ‘pioneer feat’, and my classmates, the class teacher and the pioneer leadership pretended to believe me.



Picture 1. Author's fourthgrade assignment, 1989.

The photo belongs to Yana Yancheva's personal archive.

Отрядният съвет на отряд „Ваня Леванки“
гр. Божовица

в з л а г а

Поръчение

на _____
пионер от „В.Б.“ клас,

през лятото на 1989 г. да извърши следните дейности:

1. Да отработи 10 дни в часоуслугата
2. Да предаде 2 Фкг билки - 30 др. думички - 10 др. хартия
3. Да изгуби участие на чашки фонд в геронгичите билки на народи и.

Отрядни председател: _____

май 1989 год.

Сведение

за лятната работа на _____ пионер от „В.Б.“ клас при училище „Ал. Смирненски“ гр. Божовица

I. Предадени билки, диворастващи плодове и вт. суровини

№ по ред	Дата	Количество	Подпис на чича и гр.
1	26.06	билки 40	_____
2	18.07	30 думички	_____
3	09.08	хартия 10 др.	_____

Picture 2. Author's fourthgrade assignment, 1989.

The photo belongs to Yana Yancheva's personal archive.

2. Трудови бригади

№ по ред	Бригада	от до	Кратка оценка на извършената работа	Подпис на командира
1.	Вранско-мундирската	10 дни	Всички	_____

3. Лагер школи

№ по ред	Вид на лагершката	от до	Кратка оценка на работата	Подпис на друж-р-а
1	появилата	17.07 - 30.07		

4. Сборни отряди, тимуровски команди

№ по ред	Име на отряда или командата	от до	Кратка оценка на работата	Подпис на ръковод.

Picture 3. Author's fourthgrade assignment, 1989.

The photo belongs to Yana Yancheva's personal archive.

Pictures 1, 2 and 3 are made and posted by Danail Grigorov in the website 'Our Childhood'.

The second example concerns the ceremonial inspection of the attending members of the *družina* (*raportuvane*) at a 1988 school celebration of the October Revolution. At that time, more and more students in my class ignored such events, were late or did not even attend. As a detachment chairman, I had to report solemnly to the *družina's* chair that all the pioneers in my detachment were present. Therefore, I was very worried about what phrase I should use during the report if half of my classmates were attending or absent. During the rehearsals and before the start of the event, I persistently and repeatedly asked the pioneer leader (*družinen rākovoditel*), who scared me a lot with her strict demands, what I should say. But at first, she ignored me, and later told me directly that as a detachment's chair I was obliged to gather and motivate my classmates to attend, that their absence was my responsibility. I was confused and when it was my turn to report, I announced that 'everyone in my detachment was present' which was the usual report phrase. The *družina's* chair, a girl a year older than me, accepted my report, but the pioneer leader (*družinen rākovoditel*) made her bring me back and I had to report again. This was



Picture 4. A 1980s pioneer gathering and a solemn inspection of the attending pioneers – *raportuvane*.

The photo is from the archive of The Third Primary School "Ivan Vazov", Berkovitsa town.
With the consent of Teodora Ivanova, Director of The Third Primary School "Ivan Vazov", Berkovitsa.

repeated three times, and in a voice trembling with shame and humiliation, I 'lied' the whole school for three times that everyone in my detachment was present. Then the *družinen rākovoditel* confronted me in front of the *družina*, i.e. the whole school management and all the students and accused me of 'lying and treason' the pioneer organization. She had taken this case so seriously that she demanded the teachers' council to punish me. However, the teachers had no intention of punishing me, but in order to reassure the pioneer leader, they agreed to rebuke me, which was as unpleasant for me as it was for them.

I retell all this because the situation reflects several symptoms. Everyone was aware that the number of absentees from the pioneer events was increasing, and this was a failure for the pioneer organization as a whole. But neither the top leadership of the pioneer organization nor the top Party leadership itself allowed the slightest form of failure. According to the ideology, the socialist society could only develop in an upward direction. Therefore, the rituality of the pioneer organization did not provide for or allow an admissible report announcing the presence of half of the members. It was inadmissible to acknowledge the existence of a situation which showed a crack in the perfect ideological image of the 'Pioneer State'. Thus, everyone was seeing this paradox, but pretended it did not exist.

The ideological suggestions and expectations for the fulfillment of the pioneer duty, outlined by Georgi Dimitrov, were being loudly proclaimed by the pioneer leadership. These expectations oppressed me with the constant requirement to be 'always ready' for 'pioneer feats' or to be responsible for the behavior of my classmates in my capacity as a detachment chairman. All this put me and my peers in a situation to admit to ourselves that we were overloaded with impossible and unfeasible expectations but we were not allowed to say this out loud, because it would damage the perfect image of the all-round comprehensive socialist child, and of the socialist reality, built on ideology and rhetoric.

It can be seen in the interviews and stories that many respondents use the phrase 'to suck myself my fingers out' when noting that they had to report fictional activities or present trivial activities such as 'pioneer feats' or achievements to meet the expectations of the teachers and the pioneer leadership. The memories in the forums and the website 'Our Childhood' and the interviews with the respondents emphasize this requirement for pioneers to exaggerate, distort and hyperbolize the content of their children's and students' lives in constantly reproducing fictional and 'idealized feats'.

My experience shows that in the 1980s, many teachers were tired of maintaining this compromised balance between the demanding and controlling pioneer organization and the increasingly 'elusive', slipping away and disdainful students and parents' behaviour. Thus, on the one hand, the pioneers slipped away, fulfilling only the minimum necessary to provide them with a 'suitable pioneer biography'. And on the other hand, the teachers turned a blind eye to the lack of enthusiasm and diligence, and through small or large efforts in turn supported their graduates' mimicry.

THE 'EXAM' IN DEJAN DEJANOV'S CRITICAL READING

And this draws my attention to the pioneer rituals as an 'exam', during which it was becoming clear what was not known and how it was not known. With a critical assessment of Foucault's theory, Dejan Dejanov noted the difference between the Authority's surveillance gaze and its public gaze. The public gaze, in his opinion, "retains the power of the public norm as public" (Dejanov 1994). Both, the examiner and the examinees are equal and in symmetrical relations in front of the public gaze. Dejanov thinks that during the exam, the Authority / Power's gaze is public, because it is visible, i.e. the examinee is forced to see the examiner during the whole examination (within the broadest framework of these concepts) (Dejanov 1994). Thus, in the school time-and-space, the teachers, the school management and the pioneer leadership were the bearers of a 'double glance' – the supervising and the public gaze. On the other hand, they themselves were visible to the supreme Authority / Power and its supervisory gaze, i.e. they were tested to what extent they observed the public norm of the exam and whether they had successfully carried out the political education, the *forced ideological processing* of their wards, and the successful involving and *provoking the enthusiasm of the younger generations* (Znepolski's notions). Therefore, this is the second gaze in the examination situation, in his opinion – the Authority's supervising gaze, which as a disciplinary authority remained invisible. This gaze created asymmetrical, hierarchical, and subordinate relationships between the examiner and the examinees. In the situation of the examination, both the examinees and the examiner actually appeared to be examined in front of the supreme disciplinary Authority's gaze.

Dejan Dejanov points out that the knowledge (in the most general sense of the word, including ideological suggestions, beliefs, upbringing, discipline, rules, ethical norms, etc.) that the students acquired at school aimed to replace the knowledge acquired in their private lives and espe-

cially in the non-public family environment.¹¹ He emphasizes that the 'exam' as a manifestation of the supervisory authority aimed to reflect not only the explicit knowledge that the students acquired at school, but also the implicit knowledge that reflected the extent to which they had learned and reproduced the public norm. Thus, the pioneer events such as gatherings, inspections of the attending pioneer composition, reports, manifestations, assignments, competitions, solemn promises, solemn celebrations and others made students and their families, teachers, pioneer and school leadership visible to the Authorities and showed what the students knew, what they did not know and "how they did not know it" (De-



Picture 5. A 1980s manifestation in Berkovitsa town. Pioneers march through the city, past the tribune with high-ranking party leaders, i.e. expressing publicly their gratitude to the Party, showing the products they made in the clubs of interests.

Picture is from Danail Grigorov's personal archive.
With the consent of Danail Grigorov Filipov.

¹¹ He adopts the psychoanalytic approach to the concept of 'knowledge', according to which the knowledge acquired at school replaces the one acquired in the private life, in contrast to the pedagogical approach, according to which the knowledge acquired at school replaces the non-knowledge, i.e. the lack of knowledge (Dejanov 1994).



Picture 6. A 1980s manifestation in Berkovitsa town. Pioneers march through the city, congratulating the high-ranking party leaders".

Picture is from the archive of The Third Primary School "Ivan Vazov", Berkovitsa town.

With the consent of Teodora Ivanova, Director of The Third Primary School "Ivan Vazov", Berkovitsa.

janov 1994), i.e. the extent to which the 'knowledge' of their private life (interests, aesthetics, religiosity and beliefs, political sentiments, cultural characteristics and socio-economic situation in the family, etc.) displaced, obscured or undermined the penetration of the implications of the public / ideological norm. The supervising gaze of the school authorities monitored the deviations in the students' knowledge from the norm and the normalization of this knowledge, which turned it into a repulsive gaze.

In addition to the rituals mentioned so far, I will just mention several other forms of organized pioneer / students' life outside school, which also had the function of an 'exam' and aimed to completely occupy children's free time. These were the students' tourist movement, the labour days at school, the contracts with 'brigades for communist labour' and various enterprises, the summer pioneer camps etc. From the chronicle books and pioneer diaries I have the impression that even the students' free time was fully engaged in various extracurricular activities that continued to keep them at school time-and-space and under the supervision of the pioneer / Komsomol organizations. Their participation in various clubs of interests,

sports clubs, artistic and creative groups obliged them to participate in celebrations at school and municipal level, competitions and 'examinations', congratulatory concerts and solemn events of various enterprises, and parents' evenings so they had to constantly 'demonstrate their achievements'.

All these extracurricular activities of the pioneers aimed to detach them from their usual, uncontrolled and invisible family environment and by constantly saturating their mind with ideology, to displace and even erase the implicit knowledge which was acquired in their private lives, also contrary to the ideological norm and causing doubt and mistrust. In this way, the Authority wanted to achieve two goals. On the one hand, the ideological and political upbringing of children and their modeling as future members of the socialist society with a correct biography was taking place. Karin Taylor notes that the ceremonies and rituals of the pioneer and Komsomol organizations aimed to structure the growth process of children and young people and to accustom them to their responsibilities to the collective (Taylor 2006, 68). Thus, all the mentioned rituals-exams consolidated a long initiation process of turning children into pioneers, Komsomol members and possibly communists, i.e. supporters of the authoritarian regime.

On the other hand, through these numerous activities, the Authority aimed to control students' parents and families, trying to turn children into bearers of the socialist culture and ideology. However, as Dejan Dejanov notes, the 'knowledge' acquired in the private and intimate world of the family could not be so easily replaced by the knowledge acquired in the public institutions such as the school, the pioneer or party organization, and others (Dejanov 1994). I remember that after the family gatherings on religious holidays my grandmother repeatedly reminded me not to tell my friends, classmates and teachers about celebrating them at home. There are many testimonies from the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s of teachers on duty and pioneer / Komsomol activists who patrolled temples during major religious holidays to record the students and young people who visited them. And that could have serious effect on their educational and professional biography. For the teachers it was completely impossible to demonstrate religious behaviour.

CONCLUSION

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, the school and the pioneer / Komsomol organization continued to have a strong institutional influence on the students and young people. Kristina Popova notes that "the social techniques of the work with pioneers changed from disciplining the children's collec-

tives to studying them. The tasks became increasingly focused on educating children's social behavior" (Popova 2010b, 47). But in general, both organizations (DPO 'Septemvrijske' and DKMS – the Komsomol) did not change their style of work and the desire to monitor and control students' free time. They became even more detached from the young people and children's interests and need. Most students started to perceive their membership in these organizations as mandatory, imposed, unwilling and boring.

The values, ideals and behaviour norms preached by the youth and school institutions over the years began to disagree with the students' extra-institutional everyday life, interests and dreams. This discrepancy, as well as the lack of interest and motivation among children and young people concerning the organizational activities, their detachment and differentiation from the outlined political and ideological goals became especially noticeable in the years of the late socialism in the 1980s, which caused a concern among the party and state leaders.

The ideological and political education of the children, their training to become future Komsomol members, communists and 'decent and worthy sons and daughters of the Homeland' was not successful. It became obvious that the institutional and public knowledge was incapable to remove and replace the knowledge, acquired in the intimate and unpublic sphere of the family. The authoritarian regime, using all political, economic, administrative and repressive methods, did not succeed to impose complete control and supervision over families and students' private lives. The Authority tried to supervise students, parents and teachers through the multi-layered system of the 'examination', the double supervisory gaze and imposing the constant necessity for individuals to prove their devotion and loyalty to the regime and the Party, but it failed. Its demands in this direction became one of the reasons, which caused the people's alienation from the Authority's policy and ideology.

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