

*Experiences of Communist Modernization in a Bulgarian Muslim Village,
1945-2005*

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Abstract

This PhD thesis, entitled "Experiences of Communist modernization in a Bulgarian Muslim Village, 1945-2005", examines the impact of a specific project of Communist modernization, analyzing how this state driven development was experienced and interpreted by the Bulgarian speaking Muslims ("Pomaks") during the Communist period and the post-socialist transition. Rather than analysing political structures, this research is principally concerned with the implementation of and responses to political ideas. The thesis approach to this particular Muslim community questions using of theories of ethnicity and attempts to deconstruct the way in which the Communist state created or invented the distinctive features of this group. Gender plays a central role in the regime's assimilation as well in the community's strategy of resistance against modernism. During the period of social and economic decline the former target groups of the development project experienced dramatic social and economic changes in which people had to find new economic means of subsistence and alternative consumer strategies. The former political elite and the existing system of power relations broke down and were replaced by new elites which introduced a new discourse and new political ideologies, based on an amalgamate of different ideological concepts such as ethnicity, nationalism and neo-liberalism. Analysing the example of Communist development among Bulgarian Muslims, as well as its ultimate collapse, allows to raise and answer a complex question about the effects of communist modernization and about the functioning and the consequences of cultural and socio-economic development projects in general.

For purposes of the dissertation I have conducted research the archives:

‘Glavno Upravlenie na Archivite pri Ministerskijat Sovet vav Sofija’
[Archives of governmental Committee in Sofia]

‘Darzaven Archiv vav Blagoevgrad’
[Governmental Archives in Blagoevgrad]

‘Katastralen Otdel na Obshtinskijat Sovet v Jakoruda’
[Cadastral Office of the Municipal Hall in Jakoruda]

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I. Introduction

The thesis is called *Experiences of Communist Modernization in a Bulgarian Muslim Village, 1945-2000* and examines the impact of a specific project of Communist modernization, analysing how this state driven development was experienced and responded to by the Bulgarian speaking Muslims ['Pomaks'] during the Communist period and the post-socialist transformation. The focus is thus given to responses to modernization, a modernization which took the form of a state driven development programme carried out in a remote region of the Western Rhodope Mountains in Bulgaria. This development programme took the shape of urbanization, industrialization and emancipation and one of the outcomes of this project was the foundation of a new village built 'from the ground up'. The development was accompanied by specific measures imposed by the state upon the Muslim group ('Pomaks') aimed at diminishing elements of their cultural and religious identity. Such measures included changing of personal names and banning of religiously symbolic elements of female dress. Can the process of Communist modernization be interpreted as a specific response to modernity? Were these measures: 'renaming, re-dressing and resettlement', an assimilation conducted by the modern nation state, or were they a response to modernity realized through Communist modernization aiming at the creation of 'new Communist men and women'?

The argument of the thesis is that the development project which included the foundation and development of the new village, the assimilation measures imposed on the Bulgarian speaking Muslims group was a specific response to the ideas of modernity articulated in the ideological project of Communist modernization.

The thesis is using the term 'Communist modernity' which refers to the ideological aspect of this development project. Centred on an ethos of progress, this project found its legitimacy in the enormous temporal and spatial scale of the Communist utopia, reaching from the October Revolution in Russia to 'developed socialism' in Central Europe during the post war period. Rather than analysing political structures, my

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research is principally concerned with the implementation of and responses to political ideas.

Communist modernization aimed to accomplish the transformation of Muslim shepherds, who were perceived by the modernizers as the bearers of 'traditions and backwardness', into the 'new men', modern, Bulgarian and Communist. The transformation was supposed to be fast and total.

In the 1970s when the assimilation measures were reaching their climax, the idea of the 'new man' was not conceptualized in terms of a 'proletarian' but rather in terms of a 'middle class citizen'. Cultural categories-religious beliefs, economic strategies, value systems-of Bulgarian speaking Muslims were in conflict with the Communist modernizing effort. The Pomak group were not only a national enemy for the Bulgarian nation, but also their 'backwardness' and 'traditionalism' was also in conflict with the Communist ethos of development and progress. Therefore the attention of the Communist regime was given to the elimination of religious concepts. The social and the economic practices of the Bulgarian speaking Muslims were supposed to be reduced or eliminated at any cost. The creation of the new man through urbanization, industrialization and assimilation had to happen quickly. The socio-economic changes had to be better and faster not only than 'the capitalist West' but even the Soviet Union.

The thesis analyses the experiences of those who were the subjects of this development programme - the inhabitants of the village, the members of the wider minority of Bulgarian speaking Muslims, and those who were the organizers of local development - the enactors of the political programme of 'Communist modernization', the former members of the local Communist elite.

I.1.Modernity, Modernism, and Communist Modernization

Before we start to tell the story of the experiences of modernity at the 'periphery of civilization' it should be clarified how the terms modernity, modernization, Communist modernization and modernism will be used.

Modernity and modernization are often used in sociological literature as synonymous terms and very often then exchanged for 'modernization theory'.

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Modernization theory as promoted especially by the American school of sociology in the 1950s widely influenced the social sciences' approaches to modernity. In general terms 'modernization theory' assumes the existence of universal paths of humankind towards modernity. Modernity is in these terms conditioned by the political and economic institutions of a liberal political economy, the 'free market' and participatory democracy.

In my research I use the term 'modernization' in a different sense to that implied by 'modernization theory'. By the term modernization I aim to distinguish the social, cultural and political process from the abstract term 'modernity'. 'Communist modernization' is used in the thesis to refer to the political, social, economic and cultural responses to modernity which were carried by Communist regimes in Eastern Europe. The term 'Communist modernity' refers to the ideological aspect of the development project carried out by the Communist state.

Modernism is the third term - widely used, often interchangeably with modernization and modernity. To avoid terminological confusion I refer to modernism, as it is used in accounts in intellectual history and the history of ideas, as the aesthetic dimension of modernity. Modernism is thus referred to only when it is in relation to its specific articulation, the so called Russian Modernism or the Russian avant-garde.¹

The concept of modernity is a key interpretative framework for my argumentation based on the interpretation of the ethnographical material gained through the analysis of a case study of the village Cherna Mesta as part of the wider project of Communist modernization, which was carried on by the Communist state for several decades. In the following text I will introduce major theoretical concepts of modernity and I will explain how relevant they are for my research.

¹ Russian modernism reflecting elements of western modernity see for instance Barta, Peter, I., ed., *Metamorphoses in Russian Modernism*. Budapest. New York: CEU Press, 2000. In this account Barta explores articulations of modern subjectivity in Russian modernism through the motives of a Metamorphosis. For more on Russian modernism in relations to philosophical and political thoughts see for instance in Efimova, Alla, & Manovich, Lev, eds, *Tekstura: Russian Essays on Visual Culture*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1993. Modernism and its linkage to Stalinist ideology see in Groys, Boris, *The Total Arts of Stalinism: avant-garde, aesthetics, dictatorship and beyond*. Princeton, NY, Oxford: Princeton University Press, 1992.

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Modernity is defined by many theoretical works as essentially ‘ambivalent’.² I start with an author who has had a major impact on social and political theory. In Giddens’s theory of modernity he defines modernity as the essential social and political attribute of ‘Western’ society.³ He introduces the notion of ‘duality of structure’, through which he sees modernity as the embodiment of modern institutions, which are simultaneously enabling and constraining human action.⁴ According to Giddens’s definition the inherent aspect of modernity is rooted in this duality of modern institutions. Giddens then elaborates the definition of modernity while defining it in terms of ‘globalized risk’ and ‘globalized trust’.⁵ Although, Giddens’s definition of modernity has greatly influenced social theory and current thought in political science, it doesn’t allow enough of a theoretical perspective to enable us to theorize modernity in those spaces which are in some respects - culturally, temporally or otherwise - peripheral to the West. And the Muslim minority was peripheral not only to the Communist state or the liberal West but also to European civilization more generally. Thus the Communist modernization in Cherna Mesta was taking place at the ‘periphery of periphery’.⁶

Analyses of Communist modernization require those theories of modernity which approach modernity from wider philosophical or historical positions. Such perspectives include the theories of modernity by Zygmunt Bauman, Jurgen Habermas, Marshall Berman or of the social historian Peter Wagner and the historian of ideas, Reinhart

² The idea of modernity as an ambivalent concept is contained already in Marx’s thoughts, in terms of ‘alienation’, and in Weber’s thoughts in terms of ‘bureaucratization’. For more about Marx’s and Weber’s concepts of modernity see for instance Wagner, Peter, *A sociology of Modernity. Liberty and Discipline*. London & New York: Routledge, 1994, 7.

³ Giddens, Anthony, *The Consequences of Modernity*. Cambridge & Oxford: Polity Press Blackwell, 1990, and also see Giddens, Anthony, *Social Theory and Modern Sociology*. Cambridge & Oxford: Polity Press, 1987.

⁴ To this point of Giddens’s definition responses Peter Wagner in prologue to *Sociology of modernity*. 1994. Wagner gives a socio-historical analysis of modernity and attempts find out what kinds of ‘actions’ are enabling and what kinds are constraining.

⁵ Giddens, *The Consequences*, 1990.

⁶ In this context Nikolai Chaikov uses for that the term ‘nesting orientalism’ which is derived from the term ‘nesting hierarchies’ by Caroline Humphrey, see in Bakic-Hayden, Milica and Hayden, Robert ‘Orientalist Variations of the Theme ‘Balkans’: Symbolic Geography in Recent Yugoslav Cultural Politics’, *Slavic Review* I (1992) 1-15, cited in: Ssorin-Chaikov, Nikolai, *The Social Life of the State in Subarctic Siberia*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003, 15. The topic of the periphery is discussed in the thesis chapter I. Modernization at the Periphery. As

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Koselleck.⁷ The common denominator of these approaches is that they see modernity as a universal concept and an ‘open’ project.

Zygmunt Bauman gives a more elaborated definition of modernity stressing the negative side of modernity as a social and political concept. In his work *Modernity and Ambivalence*,⁸ Bauman gives a very powerful critique of modernity, which he defines as the pressure to assimilate. His discussion of alienation under modernity draws on the work of Franz Kafka and George Simmel, using such concepts as the *stranger* and the *foreigner*. In his book *Intimations of Postmodernity*, Bauman argues that modernity is an:

‘[...]enlightenment message where capitalism and socialism are ‘married forever in their attachment to modernity,’ and where ‘modernity is turning into a legacy because we are now at crossroads with a road ahead ‘which is still hard to describe [...]’”⁹

In this regard Bauman’s definition represents a relevant theoretical framework for my research, focused on the experiences of the modernization project conducted within a socialist system. This also gives the perspective in which Communist modernization can be interpreted as a specific response to ‘modernity’. And it allows us to approach the tension inherent in the experiences of modernity and modernization, imposed by the Communist state, upon a marginalized group of Bulgarian speaking Muslims.

In the context of a discussion about the universal character of modernity there must also be a mention for Marshall Berman’s *All that is solid melts into air*. In Berman’s definition modernity is conceptualized as a universal experience using Marx’s conception of modernity as dialectical motion.¹⁰ This argument gives support to the study of modernity at the European periphery. Berman about modernity says:

‘To be modern is to find ourselves in an environment that promises us adventure, power, joy, growth, transformation of ourselves and the world –

⁷ Bauman, Zygmunt, *Modernity and Ambivalence*. Cambridge & Oxford: Polity Press and Blackwell, 1991. Habermas, Jürgen, ‘Modernity: An Unfinished Project’, In: Passerin d’Entreves Maurizio & Benhabib S.eds, *Habermas and The Unfinished Project of Modernity Critical Essays on The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*. Cambridge & Oxford: Polity Press, Blackwell Publishers, 1996, 38-55, Marshall, Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts Into Air*. London: Verso, 1982. Koselleck, Reinhart, *Futures Past: On the semantics of historical time*. Cambridge, Mass. London: MIT Press, 1985.

⁸ Bauman, Zygmunt, *Modernity and Ambivalence*, 1991.

⁹ Baumann, Zygmunt, *Intimations of Postmodernity*. London, New York: Routledge, 1992, cited in: Todorova, Maria, *Balkan Identities. Nation and Memory*. London: Hurst & Company, 2004, 16.

¹⁰ Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts Into Air*, 15.

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and, at the same time, that threatens to destroy everything we have, everything we know, everything we are. Modern environments and experiences cut across all boundaries of geography and ethnicity, of class and nationality, of religion and ideology: in this sense, modernity can be said to unite all mankind. But it is paradoxical, a unity of disunity: it pours us all into a maelstrom of perpetual disintegration and renewal, of struggle and contradiction, of ambiguity and anguish. To be modern is to be part of a universe in which, as Marx said: 'all that is solid melts into air'.

Another account which creates a theoretical space for my research is Wagner's sociological history of modernity. Wagner recognizes different categories of 'actually existing modernities' and speaks about three major forms of modernity, American modernity, Western European and Soviet.¹¹ He uses the term *modernity of Soviet socialism*. American and Soviet paths to modernity are conceptualized as in opposition to one another. Wagner defines two essential discourses within modernity, the 'discourse of liberation' and the 'discourse of disciplinization'. For my research it is relevant to recognize that such spatial categorization is not sufficient to understand specific variations within modernity. His approach which can conceptualize modernity across time and space enables us to recognize that:

*'If modernity was to mark a 'condition' or an 'experience', then the qualifications required to show its existence were largely absent in the allegedly modern societies during the nineteenth century, and for a still fairly large number of people during the first half of the twentieth century.'*¹²

Wagner's conception of two discourses makes a useful theoretical framework for my research, in particular, in relation to the analysis of the local discourses of the development project conducted in a Muslim village. In a certain parallel to Wagner's perspective which allows us to approach modernity not only as an experience of western

¹¹ Wagner, Peter, *A sociology of Modernity. Liberty and Discipline*. London & New York: Routledge, 1994.

¹² Wagner, *A sociology of Modernity*, 3-4, cited in Miller, Nicola, *Reinventing Modernity in Latin America, Intellectuals Imagine the Future, 1900-1930*. New York: Palgrave, Macmillan, 2007, 4-5.

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subject objectively measured by a level of economic development, is an approach of the historian Reinhart Koselleck. He defines modernity as a 'stage of consciousness', in wider terms as a relationship between structure and time. Modernity is thus an experience of change in conceptualization of time, as far more a subjective experience of 'horizons of expectation' and 'spaces of experience'.¹³

Habermas offers us another concept of modernity distinguishing between 'cultural modernity' and 'social modernization' and giving modernity the character of an 'unfinished' project.¹⁴ Another theoretical work on the 'cultural' face of modernity is given by Mircea Calinescu.¹⁵ Calinescu in his account examines the notion of cultural modernity and the relationship between the avant-garde and politics. He defines two conceptions of modernity, economic and technological progress of Western civilization and aesthetic conceptualization.

There is a huge scholarship approaching of a post-modern critique, but for purposes of that particular definition of Communist modernity and Communist modernization is not relevant.¹⁶

Modernity 'At the Periphery'

My research is concerned with modernity 'at the periphery'. There has not been very much attention paid in the research on modernity to the experiences and responses of subjects in spaces 'peripheral' to the 'West'.¹⁷ In the field of anthropology however the situation is different and there exists solid anthropological scholarship on modernity outside of 'Europe'.¹⁸ An example of such literature where modernity is discussed in

¹³ Koselleck, *Futures Past*, 267-88. About historical conceptions of *Modernität* as distinct to the formation of the concept new time (*neue Zeit*) as general historical concept see also Koselleck, Reinhart, *The Practice of Conceptual History*. California: Stanford University Press, 2002, 158-68.

¹⁴ Habermas, 'Modernity: An Unfinished Project', 1996. For more on the analyses of modernity represented in art and literature see Habermas, Jürgen, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1987.

¹⁵ Calinescu, Mircea, *Five Faces of Modernity, Modernism, Avant-Garde, Decadence, Kitsch, Postmodernism*. 2ed., Durham, Duke University Press, 1987, 47.

¹⁶ Discussion about the post-modern approaches to concepts of periphery, the east and the west see for instance in Strath, Bo & Witosek, Nina, *The Postmodern Challenge: Perspective East and West*. *Postmodern Studies* 27. Amsterdam-Atlanta: Rodopi.1999.

¹⁸ There is a long line of scholarship dealing with the relationship of modernity, colonialism and post-colonialism. As an example of such studies see the edited volume by Van der Veer, Peter, ed., *Conversion to Modernities: The Globalization of Christianity*. New York and London: Routledge, 1996. In intellectual

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relation to a socialist society, is an account on Communist modernization in China by Lisa Rofel.¹⁹ In her account Rofel writes about the experience of late modernization in China (late 1980 and the beginning of the 1990s) and the effects of modernization and its implicit idea of progress on the creation of gender discourses. Rofel formulates a definition according to which modernity persists as an imaginary and continuously shifting site of global/local claims, commitments, and knowledge, forged within uneven dialogues about the place of those who move in and out of categories of otherness.

Modernity in Eastern Europe, like other regions which are regarded as peripheral, is usually described as a deviation from proper 'western' modernity. The question usually asked is what would have happened if the societies in Central or Eastern Europe had followed a path different from that of Communism?

Besides the political analyses there is also a body of anthropological scholarship which deals with this question. Although these analyses deal with the issue of modernity and modernization, not many of them accept the possibility that 'modernity' could exist in Eastern Europe, in its own right rather than as a deviation from western modernity. An example of a different approach, where modernity in Eastern Europe is conceived of as a complete realization of European modernity, is *The Archaeology of Socialism*, by Victor Buchli.²⁰ Based on examples of the experiences and appropriation of Soviet modernism in architecture, using the case study of the Narkomfin Communal House in Moscow, Buchli explores the micropowers of cultural change, the 'superfluity of meanings' of every day life and their interconnection with the macropowers affecting the changing state'.²¹ Similarly, my research explores the space between ideology and every day practice using the development process of the village of Cherna Mesta.

The relationship between the socialist system and modernization is explored by several anthropologists specializing in the field of Central and Eastern Europe during the

history for instance, there has recently been published a book on modernity and modernism in thoughts of Latin America's intellectuals by Nicola Miller *Reinventing Modernity in Latin America* (2007).

¹⁹ Rofel, Lisa, *Other Modernities, Gendered Yearnings in China After Socialism*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1999.

²⁰ Buchli, Victor, *An Archaeology of Socialism*. Oxford, New York: Berg, 2000.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 4-6.

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period of Communism, e.g. Caroline Humphrey and her book *Karl Marx Collective*.²² Humphrey in the case study of collective farm in Buryatia explores how the changes of cultural forms are interrelated with changes in social structures – i.e. collectivization. Another important work on socialism and modernity in Eastern Europe is by Alexander Slezkine.²³ Slezkine discusses the issue of ‘orientalist’ discourse by the Soviet state about the Evenki ethnic group. He interprets the projection of concepts of otherness and wildness on the Evenki group as part of the Russian colonial attempt to conquer everything which is ‘east’ of Moscow, the Urals or Saint Petersburg. Slezkine doesn’t interpret the ‘civilizing’ attempt conducted by the Communist state in terms of Communist modernization but understands it rather as a continuum of Russian ‘missionarism’.

Another analysis of the socialist system and its relation to modernity is Alexander Kotkin’s *Magnetic Mountain*.²⁴ Kotkin approaches the socialist system in the Soviet Union through a historical survey of one of the major projects of Soviet urbanization and industrialization, the industrial/residential complex of Magnitogorsk.²⁵ Although Kotkin uses the notion of modernity it is not his primary interpretive framework. Kotkin explains all the effort of building up of a new city, a ‘new world,’ as a deliberate effort by the Soviet state to overcome the contradiction between socialism and capitalism.²⁶

Another anthropological work relevant to my research is Alexei Yurchak’s book *Everything was forever until it was no more*.²⁷ By deconstructing discourses of popular culture in the Soviet Union he analyses socialist system in the late 1980s. In the introduction to this account he approaches modernity through the perspective and experience of the Communist system and he defines modernity as a ‘paradox’. As a

²² Humphrey, Caroline, *Karl Marx Collective. Economy, society and religion on a Siberian collective Farm*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1983.

²³ Slezkine, Yuri, *Arctic Mirrors: Russia and the Small People of the North*. Ithaca. London: Cornell University Press, 1994.

²⁴ Alexander Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization*. Berkley and Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1995.

²⁵ Many accounts see the socialist way urbanization as less successful then the ‘western’ one. See for instance Bater, H. James, *The Soviet City, Ideal and Reality. Explorations in Urban Analyses*. London: Edward Arnold. 1980. As an example of more neutral approach to urbanization in East European socialist countries see for instance Musil, Jiri, *Urbanization in Socialist Countries*. London: Croom Helm. 1981.

²⁶ Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain*. 1995, 109.

²⁷ Yurchak, Alexei, *Everything was forever until it was no more: the last Soviet generation*. NY: Princeton University Press. 2005.

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modern project Soviet socialism shared the key contradictions of modernity: the split between *ideological enunciation* (which reflects the theoretical ideas of the Enlightenment) and *ideological rule* (manifest in the practical concerns of the modern state's political authority).²⁸

Within the sociological literature the relationship between modernity and Soviet Union is quite an old concern. Sociological accounts identified modernization as the fundamental trend characterizing Stalinist society. American sociologists pointed to the modernizing goals of the Soviet leadership which consciously sought to achieve industrialization, urbanization, secularization, universal education and literacy.²⁹

Another theme related to the notion of modernization and modernity is *development*. I will not proceed to consider several major approaches to the study of development under the socialist system. In particular there are three authors whose approach to the study of development programmes is useful for my research. These are the works of Steven Sampson, James Scott and James Ferguson³⁰ whose writings have had a major influence on anthropological studies of development and of the systems of the planned economy. Sampson's study is based on case studies from socialist Romania. About approach to socialist societies and development Sampson says that

*'[...]we must study planners as actors in the planning organization. In anthropological terms, we must examine "the culture of the planners": how they think, how they act, the rhetoric of planning, or what may be called "planner ideologies" [...].'*³¹

Scott examines the social relations in two disparate settings: the planning office of the Romanian state and a community of Romanian villagers. He describes the system of 'planning institutions' as a 'vertical slice' and tries to track down particular manifestation of the planning system at the national, regional and local level. In his material he

²⁸ Yurchak, *ibid.*, 10.

²⁹ For instance, Fainsod, Merle, *How is Russia ruled*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1953. About the discussion on Soviet Union and modernization see more in Martin, Terry, 'The Soviet Union as a Communal Apartment', In Fitzpatrick, Sheila, ed., *Stalinism New Directions*. 2000. London: Routledge, 2000, 349. Terry Martin's approach comes from a tradition that posits different modernization outcomes depending upon the historical traditions of a given society, the historical epoch, and the strategy of modernization chosen by a society's elite, *ibid.*, 362.

³⁰ Sampson, Steven L., *National integration Through Socialist Planning, An Anthropological Study of a Romanian New Town*. East European Monographs, Boulder, New York: Boudler. 1984.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 13. For comparison see another Sampson's account, Sampson, *The Planners and the Peasants: An Anthropological Study of Urban Development in Romania*. Esbjerg: Sydjysk Universitetsferlag, 1982.

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demonstrates the discrepancies between the plan as discourse, the planners as a group -he even introduces the term the 'culture of planners' - and the village community. According to Sampson the plan is a model of socialist society but in a rather paradoxical sense. Sampson concludes that 'socialist societies are not planned societies' but rather 'societies with a plan'. He uses participant observation and analyses of statistics from different sources but ultimately this does not allow him to get close to the proposed 'culture of planners'. This is one of the points where, due to the methodology I have used, my research can give more of an insight. My use of oral history allows me to approach precisely the local discourses of specific responses to modernity, which in Sampson's terms could be called the 'culture of planners'. Another point where my research differs from Sampson's is the interpretation of the ideological meaning of planning. Sampson argues that the 'national interest' was the main ideological driving force of socialist development and was manifested in planned urbanization and industrialization. By contrast, in my interpretation - which I will develop in the following chapter - the ideological engine of the socialist development project is understood as Communist modernization, manifested through a discourse of the 'ideology of development and progress'.

Another important work in the analysis of development projects is the work of James Scott *Seeing Like a State*.³² Scott presents a strong argument with an unavoidable political message. He sees development programmes in terms of a dichotomy of power. And interprets these development programmes as an instrument of control. In his view the modern state which he sees as having absolutist and totalitarian character- is a kind of development programme and as such it uses its own mechanisms to control itself. In his examples of development programmes –villagization in Tanzania, collectivization in the Soviet Union and urbanization in Brazil - he analyses these projects as failures of development and social engineering. According to his analysis 'the most tragic episodes' of state-initiated social engineering originate in a pernicious combination of four elements: the administrative ordering of nature and society, high-modernist ideology, an

³² Scott, James, C., *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Failed*. New Haven, Conn., London: Yale University Press, 1998.

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authoritarian state and a prostrate civil society.³³ According to Scott's argument the aesthetic dimension, so strongly presented in 'modernist ideology' (for example the important symbolic role of electricity for development in Soviet Union in the 1920's, but also the aesthetic aspects of minituarization in the villagization in Tanzania), are interpreted as an instruments for the imposition of power. Scott in this account distinguishes between the 'developers' and the 'locals' and describes the power relationship of these two as a permanent conflict with local resistance.³⁴ The argument which I present does not support Scott's argument fully, nevertheless I do use some points of his reasoning as structuring points for chapter IV. Resettle! and using my disagreements with Scott as a point of departure for my own argumentation.

A third major influence is James Ferguson's *The Anti-politics Machine*.³⁵ Ferguson like Scott does not consider development programmes to be highly valuable in their outcomes. He analyses a development project which was run in Lesotho. Ferguson does find at least some positive effects of development. His major argument is that the development projects themselves are almost always condemned to fail, but what remains after the failure is the infrastructure in terms of administration which can be used as bases for the further functioning of given society.³⁶

No other published account makes this connection between Communism and modernity. And in this regard, which analyses the relationship between the specific discourses of a Communist response to modernity, as articulated in the ideology of 'development and progress', and its social and economic practices represent a unique contribution to the analysis of the socialist system and its development project in general.

I.2. Bulgarian Speaking Muslims 'Pomaks'

There are approximately one million Muslims in Bulgaria. Most of them are Sunni. Only a few groups are Shi'ites. The most numerous part of the Sunni are

³³ Scott, *Seeing Like a State*, 4-5.

³⁴ This argument is then elaborated in Scott's influential account of resistance Scott, James, C., *Weapons of the Weak, Everyday forms of Peasant Resistance*. New Heaven and London: Yale University Press, 1985.

³⁵ Ferguson, James, *The Anti-politics Machine. The "Development", Depolitization and Bureaucratic Power in Lesotho*. Mineapolis & London, 1994.

³⁶ Ferguson, *The Anti-Politics Machine*. 1994, 252.

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ethnic Turks. Estimates of their number range from five hundred thousand to a million people. Several groups of Roma form a part of the Muslim population which is very difficult to measure though some sources estimate their number to be around three hundred thousands people. The second largest Muslim group are Bulgarian speaking Muslims, known in ethnographic literature as 'Pomaks'.³⁷

Different sources state that the number of Bulgarian speaking Muslims is between two and three hundred thousand people. This minority lives predominantly in the western and middle part of the Rhodope Mountains, which traverse the Bulgarian-Greek border. There are also a few Bulgarian speaking Muslim villages in the eastern parts of the Rhodopes though the eastern Rhodopes are predominantly inhabited by Muslim Turks. The second region where 'Pomaks' live is in the north and north-east part of Bulgaria around the towns of Shumen and Razgrad.

In general Bulgarian speaking Muslims themselves don't like the name 'Pomak'. They use the term Pomak only in specific situations. People in the Western Rhodopes don't accept being named Pomaks by an outsider and understand it as a pejorative. They ascribe it to themselves when they are referring to how are they are named by the Bulgarian majority.

Conversations about such issues of nomenclature were arose spontaneously at several points during my field work. Then they would say:

"...They call us Pomaks, because we are neither Bulgarians nor Turks. We have the Bulgarian language and the Turkish faith", or
"...they call as Pomaks, because we are poor simple people..."

People in the village use the term 'Pomaks' with a positive connotation only in cases where it is related to religious identity. People then usually say: "...we are Pomaks here, Muslims..." People in the Jakoruda valley used the name 'Pomak' quite often in the context of their bad economic situation or their social marginalization. The women

³⁷ According to the 1992 census about 87,5 % of the population of Bulgaria are Bulgarians, 9,4 % are Turks, 3,7% Gypsies, In: Genov Nikolai & Krasteva Anna, eds, *Bulgaria 1960-1995, Trends of Social Development*. National and Global Development, Sofia, 1999. The census is based on the principle of self- identification but it does not include Bulgarian speaking Muslims as a separate category. The issue of ethnic category represents an 'eternal' topic within political discussion about ethnic issues and related topics in Bulgaria.

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with whom I shopped at the local market would comment of the bad quality of the clothing for sale.

“[...]It is rubbish but for us Pomaks it should be good enough.”

For classical Bulgarian ethnography the Pomak was essentially a ‘helper’ to Turkish rule.³⁸ This narrative also has currency among the Bulgarian speaking Muslims themselves. As my informant Musa commented

“It was at one point already in Italian or Greek times. When Turkey came here, these people were helping the Turks because they were Muslims. From that is derived Pomagaci and then Pomaci.”³⁹

Western ethnography use the term ‘Pomak’ as an ethnonym for the group of Bulgarian speaking Muslims.⁴⁰ Bulgarian ethnographers normally use the terms ‘balgaramohamedanite’, ‘balgarite-mochamedani’, ‘balgari-mohamedani’.⁴¹ Russian ethnography uses the term ‘Bolgari Mjusulmane’.⁴²

At this point I should explain the way in which the name Pomak is used in this thesis. I had a few options in sorting out the issue of an ethnic name. It was suggested to me that instead of the term Pomak I use one of the various collective nicknames which

³⁸ See for instance Gambarov, R. & Konstantinov, Christo, P., ‘Petko vojvoda, branitel na rodopskite balgari do 1879 g’, In Petrov, Petar, *Nepokorni podanici na sultana, dokumentaren sbornik*. Sofija, 1995, 243. As the author of the ethnonym is considered Vasil Aprilov, an important figure of Bulgarian national awakening, he used the name as an ethnonym in journal *Denica na novobalgrasko obrazovanie* issued in Odessa, see in Rajchevski, Stefan, *Balgarite Mochamedani*. Sofija, 1998, 12p. The construction of the name see also in the account of the most known ethnographer of ‘Pomaks’, Shishkov, N., Stoju, *Pomatsite v trite balgarski oblasti, (Trakija, Makedonia, Mizija)*. Plovdiv, 1914.

³⁹ The Bulgarian verb ‘to help’ is ‘pomagam’.

⁴⁰ Devetak Silvo & Flere Sergej & Seewann Gerhart, ‘Small nations and ethnic minorities in an emerging Europe: international scientific conference’, *Ethnicity and nations*, Munchen: Slavica, 1 (1993), Tsibirdou, Fotini, *Les Pomaks dans la Thrace greque: discours ethnique et pratique socioculturelles*. Paris: L’Harmattan, 2000, Todorova, Maria, Identity (Trans) formation Among Pomaks in Bulgaria. in Kurti László & Juliet Langman, eds, *Beyond Borders, Remaking Cultural Identities in the New East ad Central Europe*. Oxford. Westview Press, 1997, 63-82pp. Konstantinov, Julian, ‘Strategies for sustaining a vulnerable identity. The case of Bulgarian Pomaks’, In Poulton, Hugh & Suha Taji-Farouki, eds, *Muslim Identity and the Balkan State*. 1997, 33-54pp.

⁴¹ See for insatnce Shishkov, Stoyu, N., *Balgaromochamedanite (Pomatsi). Istoriko-Zemepisen I Narodonauchen Pregled v Obrazi*. Plovdiv, 1936, Cholakov, R., *Balgarite –mochamedani v minaloto i dnes*. Sofija, 1940, Vranchev, Nikolai, *Bulgari-Mohamedani (Pomaci)*. Sofija. 1948.

⁴² Markova, V. Ludmila, ‘Bolgari Mjusulmane (Pomaki)’, In *Ethicheski menshinstva v sovremenoj Evrope*. Institut ethnologii a antropologii RAN, Moskva, 1997, 131-171.

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the people from the Jakoruda region use themselves, for example ‘Hajduti’, ‘Highwaymen’, ‘Wild people’, ‘Indiani’, ‘Babichani’.⁴³

However, using a nickname would not solve the problem completely. And indeed, it would create other issues. Creating and using a nickname would reaffirm the erroneous assumption that Pomaks actually exist as an ‘ethnic’ group. The other problem with this kind of nickname is that most of these names have a very negative connotations. Further more the name Babichani is misleading because it might be understood as referring just to one particular village. These are the reasons why on the whole I use the rather politically correct but ethnically neutral ‘Bulgarian speaking Muslims’, however in some cases. On occasion however this is so stylistically cumbersome that in certain context I use ‘Pomak’, but I place it between inverted commas to indicate my unease with the term.

I.3. ‘Pomaks’ in Bulgarian Historiography and Ethnography

In my case study of the Bulgarian speaking Muslim community I deliberately avoid using theories of ethnicity as an interpretative framework. Emphasis is rather given to attempts to deconstruct the way in which the Communist state created the distinctive features of this group. In the following text I give a critical overview of historiography and ethnography on the Pomaks. I refer to the particular elements of the constructed image of the Pomaks again in more detail throughout the thesis, in particular in the chapter called Modernization at the Periphery, in the respective chapters III. Rename! IV. Re-dress! and V. Resettle!, and in the chapter Resistance VI.

The ethnographic works written after 1878 create the image of Bulgarian speaking Muslims in a way that supports the legitimacy of a newly born Bulgarian state.⁴⁴ Bulgarian speaking Muslims, always Pomaks in these accounts are represented as

⁴³ The last, Babichani derives from a name of a village located higher in the mountains which used to be an important administrative, military and trade centre in Ottoman times, and I thought I might use this one as a nickname.

⁴⁴ See for instance, Cholakov, *Bulgarite –mohamedani*, Miletich, Lyubomir, *Lovchanskite Pomatsi*. Sofija, 1889, Pop Konstantinov, Christo, *Nepokornite sela v rodopskite planini*, kn. 1, 1878-1879, Veliko Tarnovo, 1887, Konstantinov, Chrsito,

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an enemy of the Bulgarian nation. The accounts use etymological analyses of the ethnic name 'Pomak' representing it as deriving from various sources which all have negative connotations.⁴⁵ These accounts explain the 'origins' of Pomaks as related to the 'Ottoman yoke' and 'violent islamization'.⁴⁶ According to these historical narratives the 'Pomaks' are Bulgarians, who during the Ottoman rule, were forcefully converted to Islam. Classical Bulgarian ethnography thus aimed to discover, collect and represent 'Pomak culture' as nearly identical with either Bulgarian or Orthodox Christian culture.⁴⁷ In contrast to this, there is another narrative within older Bulgarian ethnography, which represents the Pomaks as 'betrayers' who by their conversion to Islam betrayed the Bulgarian nation.⁴⁸

During the Communist period the ethnographical image of 'Pomaks' remained similar. Nevertheless the general tendency in ethnography and historiography began to

Obshestevnite zabavlenija i praznenstva u Pomacite v Chepino, In *Slavovi Gori III*, 1884, Primovski, Alexandar, *Balgarite-Mohamedani v Nashata Narodna Obshtnost*. Sofija. 1940, Shishkov, Stoyu, 'Rodopskite Pomaci ot obshtveno –ikonimichsko gledishte i prichinite na izslevaneto im', In *Rodopski napredak 1-5 1903*, Shishkov, *Balgaromohamedanite*, Shishkov, *Pomatsite v trite balgarski oblasti*. As an example work from later period see Vasilev, *Rodopskite Bulgari Mochamedani (istoricheski ocherk)*.Plovdiv 1961.

⁴⁵ Apart from the link with 'helping to the Turks', there are also other etymological explanations linking the name with word 'swill' [in Bulgarian 'pomyje'], or with 'torture' [in Bulgarian 'pomachen'].See for example use of the ethnonym in Shishkov, *Balgaromohamedanite (Pomatsi)*, 25. The usage of the ethnic names compare with Jirecek, Konstantin, *Cesty po Bulharsku*. Praha: Novočeská bibliotéka, 1888, 337, and with Gjuzeev, Bozidar, 'Bulgarite Mohamedani v Turcija', *Istoricheski pregled*. 10 (1990),pp.17-33. For a more detailed account on construction and use of the ethnonym 'Pomak' in Bulgarian ethnography, historiography and literature through the course of 19th century see L. Nahodilova, *Bulharofonní Muslimové (Pomáci) Příspěvek k otázce etnické identity*, MA, Universita Karlova, 2001, 11-17.

⁴⁶The discussion about 'forceful islamization' is a major theme of Bulgarian historiography and continued throughout the course of the whole century. As a historical prove of the 'forceful islamization' were used the so called 'manuscripts called *Chronicle of Metodi Draginov*'. The *Chronicle* was published by Zachariev, Stefan, *Geografsko –istoriko- statistichsko opisanie na Tatarpazardzishkata kaaza*, Vienna, 1870.

⁴⁷ As an example of that approach see Konstantinov, 'Obshestevnite zabavlenija'.

⁴⁸ The same author writes an account where he uses the other discourse Christo Pop Konstantinov, *Nepokornite sela*, also in Zachariev, *Geografsko –istoriko- statistichsko opisanie*. 1870. These accounts represent the Pomaks as those who resisted the rule of the newly established Bulgarian state and use the term 'Pomashka Republica' and locate its territory south from Velingrad at the region called Rupshos. About resistance of 'Pomaks' compare Jireček, Konstantin, *Cesty po Bulharsku*.Praha: Novočeská bibliotéka, 1888, 332.

change. Yet the task and the aim was the same: to incorporate this peculiar minority into the Bulgarian nation. Later generations of Communist ethnographers abandoned this instrumental tendency and turned their focus more on a representing the particularities of 'Pomak culture' in line discourses on culture and minorities which by then had become policy for the Communist state. Thus the Pomaks were represented in the discourse of the official discipline of folklore [in Bulgarian 'folkloristikata'] as the most genuine part of Bulgarian *folk* culture. I elaborate in more detail on this topic in chapter IV. Re-dress! Later, in the 1980s, the focus of ethnographers changed again and the emphasis was given to the representations of 'Pomaks' as an example of cultural and social diversity within Bulgarian society.⁴⁹ Apart from that change, in the 1970's and 1980's, when the main-stream of the official historiography remained within its classical borders, presenting the Bulgarian speaking Muslims as suspicious victims of the ancient sin of forceful conversion to Islam, in some academic circles there began a critical discussion and attempt at reinterpretation. The discussion started with evaluation of the validity of the so called 'manuscripts'.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Examples of folkloristic accounts on Pomaks are given in chapter 3. Re-dress! As an example of ethnographical approaches to Pomaks at the end of late socialism see for instance Velcheva, Nedyá, Changes in Moral Relations Among Population in Rodopi Mountains, *Bulgarian Ethnology*, 1, 1991, pp. 41-52. or an ethnographical analyses of intermarriages between Muslim and Bulgarians see Karamihova, Margarita, 'Intermarriages - An Unwishful Reality', *Bulgarian Ethnology*, 6 (1991), pp. 29-38.

⁵⁰ 'On of them is the so called "Chronicle of Metodi Draginov" published in Zachariev, *Geografsko – istoriko- statisticheskó opisanie*. is an account representing the forceful mass Islamisation of Bulgarians in the Chepino (today called Velingrad) region of the western Rhodope mountains in the seventeenth century. Similar to two other chronicles, the 'Belovo chronicle' and the 'Batkunski chronicle, it was supposed to be a Bulgarian translation of a Greek translation of a lost and undated Bulgarian original made a couple of decades previously by a Greek. Khristo P. Konstantinov, 'Pisma od Rodopite'. Pismo XIV. Istoricheski pregled na pokrainata Chepino', *Svoboda*, 7, 7 April 1970, Reprinted in Khristo Pop Konstantinov, 'Chepino (Edno balgarsko kraishete v severozapadnite razkloneniya na Rodopskite planini)', *Sbornik za Narodni Umotvorenia*, 15 (1989), pp.230-1. The discussion continued in the account by Nikola Nachov, 'List ot khronika, namerena v selo Golyamo Belovo', *Balgarski pregled*, 5, 2 (1898), pp. 149. and Khristo, Kodov, *Opis za savyanskite rakopisi v Bibliotekata na Balgarska Akademiya na Naukite*. Sofija, 1969, pp.256-8, Petar Mutafchiev also contributed to the discussion in *Stari gradishta iz dolinite na Strema i Topolnitsa*. Sofija, 1965, 73-4. and also Petar Petrov, 'Balgarskite letopisni svedeniya za pomohamedanchvaneto v Chepino', *Rodopski sbornik*, I, Sofija, 1965. In the year 1984 Iliya Todorov published what has become the definitive verdict on the chronicle. Through linguistic analyses he gave a proof against the authenticity of the 'manuscripts'. See in Iliya Todorov 'Letopisniyat razkaz na pop Metodi Draginov', *Starobalgarska literatura*, 16, 1984, 59-67, cited in: Todorova, Maria, ed., 'Conversion to Islam as a Trope in Bulgarian Historiography, Fiction and Film'. In *Balkan Identities, Nation and Memory*, Hurts & Company, London, 2004, 103-29pp.

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The collapse of the Communist regime brought changes interpretation to Bulgarian history. Among the discourses which appeared in the historiography and ethnography of the 1990s it is possible to distinguish two tendencies. The official institutions, such as the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, remained to keep the old discourses about Bulgarian speaking Muslims. New publishing houses and also alternative academic institutions start out, for instance the Centre for the Rights of Minorities in Bulgaria or the New Bulgarian University in Sofia, and they came to be the agents of the alternative interpretations. The specificities of these new interpretations are presented in Chapter III. Rename!, IV. Re-dress!, and VI. Resistance!

In contrast to that, during the 1990s in the non-academic milieu, there emerged discourses and rhetoric, that was rigidly and openly hostile towards the Bulgarian speaking Muslims. Indeed they articulate a hostility that is far more pronounced and than that which is found in the official ethnographies of the former regimes. These new accounts are published by local publishers, museum institutions or political organizations.⁵¹

I. 4. Methodology

For the purposes of my research, which deals with the past and the memory of marginalized groups, I have used the method of oral history. This method combines both the methodological awareness of anthropology and the empirical stability of history. This combination typical of oral history, represents a strength and at the same time a weakness. Let's speak first about its strengths.

In my use of oral history I was especially inspired by two authors both of whom are historians, Luisa Passerini and Alessandro Portelli, both working on cultural history and popular cultures in Italy after the Second World War.⁵² Passerini recalls the theoretical the work of Bronislaw Malinowski - specifically the point when 'he distinguishes [...] between the personal opinions of the informants and beliefs

⁵¹ An example of a conservative approach is for instance book by Pecilkov, *Istoricheskata sadba na rodopskite balgar mohamedani*. Smoljan, 1993.

⁵² Passerini, Luisa, *Fascism in Popular Memory*. Cambridge: University Press, 1987 and Portelli, Allesandro, *The Battle of Valle Giulia, Oral History and the Art of Dialogue*. The University of Wisconsin Press, 1997.

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incorporated in institutions and traditions and, the actual forms of behavior.’⁵³ Thus, in comparison to other research methods, which are attempting to abstract from individual experience and memory the patterns and models that transcend the individual, oral history combines this effort to reconstruct patterns and models with attention to concrete individual variations and transgressions.⁵⁴ Another example of using a memory and narrative for reconstruction of social history is a book by Anastasia Karakasidou *Fields of Blood*.⁵⁵

Oral history allows us to get closer to the ‘culture’ about which we do not have any written sources and at the same time it allow us to distinguish the various layers of the reality we are analysing without losing its subjective character.

This is the advantage of oral history in the particular case of my research which is on a Muslim village at the periphery of a Communist state. It allows me to see the responses to modernity which are not written or otherwise articulated in any other historical sources, e.g. .official documents, propaganda materials, statistics. Through that I approached the aims, ideas and wishes of all of those who were involved in the ‘modernization project’.

Through thoughts, ideas, political dreams and wishes of the former Communist leaders we can thus approach the ‘other side’ of the Communist modernization project and try to understand, without any sentiment or false romanticizing, an *ethical aspect* of this project which to the eye of classical socio-historical analysis remains hidden. We can analyse the totalitarian state ‘from below’ and understand the principles of its every day functioning. Thus we can approach those who are at the margins in current political discourses, the losers of an ‘ambivalent’ or ‘unfinished modernization’. The ‘losers’ of the political dream which was called Communism.

At the same time, we can hear about the experiences of Communism from the main heroes of the modernization story, the villagers of Cherna Mesta. Those who were

⁵³ Passerini, *Fascism*, 2. In this quotation Passerini refers to Malinowski’s account Malinowski, Bronislaw, *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*. London: Routledge,1932.

⁵⁴ Passerini, *Fascism*, 58.

⁵⁵ Karakasidou, Anastasia, N., *Fields of Wheat Hills of Blood. Pages to nationhood in Greek Macedonia, 1870-1990*. Chicago & New York, The University Chicago Press, 1997.

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formerly shut off in silence, who were oppressed and humiliated by the regime of the Communist state and who are now by current political discourses rehabilitated. Again, if used correctly, oral history allows us to interpret those stories without false sentiment. In simpler words this method of research allows us to track down the story of one village, one community, several families: my friends.

In my interpretations I try to avoid confusing oral history with the concept of 'collective memory'.⁵⁶ The relationship between 'oral history' and 'collective memory' is discussed in more detail in chapter VI. Resistance!

The analyses of oral histories were combined with the analyses of several archival materials - the collectivization contracts, property contracts from Cadastral Office of the Municipal Hall in Jakoruda, the village chronicle of Cherna Mesta and Medeny Polajny village. Other sources were the documents from personal archives such as that of the my informant Musa Abdulev, former mayor of Cherna Mesta village Starkov, or the former first secretary of town Party Committee Rosnev, also the private archive and collections of material about the town and region Jakoruda and Cherna Mesta kept by former teacher Pepa Maslarova, and the collection of historical photographs kept by Petar.

Narratives and Interviewees

I conducted the interviews for this research at a time when I already had an established position within the community based on my previous stays and visits. Thus most of the interviews I conducted with people from both groups, the villagers (Muslims) and the former Communist elite (Bulgarians), took place in friendly and familiar atmosphere. Those people with whom I established new contacts specifically for this research were members of the former local political elite - the former functionaries of the Communist Party. (See figure 7.) And it was only during my fieldwork that I discovered that the political and ethnic tension between the two groups, the ethnic Bulgarians and the former Communists, on the one hand, and the villagers, the Bulgarian speaking

⁵⁶ The distinction of 'oral history' which is based on *personal* and *subjective* representations is distinct to concept of 'collective memory' which is based on memory of *individual*, not of a person. For that methodological discussion see Portelli, *The Battle of Giulia*, 12-17, and about oral history as a genre *ibid.*, 3-25, and Passerini, *Fascism*, 2.

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Muslims, on the other, is still latently present (I discuss this issue in detail the chapter VI. Resistance). To a certain this latent division between the two groups level influenced my fieldwork. For example, during the entire period of fieldwork I lived in a house with a family in a Muslim village, but at the same time I had to conduct interviews with the former representatives of the Communist regime who were still perceived by the village community as the persecutors. This ‘commuting’ between the two antagonistic groups occasionally generated precarious situations, something which at a personal level also caused me a certain ethical unease.

In my presentation of the field work material I have tried, because of theoretical and as well methodological concerns, to avoid dividing it according to the two antagonistic groups, the Muslim ‘villagers’ on the one hand, and the ‘Communist modernizers’ on the other. Nevertheless, during my analyses of my ethnography, I have realised that the contesting narratives of these two groups are in such opposition and contrast to each other that to break down this structure is impossible and ultimately undesirable. The binary structure of two groups, the two kinds of narratives and the consequent meanings thus became the skeleton of my interpretation. Thus in structuring the material and consequently also in structuring of my argument I have preserved the binary structure of these contradictory but at the same time complementary narratives.

Thus, every event in Cherna Mesta’s story is accompanied by two contesting narratives. One is the narratives of the villagers, the current inhabitants of Cherna Mesta, and the other is the narratives of the ‘members of the former Communist elite’. These last I refer to as ‘modernizers’ or ‘organizers’ or with a certain reserve ‘Communist developers’.

I am aware that his procedure may potentially be critiqued from a theoretical point of view, but given my explanation, I see it as one of the legitimate ways to tell the story of Communist modernization in Cherna Mesta village. In a certain sense it allows me to keep alive the tension inherent in any kind of power structure and to a certain extent it reflects the current situation within the ‘community’ of Cherna Mesta valley.

My respondents were many - most of them the villagers of Cherna Mesta but also people from other villages in the Cherna Mesta valley region and people from villages in other parts of Western Rhodopes Mountains. Another group of respondents were people

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from the local administrative centre Jakoruda. I gained further interviews and information during my travels around the region of Western Rhodope using various means of transport-vehicles, trains, bus, hitch hiking and walking.

An important group of respondents came from the former political elite in Jakoruda. In the social environment of the town they formed a compact group which kept close social relations and during the period of my thesis research they held regular meetings. My main respondent from that milieu was the former first secretary of the district Party Committee. He was one of the main enactors of Communist modernization in the region. He was the main supporter and the *homo faber* of new village. During the renaming and the re-dressing campaign he served in the function of the first secretary of the Party Committee and he was the most powerful man in the municipality. After the events of the resistance, (described and discussed in chapter VI. Resistance), and consequent political failure he moved to the regional capital Blagoevgrad and had a high post as Chief of Propaganda at the Regional Party Committee. Nowadays he comes to the town where he was born only to spend his summer holidays as a retired pensioner. His friendship and enthusiasm for my research played an important role in my work. Then I also use narratives of other members of the former Party Committee and other peoples who were professionally and personally involved in the modernization project carried out by the Communist state.

Another important group of informants were the Bulgarian speaking Muslims, the 'villagers' themselves. Most of these people were my friends, people with whom I have lived, shared a house, time, work, food and emotions. In most cases their voices tell the other side of the story. So much of this experience anthropological and generally human could not be fully cited in this thesis.

Fieldwork

I have been in contact with the community of Cherna Mesta since the year 1998, when I was doing research for my MA thesis on the ethnic identity of the Bulgarian speaking Muslims. At that time my focus was not directed only at the village community of Cherna Mesta, and my research was taking place in several other villages as well. I have spent a total of sixteen months of fieldwork in the village. Most of the time of

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fieldwork I spent in Cherna Mesta village - which was a base of my field research - Jakoruda and the hamlets of Konarsko. Throughout the course of the fieldwork I have lived in the house of one family.(See figure 8) Through this family I was introduced to the village community. During one of my stays I worked for several weeks in the local dairy factory [in Bulgarian *mandra*]. Data gained through that part of my fieldwork are used mostly in the Chapter VIII. Epilogue. During that employment I conducted interviews and participant observation. The life with the family and their members allowed me an unusual amount of proximity in relation to the every day life of its members, their feelings, troubles and emotions. I was drawn into sharing the social, economic and emotional life of the family. I have also made close friendships with other families and people in the village. These conditions brought many advantages and as well as disadvantages with regard to my research work.

A Small Portrait of the Village

Cherna Mesta is a village in the remote region of the Western Rhodope Mountains , (see Figure 1) It has about four hundred inhabitants, all of whom are Bulgarian speaking Muslims. This part of the Rhodopes is a small enclave of Muslim population. Christians live in a nearby small town, the administrative centre for the village. Christians make up one third of the population there. Cherna Mesta is located at the end of a narrow valley where a narrow gauge railway encounters an asphalt road which divides the village in two parts, the upper quarter and the lower quarter, [in Bulgarian ‘gornata machala’ and ‘dolnata machala’]. The lower quarter, which is older, spreads a bit into the alluvial plane. The upper quarter was built up in the 1970’s and 1980’s during the most rushed years of modernization. When one climbs just a bit up the steep slope, one can see that this part of village was really carefully planned. Streets are in rectangular order and building plots are of the same size and shape. They are built from concrete and bricks, mostly light coloured, with many large windows often covered by aluminium or newspaper. Most houses have three floors, all have at least two, some even have four. The upper part of the village is based on the plains next to the river. A sharp wind blows here during all seasons. The surrounding hills are shaded from the sun till late in the morning and from early in the evening. In contrast to the rest of the region,

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and even to the other mountains villages, fruit trees and hardly any vegetable grow in this place. Only beans and potatoes. From this point of view the land itself is not very hospitable. In comparison with the other Pomak villages, Cherna Mesta is at first sight a bit gloomy. But already on second sight one could be drawn to the discreet charm of its inhabitants and their destinies. The following chapters of this thesis are an attempt to unravel the enigma of Cherna Mesta and its inhabitants.

I.5. Synopses of the Chapters

Chapter **II. Modernization at ‘the periphery’** introduces the concepts of periphery and ‘modernization at the periphery’. And in that context it discusses the specificity of modernization conducted by the Communist regimes in the ‘peripheral’ region of Eastern Europe. This chapter argues that the Communist development project was an effort to introduce modernity in terms of ‘urbanization’, ‘industrialization’ and ‘emancipation’ at any cost. This effort to respond to modernity and to the ideas of *enlightenment* in such a large scale, as Communism did, is what makes the Communist modernization specific and different to any other kind of development programme. This chapter presents examples of ‘modernization at the periphery’ aiming at incorporation of marginal groups carried out by the Communist regime in Eastern Europe. It introduces Cherna Mesta village in that context. The chapter delivers the argument that the assimilation programme of the ‘Pomaks’, was not only a response to the needs of the national state, but that it was also a part of the Communist modernization programme. It argues that the assimilation programme, the so called ‘Process of Rebirth’, [in Bulgarian Vazroditelen Proces], was also articulation of the Communist modernization effort.

The chapter introduces the three processes which took place during the 1970s and 1980s: *Renaming*, which consisted of organized change of personal Muslim names into Bulgarian ones, the *re-dressing* which took place in the form of banning of religious elements of women’s dress and the organized *resettlement* of former shepherds into new villages. I argue that they were not independent actions but interrelated measures of Communist modernization aiming at creation of “New Men” and “New Women”.

In the three following chapters **III. Rename!**, **IV. Re-dress!** and **V.Resettle!** this argument is elaborated and supported by the case studies and narratives. Each of these chapter starts with a brief introduction to the historical context of the assimilation processes in Bulgaria. The historical perspective helps to reveal the specificity of the Communist approach to assimilation and modernization.

Chapter III. called **Rename!** analyses the measures carried out by the Communist regime upon the 'Pomaks'. It argues that renaming was part of the assimilation process officially called 'The Process of Rebirth'.⁵⁷ The chapter presents the narratives of the villagers and of the modernizers, revealing subjective experiences and perceptions of the renaming campaign. On the basis of these decomposed narratives the chapter argues that the renaming campaign was part of a deliberate effort to create 'new Communist man'.

In chapter **IV. Re-dress!** presents the assimilation measures undertaken by the Communist regime attempting to eliminate religiously and symbolically important elements of women's dress. It is argued that the *Re-dressing* was an expression of the, 'emancipation of women' and part of the wider programme of Communist modernization. Using Norbert Elias's concept of civilizing process the chapter argues that the aim of the *re-dressing* campaign was to create 'civilized' and 'emancipated' 'new women'. It is questioned to what extent the qualities of the 'ideal' new woman were 'proletarian' and 'Communist' and to what extent they were an expression of the creation and acceptance of 'middle class' values within the Communist system. This leads to a wider discussion about the character of Communist modernization. This aspect of the 're-dressing', the turn to rather 'middle class' values recalls the ideological turn which took place within the cultural policy of the Soviet Union in the 1930s. In sociological literature called the 'big deal'. The possibility of seeing this parallel as the basis for the interpretation of *re-dressing* as an outcome between the Bulgarian Muslims and the Communist regime is questioned on the basis of historical and ethnographic sources.

The focus of chapter **V.Resettle!** is given to the foundation of the new village. The chapter discusses the Communist modernization from the point of view of

⁵⁷ The official name, 'Process of Rebirth', usually refers to the renaming campaign imposed on the Turkish minority in 1984-1986. In the oral histories however it refers to the renaming campaign conducted among 'Pomaks' in the 1960s and 1970s under the same name.

urbanization and describes the foundation of the village on basis of the oral histories and narratives of the two contesting groups. The ethnographic material is used to support the argument that the foundation of the village was a response to the idea of modernization at the periphery in terms of urbanization and industrialization. It is shown that the resettlement was perceived by the villagers as an ambivalent experience. As an improvement in their standard of living on one hand and as an experience of 'loss' on the other hand.

The three chapters aim to represent how was the concept of modernization at the periphery is remembered, perceived and responded to by the agents of Communist modernization and by the villagers. In all the three cases the villagers represent their subjective perceptions and responses to the development procedures and the assimilation measures as being ambivalent.

Chapter **VI. Resistance** discuss the responses to the assimilation measures and development which took the form of a march from the mountains to the capital city of Sofia. This event, which is represented in the oral histories of both the villagers and the Communist bosses is classified as an open form of resistance. The chapter discusses the approaches to classification of resistance articulates a theoretical and methodological uneasiness about writing ethnography using the concept of resistance. It describes cases of 'every day form of resistance' which took place in Cherna Mesta.⁵⁸ In interpreting the oral histories my primary focus is given to memory and its role in shaping the meanings of resistance in specific political circumstances. Finally the question of is posed against what was this resistance directed? Was the resistance which took place in Cherna Mesta directed against the development programme carried out by the Communist state, or against the Communist regime tout court or against ,modernity' per se?

Chapter **VII.** focuses on Cherna Mesta as a case study of Communist development and modernization programme. It describes the development of the village within the perspective of the wider national and regional context. It explores social and economic practices which appeared during the course of the development programme at the village level. At that level is analysed the relationship between the institutions of the state (represented by the local cadastral office, the National Council, the Cooperative

⁵⁸ Scott, James, C. *Weapons of the Weak*.

Farm and the Communist Party) and the individual subjects. The ethnography is interpreted in a way which challenges the classic 'party-state' model of power relations within the socialist society, originally defined by Katherine Verdery. This chapter presents the ethnography which allows me to argue that Communist modernization had inherent ethical aspect. This chapter asks to what degree was the development programme conducted and perceived as a form of oppression and to what level was it conducted as an ethical programme.

Chapter **VIII. The Epilogue** presents the social and economic situation which emerged after the collapse of the socialist system in the 1990s. With the collapse of the Communist regime the development project disintegrated along with the state subsidized economy. During the period of social and economic decline after the collapse, the village communities of the Bulgarian Muslims experienced dramatic social and economic changes in which the local population had to find new economic means of subsistence and alternative consumer strategies. The former political elite and the existing system of power relations broke down and were replaced by new elites, which introduced a new discourse and new political ideologies based on an amalgam of different ideological concepts, such as ethnicity, nationalism and neo-liberalism. The Islamic religious revival played a central role in the new approach to the experience of social and political change. This chapter attempts to deliver an answer to the question why the development program conducted within the socialist system ultimately failed? Was this part of the wider failure of socialism or can its failure be related precisely to the withdrawal of economic and ideological support consequent on the collapse of socialist regimes of Eastern Europe.

My analysis of the responses to this specific process of development demonstrates that people experienced the Communist modernization process as double sided, as a process which, at least temporally, improved their standard of living, while at the same time interfering in the intimate spheres of their private lives and their cultural and religious values. The ambivalent nature of this response is typical of the experience of Communist modernity; but such ambivalence is also surely implicated in other projects of modernization. Hence, analysing this project of Communist development and the ultimate collapse of this project, allows me to raise complex questions about the effects of socialism, understood as a specific historical and empirical reality rather than

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as a rhetorical trope as it is so often used in current political discourse. And at the wider level my analysis allows me to further question the functioning and the consequences of cultural and socio-economic development projects more generally.

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This chapter is an introduction to a first section of the thesis formulated in four chapters II. Modernization at the Periphery, III. Rename!, IV. Re-dress! and V. Resettle! The argument of this section is that the assimilation measures imposed upon the group of Bulgarian speaking Muslims by the Communist state which consisted of the state organized changing of Arabic –Turkish names, the banning of religiously important elements of female dress and in the case of Cherna Mesta was accompanied by resettlement to the new village can be interpreted as part of the process of Communist modernization. It is argued that they should be seen not only as one in a series of state campaigns imposed on Pomak group during the course of the 20th century, but that the assimilation triplet, the ‘renaming’, ‘re-dressing’ and the ‘resettlement’, can be interpreted as a specific response to modernity exercised through the ideological project of modernization which was carried out by the Communist state.

In the framework of this argument arises a question which is essential to the context of a wider discussion on modernity, Communism and totalitarianism: to what extent can we interpret Communism as an ethical project? And if we can answer this question at all, then what makes Communism different from other kinds of development projects which were not run by the Communist state? These questions challenge the classical argument about Communism made by the so-called ‘totalitarian school’.¹ The totalitarian school analyses Communism in Central and Eastern Europe through the prism of a *gulag* and through the theory of the dichotomy of power. In the perspective of that approach is Communism and socialist societies only as an outcome of totalitarian hegemony and repression. One of the representatives of this kind of interpretations is for instance Tzvetan Todorov who says that ‘the only ‘idea’ involved in the socialist or Communist policy was the triumph of Communism’.² Todorov and others built up upon

¹ ‘Totalitarian school’ follows the interpretation of totalitarianism in political philosophy made by Hannah Arendt in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. New York : Schocken Books, 2004. As an example of Todorov’s analyses of the Bulgarian context see Todorov, Tzvetan, *Voices from the Gulag, Life and Death in Communist Bulgaria*, Penn state University Press.1999.

² Todorov, Tzvetan, *Hope and Memory*. London: Atlantic Books, 2003,15.

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the basis of the totalitarian model say that once the Communist Party was in power, the separation of ends and means became impossible, and the only 'idea' involved was the triumph of Communism. And that there was no truth of Communism that could be reached by means external to the party.³ However, even if we do not want to dismiss the experiences of terror and violence suffered by people who lived in the Communist regimes, the interpretations based on an analysis of the instruments of power, such as the *gulag*, do not let us understand any better the other mechanisms of the functioning of Communist regimes which allowed such a repressive regimes to survive for several decades. There are not many accounts which challenge the 'totalitarian' approach to the interpretation of socialist societies from non-Marxist positions.⁴

On the basis of my ethnography I put into question the hegemonic model of Communist society. The question is what was the role of the state and what was the role of the Communist party in the modernization processes? Through the interpretation of the ethnographic material I attempt to answer the question to what extent the promoters of the modernization and the people who were subjected to the modernizing processes concurred the Communist modernization as an ethical project. If we can say that the Communist modernization was not only a part of a 'devil' ideology but had ethical aspects as well, then where were the concepts of that 'ethos' rooted? The ethnographical examples given in the text represent how this ideological concept was perceived by its promoters. What were the actual ideas, aims and desires of the Communist modernizers? To what extent had the local leaders of modernization, the members of the Communist elite, themselves clear ideas about the aims of modernization?

My ethnography supports the argument that the assimilation measures were part of the modernization ethos which was articulated in the attempt to introduce 'modernity'. It meant to create a new urban settlement through re-settlement and to create a 'new man' and 'new woman' through renaming and re-dressing. This is already one of the essential specifics of Communist modernization which makes it distinct from any other kind of modernization, namely that all the aspects of 'modernity', the

³ Todorov, *Hope and Memory*, 15.

⁴ This approach to reinterpretation of socialism represents for instance Yurchak, *Everything was forever until it was no more: the last Soviet generation*. Princeton University Press, 2005.

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industrialization, urbanization and emancipation had to be implemented *quickly* and the modernization measures had to be applied *at any cost*.

The main sources for this chapter are the oral histories of the main organizers, the former communist leaders and local political elites and the oral histories of the villagers and people who were considered by the modernization discourse to be the subjects of modernization.

II.1. Marginal Groups at the Periphery of Communist Eastern Europe

At the beginning of this chapter attention was paid to the definition of the notion of 'periphery'. Periphery is usually conceived of as a relationship between the 'centre' and the political geographical, cultural and physical spaces which are considered as something 'other' and essentially 'different' from the 'centre'. Periphery is thus defined as the other, but at the same, it is a part of a bigger and more abstract 'unit', the 'civilization', the 'nation' and 'culture'.

The notion of the periphery which is used for my argumentation about the relationship between the group of Bulgarian speaking Muslims and the Communist state is used in terms of Stuart Hall's theory of culture.⁵ Thus 'periphery' is created through the process of exclusion, but at the same time it is part of a self-identification of the 'centre'. The relationship between the centre and the periphery is taking place in both directions, where the inclusion and exclusion is conditional on each other and are not separable processes.⁶ The 'modernization' implied in the peripheral Rhodopes and on

⁵ For more on identification through exclusion and inclusion see Hall, Stuart, & Du Guy Paul, eds. *Questions of Cultural Identity*, London: Sage Publications, 1996. According to Hall the processes of identification have the character of 'unities' which are, in fact, constructed within the play of power and exclusion, and are the result not of the natural and inevitable or primordial totality but of the naturalized, over-determined process of 'closure'. Hall, Stuart, *Questions of Cultural Identity*, 1996, 5. Hall refers here to his explanation of identity constructed through exclusion in Hall, Stuart 'Cultural Identity in Question', in Hall, Stewart., Held, D., and Mc Grew, T., eds. *Modernity and Its Futures*, Cambridge: Polity. 1992, compare with Bhabha's concept of culture in Bhabha, Homi, *The Location of Culture*, London : Routledge, 1994.

⁶ As an examples of ethnographical surveys made on 'exclusion and inclusion' in Eastern Europe see for instance the case study of rural community of Gorale and its relationship with the state, the church and the market by Frances Pine in Pine, Frances, 'Incorporation and Exclusion in the Podhale', In Day Sofie & Papataxiarchis Evtymios & Stewart Michael, eds, *The Lilies of the Field*. Westview Press. Oxford. 1999, pp. 45-60.

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the marginal 'Pomaks' can thus be interpreted as a way of creating cultural identities through exclusion and inclusion, carried out by the Communist state.

In the following analyses of the three aspects of modernization at the periphery this interrelation between exclusion and inclusion is taken for granted and is not given any particular attention. The focus of the analyses is placed on an exploration of the actual practices and discourses of the modernization measures. It is analyzed how the modernization at periphery was conducted by the Communist state at the micro-level and on basis of that the answer is given to the question what makes the modernization at the periphery driven by Communist state different to other kinds of modernization?

It can be argued that the European cultural space has in fact only a relatively few strategies for dealing with *otherness* and the *periphery*. The most common way is a specific kind of exoticisation that Edward Said has described and defined as *orientalism*.⁷ This concept prompted Maria Todorova to apply a similar concept of 'balkanization' to the marginal European region of the Balkans.⁸ Todorova distinguishes the two concepts and says, 'whereas orientalism 'is a discourse about imputed opposition, 'balkanism' is a discourse about an imputed ambiguity.'⁹ Todorova thus used the notion of 'balkanism' to conceptualize an 'ambiguity' and an 'anomaly' which Europe attributes to the cultural, social and political space of its own periphery, called the Balkans.¹⁰ Thus the periphery is always something unclean, ambiguous, anomalous and problematic. And I argue, that it was the concept of periphery rather than nationalism what shaped the relationship of the Bulgarian state and the Bulgarian speaking Muslims during the Communist modernization.

For instance Ssorin-Chaikov in *The Social Life of the State in Subarctic Siberia* is using the notion of 'nesting Orientalism' borrowed from Milica Bakic-Hayden in order to catch the equivocality of the identity effect of orientalizing and being

⁷ Said, Edward, *Orientalism*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978.

⁸ Todorova, Maria. *Imagining the Balkans*, New York Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997.

⁹ Ibid. 17.

¹⁰ Todorova draws the explanation of 'balkanism' on Mary Douglas analyses disorder anomaly, dirt and pollution as cultural constituents of cultural categories, see in Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger. An Analyses of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*, Hammondsworth, Middlesex, England: Penguin, 1970.

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orientalized in the relationship between ‘Russian/Soviet state’ and ‘Siberia.’¹¹ In this particular case it is the relationship between the Soviet state and the Evenkas’ reindeer brigades. Hayden proposed the term ‘nesting Orientalism’ which is based on the term ‘nesting hierarchies’ suggested by Caroline Humphrey¹² to account for the relational meanings of otherness within the broader orientalist discourses in the sense of Edward Said.¹³

For the interpretation of the relationship between the ‘Pomaks’ and the Communist state I borrowed the term ‘nesting orientalism’ and from it create the term ‘nesting periphery’ in order to better illuminate the political, social and cultural relationship between the village community of Bulgarian speaking Muslims and the ‘centre’, represented in this case by the amalgam of national ideology and Communist modernization. The term ‘nesting periphery’ expresses the multiple character of the ‘periphery’ in the cultural, geographical and social space of Cherna Mesta village. It illustrates the specific situation of the Bulgarian speaking Muslims and the location of the village community on the layers of several ‘peripheries’. To recall the situation, we have to say that we are speaking about the community of a village which is located in Eastern Europe, in the Balkans, within the borders of a Communist state, at the ‘border zone’, in the rural region of the Rhodope Mountains. The marginality of the space is strengthened by the fact that the village which was founded as a new settlement in the bottom of the valley, at the crossroads of a narrow railway, mountain streams and a dusty road was built around a railway shed and a ‘Turkish han’ (the inn). The village community of Bulgarian Speaking Muslims and the Rhodope Mountains and the Pomak community is not only at the periphery of the ‘West’ but also at the inner periphery of that cultural and geopolitical space which is conceptualized as the ‘East’.¹⁴ As was said, Cherna Mesta by its character recalls various other places within Communist Eastern Europe, villages in the so-called ‘border regions’ (the so-called pogrannitsa), places

¹¹ See Chaikov –Ssorin, *The Social Life of the State in Subarctic Siberia*, 2003, 15 and Bakic-Hayden, Milica & Hayden, Robert M. ‘Orientalist Variations’, pp. 1-15. These authors are using the term “nesting orientalism’ for East European context to describe the way how is constructed and perceived the relationship between centre and periphery and through that constructed the ‘other’.

¹² The term is introduced and discusses in the I. Introduction.

¹³ Said, Edward, *Orientalism*.

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which had been abandoned by various state organized resettlement projects and population expulsions (as for instance the Suddetenland in former Czechoslovakia) or places along the border between the GDR and the FRG. But in none of these cases was the impact of the centre, the attempt to retie the periphery to the centre and to extend the 'centre' into the periphery so intense as it was in Cherna Mesta case.

The relationship between the centre and the periphery has many articulations in the relationships of various ethnic, cultural and social 'units' (groups) to their respective 'centers'. It is the relationship between ethnic minorities and the national majority, between peasant cultures and the culture of the cities, between economically and socially marginalized groups and those who have economic and political power. In the following text are given examples of such groups in relationship centre-periphery.

At this place, even if he is not using East European case study, has to be mentioned a book by Eugen Weber *Peasants into Frenchmen, The Modernization of Rural France 1870-1914*¹⁵. Weber studied the modernization process conducted from the 'centre' to the 'periphery' from point of view of social and cultural history and offers a detailed exploration of the modernization process conducted by state in France of the late 19th and early 20th century. The peasants are represented in contemporary discourses of that time as 'the savages'.¹⁶ Weber explores the mechanisms of their integration into the 'civilization' and into the culture of the city and of the City of Paris, city 'par excellence'.¹⁷ Modernization was imposed through education and army, two key institutions of the modern state. Weber's account is relevant to my research for two reasons. The first reason is the methodology used to hear the voices of the illiterate 'peasants' standing at the subjective 'verge of modernity'. In my research, I used a similar methodology to approach the unwritten experiences and perceptions of Communist modernization. And another reason is the resonance with Weber's argument that the cultural categories created by modernization in France of the 19th and early 20th centuries were introduced through the social institutions of the modern state by the process called by Weber 'cultural colonization'.

¹⁵ Weber, Eugen, *Peasants into Frenchmen, The Modernization of Rural France 1870-1914*, Stanford University Press, California. 1976.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 4-5, and the Chapter 1.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, chapter 1 'Country of Savages', 3-23.

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Within the thematic framework of exploring the relationship between the ‘centre’ and the periphery there exists an extended anthropological scholarship about the so-called ‘marginal’ groups.¹⁸ In the East European context the classic examples of such groups are ‘Roma- Gypsies’, but also various other groups defined by political and scientific discourses as ethnic or religious groups. Bulgarian speaking Muslims represent one of them.¹⁹

At this point I wish to turn attention to the accounts by Michael Stewart and Frances Pine²⁰. Both deal with communities socially and economically marginalized and explore the relationship of these groups to the state in the Communist and post-Communist period. Both of the two accounts, Stewart’s and Pine’s, focused more on the construction of the identity of ‘the marginal people that can imagine themselves to be princes of the world’ from inside of their ‘cultural boundaries’.²¹ In difference to them my research is concern rather with the relationship between the inner self representations and outside constructions.

Another example of exploration of the mutual relationship between the majority and the marginal group using case study from Eastern Europe is Van de Port’s account on ‘Gypsies’ in Serbia. Van der Port deconstructs the cultural narratives of Serbian ‘bachnalias’, the cultural performances carried out by the ‘Gypsies’. His analysis reveals the construction of category ‘Gypsy’ in Serbian culture through concepts as ‘savages’, ‘devils’, or ‘dirt’. He argues that ‘Gypsies’ are in that particular context defined not only as those who are different and ‘other’, but that they are at the same time part of the

¹⁸ For a more general account see Kuper, Adam, *The Reinvention of Primitive Society, Transformations of a Myth*. Routledge, London and New York, 2005, as well as Hertzfeld, Michael, *Anthropology through the Looking Glass: Critical Ethnography in the Margins of Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987, 7.

¹⁹ For the list of bibliographical references to the Bulgarian speaking Muslims see the thesis’s I. Introduction, p.17-23.

²⁰ Pine, ‘Incorporation and Exclusion’, pp. 45-60, Stewart, Michael, ‘ “Brothers” and “Orphans” ’: Images of Equality Among Hungarian Rom’

In Day Sofie & Papataxiarchis Evtymios & Stewart Michael, *The Lilies of the Field*. Westsiew Press. Oxford. 1999, pp 27-44, see also a monograph on Gypsies in Communist and post- socialist Hungary Stewart, Michael, *The Time of the Gypsies*. Oxford: Westview Press, 1997.

²¹ Bloch, Maurice, ‘Foreword’, Day Sofie & Papataxiarchis Evtymios & Stewart Michael, *The Lilies of the Field*. Westview Press. Oxford. 1999, 13.

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Serbian identity, a kind of an alter ego of the Serbs.²² This is another example of the relationship between the ‘centre’ and the ‘periphery’ articulated in terms of the relationship of the minority and the majority in the context of the former Yugoslavia.

The two major accounts on Communist modernization at the periphery are the works of Yuri Slezkine and Nikolai Chaikov.²³ Both authors make their interpretations while putting emphasis on the exploration of the ‘outer’ side of the relationship of the centre-periphery and on the inclusion part of the ‘exclusion’ – ‘inclusion’ process. Both authors make their case study on the Evenka group, one of the so-called ‘small peoples’ of Siberia. They analyze the role of the state in the relationship between the Soviet/Russian state and the Evenkas. Slezkine deconstructs the state discourses of the ‘war against backwardness’ of the ‘small people’ in its historical perspective and represents the modernization and ‘civilization’ of the “small people of the north”, ‘the non Russian subjects of the Russian state’, as conducted by the Soviet state, as a continuation of Russian missionary and imperialism. Slezkine says:

*“From the birth of the irrational savage in the early eighteenth century to the repeated resurrection of the natural man at the end of the twentieth, they [Evenkas] have been the most extreme case of backwardness-as –beastliness or backwardness-as-innocence. They have provided a remote but crucial point, while at the same time serving as a convenient testing ground for policies and images that grew out of those speculations.”*²⁴

But such kinds of ‘civilization’ and modernization processes were conducted not only at the peripheries of the USSR. Eastern Europe and especially Communist Eastern Europe is full of similar examples - the shepherds or ‘Vlachs’ in Yugoslavia, the nomads in Mongolia²⁵, the Gypsies in Hungary and Czechoslovakia.²⁶

²² ‘Each Serb claims at least a bit of Gypsy blood’ says Van der Port in Van der Port, Mattijs, 1998. *Gypsies, Wars and Other Instances of the Wild, Civilization and its Discontents in a Serbian Town*. Amsterdam University Press.

²³ Slezkine, *Arctic Mirrors* and Chaikov-Ssorin, *The Social Life of the State*.

²⁴ Slezkine, *Arctic Mirrors*.

²⁵ About modernization of nomads in Mongolia Humphrey says ‘During the socialist period, lasting from 1921 to 1990, the Mongolian cities used to be associated with industrialization and development, and the sparsely populated countryside, home to villagers and nomadic pastoralists, was considered a space to be civilized and urbanized’, in: Humphrey, Caroline & Sneath, David, *The End of Nomadism? Society, State and the Environment in Inner Asia*. Cambridge: The White Horse Press, 1999, 301 Cited in non published

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The examples of marginal groups and their relationship with various ‘centers’ which were mentioned above were given to illustrate that the attempt to tie the ‘exotic’ marginal groups to the ‘centre’, represented either by nation, culture or civilization, through the ideological means of modernization, did take place in many places of Eastern Europe during the Communist period. The Communist states used various instruments to incorporate the marginal groups from the ideological ones of propaganda and education to the new modes of production through collectivization and industrialization. None of these attempts, however, took the form of an actual cultural revolution, something what did occur during the Communist period in Cherna Mesta. As it was said, Bulgarian speaking Muslims represented always a political issue because of their marginal, liminal and peripheral character. Their ambiguous ethnic identity was problematic for the national state and also their geographic location of their settlements on the border with the greatest national enemies of the Bulgaria (until 1912 the border with the Ottoman Empire, later with a hostile Greece, Turkey and NATO), made the Bulgarian Muslims the centre of interest for every political regime which occurred during the country’s existence and the Communist one was not an exception.

Bulgarian speaking Muslims have played a similar role in the Bulgarian context. They are excluded and included at the same time and are have a role as a constituent element for the creation of the national or ideological identity of the majority. In the following text there will be analyzed how that process of identification was interrelated with the process of Communist Modernization in the particular case of Cherna Mesta.

article Hojer, Lars Absent Powers: Imaginary effects in Post –socialist Mongolia. Department of Cross-Cultural Studies, University of Copenhagen. For research on the reindeer groups in Siberia, see also Vinsthain, Sevyan, *Nomads of south Siberia, The Pastoral Economics of Tuva*. Cambridge: Cambridge University.Press,1980. Khazanov, M. Anatoly, *Soviet Nationality Policy During Perestrojka*. Falls Church, VA: Delphic Associates, 1991. About conceptualizations of ‘backwardness’ in Inner Asia see Kaplonski’s account Kaplonski, ‘One hundred years of History: Changing Paradigms in Mongolian Historiography of Inner Asia’, In *Occasional papers of the Mongolian and Inner Asia Studies*, 2, (1997), pp.48-68. Kaplonski says: ‘*The implication was that city versus countryside was socialism versus a backward, feudal and traditional way of life and that history was written as ‘the progressive nature of the socialist regime’*’, *ibid.*,57.

²⁶ In Czechoslovakia, Roma communities were subjected to various types of resettlements, for instance from southern Slovakia to regions of Sudetenland abandoned by expelled ethnic Germans after WWII.

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II. 2. The 'Pomaks' at the Periphery'

In the following subchapter the representations of the Bulgarian speaking Muslims as a 'peripheral' people will be discussed and will be followed by the questions why and how they were supposed to be tied to the 'civilization' of 'Communist modernity'. The question is posed what were the goals and what were the mechanisms of the Communist modernization? And why Bulgarian speaking Muslims remained to be 'at the periphery'? As an interpretation framework will used Hall's theory of culture. Hall says:

*"[...] actually identities are about questions of using the resources of history, language and culture in the process of becoming rather than being: not 'who we are' or 'where we came from', much as what we might become, how we have been represented and how that bears on how we might represent ourselves."*²⁷

Traditionally the Turks are regarded as the enemy of the Bulgarian national state.²⁸ The Pomaks as Bulgarian speaking Muslims are and have been treated somewhat differently. Their dual and marginal identity as seen from the point of view of state nationalism represented an issue for the Bulgarian state from its very beginning. Quite simply Pomaks *are* and at the same time *are not* national enemies.

Bulgarian ethnography and folklore studies describe the Pomaks as Bulgarians who were forcefully converted to Islam under Ottoman rule. (For more see Introduction and chapter III. Rename!) The opposite interpretation is that they converted to Islam voluntarily and thereby sinned against the Bulgarian nation. But in many narratives 'Pomaks' are represented not only as the 'enemy' but also as 'potential Bulgarians', if not s in fact the 'purest Bulgarians'. In the most of the Bulgarian ethnography Bulgarian or at least Slavic cultural rituals, language, customs and clothing are attributed to the Pomaks.²⁹ Thus the only distinctiveness feature is their religion and that is reduced to a

²⁷ Hall & de Gay, *Questions of Cultural Identity*, 4.

²⁸ For more discussion on this topic see the critique of Bulgarian historiography and ethnography in the thesis I. Introduction.

²⁹ See for instance Chadzinikolov, Christo ,Ch., *Iz Minaloto na Balgarite Mochamedani v Rodopite*, Sofija: BAN 1958, Konstantinov, 'Obshtevnite zabavlenija', Marinov, Anastas, *Bulgarite Mochamedani*. Sofija, 1944, Pecilkov, *Istoricheskata sadba na rodopskite balgari mohamedani*. Smoljan, 1993, Rajchevski, *Bulgarite Mohamedani*, Shishkov, 'Rodopskite Pomaci', Shishkov, *Pomatsite v Trite*

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varnish over their wholesome Bulgarian core. The ‘Pomak’s’ language has been proclaimed by Bulgarian linguists and also by anthropologist and ethnographers as the most original, the most beautiful dialect of the Bulgarian language.³⁰ Bulgarian archaeologists have discovered ruins of many Christian sanctuaries and various Christian symbols in the Rhodopes.³¹ The motive of ‘violent islamization’ or ‘forceful conversion’ is often present in the narratives of Bulgarian group in the region.³²

At the same time, however, Bulgarians conceive of the Rhodope Mountains as the hard core of the Bulgarian wilderness. The population of the Rhodopes is generally seen only as Muslim, although there are whole parts of the Central Rhodopes with a mixed population, where Orthodox Christians population and Muslims are in the same proportion. There are also Christian villages and small towns in the Western parts of the whole area. The Western regions, where Cherna Mesta is located, are generally considered as more ‘wild’ than the so-called Central Rhodopes. People who gave me a lift upon my arrival in the valley scattered with little villages with eloquently towering minarets would say: ‘Wild people live here’ and many times they would show undisguised fear on my behalf and at the same time a respect when they learned that I lived in that valley. A grandmother of a friend, a Bulgarian, who came to the Rhodopes to visit me when I was doing my fieldwork made the sign of the cross on her forehead when she learned where she was going. But in contrast to that the image of ‘the Pomaks’ has often also positive connotations. In general talk they are represented as ‘poor’, ‘mountaineers’, but at the same time as ‘people with a good heart’ and are known for their ‘hospitality’.

Bulgarski Oblasti, Shishkov, *Balgaromohamedanite*, Vasilev, *Rodopskite Bulgari Mochamedani*, Velceva, *Bulgari Mochamedani (Pomaci)*. Sofija, 1994, Vrancev, Nikolai, *Bulgari-Mohamedani (Pomaci)*. Sofija, 1948.

³⁰ See for instance Christian Giordano & Dobrinka Kostova & Evelyne Lohman-Minka II, *Bulgaria, Social and Cultural Landscapes*, Studia Ethnographica Fribourgesia, Fribourg: University Press Fribourg, 2000., speaks about the ‘Pomaks’ in Western Rhodopes as those with ‘the most beautiful’ Bulgarian dialect.

³¹ Apart from the findings made by an official Bulgarian archaeology, there are many other representations having the form of a narratives about ‘stone crosses’ found near to the Muslim villages. These narratives are never told by the Muslims, always by the ethnic Bulgarians. (About the ‘ethnic’ division and contest of narratives see also chapter VI. Resistance.)

³² See for instance textbook for gymnasia Delev, P. *Istorija na Bulgarija* (for 6-11 class). Sofija, 1996.

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On the other hand, in contrast to the image of 'hell', the Rhodopes are in a general discourse represented as the place with a 'purity of paradise'. Similarly as for Russians and Russian Communists Siberia holds the image of a 'hell' and a 'paradise'.³³ Bulgarians often say that in the Rhodopes there is the purest water, the deepest forests, the healthiest air. The Rhodopes represent a big theme in both Bulgarian national and also Communist fiction. In Communist belles-lettres the Rhodopes Mountains are represented as the backdrop for natural lyrics against the harsh themes of social conflict.³⁴

The village and the village community is represented as peripheral also in the narratives of the villagers. During the course of my fieldwork one of the most frequent phrases which were spoken by the villagers in various situations of gathering, chatting (in the dialect expressed by the Turkish word *moabet*) was: "We live here in the forests". The meaning of that phrase was clear; it was an expression of the peripheral character of life in the village. It is an expression of the perceptions of the physical space of the surrounding landscape and the whole life style of the villagers as peripheral.³⁵

The Communist modernization of Bulgarian speaking Muslims was tied completely to a colonialist 'orientalist' concept of the 'wild man' and the 'oriental Turk' of the Balkan variety.³⁶ According to the recollections of the former Communist bosses modernity in the Rhodopes was struggling with the 'darkness of the Middle Ages' and 'Turkish savagery' as will be shown in the narratives used below. During their talks the 'modernizers' quite often slipped into colonial-orientalist discourse. This was also the case in one of my first interviews with the main organizers of the modernization campaign, Angel and Pavol. In the context of speaking about the remaining and other measures the have often commented:

³³ Slezkine, Yuri, *Arctic Mirrors*.

³⁴ See for example novels by Chajtov Nikolaj *Divi razkazi* or *Rodopski Vlastelini*; Ekaterina Tomova, *Zabraveni ot nebeto* or Georgi Karaivanov *Po Visinite na Rodopa* and Velichko Karadzov *V Pametta na Rodopa*. Also, the in Bulgaria influential historical novel by Anton Donchev, *Vreme Razdelno* supports the narrative of 'forceful islamization' which took place in the Rhodopes. For a discursive analysis of a movie based on that novel, see Todorova, 'Conversion to Islam', 103-2.

³⁵ Berdahl, Daphne, *Where the World Ended, Re-unification and Identity in the German Borderland*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1999. This account is focused more on the *boundaries* than on the *periphery* per se, but it offers a good comparative case of a village community at the peripheral space.

³⁶ Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*.

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“If you met someone with braids on the path, it would clearly be some little Muslim.”

Or the former chairman of the National Committee said:

“They [the Pomaks] were very backward. They never cleaned their teeth... such very basic things...and we taught them all that. But they are industrious...”

Thus the Pomaks are those who are culturally backward but they also display some other qualities of the ‘noble savage’, they are represented as ‘industrious’ or at other times ‘sweet hearts’.

The former head of the National Committee was one of the most enthusiastic carriers of the ideas of modernization and of ‘enlightenment’. He believed in an almost natural necessity of ‘cultural progress’ and ‘development’ and he saw the imposition of cultural values, habits and categories on the backward Pomaks as an ethical demand. While we were sitting in the garden of his small villa in Jakoruda he recalled how it was when he started as a young teacher together with his wife to teach in one of the ‘Pomak’ villages:

Parcev 1.

“They were too backward and it was the result of their heritage of Turkish slavery. Jakoruda was under Turkish rule until 1912. As a young teacher I worked in the village of Smolevo where the first school was opened in 1926. That means twelve years after the liberation from Turkish slavery. In 1926 the school was opened. The children’s name were inscribed in a special book. Next to each of most of them [their names] was written that they studied for one or two years and then they left because of the parents’ lack of interest. And they didn’t get an education. They studied for one, two or three years and then they stopped. In 1954, fifty years ago, I went back to the same village as a young teacher and I opened a pre-gymnasium of five classes. We succeeded in convincing thirteen children, one girl and twelve boys, to move up to the fifth class. What did the people say? Why does he have to lose time in school? Our children won’t be teachers. They did not believe of themselves that they can afford it. Now, I will describe their material condition: there was no money for textbooks. I was buying them with my own money. For all of them. Thirteen pupils. After that I didn’t make a list. One of the pupils wrote down who gave what and who got what. They were waiting for the hens to lay eggs to bring to the shop and buy books. This was the standard of living fifty years ago. And because of that the first concern was for their material condition and the second was to convince them

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to believe that they could do it. They don't acknowledge it. It is offensive to them to say that we were going from house to house to convince the parents and that we even applied some sanctions in order to see that the law on basic education was fulfilled."

In this talk can be seen a perception that the Pomaks who bear the heritage of Turkish slavery have to be 'civilized'. In the narrative the personal engagement of the former Communist modernizers in the modernization project is quite apparent. Their personal engagement was of course related to the ethical aspect. To promote 'culture' and 'modernity' was an imperative of the day.

In the self-representations of Bulgarian speaking Muslims who are living in the region of Cherna Mesta there is present an aspect of 'otherness', a distinctiveness and exclusion. A most common name which people in Cherna Mesta would apply to themselves in terms of an ethnic name is 'Turks'. This phenomenon is described in several ethnographic and other accounts on the Bulgarian speaking Muslims.³⁷ The use of the ethnic name, 'Turks', is a complex issue. It is usually elderly people who are referring to themselves as to the Turks.³⁸

In situations where people would present themselves to me, when I was still a 'guest' and an 'outsider' they would use the term '*chajduti*'³⁹ This nickname was very often used in the context of the 'black market' with timber. Another nickname which people use a way of self representation is the name '*Babichani*'. This name refers to the old village of Babjak (see in Introduction) The villagers would for instance make a gloss: '*Babichani* have sugar even in the ashtray'. Another nickname which people would use is the name '*Indiani*'. This nickname have also connotations with the concepts of the 'other'. These and similar nicknames would be explained always as the

³⁷ About usage of the name Turks as an ethnic name see in Georgieva, Tzvetana & Zheljazkova, Antonina, 'L'identité en période de changement (observations sur certaines tendances du monde mixte des Rhodopes)', In: *Cahier Internationaux de Sociologie*, XCVI (1994).

³⁸ This is usually explained in the ethnographic accounts as a residuum of the Ottoman system of the nations, of the so called millets. According to that system, religion corresponded with the 'nation'. (millets means 'the peoples') Thus the Orthodox believers would be called 'Greeks', and the Muslims would be called 'Turks'.

³⁹ The name 'Chajduti' has in the Balkans a general meaning of 'bandits', people who are in some respect outside of the legal rules of the society. In the context of the village used 'chajduti' was mostly in the context of the 'black market' with timber.

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names for people who are 'wild' but have 'a good heart' and all of them would be pronounced with self-irony.

Thus, in spite of the effort and the measures undertaken by the Communist modernizers to prevent people 'from feeling like second class citizens' the sense of 'exclusivity' and 'marginality' remained present among the people in the village.

II. 3. Communist Modernization 'At any Cost'

At the beginning of this story in the 1950's the Rhodopes with their Muslims in the least developed regions were a country where wild mountain barbarians lived in mountain huts, rode in strange oriental clothes on their donkeys, had Muslim names and professed a dark religion from a former empire. In the village community which I have studied not only people's names were changed, but they were also forbidden to wear their usual clothing. Finally they were transferred in an organised way to a newly established village. Thus the state pried into the innermost privacy of people and all that was done with "the carrot and the stick".⁴⁰ I use this metaphor in a way which allows us to understand the sense of urgency of the situation on the part of the Communist bosses. The modernity had to be applied at the periphery quickly and at any cost. These are the words of the Communist modernizers which will often resonate in the narratives below.

Angel was one of my main respondents from the group of the promoters of modernization. He was one of the two most important and most powerful people in the region during several years in the course of the 1970's. He is considered and also considers himself as the ideological 'father' of Cherna Mesta village as a development project. He personally took part also in forceful measures undertaken during the renaming and re-dressing campaign in the region and became one of the negative heroes of the 'resistance' events which took place as reactions to these measures. Communist ideas became the destiny and believe of his life. He was very enthusiastic about my

⁴⁰ The model 'carrot and stick' is often used in the analyses of political science. This model is occasionally applied to another model called 'gulash socialism'. Both of these terms do not assign to Communism an ethical aspect or recognize the development enthusiasm and ethos and recognize only their totalitarian character.

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research and became one of the most important informants from the side of the former Communist elite.

At the time of the development programme he served in the function of the first secretary of the municipal committee of the Communist party. He was one of the main organizers of all the modernization in the region. He supported resettlement of the people and the creation of the new village. The modernization of the region and of the Bulgarian Muslims who lived there was his personal concern. During the renaming and the re-dressing campaign he worked as the most powerful man in the municipality. He was literally using the metaphor “the carrot and the stick” when he told me about ways of implementing the modernisation process, especially the renaming and re-dressing steps which met with the hostility of the villagers.

Angel 1.

“The main goal was to integrate everyone into one Bulgarian nation. We were very backward and wanted to catch up and do better. We gave the fist to anyone who slowed it or didn’t want it, because we needed to continue the process of modernization.[...] here were also a politics of economic pressure. For us it was most important that the process continues. I mean the process with the names. We were convinced that it would not succeed through violence alone. I knew it was necessary that there will be an improvement as a consequence. Just imagine that someone is constantly pestering them and suddenly someone gives them water and gives them a place to work. We call it carrot and stick [in Bulgarian *sladko i ljuto*].”⁴¹

This narrative reveals the way the concept of power was described in the metaphor of ‘the carrot and the stick’ by the promoters of the modernization themselves. In the narrative of the villagers is revealed that the measures of re-dressing, renaming and resettlement were perceived as one enhancing the others, also as a ‘carrot and stick’. (For instance see the narrative Medzu Saranski in the Chapter VI. Re-dress!)

The means of application of the modernization program were determined by the architecture of the power structure of the Communist state itself. Any program, although dictated from the centre by resolutions of the Communist party, was carried out by various agencies. Its realization was conducted not only by government ministries but

⁴¹ Notebook, 2004/ 1, pp.95, fragment of that narrative is also used in chapter III. Rename!

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also by the executive committee of the Communist Party, the cultural agency of the Fatherland Front [in Bulgarian Otechestveni front] of the Communist Party and by the labour unions. As a consequence there were cracks in the system which particular programs did not close. Some agencies used more 'sugar', others more 'stick' and others both. There was a problem but sometimes also an opportunity for resistance whenever agencies lacked proper links with one another. Nevertheless there was a common denominator that meant the same thing to all participants, the continuation of the process, in short the *progress* itself.

Communist modernization came down from a high. It is carried out down a descending order at different levels. It begins with Marx and is refined by Lenin's modernization doctrines which are applied to the entire state modernization program of individual countries down to the modernization programs in every region, district, city and community. In Cherna Mesta literally to the individual. I wouldn't be exaggerating much if I were to say that in Cherna Mesta everyone had their own modernizer. The modernization program was a personal deal for the local Communist bosses. Local Communist bosses not only personally oversaw how urbanization, industrialisation and assimilation were proceeding but also what names people had and what clothes they wore. A woman from the village recalls:

“(...) Stary [the name of the former mayor] went round the village with the police and pestered us to take off our pantaloons (...).”

This fragment of a narrative represents how the measures as perceived by the villagers conflicted with their cultural categories, beliefs and practices. The response of the villagers to the modernization measures will be explored in each of the respective chapters and then in more details in the chapter VI. Resistance. This narrative and similar ones, which will be used in the following chapters, reveal that the modernization at the periphery was characterized by a conflict between the two groups and ideologies. In other respects it also supports my methodological argumentation which says that 'modernization at the periphery' has to be approached from the perspective of the two groups - the modernizers on one side and those who were to be modernized on the other side.

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II. 4. Creating of the New Communist Men

The Communist party resolutions proscribed a modernization campaign for the periphery, concretely for the Bulgarian speaking Muslims.⁴² And thus all efforts of local representatives of the state, such as high functionaries of the Communist Party, representatives of the state institutions such as the National Council, people from the Fatherland Front, village mayors, teachers and policemen were directed toward achieving all the properties of the modern Communist Man among the ‘Pomaks’. That means a modern man, in our case a modern Bulgarian who can read and write, brush his teeth, keep a civilized diet and practice hygiene, live in a walled house with big windows and wear city clothing.

This effort then found its articulation in the three assimilation measures, the renaming, the re-dressing and the resettlement, carried out by the Communist party and by the state. And as will be argued and demonstrated throughout next chapters the assimilation measures were not merely an awkward way of national homogenisation and integration of the Muslim minority into the socialist system, but also as an effort to literally create the new Communist Man. As the first secretary of the local Party Committee says:

”The goal was to create new people. Collectivism, that meant principally united brigades, training in patriotism and internationalism.”

The reasons for the ‘modernization’ measures undertaken through renaming and re-dressing were seen as an ethical imperative. Ceca, the former boss of the local Fatherland front about the assimilation campaign recalls:

“We didn’t want them [Pomaks] to feel like second class citizens!”

The cultural and social distinctiveness of the Bulgarian speaking Muslims in the thinking of the Communist modernizers was understood as one of the major dangers for the success of socialism. Angel continues in his recollection and says:

⁴² The document was issued by the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party and was called ‘*Resolution on Class, Party and Patriotic Education of the Bulgarian Muslims*’, issued in the 1970.

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"We thought that that the situation could mean a threat to socialism. His [the 'Pomak's'] sense of inferiority, his sense of identity, which told him that he is something different. We felt we had the power and the possibility to do what had not been successful in 1912 and in 1964."⁴³

The chairman of the National council told what he remembers about his youths when he worked as a teacher in the remote Muslim village in the region:

Parcev 2.

"I think that a policy of support for protectionism was pursued starting with the state and ending with the average Bulgarian. It was conducted not only in accordance with some directive. We simply wished that [the Pomaks] would emerge from that state of backwardness. They were very backward. Materially. But not only materially. Well. I know no that since I worked in the region. I was the director of a school and I worked in their villages. How do you think that they took a bath? Mama would pour one bucket of water into a wash basin. And that alone was the washing. You know what a wash basin is? To pour water from above in this way. They didn't know how to clean their teeth. They never cleaned them. Such very basic things. And we taught them all that. I don't think that's resorting to force(...)."

Also the Fatherland Front, the cultural agency of the Communist Party, began to carry out a program whose goal was to eliminate those manifestations of everyday life which constituted the symbols of tradition, backwardness and cultural and religious peculiarities. For Muslim girls there was a three month obligatory course in cooking, sewing and keeping a modern household. They were supposed to turn into 'modern' housewives who were educated, emancipated, employed, politically conscious. All the aspects of emancipation as part of modernization at the periphery will be discussed in the chapter IV. Re-dress! For men there was the army and work in the 'socialist brigades' on the so called 'constructions of socialism'. The question here is if the ideal man was really a "Communist" or if in reality the outcome of that effort lead to the creation of a 'citizen' with cultural values of the 'middle class'.

All of this, the 'civilization' of marginal groups, the promotion of modernity at the periphery, the creating of the 'new man and woman', required a huge effort on the

⁴³ The years mentioned in the narratives are the years of major 'renaming' and assimilation campaigns. They took place in the years 1912, 1942, 1964 and then in the 1973, of which Angel was one of the main organizers.

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part of the politicians, the party functionaries and of the state. And according to the narratives of the former modernizers quoted above and also in the following chapters, the ideological driving force was of an *ethical* character.

In contrast to other state organised development programs conducted elsewhere in the world the Communist program of modernization is a very homogeneous project both in terms of space and time. In contrast as well with the campaigns of Communist states which changed every year or two (in one case ‘a battle for self-sufficiency in food production’, then again the ‘battle against the potato beetle’ or the ‘battle against the kulaks’) the modernization program started as the main ideological doctrine right from the beginning of the Communist regime and continued uninterruptedly for several decades almost to the end.

This chapter reveals that one of the aims of the Communist ideology was to introduce modernization among the marginal groups which were by the ideology of modernity and development considered to be at the periphery. There are several examples of such effort in the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia and other East European countries. The modernization promoted by the Communist state among the Bulgarian speaking Muslims is another example of that effort. The ethnography reveals that the Communist state was based not only on the oppressive practices of a totalitarian regime, but on the ethical imperatives coming from the ideas of the Communist modernization. In that respect we can see parallels between the Communist modernization and any other kind of responses to the ideas of *enlightenment* and ‘*civilization*’ which took the form of modernization.

In spite of the entire effort made by the state and Communist party the Bulgarian speaking Muslims remained ‘at the periphery’ until current days, both in the way they are represent themselves and also in the way they are represented. Thus, in the sense of the Hall’s argument, the Communist modernization paradoxically strengthened the sense of distinctiveness of that group and enhanced its specific image and identity. In that sense the project of Communist modernization applied on the Bulgarian speaking Muslims was unsuccessfull.

III. Rename! Reconciliation with the Past

III. Rename!: Reconciliation with the Past

This chapter analyses the renaming campaign which took place as one of the triplet of the assimilation measures, renaming, re-dressing and resettlement, applied by the state and the Communist party to the group of Bulgarian speaking Muslims in the Cherna Mesta valley during the course of 1970s. Can be the 'renaming' campaign interpreted as a restoration of the past and 'order'.¹ This chapter discuss the relationship between the ritual, narrative and the past.

Recollections about the renaming, in contrast to the recollections about 're-dressing' or resettlement, are a central theme in the memory of the Communist regime. Renaming as well as the subsequent return of the original names in the 1990s are a major themes in the narratives of both groups-the former representatives of the Communist elite, and also those who were primarily subjects of the organized changing of the names, the members of the Muslim community. Renaming was one of the organized procedures which were accompanying the national modernization program and its articulations in the local development. Therefore, the first chapter of the section is dedicated to analyses of the memory of the subjective appropriations of the renaming process.

This chapter argues that the so called renaming campaign organized by the Central Party Committee of the Communist Party and applied to the members of Bulgarian speaking Muslims group was not only a radical method of assimilation but part of the *modernization* organized by the Communist Party and the state. The new values introduced by that process were primarily 'modern' and 'Communist' and only

¹ More about the relationship between the ritual, state and the past see for instance in Kertzer, David, I., 'The Role of Ritual in the State Formation', In Wolf, E.R. *Religious Regimes and State Formations: Perspectives from European Ethnology*, Albany: State University of New York Press, pp. 85-104. About ritual as a restoration and reintegration of order see for instance, Bloch, Maurice, *Ritual, History and Power: Selected Papers in Social Anthropology*. London: the Anthlone Press,1989. About the relationship of the politics, historical narrative and alternative histories within socialist systems see Watson, Rubie, S., ed., *Memory, History and Opposition Under State Socialism*, School of American Research Press: Santa Fe, New Mexico, 1994, and particularly on Bulgaria see book by Kaneff, Deema, *Who Owns the Past? The Politics of time in a 'Model' Bulgarian village*'. New York: Berghahn Books, 2004.

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secondary 'national' and 'Bulgarian'. The aims of the renaming campaign were rather *ethical* 'integration' with the rest of the society and '*equalization*' of all citizens and '*re-conciliation*' with the past. The procedures of the campaign were rather immoral and the responses from the ranks of the Bulgarian speaking Muslims were mostly negative. According to the recollections of the villagers the renaming campaign together with the pressure against the 'traditional' elements of women's dress in many cases provoked the resettlement from Konarsko to the new village in the valley. (See the narrative of Medzu Sharanski in the chapter IV. Re-dress!).

Was renaming a simple implication of power upon the religious minority or was it an articulation of response to modernity through implementing measures of 'civilization' and modernization? In this context the question arises why was so important for representatives of the Communist state to change people's names at any cost and why those whose conditions were meant to be improved by the renaming resisted these procedures? Can we interpret the renaming as a sort of political ritual? As a 'purification' aiming at the elimination of Muslim name as an element foreign to the national culture?

The narratives reveal that the renaming had the function of a symbolical act, although its consequences were far more realistic. The change of all the three personal names had an impact on the every day life of the people. To get a new name meant to get a new identity: from property hold, legal status, employment, health care, education. One of the organizers of the renaming commented on that: "We have changed the names even of a dead person". Thus, we can argue that renaming was more than a symbolic act of national 'purification'. Renaming together with re-settlement and re-dressing was aiming at creation of a new modern Communist man/woman.

The analysis in this chapter is focused on recollections of the renaming campaign which was taking place in Cherna Mesta in the years 1973-1974 in parallel with the first wave of resettlement and with the 're-dressing' campaign. As an ethnographic material are used oral histories, local narratives and anecdotes.

III. Rename! Reconciliation with the Past

III. 1. Renaming Campaigns in Historical Perspective

From secondary literature, historical sources, and also according to some oral recollections of the villagers, during the course of 20th century took place several waves of renaming of Muslim population in Bulgaria. Several times the Bulgarian government carried out an effort at cultural assimilation by means of an organised conversion to Orthodox Christianity or by changing the Muslim personal names to Christian ones in personal documents.

As I said, renaming campaigns are an inherent and stable motive in the memory of the villagers and in general Bulgarian speaking Muslim in the region of Cherna Mesta. People in Cherna Mesta often refer to recollections of the renaming made by their elderly kin or parents. For instance Medzu Mustafa at Sufrichen recalls about memories of his mother:

“From those times when it became Bulgaria here, from the year 1878 till now, they have baptised us ten times. In the year 1908, my mother was telling me, she was still a little girl, they brought them to a church and there they have baptised them, and again in the year 1928, and again in the year 1932.” [baptise means in this context conversion to Christianity often consisting also change of name].

The renaming campaigns officially recognized and described in secondary literature took place in the period of the years 1912-1913, 1941-1943, 1956, 1960, 1972 and 1984 and 1984-5, the latest was concern only with the renaming of the Turkish minority.² Most of these procedures are interpreted in terms of national homogenization and ‘Bulgarization’.³ Some of the renaming campaigns coincide or were accompanied by symbolical conversions of Muslim dress of both genders. (The re-dressing

² Empirical data about the renaming campaigns see for instance in Krasteva –Blagoeva Evgenija, ‘About the names and renaming of the Bulgarian Moslems (1912-2000)’, In *Ethnologija Bulgarica*, 3 (2006), pp. 63-75, 63.

³ For more details about the first wave in 1912-1913 see for instance collection of primary sources in form of official renaming documents Georgiev, Vasil & Trifonov, Slavo, *The Conversions of Bulgarian Mohammedans 1912-1913*. Sofia, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, 1995. For details about the campaign which took place in the 1930s and 1940s and the patriotic movement Rodina see in Marinov, A, Petar, ed., *Sbornika, Rodina. Izdanie na Balgaro- Mochamedanskata Kulturno-Prosvetna I Blagotvoritelna Druzba “Rodina” v grad Smolen*. I (1937-1938), II (1938-1939), III (1939-1940). Smolen. 1944 general about minority policy towards Muslim minority in Bulgaria see Stojanov, Valerij, *Turskoto naselenie v Bulgarija mezdu poljusite na etniceskata politika*. Sofia, 1998.

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campaigns called also ‘throwing away of feredzets and fez”, in Bulgarian ‘otchvarlaneto na feredzeta i fezovete’, and the relationship between re-dressing campaign, modernization, ‘traditions’, Islam and gender is in more detail discuss in the chapter Re-dress!).

The renaming process applied on ‘Pomaks’ s in the 1960s and 1970s is known the less than the ‘re-naming’ campaign which was applied upon the Turkish community in Bulgaria in the years 1984-1985.⁴ The renaming campaign among Turkish minority was organized by the Central Committee of the Party and was officially called ‘The process of Rebirth’, [‘Vazroditelen Process’]. The ‘Process of Rebirth’ was used as an official name only for the campaign undertaken in the year 1984 among members of the Turkish minority.⁵ However, the representatives and major organizers of the renaming from the ranks of Communist elite refer to the ‘Process of Rebirth’ also in relation to the renaming campaigns organized among Bulgarian speaking population in the Western Rhodope Mountains in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The former Communist elite members often refer to the campaign which was undertaken among Bulgarian speaking Muslims a as a ‘training’ for the renaming implied on the Turkish minority.

III. 2. Renaming in Cherna Mesta: Reconciliation with the Past

The renaming which took place in Cherna Mesta at the beginning of the 1970s was organized on the basis of official political resolutions having the official form of a Resolution a Programme and declared by the central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party.⁶ People were supposed to change their original Muslim names to

⁴ In political analyses this campaign is usually interpreted as a complicated plot serving the purposes both of internal Bulgarian minority policy an international political game.

⁵ Ethnographic accounts on the assimilation process applied on Turkish minority, see for instance Georgieva, Tzvetana, ‘Vazroditelnijat Process’ i ‘Goljamata Ekskurzija’ (Opit za oralna Istorija), In *Ethnicheska Kartina v Bulgarjia*, Sofia, Princeton: Klub 90, 1993.pp. 98-105.; Kuseva, M. Edin, ‘Vestnik za Vazroditelnija Process’, In *Ethnicheska Kartina v Bulgarjia*, Sofia, Princeton: Klub 90, pp.157-164.

⁶ For a secondary source giving an overview of the official declarations made by the Bulgarian Communist Party in relation to the cultural and minority policy towards Muslim minority (the Turks and the Bulgarian speaking Muslims) of the Communist state, from the point of view of the defenders of that policy, see Zagorov, Orlin, *Vazroditelnija Proces, Teza a Antiteza, Otricanie na otricanieto*, Sofia: Pandora, 1993. The material he describes relates mostly to the Turkish minority. One of the political resolutions he mentions which relates to the ‘Pomaks’ is ‘Programa’, the program which came out from Central Party Committee meeting on 10.3. 1964, Political Bureau of Central Committee of Bulgarian Communist Party, measures for the fight against the ‘turkisation of Cigans, Tatars and Bulgarian Mohamedans’

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Bulgarian names, but as much as possible not into Christian names. So the national Bulgarian identity was emphasized and not the confessional identity. The Bulgarian Academy of Sciences has created for that purpose a list of names which were 'Bulgarian' but not 'Christian'.

Its procedures were assisted by state's institutions of power (the forces of the police and the army) and at the local village level was also supported by organized groups of 'volunteers', so called 'hunting groups', [in Bulgarian 'lovni grupi']. The renaming campaign which took place in the first part of the 1970s had led according to the oral histories to a conflict between the villagers from Cherna Mesta and the other villages in the valley and the members of the local Communist elite. (The recollections of the conflict are analysed in the Chapter VI. Resistance).

Elderly people generally remember the renaming campaign as forceful and violent. Their recollections were accompanied by the negative emotions, bitterness and feelings of ancient harm and insult. This was the case for the recollections of a group of elderly men which I met by chance in one of the cafés in Jakoruda. This was a former "cultural house", a socialist enterprise, which was at that time a place of gathering for elderly Muslim men from the town. They had not previously met me and kept calling me a 'journalist' and were keen on telling me their story. I listened to them for several hours and have recorded their talk.

Destan (88) recalled:

'[...] They chased us with weapons through the houses. Whoever did not wish to be renamed at home, they took away to the office. There even was a battle.'

(Politicheskoto Buro na CK BKP meroprijatija za borba protiv turcheeneto na cigani, tatari i bulgari mohamedani.), *ibid.*21p. Krasteva-Blagoeva speaks about that particular program as applying to the region of 'Chech' which is a local name for a territory in Western Rhodopes. Cherna Mesta valley region is part of that territory, see Krasteva –Blagoeva Evgenija, 'About the names and renamings'. Konstantinov relates the renaming procedures with the resolution of the Central Committee of 7 July 1978 "*Resolution on the Improvement of Work among the Descendants of Islamized Bulgarians*", see in Konstantinov, Yulian, Alhaug Gulbrand, *Names, Ethnicity in Bulgaria 1912-1992*, Oslo: Novus Press, Tromsø Studies Linguistics 15, 1995, 32. My respondents, the local carriers of the renaming campaign from the rank of the Party officials usually refer to the *Resolution of the secretariat of Central Party Committee of Bulgarian Communist Party for class and patriotic education Bulgarian Mohamdans*, 17.7.1970. [in Bulgarian Resenia na sekretarijat na CK BKP za klassovo –partijno i patriotichno vazpitanie na Bulgarite mohamedani, issued 17.7. 1970].

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Q: How was it when they changed your name? Mustafa, (82): “Violent. We were against it. There even were victims. The militia was mobilized. Everything was blocked. They occupied every house.’

People in their mid-age remember the renaming rather with the irony and often make anecdotes and fun of it. The current mayor of the village, Salih (45) when I asked him a question about renaming recalled:

Q: And what was the renaming like? They chased us and we hid in the woods. How would they give you a name? They grabbed you and said what name do you want? I was Belija, so they gave me the name of Beluuna. Each as he wanted. If the Muslim family name was Karafiz, they made it Karafov. It was according to the phone book. Vrub [nickname] hid in a flour sack. He was white all over. There were jeeps in the village. I was four years old. I hid in the bathroom.” (Notebook, 2004, Harvest on Leve)

This narrative was told within a group of mid age people and these short narratives served for general amusement.

Women from the village recalled the renaming mostly negatively, with the feeling of dislike, insult and shame. As for example a woman from the family in which I lived responds to my question.

Emine 1.

“What was the renaming like? ‘Awful. We thought they would kill us. It was awful. As soon as they seized you, they did what they wanted. Brother or sister’s name remains the same. At the same time they chased us to take off our dresses and pantaloons. We should go naked. Like them. But we weren’t used to it. Like young people are used to go now. Some others covered up again. But we couldn’t cover up. How could you stand it if they didn’t give you anything to eat. Q.: How is it? They didn’t pay you [a salary] if you didn’t change your name? “ No. They did not. They did not give as a bread. It is good, Lenka, if you don’t change your name.”

People from the village also recall the way in which the renaming was conducted and that not only the act or renaming but also the procedure was humiliating for them. For instance, villager Sharata, remembered:

“The whole time he lived there at the town hall in Konarsko. He grew up there. He was the commander of a volunteer unit. If you went to the

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cascade [to work], they would grab you and rename you and that night they would eat and drink at the expense of the ‘Sovet’ [meant ‘Naroden Sovet’, the National Committee]”.⁷

There is another recollection, when Medzu Musa recalls how the commander of the volunteer unit made a mistake and wrote into the so called renaming document, the renaming application, his old Muslim name, instead of his new ‘Bulgarian’ name. (See in Chapter VI. Resistance and see Figure 2).

Another fragment is from the interview with a man whose nickname is Vrub, one of the first people who had resettled to Cherna Mesta from Konarsko after his house in the Konarsko burned.

Q: And how did they organize it? “Either your head or jail. If it doesn’t go as we want then they throw you into a jail’ Q: And whose idea was that? The Bulgarian Communist Party. Who organized all that? That Nemchov was a good fellow and he put pressure on the people. If you didn’t want, then you go to Belen, if you have heard of Belen, there is a jail there...”

In the memory of the villagers the renaming stays as closely related to the expropriation of the property and to the resettlement.

“Q: ‘When they changed your name, were you still up above or down below?’ ‘They decided about the names, but I was already down below. But when they changed the names, there came a time. It was during Todor Zivkov. It happened in his time. They decided that they would do it, but it couldn’t be so. Because everyone wanted to choose what he wished to be. He could want to be a Czech or a German. But nonetheless it came to that.”

The narratives above and also the narratives presented in chapter resistance demonstrate that the renaming in the recollections represented as radical and as being accepted by the villagers as oppressive and forceful. It can be argued that the renaming campaign whether thought of as an ‘evil’ or as an opportunity for equality is regarded today by the local people negatively, as ‘the stick’ of the Communist modernization on periphery.

⁷ Tape record, Musa Abdulev.

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And what the organizers of the renaming campaign say? Was the renaming campaign merely an act of power and the imposition of control and hegemony over a marginalized group which considered from point of view of the national state considered to be 'marginal' and problematic? Or was there something different which led the local Party official to take a radical measures? What was the ideological input which led the Party officials to take a military jeep and to follow people around their homes, fields, on their way to work in their gardens and forests, and catch them in order to change names written in the 'lichna karta', (ID card), represented by a piece of paper, which they had hidden in their pocket?

According to one interpretation key the renaming could perhaps be seen as exercises of power and structuring of the social world.⁸ When borrowing Kreutzer's words, as 'locking people into identities' through giving them a new names.⁹ But can be the renaming process interpreted in these terms? What was the reason behind all these actions which lead to procedures which could be equally evaluated as 'crimes of Communism' as well as modernization process and a response to an *enlightenment*? Can be renaming understood also as something else then only a national homogenization or malevolency?

Let's now at this point of argumentation hear the voices of the organizers and people who were involved ideologically, politically and personally in the renaming on the side those with a power. Let us now present the narrative of the main organizer of the Communist modernization, of that one who calls himself the 'father of the village', the real *homo faber*. Paradoxically, he and people who became political prisoners during his reign, are the main heroes of the narratives and recollections about the renaming campaign. The following narratives reveal that he was very well aware of the ethical ambivalence of the renaming process. As the former first secretary of the District

⁸ 'By structuring the perception which social agents have of the social world the act of naming helps to establish the structure of this world', Bourdieu, Pierre, *Language and Symbolic power*, 1991, 105, cited in: Kertzer, David I., *Politics and Symbols, The Italian Communist Party and the Fall of Communism*. Yale University Press, 1996, 66.

⁹ Similar interpretation made David Kerzter in his analyses of 'renaming' the Italian Communist Party after its split in the 1980s. "The same was clear to Michael Foucault as well, for Foucault viewed the ability to lock people into certain identities as the kernel of the exercise of power", Kertzer, I, David, *Politics and Symbols, The Italian Communist Party and the Fall of Communism*. Yale University Press, 1996, p. 66, refers to Foucault, *Power and Knowledge*, 1980.

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Committee of the Communist Party expresses his understanding of the goals of the renaming campaign:

Angel 1.

“The main goal was to integrate everyone into one Bulgarian nation. We were very backward and wanted to catch up and do better than the USSR. We gave the fist to anyone who slowed it down or didn't want it, because we needed to continue the process.”

Thus the re-naming campaign can be interpreted as part of wider, almost transcendental process of *fast* modernization. They needed to be better and faster than the Soviet Union. And integration, in sense of equalization of all of the citizens, was a condition. And the process had to continue! Thus was legitimized usage of force and institutional pressure. And what else? What else was at the stake besides of the ‘integration’? Why did the renaming *have* to take place?

Angel, the first secretary continued:

“There was the deep conviction that 350 years ago in Jakoruda there was forceful Islamization. What do you think can happen across eight generations? Historical memory is lost but not the mother tongue. When the names were changed that was a great revivalist period. There was one teacher who wrote his thesis on the language in Smolevo and in Konarsko. I was in one village. The gathering was very educational. People were interested. They were asked: do you have a cow? What is its name? Sunday. [The word for Sunday is ‘Nedelja’ and has typical sound of Slavic language]. Because it was born on Sunday. Our enslaver changed our names, but he couldn't change everything. Despite all that, they are Bulgarians because they sing Bulgarian songs. And his talk made a big impression on me and on the people. And I made an image for myself who these people are. Their origin is something different. They are a part of the Bulgarian nation which had the misfortune to be Muslimized.”

This and also the following narratives demonstrate that the renaming program having this name ‘Process of Rebirth’ was legitimized by the Bulgarian national myth. To the members of the former Communist elite who were thinking the the ideological frame of Bulgarian national narrative, the renaming was a way of *re-conciliation* with

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the past. Renaming was thus rehabilitation of the ancient sin made by ‘forceful islamization’.¹⁰

Thus, the renaming can be interpreted as a reconciliation with the past through the radical elimination, almost purification of the elements of the Muslim identity and culture through the radical elimination of the Muslim names. In the contexts of the dichotomic cultural narratives in the Balkans the renaming has a symbolical meaning of religious *conversion*. (More exploration about the motives and procedures of forceful *conversions* see in the interpretations of the narratives of the Bulgarian speaking Muslims in Chapter IV. Resistance.) The renaming is in various anecdotes and comments of every day talk occasionally called by the members of the Muslim community as ‘*pokrastvaneto*’. “*Pokrastaveneto*’ means baptism, but in that particular context it means rather ‘Christianization’ and refers to an official campaign of Christianization which took place in the years 1912-1913.)¹¹

From point of view of the Communist organizers of the renaming campaign, the renaming was a way to overcome the cultural marginality of the ‘Pomaks’. Paradoxically, the renaming organized by the Communist state, was performed and perceived as a *conversion*. And *conversion* in that particular cultural environment resonates with the classical cultural narratives at the Balkans, polarizing the distinction between good and bad, ‘us’ and ‘them’, between ‘ours’ and the ‘others’ through juxtaposing the Christian, Orthodox and European to Islamic, Muslim, Ottoman or Turkish.

¹⁰ Bulgarian ethnography traditionally represents the islamization as forcefull and violent. In contemporary history and ethnography there are still presented the two opinions. For example Todorova mentions this on-going discussion about the islamization of Pomaks. See Todorova, ‘Identity (Trans)formation’, 64. For other interpretations, examples of rigid nationalistic approach see for instance Dimitrov, Strashimir, ‘Demografski Otnosheniya I Proniknovane na Isljama v Zapadnite Rodopi i Dolinata na Mesta prez XV-XII’, in *Rodopski sbornik* 1, (1965) and Dimitrov, Strashimir, ‘Pronikvane na Mohamedanstvoto sred Bulgarite v Zapdanite Rodopi prez XV-XVII vek’, *Rodopi* 6-7 (1972). As an example of reinterpretation from the 1990s see for instance Zeljazkova, Antonina *Spread of Islam in the Western Balkan Lands under Ottoman Rule*, Sofia: Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, 1990, pp.52-160. (About the motive of forceful conversions to Islam and how they are used in the discourses and the ethnographic and historical narratives see the references in Introduction pp, about how are these narratives subjectively appropriate see Chapter IV. Resistance).

¹¹ Georgiev & Trifonov, *The Conversions*.

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Another concern which led the local bearers of modernity to the awkward steps of renaming was a concern about the 'Pomaks' identity. This concern was not a banal articulation of the need for national homogenization, but rather a concern about *integrity* of the members of the Muslim group and to certain extent also a fear of liminality. Liminality, understood in Douglas's sense of a 'tension between pollution and uncleanness and sanctity'.¹² In other words the 'Pomaks' had to be renamed because of their indefinable character. They were considered dangerous, while being in danger themselves and emanating danger to the others.

According to the former local Communist politicians Bulgarian speaking Muslims did not know to whom they belong. For instance, Parcev, who is even now, after all that happened, a passionate Communist and bearer and promoter of Communist modernization ideas. He was not a defender of the oppression and forceful measures undertaken during the assimilation process. He tried to defend and find explanation to the renaming in the following word. During my interview he recalled:

Parcev 1.

"Fifty years ago one of my pupils said to me. He said. 'Comrade teacher', such was the form of address at the time- we didn't farm out any sort of analysis on the theme- he simply bore it in himself. He sought an auspicious moment when he found me alone without other people. He said to me: 'We don't know who we are.' That was fifty years ago, an eleven or twelve year old boy. The question interested him. I asked why? He said: 'In fact we have Turkish Mohedanism which is bound to the Turkish faith, but we speak Bulgarian. Who are we?' I said to him: 'You have to answer that yourself.' And today he is in the same situation as fifty years ago. They don't have an answer to the question who they are."

And later in another context he continues. This time explaining and trying to justify the forceful process of renaming. According to the following narrative some members of the Bulgarian speaking Muslims group wanted to change their names in order to elevate and improve their own social status.

Parcev 2.

¹² Douglas, Mary, *Purity and Danger. An Analyses of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*. London and New York, Routledge, 2006.

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“What do I think of name changing? Others think that too. It was unjustified force. Well. There were then individual people who wanted to change their names in order to join the Bulgarian nation. Wasn't it so? But they persecuted them. Others persecuted them. The pressure on them was enormous. I remember the year 1958. I was studying then. One boy came back from the military service. He had been embarrassed there with such a name. He was convinced that he was Bulgarian. And he changed his name. And that was very difficult. The Bulgarians hardly accepted him and the Moslems hated him. They hated him very, very much. I am interested how that has continued over the years. He went back to his old name. He couldn't exist without doing so. He was simply isolated. I remember the village of Smolevo. One young man declared before me and everyone else that he took such a name in the barracks and that he gladly took it. But under a certain amount of pressure. He remained isolated. He was under enormous pressure. He came to me at school and said: for me this isn't life. And he left. He moved somewhere in northern Bulgaria. And there are other such cases. It means that they were at odds with one another. But such forceful name changing isn't just. In fact by force. Isn't it so? But they were caught up in a system which would not let those who wanted or wish to change their names to get out of that. Therefore they were afraid they might break their necks. Sometime in the nineties I read material from one scientist of some institute at the ministry office. She wrote: up to 1984, that is before the change of Turkish names, more than thirty thousand Turks adopted Bulgarian names without anyone taking an interest in it. Simply because they felt uncomfortable and wanted to join the Bulgarian nation. That is voluntarily. And later it is clear that it wasn't easy for those people. Those who wanted to, I will tell you there were some in Jakoruda with Arabic names, but outwardly they presented themselves as Bulgarian. They felt uncomfortable. "There were two brothers. Both brothers did not take back their Turkish names. One of their sons was a scientific worker in the institute for motor cars in Sofia. And they kept their Bulgarian names. And so they joined. Another two brothers remained in Buncevo. And because I worked in the neighbouring region I said: Do you know that one here? They shook their heads and said: we don't know them. They didn't feel comfortable that their relatives had Bulgarian names.”

This narrative represents typical contra-narrative to those of the villagers. It represents the Bulgarian speaking Muslims as those who were willing to 'integrate' themselves into the 'civilized' world. And in similar terms comments also the former first secretary of the Party Committee. According to them, Bulgarian speaking Muslims were willing

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change their names and the renaming campaign was there just to help them to elevate their status and to resolve their identity.

Angel 2 “These people are very broken apart. Deep within themselves they felt that they are Bulgarian’ [...] In the year 1964 people came to the railway station to change their names. They showed such determination. That’s how it was then. Our politicians were determined to do it in an uncompromising way. It is said that our politicians wished to do it forcefully. But it was forceful. It was forceful in 1972 but it did not succeed.”¹³

At this point we can see that the modernizers admit that the renaming campaign was harsh and tough. The modernization, articulated in this case through renaming, had to take place *at any cost*. The reconciliation with the past and the undoing of the ancient crime had to take place at any cost. Despite the obstacles and resistance. In that perspective renaming can be interpreted as a way of modern sacrifice.

My interviews referring to the renaming campaign which I conducted with the Communist functionaries were always emotionally and ethically very sensitive, because renaming was one of the immediate causes of the ‘resistance’ which had far greater consequences for members of the village community and also of the former political elite. And that was also the case in another talk I have with the Angel.

Q: And I wanted to ask about that. If there was some sort of connection, a new village and new names? “No. It was before that. Such preconditions did not exist. But there was something here, it was not a voluntary process. The change of names. It wasn’t voluntary! We’ll talk of that elsewhere. I will tell you how everything happened...” Q: It is very interesting, because it is actually a part of modernisation. “Everyone sees it differently. At the same time everything is evaluated one sided. You scarcely see this only with the names. That party wanted to change people’s names. But that isn’t true.” Q: Then how was it? “You must go back. Far back. Three hundred years. So that you understand why that once happened. They don’t say so now, but it is true” That means that it was like returning to the true past? “You know that inwardly I was opposed to it. At that time as a young man. It’s unnecessary. It isn’t important. Whether one is Asan of Ivan. For me that was not significant. I had dozens of Moslem friends. Because I had grown up in that district. My house when you go along the main street was the last Christian

¹³ Notebook, 2004,1, pp. 58, 59.

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home and then there were only Moslems. And we were the best of friends. There was no fence between our courtyards. They came to us and we went to them. There were no such problems. But slowly, slowly things changed. And they changed because of the propaganda that was conducted. That these people were backward. It was suggested to them that they aren't a part of the Bulgarian nation. That couldn't continue for ever. We felt that the names were one of the conditions. They always had the feeling that it wasn't their country. That sooner or later they would go off to Turkey. That they would resettle. We marveled that there could be such a thing here. Why is it so widespread? In Bulgaria they went to school, worked, lived and travelled and so forth. Why are there these problems from time to time? This relationship to a young man or to a girl. We had got letters at the party committee. 'Why do we go about in veils?' 'Why can't you help us break with such a thing?' We'll talk later how things were. But as long as we're talking about our cooperative, one of our last directors (predsednik) , Alexandar Chadzicenev, is alive...Krum Grakov. He was the last president. But it no longer was the TKZS but rather DSS. That means that those of us in charge said that we will do something for agriculture, because the region was difficult for the cooperative."

And here is another narrative which put a light on the role of the renaming not only as a aim of the national programme but also as one of the articulations of Communist modernization and development of the region. Angel and Pavol, the two former policy makers recalled:

"Renaming was not important for the policy of the Party. It was fundamental that the standards of the population be raised. In order to compare the Christian and the Muslim population, but the population was backward. They made their living by sheparding. Religion was an obstacle. The community (the administrative unit) could not raise itself economically without having educated people. A group of people in Konarsko changed their names themselves. This rise some other elements of resistance and intimidation. And these people came and said: 'We are Bulgarians and you won't defend us?' The priority was the economic, social and cultural development of the population and that assumed the existence of an educated group of Muslims. Together with this came the realization that these people had previously been Christians.'¹⁴

¹⁴ Tape record, Angel Pavel

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This narrative gives another evidence for the argument that renaming was understood by its promoters as an ethical obligation a necessary process which had to be done to reach the ‘better future’ through education and the emancipation of the Muslims from the ‘traditions’ and ‘backwardness’.

Once, after all the long days and hours I had spent with my respondents from the ranks of the former Communist elite, after all these recollection, emotional turbulences and confessions, I have asked my friends once more, openly and straight away: ‘And why did You rename them?’ And this is what they have told me:

Angel 3.

“[...] they always acted spitefully toward us. They found a way to counteract any of our acts. Jakoruda was the fortress of this approach. The young people always had the impression that they could act against the [Party] Committee. Like small children. We played. For instance I would go with Tonchev on inspection to the wood manufactory in Jakoruda. People got to know that we were coming and whistled a warning. ‘Rosnev and Tonchev are coming!’

We came to the plant and it was empty. We would look up the nearby hill and there all two hundred workers were laughing at us. Well, wouldn’t you have renamed them?”

From the way the local bosses talk about the renaming it can be clearly seen that there was a strong ethical and moral aspect in the whole renaming campaign and that they were aware about the ethical ambivalence of the process of renaming and also of the other two processes, re-dressing and resettlement. (The narrative quoted above is analysed in the context of reactions to the modernization measures in chapter VI. Resistance). The local Communist officials were aware that the pressure of renaming had to be balance by other kind of policy and they used the measures of what is often called politics of ‘the sugar and the carrot’. They recall:

“There was also a politics of economic pressure. For us it was most important that the process continue. I mean the process with the names. We were convinced that it would not succeed through violence alone. I knew it was necessary that there be an improvement as a consequence. Just imagine that someone is constantly pestering them and suddenly someone gives them water and gives them a place to work.”¹⁵

¹⁵ Notebook, 2004/ 1, 95p.

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III. 3. Memory of Returning

Re-naming became one of the major points of criticism of the Communist regime which came not only from outside but also from inside of the society. This criticism raised up in mostly in relation to the renaming campaign imposed upon the Turkish minority in the years 1984-1985. One of the outcomes of this internal criticism was a resolution which was adopted among the two juridical arrangements- the dissolution of the Communist regime and commencement of the new one.¹⁶

An understanding of how was the renaming and later the re-turning of the names perceived by the local bearers of modernity is nicely represented in words of Elisabeth, the local veterinary. She came from the socialist GDR as a young student and married in the town. She is until today one of the main bearers of the ideas of idea Communist enlightenment and was one of the upholders of the modernization and emancipation ethos. She together with other a few Bulgarian women from the town organized a public demonstration of protest against the official acceptance of returning of the Muslim names.¹⁷ The demonstration took place on the main square in Jakoruda in January 1990s. This demonstration at the beginning of the 1990's was not against the return of Muslim names. She commented on the return of the original Muslim names which occurred after 1990 with the words:

“It's such a shame when they had already been nicely renamed.
They were already so well accustomed to those Bulgarian names.”

But people in the village in general proudly recall how they have changed their name back after the 1990s. The following narrative is from an elderly man but people across the generations recall the returning of the names. One of the elderly villagers, Vrub recalled upon the theme of renaming:

¹⁶ The first juridical act regarding the change of personal names was accepted on the 29. December 1989 by Central Committee of Bulgarian Communist Party, it officially rejected the “Process of Rebirth” - acknowledging returning of the Turkish names of ‘Turkish’ language speaking population’, Zagorov, *Vazroditelnija Proces*, 168. This resolution was valid also for the Bulgarian speaking Muslims. On 15 January 1990 the National Assembly adopted a declaration on the national issue, assessing the forcible names change as one of the greatest crimes of the previous regime. Legal arrangements were made for each Bulgarian citizen to restore his/ her former names. Genov, Nikolai & Krasteva Anna, *Bulgaria 1960-1995, Trends of Social Development*. National and Global Development, Sofia, 1999, and compare with Konstantinov & Alhaug, *Names, Ethnicity in Bulgaria*. On 29. December 1989 Central Party Committee disowned the ‘process of rebirth’ (vazroditelnija process) by acknowledging the return of the Turkish names to the Turkish (Muslim) population. The second resolution was an amendment of constitutional law which abolished the absolute sovereignty of the Communist Party.

¹⁷ Similar demonstration, protesting against the return of the Muslims names to the members of Muslim groups in Bulgaria took place in Sofia in January 1990. The demonstration was attended by some 10 000 people.

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“And five or six months of that affair passed and it was good again. And then came a time when people asked to have their names returned. Then the imams came and everybody and made the request. Perhaps they came from Europe or wherever. Possibly from some other state more powerful than us, could it be? And thus the reason arose and that is how I understand it. It was definitely during the regime and then it passed. Then we have a freedom as never before!”

As a souvenir of returning of the names people of the village wear little amulets with a Koranic inscriptions.

According to the argument of this chapter the assimilation and other measures which were undertaken by the local representatives of the Communist state and Communist party were part of the project of Communist modernization. The aim of renaming was not only homogenization of the Bulgarian nation, but also an implementation of ‘civilization’ and ‘modernity’ at the periphery. The second part of the argument is that paradoxically, the ‘civilization process’ conducted in the ideological frame of Communist modernization, had the form of ‘purification’ aiming at reconciliation with the Ottoman past.

Renaming was not only about ‘establishing authority’ through naming or locking someone into an identity. On bases of the narratives of the organizers of the campaign we can say that renaming was the reconciliation with the past through a radical conversion of the personal names. The past was reconciled through the unmaking of an ancient crime committed against the Bulgarian speaking Muslims, the ‘Pomaks’, by a forceful conversion and ‘violent islamization’. In a way the renaming was a return to ancient times, ‘three hundred years ago’ if we paraphrase the old Communist, ‘we felt that we had the power and the chance to *return* everything back, to undo the crime which was committed against this population’.

It can be argued that the renaming was a response to modernity through Communist modernization and that it had an ethical aspect. As we can see from the narratives of the villagers they responded to the renaming campaign mostly negatively. (The responses will be analysed in the Chapter VI. Resistance).

III. Rename! Reconciliation with the Past

From perspective of the major narrative of the villagers the renaming was perceived mostly as the suppression of the personal identity of the villagers. People do not remember the renaming as a positive and liberating step in their life, just the opposite. The renaming which took place during the course of the 1970s together with returning of the names in the 1990s remains a central part of representations of their identity. Thus renaming remains one of the major themes of represented identity of Bulgarian speaking Muslims.

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Together with the resettlement and the renaming campaign went another state organized process which can be called *re-dressing*. The term re-dressing refers to the specific parts of assimilation campaigns conducted by state institutions in Bulgaria during the course of the 20th century. An argument of this chapter is that the restrictions implied on religiously symbolical parts of women's dress by the Communist state were not only an awkward attempt at cultural assimilation and 'secularization', or fight against a 'national enemy', neither that it was an exercise of hegemonic power over marginalized groups of women. The re-dressing campaign had all of these aspects; but it had also one more. It was an effort to introduce an emancipation of women through new politics of aesthetics, which was in itself a specific response to modernity organized by the Communist state.¹

The aim of redressing campaign which took place in the 1970's was not only to 'strip off' the veil, to 'wrap -out', as the Communist functionaries say in the interviews, but precisely to '*re-dress*', to create a whole new aesthetics and new aesthetic forms and symbolic meanings of the female body. These new aesthetic forms were expressed through a particular concept of '*beauty*'. Paradoxically, the new aesthetics promoted by the re-dressing campaign carried on in the contest of Communist modernization had the character of what is usually regarded as 'middle class' values, rather than Communist and proletarian. The re-dressing had the character of what Norbert Elias calls a 'civilizing process'.² Its aim was formation of 'privacy and individualism'. In parallel to the body, the 'civilizing process' promoted by Communist state was concerned with the aesthetics of living space, house and household. These concerns were articulated through the concepts which are for purposes of my interpretation called '*purity and hygiene*'.

¹ A study of the relationship between Communist modernization and women emancipation during the Communist period in Bulgaria see in: Vodenicharov, Petar, 'Balgarija prez 70-te godoni-nacionalizm, modernizacija, emancipacija? Kriticheski diskursen analiz na totalizarnite politika na pametta', in *Balknistichen Forum*, kn. 1-2-3 (2004), pp. 104-119.

² Elias, Norbert, *The Civilizing Process, Sociogenetic and Psychogenetic Investigations*, revised ed., Oxford [England], Cambridge: Mass Blackwell Publishers, 2000.

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However, this process imposed in a systematic organized way was perceived as oppressive and violent. The conflict between the two aesthetic systems, that of the modernizers and that of the villagers, is revealed through experiences represented in terms of '*shame and nakedness*'.

This chapter presents re-dressing, apart from its subjective appropriations, as another example of the negotiating process between the two sides of Communist regime in Bulgaria, the 'civic' side of the state and the ideological side of the 'Communist party'.

I demonstrate my argument through an analysis of oral histories and visual material related to the redressing campaign in which I examine local practices and responses to that ideological concept. For the purposes of this chapter, I analyse oral histories of former high functionaries of the Communist party, the so called 'cadres'; secretaries of local Organization of the Communist Party, the head of the National Committee [Naroden Sovet] of the village, head of the National Front; as well as representatives of local professionals and technical managerial elite, veterinary doctors, teachers, and officers of the state administration. On behalf of the objects of the campaign, I interpret the accounts of the redressing campaign in the narratives of the villagers, of both genders and of different age. In addition to that, I have analysed visual material, photos and documents from private archives; images from the regional journal *Rodopi*, which was promoting and celebrating Communist modernization in the Rhodopes, propaganda manuals published by the regional branch of the Communist Party and the National Front, and popular publications about culture and geography of Cherna Mesta and the Rhodopes Mountain region.³

IV. 1. Creating of the New Communist Woman

The redressing campaign in Cherna Mesta is a story about the messianic ambitions of the Communist modernization project and the political frustrations and personal dramas of its promoters. They were aiming at those elements of Muslim

³ Krasteva, Galina & Primovski, Atanas., *Rodopsko narodno iskustvo, takani i mednikarstvo*, Bulgarski chudoznik, 1970.

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women's dress which were considered by various political discourses as religious or ethnic symbols.

In the following chapter, is examined why was the Communist modernization project articulated in the aesthetics. The re-dressing campaign is interpreted as an articulation of the ideological concepts of Communist modernization and the experiences and practices of local political elite as well as the responses of the villagers to the re-dressing campaign are seen as responses to certain concepts of modernity. The ethnography is interpreted in a way which supports my argument that 'Communist' redressing, in comparison with previous campaigns, was introduced not only as one of the assimilation procedures, but also along with the two other processes which were taking place in Cherna Mesta. Resettlement, renaming, the re-dressing was an attempt to create 'New Men' and 'New Women' through the new aesthetics.

The redressing campaign organized by the Communist state could be approached from various perspectives. Similarly as with the renaming we can use Kertzer's approach and interpret it as a political struggle over symbolic meanings of Muslim women's dress. It can be also seen as the "ability to lock people into certain identities."⁴ In the perspective of the subaltern studies or gender theory redressing can be interpreted as a struggle for symbolic ascendancy through women.⁵

In my argumentation, I try to prove that re-dressing had one more aspect. That it can be interpreted as a deliberate attempt to create the 'new women' or the 'new men'; and eventually the 'new citizens'. A second part of my argument is that aesthetic representations of the 'new man', and in this case rather the 'new woman' were not strictly Communist. The image of the new ideal woman did not carried the symbol with aesthetic meanings which could be in different contexts classified as 'proletarian'.

In the section dedicated to women and fashion in a regional journal of Communist enlightenment Rodopa we can see examples of such representations. (See

⁴ Foucault, Michael, *Power and Knowledge*, 1980, cited in: Kertzer, David, *Politics and Symbols, The Italian Communist Party and the Fall of Communism*. Yale: University Press, 1996, 66.

⁵ Guha, Ranajit, *Dominance without hegemony, History and Power in Colonial India*. 1997, also see Rofel, Lisa, *Other Modernities, Gendered Yearnings on China After Socialism*. Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California, 1999, Rofel writes on experience of late modernization in China (in the late 1980s and beginning of the 1990s) and the effects of modernization program and its implicit ideas of progress on creation of gender discourses.

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Figure 3). The 'new dress' suggested in the journal, which in reality was supposed to replace the "veil and *salvari*" consisted the aesthetic representations of what is often considered as 'middle class' or even 'Western middle class'. In this chapter, is through an ethnographic evidence supported the argument, that apart from aesthetic forms, there were also moral and political concepts ascribed to the ideal 'new women'. These concepts contained 'middle class' rather than 'proletarian' values.

At this point of my argumentation, I use Elias's notion of the 'civilization process' which allows me to interpret assimilation campaigns and particularly re-dressing not only as an exercise of national and colonial discourse, but also as a realization of Communist modernity.⁶ And from the perspective of the "civilization process", re-dressing can be seen not only as a project of Communism but also as a civilizing effort of the state itself to establish spheres of 'privacy and individualism' as distinct from 'collective and public' spheres, a distinction which is crucial for the functioning of the modern state.⁷

IV. 2. Re-dressing Campaigns in the Historical Perspective

Re-dressing, as an extreme part of assimilation did not occur only within the Communist regime in Bulgaria. It was in different forms and variations a part of the political concerns about national homogeneity and literally the 'purity' of the Bulgarian state and culture that were articulated in assimilation policies directed towards religious and ethnic minorities. In Bulgaria, as in other Balkan countries, they have been a constant part of the national political program over the course of the 20th century. Their actual aim, the means of their realization and their intensity corresponded with the actual internal and international political situation.⁸ In different times there were different

⁶ Elias, Norbert, *The Civilizing Process*.

⁷ Volkov, Vadim, 'The Concept of 'Kulturnost', Notes on the Stalinist civilizing process.', in: Sheila Fitzpatrick, ed., *Stalinism New Directions*. London and New York: Routledge, 2000, pp.210-231, 225.

⁸ Kemalist modernizing model, that is to say, had at that time as well emphasised 'de-veiling' of Muslim woman. A secularized Turkish minority, de-veiled women and men without fezzes but wearing an egalitarian cap would represent more of a potential political threat for Bulgarian national integrity, than Bulgarian's own 'veiled' Muslim women. Therefore, in order to cut off local Turks from outside Turkish influence the state administration undertook a different policy. While supporting national integration of the Pomaks it has supported the rather conservative line of the Islamic hierarchy inside the Turkish minority, about relationship between assimilation and international relations with Turkey see more in Stojanov, Valerij, *Turskoto naselenie Mezdu Poljusite na Ethnicheskata Politika*, Sofija, 1998. Compare this view

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measures applied to each of the subgroups of Muslim minority in Bulgaria: the Pomaks, the Turks and the Gypsies. And the re-dressing campaign were directed towards both genders, men and women.⁹

The assimilation policies took place at all levels of the political structure of the state from its early existence. On the institutional level it found its expression in the form of closing down religious, cultural and educational institutions. Apart from the institutional level, measures were undertaken which intruded into private and intimate spheres of peoples lives. These spheres were usually the liminal zones between public and private, personal names, body and dress.

All of the renaming and re-dressing campaigns and their variations had one common denominator which was the fight against the 'national enemy', the 'Muslim' or the 'Turk', represented in categories of 'oriental darkness', 'impurity' and 'danger'. Within the assimilation discourses the concept of 'national enemy' merged with concepts of more general European colonial discourse.¹⁰ Re-dressing was thus conceptualized as a fight against 'oriental darkness' in favour of 'civilization', 'culture' and the 'pure nation'. The main concern of the re-dressing campaigns was the body and dress of Muslim citizens; nevertheless target groups, strategies and the actual ways of realizing the campaigns varied, and corresponded with the domestic and international political situation. At the centre of attention was the female body and dress, however most of the re-dressing campaigns targeted both genders. In the case of the male body the main symbols were considered to be the fez and circumcision, in the case of female body the attention was turned to the feredze - a veil covering the whole body of women. Also, the Communist re-dressing campaigns were aimed almost exclusively at the political aesthetics and symbolism related with a female body and dress. In the 1970's and 1980's there were discussions at the level of official propaganda about male

with Neuburger, Mary, *The Orient Within, Muslim Minorities and the Negotiation of Nationhood in Modern Bulgaria*. New York: Cornell University Press, 2004, and Simsir, N. Bilal, *The Turks of Bulgaria (1878-1985)*, London: K. Rustem, 1988.

⁹ For more about the politics of Bulgarian state regarding men cloths see Neuburger, Mary, *The Orient Within, Muslim Minorities and the Negotiation of Nationhood in Modern Bulgaria*. New York: Cornell University Press, 2004, pp. 85-116pp.

¹⁰ Neuburger, *The Orient Within*. 2004, and also Zeljazkova, Antonina. & Aleksiev, Bozidar, Nazarska, Z.eds., *Mjuzjulmanskite Obshtnosti na Balkanite i v Bulgarija, Istoricheski eskizi*. Sofija: Mezdunaroden Centar po Problemite na Malcinstvata i Kulturnite Vzaimodejstva. 1997.

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circumcision as practiced within the Turkish minority. However, they were much less significant by comparison with the enormous concerns about the aesthetics of the female body.¹¹

A first re-dressing took place in the framework of an assimilation campaign which was organized by the Synod of the Orthodox Church and the Bulgarian Government and which took place in the Rhodopes region in 1912-1913.¹² During these conversions from Islam to Christian Orthodoxy women often symbolically 're-dressed', exchanging their veil or the feredze for a scarf which rather corresponded with meanings and practice of Christian Orthodoxy.¹³

Another re-dressing campaign, was organized by the modernist right wing patriotic movement *Rodina* and took place in the 1930s. By contrast with the previous assimilation processes, the political rhetoric was more elaborate. The *Rodina* campaign did not consist only of ritualistic gestures but it had a character of propaganda, aiming not only at religious conversions but having also wider the aims of modernization and 'bulgarization'.¹⁴ The re-dressing campaign organized by *Rodina* had carried the official name '*throwing away the feredzets and fezes*' and was inspired by the assimilation policy that was at the same time taking place across the border in Kemalist Turkey. There through the organized change of the traditional ways of dressing clothing promoted the secularization policy of the nationalist Turkish state. The assimilation campaign organized by *Rodina* was meant to be its counterpoint. The Communist state continued in the

¹¹ For more on the attitudes of Communist assimilation policy concerning male circumcision among the Turkish minority in Bulgaria see Neuburger, *The Orient Within*, pp. 110-113. Neuburger's work also shows that the concerns of the Communist state about the male body were less intense in comparison with the attention given to the female body. This is one of the reasons why I have not included the issues regarding male dress and the male body in my research. Also during my field work I have not encountered any reference to an official political concern or practices regarding male dress and the male body.

¹² Georgiev & Trifonov, *The Conversion*.

¹³ Muslim women who converted would change their veils for scarves which aesthetically corresponded with social religious symbolism of Orthodox Christianity, see more in Georgiev & Trifonov, *The Conversion*, 1995.

¹⁴ The Bulgarian government for the purposes of assimilation through the movement *Rodina* sponsored the translation of the Koran into Bulgarian. One of the outcomes was the translation of Koran into Bulgarian. From the point of view of Islamic theology translation of the Koran is forbidden. About the movement *Rodina* see for example Marinov, *Bulgarite Mohamedani*, 1994. For comparison about redressing organized by *Rodina* movement see also Neuburger, *The Orient*, 125.

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assimilation practices and techniques introduced by *Rodina*.¹⁵ These re-dressing campaigns are reflected in the social memory of the village community and are an important part in the self-representation of Bulgarian speaking Muslims in the Western Rhodopes.

The assimilation programmes carried out by the Communist state in the Western Rhodopes to certain resonated with the pattern of *Rodina*. Neuburger in her book argues that, "...the spirit and form of most other *Rodina* campaigns would be revisited by the BCP ...in the context of socialist progress and integration."¹⁶

However, and this is part of my argument, in spite of the fact that the logistics of Communist redressing were similar to those organized by *Rodina*, the political meanings contained in the aesthetical symbolism of the campaign were very different. I question this argument and ask exactly what is meant by the context of 'socialist progress' to its promoters. I elaborate the argument further and say that the political context of the re-dressing which took place in the 1970s was Communist modernization project and its aesthetical values. The main motives of Communist re-dressing were not only 'socialist progress and national homogenization'; but also 'emancipation of women', and the 'civilizing process' introduced by the Communist state 'at the periphery'.

The re-dressing, as well as renaming campaign, which took place during Communist regime, was promoted under the cover of two programmes conducted by the Central Party Committee. One of them was a national assimilation programme, officially called the "Process of Rebirth", [in Bulgarian "Vazroditelen process"], the second was *Resolution of Central Committee of Bulgarian Communist Party on class-party education of Bulgarian Mohammedans*.¹⁷

The "Process of Rebirth" started at the national level in 1960s, when it was applied to the Pomak group. Its local realization in Cherna Mesta started around year

¹⁵ For the secondary literature see Georgieva, Tzvetana, 'Pomaks: Muslim Bulgarians', in Anna Krasteva, ed., *Communities and Identities in Bulgaria*. Ravenna: Longo: Collana di sturdy Balcani e l'Europa Centro-Orientale, University of Bologna, 1998. p. 221-238; also see Zheljanzova, *Mjusulmanksite Obshtnosti*, 1997, Neuburger, *The Orient*, Stojanov, *Turskoto naselenie*.

¹⁶ Neuburger, *The Orient*, 103.

¹⁷ According to my respondents from the circle of former Communist functionaries the document was called "Resolution of Central Committee of Bulgarian Communist Party on class-party and patriotic education of the Bulgarian Muslims". [In Bulgarian : 'Rešenje na sekretarijat na CK BKP na klasovo-partijno i patriotičko vazpitanie na Bulgarite mohamedani'], and was issued on 17.7. 1970

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1974. Later, in the 1980s, the Communist regime used the technological pattern of this programme in an assimilation campaign targeting the Turkish minority. This campaign undertook stronger measures which resulted in the forced emigration of Turkish population.¹⁸

In Cherna Mesta valley, for a period of several years, all the three campaigns - renaming, re-dressing and resettlement - to the new village, were taking place in parallel at the same time. In that short period people moved into the new village, had to change their personal names, and women had to change their ways of a casual dressing. While promoting all the three processes at once Communist modernization reached it's most extreme point. In a very short period the villagers experienced substantial changes in their lives. They moved into new houses in the new village, changed their personal names; and under pressure of the official campaign women abandoned or changed some elements of their casual dress. At this moment, when all the three processes were running, the Communist modernization project and the assimilation program reached its zenith. These changes were caused by both 'the carrot' of social and economic advantages and 'the stick' of hidden oppression and open violence which intruded into the personal spheres of the villagers lives and were responded to in various ways.

IV.3. Re-dressing Campaigns in Bulgarian Ethnography

Most of the ethnography published in Bulgaria before 1990 was affected by Bulgarian national discourse and used as a source of historical evidence for official Bulgarian historiography.¹⁹ Ethnographic accounts published during Communist period supported the assimilation policy and practically ignored the assimilation procedures as a topic for ethnographic research or discussion. Therefore, the re-dressing campaigns themselves were not very well documented. The rhetoric of pre 1990 official ethnographic discourse lasted in many cases till the middle of the 1990's. Within this discourse the assimilation measures are conceptualized as 'rebirth', or as 'return' of the

¹⁸ More details about that see chapter III. Rename! and also in Stojanov, *Turskoto naselenie* and Simsir, *The Turks of Bulgaria*.

¹⁹ About the works of the 'old' Bulgarian ethnographers see in Introduction and chapter I. Modernization at the Periphery.

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‘past’, as a return of times before the so called ‘islamization’ [in Bulgarian islamizacijata], which is usually conceptualized as ‘violent’ or ‘forced’, [in Bulgarian nasilstvena islamizacijata]. Repressive assimilation measures, which were implied on Muslim groups are in these accounts represented as positive “civilization steps”, or as the ‘liberation of the oppressed’ ‘Pomak’ or Muslim women. These accounts written in correspondence with the discourses of Communist regimes represent the assimilation processes, especially the re-dressing and renaming as received positively by the local people, literally as welcomed by the villagers ‘with bouquets of flowers’.²⁰

In 1990s, after the collapse of Communist regime, both, Bulgarian historiography and ethnography went through a process of revision and reinterpretation of the official historical narrative. Revision of the historical narrative about the Ottoman past and legacy was in Bulgaria a politically crucial step that included a reinterpretation of the historical role of Muslim and other minorities in Bulgaria.²¹ The revision and reinterpretation of historiography together with the interest of foreign and western academic and political institutions on issues related to minorities, nationalism and ethnicity brought to the centre of attention issues concerned with assimilation processes as applied during the Communist period. Most of these accounts came from the field of political science, or from so called ‘Balkanology’; but within this stream of new literature were published several account discussing these issues from the point of view of social anthropology and social history.²²

An important role in creating a new historical narrative about the relationship of state and Bulgarian speaking Muslims also played non-academic institutions, as for example the “*International Centre for Minority Studies and Intercultural Relations Foundation*”. The Centre published an edition, revising and reinterpreting historical

²⁰ Velcheva, Nadya, *Rodopchankata: Strichi ot etnosocialnija i ethnopsichologoeskija portret*. Sofija: Izdatelstvo na Balgarskata Akademija na Naukite, 1994, 182p.

²¹ Georgieva & Zeljazkova, ‘L’identité en période de changement observation sur certaines tendances du monde mixte des Rhodopes’. *Cahiers internationaux de Sociologie*, XCVI, 1994, see also Gradeva, R., Ivanova, S, *Mjusulmanskata kultura na balgarskite zemi*. CZM: Sofija; 1998. Gjuzeev, Bozidar, ‘Balgarite mochamedani v Turcija’, *Istoricheski Pregled*, 10 (1990), pp.17-33; and published outside Bulgaria, see for instance Eminov, Ali, *Turkish and Muslim Minorities in Bulgaria*. London: Hurst, 1997, Krasteva, *Communities and Identities*. Konstantinov & Alhaug *Names, Ethnicity in Bulgaria*, Markova, L.V. ‘Bolgari Mjusulmane (Pomaki)’, Poulton & Suha-Taji Farouki, *Muslim identity*.

²² Vodenicharov, Petar & Popova, Kristina & Pashova, Asija, eds, *Iskam Chovekat da e vinagi prijaten I da si pravi moabet*, Sofija, 1998.

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narratives on different Muslim minorities in the Balkans, and particularly on Muslim Pomaks in Bulgaria.²³ The historical narrative represented in these accounts was appropriated by the Bulgarian speaking Muslims and became part of the self-representation of the group.

There is not a monograph dedicated to the re-dressing, but there are several accounts concerning the assimilation campaign as a whole.²⁴ A very good survey about re-dressing campaigns conducted by the Communist state presents for example a Soviet ethnographer Markova.²⁵

The interpretation of re-dressing is also in Bulgaria a highly politicized issue. Most of the secondary literature refers to re-dressing as the implementation of Bulgarian national and colonial discourse. Western accounts as well as Bulgarian ones which are revising the Communist ethnography represent the re-dressing campaigns, promoted by Communist state, as violating women's, minority or human rights.²⁶ The assimilation policy pursued by the Communist state is in these accounts described as 'militant communist atheism'²⁷ or 'violent assimilation'.²⁸ „The Muslims in Bulgaria were represented [by the Communist state] as a threat to the future of the state, and the violence against them as a natural way of their integration into the monolithic Bulgarian nation.”²⁹

The most relevant for my interpretation is a book by Neuburger.³⁰ Her research is mostly based on analyses of archival materials. Neuburger gives a historical overview of

²³ From the production of this centre see for example Zheljazkova, Antonina, 1990. 'Problemat za dostovernostta na najkoj domashni izvori, tajno zalegnali v balgarskata istoriografija.' *Sociologicheski pregled*, Sofija. Zheljazkova & Aleksiev & Nazarska, eds, *Mjusulmanskite Obshtnosti*.

²⁴ Konstantinov Y., Alhaug G, 1995. *Names, Ethnicity in Bulgaria 1912-1992*, Linguistics 15, Tromso Studies: Novus Press.

²⁵ She visited the region of the Western Rhodopes in the 1950s and 1960s and her account describes the responses of local women to the re-dressing campaign, see Markova, *Bolgari Mjusulmane (Pomaki)*.

²⁶ Neuburger, *The Orient Within, Muslim Minorities and the Negotiation of Nationhood in Modern Bulgaria*. New York: Cornell University Press, 2004, Genov & Krasteva, *Bulgaria 1960-1995*, Trends of Social Development. 1998.

²⁷ Georgieva, 'Pomaks: Muslim Bulgarians', 227p.

²⁸ Zheljazkova, *Mjusulmanskite Obshtnosti*.

²⁹ Georgieva, 'Pomaks: Muslim Bulgarians', 231p.

³⁰ Neuburger, *The Orient Within*. See also Neuburger, Mary, 'Veils, Shalvari, and Matters of Dress: Unraveling the Fabric of Women's Lives in Communist Bulgaria', in Reid, Susan.E. & Crowley, David, eds, *Style and Socialism, Modernity and Material Culture in Post-War Eastern Europe*. Routledge: New York. 2000, pp.1-24.

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assimilation policies and related discourses, during the period from the early stage of existence of the modern Bulgarian state to the collapse of the Communist regime. Her interpretation does not consider differences in social, cultural and historical contexts of each of the Muslim groups, the Turks, Pomaks and Gypsies; and in the respective discourses. My research is examining the re-dressing campaign, approaching it through analyses of everyday experiences and practices, in many respects contradicts but at the same time complement Neuburger's interpretations.

Re-dressing in the Bulgarian Ethnographic 'Museum'

During the Communist regime ethnography and especially its sub-discipline, folklore studies was supported by ethnographic evidence the concept of 'the folk' or 'the people', which was at the centre of Communist ideology.³¹

In the 1960s and 1970s modernization, in terms of urbanization and industrialization of rural the rural areas as organized by state, was running at its highest speed. As was mentioned above, according to the Marxist-Leninist doctrine, the speed of modernization was supposed to eliminate the differences between the 'rural' and the 'urban'. Changes in material culture brought about by Communist modernization were supposed to bring changes in social structure. And indeed, the social, cultural and environmental changes which were taking place as the consequences of modernization in mountain rural areas were often really spectacular and dramatic.

One of the ideological tasks of official ethnography and of the museum institutions was to 'conserve' examples of the disappearing 'folk' and the 'folk culture'. Through collecting of 'the peoples culture' was conserved the 'the past'. This had two reasons: to reveal the sharp contrast between the 'backwardness' of the 'bourgeois past' and the achievements of the 'socialist present', in contrast to the potential of the Communist future. The second reason was to represent the Communist society close and rooted in the 'folk culture' and its 'noble savagery'.

³¹ The role 'folklor' had for the Communist regime is excellently illustrated in the Kundera's novel *The Joke*.

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The Rhodopes region was by the folkloristic and ethnography constructed as to be ‘underdeveloped and backward’ on one hand and as a repository of ‘folk culture’ and a ‘national treasure’ on the other. Bulgarian Academy of Sciences established an ethnographic project called *Rodopskata Expedicija* of which task was to collect and conserve examples of disappearing ‘traditions’ and ‘folk culture’ and at the same time to reveal ‘backwardness’ and ‘noble savagery’ of Rhodopeans (Muslims).³²

Images of Rhodopes Women in Bulgarian Folkloristic

The Muslim women’s dress and body were as the ‘folk costumes’ part of the material culture of ‘the people’ and as such one of the priority subjects of ethnography and folkloristic.³³ Through representations of Muslims women’s dress as the ‘folk costume’, ethnography addressed the concept of women’s emancipation and at the same justified the assimilation program. There was a deliberate effort to conserve the ‘traditional’ and ‘historical’ female aesthetics into the institutions of the museum. The ethnographic representations of Muslim or Pomak women were thus constructed in the framework of three ideological concepts: emancipation of women; and modernist concept of the ‘noble savage’ and ‘folk culture’; and an Orientalist concept of ‘subordinated Muslim women’.

In the examples of the images from folkloristic studies we can see how the politics of aesthetic of Communist modernization and women emancipation were articulated. Women from the Rhodope mountains are in these images presented as enactors of the ‘tradition’, ‘Muslim culture’ and ‘noble savagery’.³⁴

³² *Kompleksna Nauchna Rodopska Ekspeditsija prez 1953 Godina. Dokladi I Matreiali*. Sofija, Balgarska Akademija na Naukite, 1953.

³³ As the most prominent Bulgarian ethnographer of folk costume is considered Veleva, Milena, “Pregled na Prouchvaniata na Bulgarskite Narodni Nosii,” *Izvestiia na Ethnografskijat Institut i Muzei*, 3, (1958), p. 252.; Veleva, Milena. & Lepavtsova, Evgenyja, *Bulgarski narodni nosii v jzna bulgarija prez XIX i parvata polovina na XX vek*. Sofija: Izdatelstvi na Bulgarskata Akademia na Naukite. 1988
See the phenomenon of relationship between social life and the realm of material culture for instance in Mikhailova, Ganka, ‘Socialni Aspekti na Narodnoto Obleklo’, *Bulgarsjata Ethnographija* 3-4 (1976), 178p.

³⁴ See Krasteva, Primovski, *Rodopsko narodno Iskustvo, Takani I Mednikarstvo*, Bulgarski Chudoznik, 1970, figure 58 and 96.

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The ethnographic and other discourses represent the Rhodopes region and its inhabitants as the most common examples of the 'purest 'folk' and 'culture'. As such they should be conserved in the 'museum' as the 'treasure' of 'folk culture' and 'the past'. As I have explained above, the 'folk culture' and 'the past' are concepts which the Communist regime needed to create its own legitimacy. Despite all its internationalism the Communist state was built on 'national values'. The issue of presenting 'the past' and its culture insofar as it related to Muslims and Islam and integrating this into the national myth was more than complicated.

The Rhodope region was perceived as the 'other' not only in the sense of the dichotomy of 'urban' and 'rural'. The region of the Rhodope Mountains was inhabited by a Muslim population and therefore was the hardcore of the 'otherness'. The task of ethnography was to bring about the integration of the 'other' into the national myth as an ethnographic treasure. At the same time the 'other', the 'Pomaks', as it was already explained, were considered in the national discourse to be worse than the 'national enemy', the Turks. Therefore in the ethnographical discourse and in describing material culture, the female inhabitants of the Rhodopes are not ever explicitly represented as Muslims. Nevertheless they continue to be represented in the framework of an internal colonial discourse. The discourse on internal colonisation deals with the elements of Muslim or Pomaks material culture. (Particular elements of the 'Muslim Costume' as for example *jasmaks*-head kerchiefs for women, the long veils, the so called 'coloured bride' [in Bulgarian *sarena nevesta*] are represented always as a part of Bulgarian, even 'pagan', but always deliberately non-Muslim culture. The images of women from Rhodopes, the folkloristic term is 'Rodopchanka' are represented not only with a connotation of the concept of 'rural' but also as 'exotic' and almost 'savage'. Among the thousands of museum collections and ethnographic materials which were supposed to preserve the 'tradition' of the Rhodopes region Muslim and 'Pomak' aesthetics are never present, as if the 'Pomak' or Muslim culture in the Rhodopes or even in the Western part of the Rhodopes does not exist. The folkloristic and ethnographic representations of the Rhodopes region are limited to the region of the 'Central Rhodopes' (in Bulgarian

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Sredni Rodopi).³⁵ The representations of material culture and aesthetics of folk costumes from the Rhodopes emphasised the non-Muslim character. The women in the images do not wear veils, but the *jashmaks*. They do not wear *shalvari*, but quite elegant skirts.³⁶ The length of these is just under the knees. These aesthetics also correspond rather with those of 'middle class', modern and emancipated woman. According to the memories of the villagers from Cherna Mesta, in the view of local Muslim women such a length of dress and especially one worn without the *shalvari* would be considered as inappropriate bordering the concepts of 'nakedness' and shame.

The elements of Islam the material culture and folklore of the Rhodope region were neglected in the ethnographical accounts published during the Communist regime. Neglect of Muslim culture in the Rhodopes region remains present in the discourse of some parts of official Bulgarian ethnography even after the 1990's, especially in the representations which are offered to a wider audience. An example and at the same time a good metaphor of this policy is the map shown at the Ethnographical Museum of the Bulgarian Academy of Science in Sofia.³⁷ This map shows all 'ethnographical regions' which are recognized by the official ethnography and also their 'folk' and 'costumes'. Their place in the ethnic costume map have ethnic groups such as the Shops, the Strandzani, even Macedonians and Bulgarian Turks. Only the Pomaks are not represented and the map neglects the geographical existence of the Western regions of the Rhodope Mountains.

In the conclusion of this section of the chapter it can be said that there exist two kinds of representation of women of the Rhodopes. On one hand emancipated, urban being, free from 'religion', 'tradition' and 'kinship ties', its ideal is represented in urban aesthetics and on the other hand there are the representations of women from the Rhodopes as the "exotic" and 'savage'. The re-dressing campaign was one articulation of the Communist project of the emancipation of women. The Muslim woman's dress and the female body were like the 'folk costumes' part of the material culture of 'the people' and as such subject of ethnography and folkloristic. Thus the ethnography

³⁵ See Krasteva, Galina & Primovski, Atanas, *Rodopsko narodno iskustvo*.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, figure 40.

³⁷ The institution itself is located in former 'konak', the seat of Ottoman governor later palace of Bulgarian prince.

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through representations of Muslims woman's dress as a 'folk costume' indirectly supported assimilation of Bulgarian speaking Muslims and the emancipation of Muslim women.

IV.4. The Communist Mission for 'Beauty'

In this sub-chapter given focus to the interpretation of the material which reveals the specific character of the re-dressing campaign organized in Cherna Mesta in the 1970s. The Communist re-dressing campaigns and their procedures are interpreted not only as ways of oppression imposed on Muslim women by the Communist regime; but rather as efforts to create and introduce new politics of aesthetics. In my interpretations I show how the political Communist modernization was articulated through concepts of 'beauty' and how it was confronted by the concepts of 'nakedness' and 'shame'. The subchapter is based on analysis of interviews with the main three promoters of the Communist 'civilizing ethos', the four former functionaries, members of the former Communist elite in Jakoruda; Angel, Starkov, Pavol and Marx and with local women who were the carriers of the ideas of women emancipation, Ceca, Stanka and Elizabeth.

38

In order to interpret the political and cultural meanings of the re-dressing campaign in Cherna Mesta we have to start from the ideological concept, the Marxist – Leninist doctrine, which was part of the official ideology of the Communist states throughout all Eastern Europe. This doctrine is based on Lenin's definition of Communism. According to this definition the realization of a classless Communist society is conditioned by the dismantling of the differences between a town and countryside, between physical and mental labour and between *man* and *woman*.³⁹

³⁸ The names I use here are the real nicknames of the three persons used within the Cherna Mesta valley. I suppose, that the Christian-Communist symbolic of these nicknames is not just coincidence and that reveals how was the whole Communist project contextualized.

³⁹ For Lenin writing on women see Tucker, Robert, C., ed., *The Lenin Anthology*, Princeton University. New York: W.W. Norton & Company. 1975., Tucker says: 'Lenin held that only a socialist transformation of society could make possible both the change in personal consciousness and the widened economic opportunities necessary for women's emancipation.' 679-680. In 'Women and Capitalist Production' Lenin makes statement 'that factory work, even under capitalism, as a progressive development for women because it leads to their independence from the stifling isolation of the rural patriarchal family.' cited in: *ibid.*, 679. See also the original, Lenin, Vladimir, I., *The Development of Capitalism in Russia*. 1899.

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The emancipation programme concerned with the Muslim women in the Western Rhodopes region was taking place under the command of the Communist Party Committee, articulated in the *Resolution for Class –Party and Patriotic Education of Bulgarian Muslim* from 1970 year; a programme which was officially covered by the implementation of Communist ideology among the Bulgarian speaking Muslims through cultural and educational policy. And the re-dressing campaign was one of its actual realizations.

The actual realization of this emancipation program, was carried out by the regional branch of the Fatherland Front, (see below the narrative Ceca and Stanka, by the former head of Fatherland Front), and was supported by all bearers of the modernizing ideas, local teachers, doctors and most intensely by the local Communist functionaries. Apart from the effort which was made to apply to the economic measures of emancipation, the Fatherland Front was running a whole scale of programmes on cultural and educational level and the re-dressing campaign was only part of them. The demand of Communist emancipation of women was rather complex. Emancipated women had to be economically self sufficient, politically conscious and aesthetically appropriate. And the aesthetics of their dress were, according to the political Marxism, supposed to create the stage of consciousness. As the narratives quoted below demonstrate, (see the narrative ‘Ceca and Stanka 1’), the programme for the emancipation of women programme affected all different spheres of women life and ‘re-dressing’ was just one of its articulations. One of the tasks of the “*Resolution*” was to eliminate the elements of women dress which were considered by the modernization and emancipation discourse as ‘oppressive’ and ‘backward’. Veil and the trousers *shalvari*, the distinctive elements of the everyday dress of ‘Pomak’ women were supposed to be eliminated or replaced by an alternative, corresponding with the demand of the Communist politics of aesthetics.⁴⁰

The following narratives were recorded during one of the summer afternoons in Jakoruda, while sitting with two of the main ‘modernizers’ on stored timber surrounded by ancient merchant’s houses. It was at one of the warm afternoons, when township,

⁴⁰ Color, patterns and shape of the trousers and veils vary regionally and also in each village within one region are these elements of women dress of very different forms.

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semi rural, semi urban, is full of summery smells of gardens, orchards and sleepy noises of poultry and sheep sheds. And also in this case, like in many other cases, the interview was a kind of confession. It was again very personal and emotionally rich testimony of people who once believed in a society where ‘yesterday meant already tomorrow’.⁴¹ The former keepers of political power, the former first Party secretary and former head of the Cooperative [TZKS] recalled about their engagement with women emancipation and re-dressing campaign in which they were involved thirty years ago not only out of their political posts, but also out of their personal believes. Angel and Pavel recall:

Angel and Pavel 1.

“It was the same with the relays. We caught with the mayor by heads. Later we wrote a lot of letters here and there saying that Jakoruda is lagging, because the income of the population is not supported by the income of the women. When we did so, we went through the villages, sometime peacefully, sometime with some sort of economic threat, and sometimes with such, how can I put it to you....[And here silence]. I remember that we were at one family in Ilansko. The father shouted to his daughter (while Angel was telling this story Paul was laughing). They did not want to... He said to her: run away! We were leaving and I said why should she flee? We only wanted your daughter to come and work down below so that she could get money and so forth. Why tell her to run away from us? Tell me. She had to disappear, because he was worried that we would have a bad influence on her. [recalled Angel] That was the reason. For that reason there was fear. [Paul] Ideological? No. From the fact that we might somehow convince her that she is beautiful. That she is good. And he said: run away, don’t talk to them! And we heckled them a good deal with these things, because we needed them for something!! Precisely to give him and not to take from him! But they didn’t accept it. This is the most problematic thing. You can take from anyone by force but you can’t give by force. [Pavel]. And why was that so? There was an ideological subtext. Firstly, the fear that they would fall under a constant influence. [Angel] They feared that the most. [Pavel]. Political influence. Do you understand? [Angel] They feared that most. The older people felt that renaming is coming and if once one gets in the hands of some enterprise, which disciplined, organized him with a

⁴¹ Reference to a national contest in CSSR conducted at primary and secondary schools. The aim was to promote of knowledge about USSR articulated in discourse of Communist ideology. The contest was called “About a Country Where Tomorrow Means Already Yesterday”. This term was in general use and for a whole one generation it was a symbol of Communist modernization and ideology of progress.

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director and a party organisation, one thing and the other, than a person becomes dependent. And so there was a wish that something like that will be established. It was one reason that it was like that. Thus they could survive because they were not at in a state of starvation. When we came, we did not find them in a state of deathly hunger. [Angel] They had cows, fruit, men worked, but they were constantly afraid that they might get into some collective where they would become dependent and they could be easily influenced. That's one thing. Secondly, that it might change. That it might change their customs, that they might abandon religion, not have enough of it. That was one of the main reasons. There was kind of a clash here which at first glance was not in the first plan, but actually, it was for a while understood as the main reason. [reference here to the conflict to which is dedicated chapter VI. Resistance] Both for us, and for them. We knew that we would succeed here. They knew that if they yielded, they would lose. Those who didn't want this to take place. Did we count on them? We counted on them. Of course we counted on them. As in school. Just as we knew that when there is learning, the person won't be the same. He will see the light and come here. Listen to us then: it is possible that we were wrong, but it upset us how Jakoruda looked. What exactly? You go out into the streets and instead of pretty young girls you see, how would you put it, you see dreadful backwardness! Q: And what in your view was that backwardness? Above all appearances offended us. The clothing. For example previously women could not come out into the streets as we do today. They had to come wrapped up [veiled, in the local dialect zabuleny] Here and there. And all that's left for you to see are the eyes. That's all that's left. [Pavel]. And that's with the young girls. [Angel] Later, they began to wear pants as we call them. Just as now they began to wear them, but now it is already considered modern, it is not. No, but they had to get rid of all these pants [meant the shalvari]. That was the idea. Not forcefully, but as it's said, to integrate Bulgarian society. So that she joined it. But look here, among the young I see great changes. Today they do not stick to that so much. They may be friendly, but when it comes to marriage, things fall apart. Does it mean that women's dress was important for you, but that men's did not irritate you? "Yashmaks."⁴² Later this barrier was overcome."

This is part of a longer narrative of the two functionaries, describing realization of the state driven industrialization in Cherna Mesta valley. 'Re-dressing' is in this

⁴² Yashmaks are one of the typical objects of pre-1989 material culture. They represented a typical part of folk costumes of Bulgarians (not Muslims) in the region of Middle Rhodopes. Here interestingly it is mentioned by a Communist functionary as one of the aesthetically problematic elements of women dress. It shows that the concern of re-dressing was not only about the religiously significant elements but about the whole aesthetical concept of women's appearance.

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narrative described in correlation with other parts of the modernization project, the industrialization, urbanization and secularization efforts.

The notion of 'beauty' is represented in the narratives of the Communist functionaries as the most crucial issue within the re-dressing campaign. (For another form of the examples of political conceptualization of beauty, see below in the narrative Parcev1). See below also the representations in other oral histories and also in narratives of the villagers. The concept of beauty was eventually the most immediate impulse for the extreme forms of the re-dressing campaign. The notion of 'beauty' which constitutes the aesthetics of women's appearance is always juxtaposed to the notion of 'backwardness' and 'ugliness'. 'Beauty' embraces the three essential ideological concepts of the Communist re-dressing: the emancipation of women, the civilizing process of Communist modernization and the national-Orientalist discourse. Thus it can be said that the concerns about 'beauty' expressed in the redressing campaign were one of the locally specific responses to modernity carried out by the local Communist elite which consisted of the so called political 'cadres', the new Communist 'inteligencija'.

The following narrative about re-dressing is part of an oral history of a former school master in the local school in Ilansko, (a neighbouring village to Cherna Mesta) and the former head of the National Committee of Jakoruda. His narrative represents a more 'civic' approach to the assimilation campaign and also the re-dressing. One of the former cadres, the former teacher and chairman of the National Committee expressed his understanding of the renaming campaign with much less of eschatological enthusiasm than it was in case on the part of the main modernizers. But the notion of beauty as a political concept is present again. Apart from seeing re-dressing as a necessity on a way to the 'cultural world', the main reason for re-dressing is again the political need that 'Jakoruda', in the sense of the women of Jakoruda, be *beautiful*. When I asked him about the re-dressing campaign he recalled:

Parcev 1

"This much I know. I was a student at the time. [the time of the re-dressing] There definitely was violence but not like with the change of names. When I finished gymnasium, I worked for the summer in the forest administration in one brigade which had about forty Muhamadan girls. I was the only Bulgarian and the only man among

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them. In the morning I couldn't recognize them in front of the forest administration, because all of them were wrapped up [in the sense 'veiled', 'zabulene' in the local dialect]. You could only see the eyes. They would tell me that they are going here and there. As soon as we left the village, they unwrapped. On the property worked open necked. They threw off everything. When we returned and approached Jakoruda, they wrapped up once again. I used to speak with them, such young, pretty girls. They knew that they were pretty. They didn't want to hide themselves. Only the little ugly ones who are the defenders of wrapping up and they shared this with me and said they wanted to be wrapped up.

But I know that some sort of action took place here although I wasn't here. I was a student. I learned in the newspaper that the women here in Jakoruda tossed off their veils [feredze]. You know what a feredze is? It's that ugly thing. But I know the two women, because they're not from Jakoruda. One is from Velingrad and one is from Jakoruda. She got married in Jakoruda. But they didn't cover up [veiled]. In Velingrad there were many more. Jakoruda was a fortress of such an approach. But that woman was not wrapped up at all. She went about in only a light scarf. One was a very beautiful and sympathetic women and the other was a medical nurse from Belica. She also didn't wrap up. She went about. She was light haired with blue eyes. She wore one light blue scarf. They said that they were the first to toss off the feredze. It means that there was some sort of manipulation here. Insofar as there is talk of 'unwrapping' [in the dialect 'razbulvane']. I personally think that at least it speeded up the process. The process of integration not to the Bulgarian nation but to the cultural world."

This narrative gives another example of the use of the concept of 'beauty'. Within the framework of the interpretation of this narrative I would like to draw attention to the concept of wrapping and un-wrapping, veiling and de-veiling, in Bulgarian 'zabulvane' and 'razbulvane'. These notions, which I translate as 'wrapping' and 'un-wrapping' are used in relation to concept of *beauty*. Wrapping and un-wrapping, can be interpreted as a structural dichotomy of 'hiding and displaying'. 'Displaying' and especially displaying of a beauty, was by the bearers of modernity considered to have a positive value. The act of de-veiling had therefore symbolical meaning of emancipation and modernization.

In the discourse of the Bulgarian national state the *veil* is traditionally conceptualized as culturally retrograde and politically dangerous.⁴³ Similarly, within the European 'orientalist' approach, the veil is for a European observer always a symbol

⁴³ Neuburger, *The Orient*, 116.

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‘wilderness and darkness’ of the Orient. In the narrative of the Bulgarian nationalist discourse, women’s veils are always a symbol of religious oppression and orthodoxy of Islam, and in the Bulgarian case one of the symbols of the ‘national enemy’. Communist Bulgaria is not the only example of a country with a state sponsored cultural policy concerned with women’s veils. In scholarly accounts, these kinds of cultural policies are often interpreted as an effort of political power to get a woman under its control. These interpretative approaches use the Foucauldian notion of power in order to interpret women behind veil as out of control. Politically organized attempts to ‘strip off the veil are in this theoretical framework interpreted as imposing power through a system of visibility and surveillance.⁴⁴ For example, Neuburger as well goes in that direction in her interpretation and argues that the re-dressing campaign aimed only to a ‘de-veiling’.

For the purposes of my argument, in which I confront the suggestions to interpret re-dressing exclusively in terms of the theory of power, the notion ‘de-veil’ is not analytically sufficient for my interpretation of re-dressing as a way of creating and promoting a new aesthetics. On bases of the narratives, which I have used in this chapter (Parcev 1, 2, Pavel and Angel 1), I argue that the concept of re-dressing consisted not only of “stripping of the veil”, but that it was a deliberate effort to impose a new concept of ‘beauty’.

In the conceptualizations of these recollections the aim of re-dressing was to make Jakoruda ‘beautiful’. And we can see that the concept ‘beautiful’ meant not only women without covered heads, because as we can see in the second part of the narrative of Parcev 1, even the most emancipated women, the most beautiful ones, ‘de-veiled’, but again not completely. They replaced their veils by some other variant with the same symbolical function, which was tolerable for the local Communists modernizers. The aim was not only to ‘de-veil’, but to create a new politics of aesthetics. The new concepts of ‘beautiful’ women shared by Communist modernizers contained a new aesthetic code which corresponded with certain ideas of modernity and development. And that the code did not consisted only of a woman ‘stripped off’ of her veil can be read in presented narratives and images.

⁴⁴ Compare with Yegenoglu, Meyda, *Colonial Fantasizes: Towards Feminist Reading of Orientalism* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, and also with Neuburger, *The Orient*, 116-117.

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What the re-dressing campaign imposed was a change of aesthetic forms and symbolic meanings of women's dress. In these terms the redressing was a way how to express a 'new reality' through symbolic changes of the forms of women's dress. To use Kerzters terminology, I see re-dressing as a 'symbolic struggle over identity and meaning'⁴⁵ through the imposition of certain concepts of 'beauty' and the construction of ideal types of men and women. The redressing and the whole women emancipation programme aimed to produce changes of the political and social reality through changes of aesthetical concepts.

The two quoted narratives demonstrated how the ideological concepts of Communist modernization project were reflected in the concepts of the re-dressing. How representatives of the Communist political elite conceptualized the political concerns about the female body and dress and their symbolic through the notion of *beauty* and related notions of hiding and displaying articulated as 'wrapping' and 'un-wrapping'.

IV.5. The 'civilizing process' in the Rhodopes Mountains

In the previous subchapter was argued that the politics of aesthetics of Communist modernization were expressions of the Communist political programme of emancipation of women and the 'civilizing effort' of Communist modernization. The new, 'ideal women' was a complex set of aesthetic and political values. As we can read in the narrative of Ceca and Stanka 1, the ideal women had to fulfil many of criteria regarding her physical and mental abilities. In this subchapter will be argued that the aesthetic values the new woman possessed did not necessarily contain the symbolism of *proletarian* political values.

For this part of my argument about the re-dressing campaign, I use as an illustration Volkov's interpretation of cultural policy in the USSR. Volkov puts into parallel the complex approach of the Stalinist totalitarian regime towards validating

⁴⁵ Kertzer David, *Politics and Symbols, Italian Communist Party and the Fall of Communism*, Yale University Press. 1996.

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aesthetic forms with Norbert Elias's notion of the 'civilizing process'. Volkov refers to Elias argument about the restrictive codes of behaviour:

*"changes in normative behavioural regulation, including the codes of manners, the rules of hygiene, dress-codes, forms of conversations, etc. The macrostructural conditions of violence in which these changes were situated were those of centralization of authority over an increasing number of territories and the creation of monopoly of force-the rise of absolutist states."*⁴⁶

Elias conceives of the 'civilizing process' as an inculcation of disciplines that proceeded without recourse to open terror.⁴⁷ Interpretation of the following narratives reveals that the re-dressing had the character of a 'civilizing process'.

While sitting in the garden of his small villa in Jakoruda, the former head of the National Committee recalls - with a certain level of nostalgia, frustration and guilt - about the re-dressing campaign.

Parcev 2

"And when did you find it legitimate and when not [the redressing]? Violence because of the names could not be justified by anything. But if there was some violence in relation to the change of the dress, then I think is warranted. It was received very well. But not that there would not be any resistance. I will tell you. In the year 1972, at the end of the first year of secondary school most of the children were Mohamedans from Jakoruda. We needed to organized a graduation ball. Over several months we were conducting enlightenment program and about what is it all about and were trying to convince them [the parents of the children] to let their children to go to the ball. And the girls started to sew nice appropriate little dresses for that ball. There were forty girls from Jakoruda who were graduating. But just four of them came. They were also assigned for those forty girls one female teacher and one male teacher to bring them safely home. Before the ball started they did not drink and they did not eat. The mothers came and started to knock on the doors. And took them away. In the morning I went to school and there was a whole group of girls waiting for the results of the exams. And I asked them, my pupils, who were very nice and pleasant, 'Did you sleep well?' And one of them

⁴⁶ Volkov, Vadim, The Concept of 'Kulturnost', Notes on the Stalinist civilizing process', In Fitzpatrick, Sheila, ed., *Stalinism New Directions*. London and New York: Routledge, 2000, pp.210-231, 210.

⁴⁷ Volkov, *ibid.*

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answered. 'This night we did not sleep.' And I say: And what have you been doing? And she says: 'We were crying. All night.' The whole night they were crying, because they parents did not let them go to the ball. Even before they had have agreed. They gave money for the dresses. And there were many similar things. But at the last moment there was someone who said that this is 'non believers work' [in the dialect 'gjavurska rabota'], and do you know what does it means 'gjavur' a non believer, an infidel. And they did not allow them to go. And today? Today they are uncontrollable. And so it is. And so it was. And along with the talk about " 'unveiling' [razbulvane]I personally think, that it speeded up that process. The process of integration not to the Bulgarian nation, but to the cultural world." ⁴⁸

This narrative offers another piece of evidence which shows that the aim of the re-dressing campaign was creation of a new aesthetics, rather than just dismantling the old ones through 'stripping off' the local women their veils. In this narrative I would like to point out to the notion of ball dress. The graduation ball and its preparation were conducted in the framework of official cultural policy. The sewing of the *ball dresses* was organized by local teachers, the primary bearers of modernization ideas and effort.

Through these new aesthetic concepts, through the new concept of *beauty*, there was introduced a new sense of 'privacy and individualism'. ⁴⁹Moreover, the ball dress can be read as a typical example of 'middle class aesthetics' and its political content was more "civic' than Communist. As we can read in the narrative, the concept of 'beauty' was tightly related with belonging to 'civilization' and 'integration with Bulgarian nation and cultural world'.

The veil and eventually the black long '*feredze*' were the elements which were in at the centre of attention of the pre-Communist re-dressing campaigns conducted on the basis bases of nationalist discourse. They were symbols of the religious identity of the main Bulgarian 'national enemy' the Turks. Despite all the re-dressing effort of the previous assimilation campaigns, when the promoters of Communist modernity came into the region, in the mid 1970's, Pomak women were still wearing their traditional outfit: white veil and wide trousers *salvari* together with long woollen apron. (See figure

⁴⁸ Parcev, tape record, 2004.

⁴⁹ Volkov uses Elias's theory about connection between the rise of an absolutist state and the creation of the concept of 'privacy and individualism', for interpretation of the change of the cultural policy which took place in the 1930' in the USSR, Volkov, The Concept of 'Kulturnost', 215.

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4). This was a specific combination which made their physical appearance from the first sight distinctive not only to Bulgarians, but also to the other two subgroups of the Muslim minority, Turks and Gypsies.

Former modernizers recalled how in year 1974 Muslim women were still wearing *feredze* in the context of speaking about the effort and activities made in order to emancipate local women.⁵⁰ These parts of women dress were for the promoters of 'civilized' aesthetics is the most irritating. (See the narratives Pavel and Angel 1 and Parcev 2.) As we can see from the narratives it was a combination of both parts of women cloths, the trousers and the dress, which the Communist modernizers considered as unbearably *ugly* and which was the real obstacle to the integration of the Pomaks and especially of the Pomak women into the '*cultural world*'. The conceptual 'ugliness' of such design made the former bearers of 'cultural' aesthetics anxious even during the interview I have thirty years later.

Thus during the Communist re-dressing campaign at the centre of attention was not only the white veil and trousers which were the symbols of alienation to the Bulgarian nation. Communist re-dressing was aiming to create the whole new aesthetic form of women's dress. If putted in this way, we can better understand the extreme concerns of the Communist modernizers in Cherna Mesta about aesthetic forms of femininity. For example, the regional newspaper, *Rodopi*, which was promoting, celebrating and propagating Communist modernization in the region had a special rubric for women containing information and advices in the filed of fashion and design. It usually also contained images of sketches of models of women's dress, which were recommended as fashionable.⁵¹ these corresponded with the current urban styles of that period. In the logic of emancipation of women such kinds of ideals of 'elegant women's city dresses in the style of 'Coco Chanel' were supposed to replace Muslim rural multi-colored *shalvari* and white veils. What was offered as an alternative to the veil and *salvari* was not only a dress lacking religious symbols, but also not containing much of the *proletarian* aesthetic propagated yet in the 1950s. Example of such representation

⁵⁰ Notebook, 2002, pp.50-52.

⁵¹

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we can see for instance in the journal of Bulgarian Turks *Yeni Isik*.⁵² The image of Turkish women, worker, mother and political actor, which is by heavy masculine hand signing a petition for peace. This concept of female aesthetics stands in straight contrast to the aesthetics of the ‘Coco Chanel’.

The aesthetics of Coco Chanel are considered to be a manifestation of individualism and emancipation not only in hidden corners of the Balkans but also in the West. This style expresses a high level of individuality –in contrast to white veils but as well to proletarian working uniforms—and in this perspective the re-dressing can be interpreted as a specific form of the ‘civilization process’ aiming at individualization.

The narrative below resonates with that concepts. We can read that the values promoted by the programs of the National Front were aiming at ‘creating’ of an ideal *emancipated* women: who knows how to dress, how to cook a rational diet, who has her own income, ‘culture’, class consciousness, political opinions, and who looks *beautiful*.

The re-dressing campaign was more than the other campaigns based on personal engagement of its promoters. For example, Ceca, the former head of local branch of the National Front, and for twenty years head of a boarding school for Pomak girls in Goce Delechev, recalled with strong nostalgia and emotional engagement her professional activities in the field of emancipation of women. A close relative of Ceca was Communist functionary whose violent death was a consequence of armed conflict between Communist functionaries and villagers in the year 1973. It happened in the context of open resistance to renaming. (I dedicate attention to this in the chapter VI. Resistance.) Ceca’s current profession is ‘healer and diviner’ and she has her own small practice in regional town of Blagoevgrad.

I have spent several evenings with her and with her friends, a mixed couple of Bulgarian and German from the former GDR, the local veterinary doctors. These people were old friends and at the same time some of the most important activists of Communist modernization in Jakoruda region. Until today they have yet not refrained from their belief in modernity and progress and in spiritual profoundness of Bulgarian ‘folk’ culture. They remained enthusiastic about the ideas of Communist enlightenment

⁵² April 1951 the image is in Neuburger, *The Orinet*,179.

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and at the same time they gained a bit of bitterness of the failure of their idealistic project.

During our long evenings they kept repeating the same answer to my question as to why there was such strong concern about Muslim women's names and cloths. And to my question why the emancipation took so dramatic shape in redressing and renaming they responded:

Ceca and Stanka 1.

"The aim was modernization, enlightenment in order that they would not feel isolated as second class citizens. We have sent girls to learn cooking and housekeeping and history. In Goce Delchev there were exhibitions of what they have learned, and after that they had to go unavoidably abroad. I went to Hungary. We made it so that they were self confident. They [opponents from among the 'Pomaks'] said that we give them to soldiers. We sent them [the Pomaks girls] to workshops for the relays, in order for them to stay economically self-sufficient. It was the 'Process of Rebirth'. The old brides were so heavy [because of the traditional costume], that they almost fainted. And now such a charming weddings! We wanted they to go to learn. We wanted especially they become medical nurses and to have the privileges of higher education. From five candidates they took two Pomaks. They themselves were under pressure because of their names. They called themselves by Bulgarian names in order not to be second class. They changed their surnames in the 1990s even those who were originally Bulgarian [...] We have been constructing schools, roads, health complexes, and now the Arabic world builds mosques here."⁵³

The emancipated Muslim women were the symbols of Communist 'civilizing process'. (See narrative Tonchev 1 below). 'Pomak' women were perceived in the national and Communist discourse as victims of the religious tradition of Islam, of cultural backwardness, of the patriarchal structures of their households and finally as those who are on the margins of the periphery, those most oppressed. Apart from that fact that they have represented the 'oriental wildness' and the danger of the 'Ottoman legacy', while being part of religiously and ethnically ambiguous group, they have also represented the 'impurity' of misogyny. Because, of all these reasons they merited the attention of the

⁵³ Notebook, 2004/1, 50-52.

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Communist modernist 'civilizing process' which aimed at emancipation and individualization.

The former second and later first Party secretary in Jakoruda region, Tonchev recalls:

Tonchev 1.

"The most important motivation was to enhance the living standard. The policy was to have economic progress in both groups. Christians and Muslims. It was needed to equalize their standard of living. In Smoljan the "Rodopski Penzion" [a boarding school] was founded and the secretariat of Central Party Committee made a decision which said that girls have to learn. With them we will 'break through'!"⁵⁴

This subchapter showed how the re-dressing was conceptualized as a way of promoting 'civilization', in the sense of creating a sense of 'privacy and individualism' of 'Pomak' women. White veils and *salvari* traditionally used by the Pomaks women, were symbols of their belonging to a 'collective', in this case to religious group, and were one of the obvious obstacles of the women's individualization and emancipation. The veils of 'Pomak' women were from point of view of Communist atheism politically incorrect, from point of view of emancipation doctrine not ethical and from the point of view of the 'civilizing process' aimed at individualization not aesthetical.

IV. 6. 'Big Deal' with the 'Pomaks'

In order to interpret the ethnographic material about Communist politics of aesthetics articulated in the re-dressing campaign among the 'Pomaks' in Cherna Mesta I continue with a comparison of my material with some ideological and aesthetical elements of the cultural policy which was undertaken in USSR in the middle of the 1930s. However, I try to avoid any generalization in categorizing all the modernizations efforts which were taking place in socialist states in the Eastern Europe after the WWII merely as the 'Soviet way of modernity'.⁵⁵ From this perspective is also possible to compare the Bulgarian case with the cultural policy and assimilation programs

⁵⁴ Notebook 2004/1, pp.55-56.

⁵⁵ Neuburger, *The Orient*.

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conducted in the 1970s in socialist Hungary among otherwise marginalized Roma Gypsies. The aim of Hungarian cultural and assimilation policy was still *proletarianization* of the Gypsies and formation of their working class values.⁵⁶ Whereas, in Bulgaria, the aim of modernization effort applied to the Pomaks, was to promote values which corresponded with aesthetic content of the notion of the 'middle class'. I do elaborate this argument on the basis of finding resonances with the cultural policy undertaken in the USSR during the second half of the 1930s.

This perspective of looking at the ethnography on re-dressing suggests, that the modernization promoted by the state, which was taking place in Bulgaria in the 1970's was in some regards similar to the one which was conducted under the Stalin's regime in second half of the 1930's. In both cases, in the USSR in the 1930s and in Bulgaria in the 1970s, the Communist state launched a process of urbanization and industrialization of the peripheral regions and marginalized peoples. (This issue was discusses more in II. Modernization at the Periphery) Also there, and this is the point at which it resonates with Cherna Mesta case, the new aesthetical ideal was not a 'proletarian', but rather a 'middle class'.

At this point I would like to sketch the historical development of Communist cultural policy in regard to emancipation of women in the USSR. In the 1920's the social change leading towards Communism was supposed to happen through proletarianization of the non-proletarian classes. Besides peasants, this process was directed mainly towards intellectuals and women.⁵⁷ Stalinism, in the 1930's brought fundamental change in cultural policy. By Dunham called 'Big Deal', by Timasheff 'Great Retreat', or by Gronow 'value transformation',⁵⁸ has meant replacement of the political concept *proletarianization* by a cultural policy called *kulturnost*.⁵⁹ For example Dunham presents

⁵⁶ Stewart, *Time of the gypsies*.104.

⁵⁷ About the making the 'New Inteligentsija' in the 1920's in the USSR see Halfin, Ingold., *From Darkness to the Light; Class Consciousness and Salvation in Revolutionary Russia*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh, 1999, 205-282.

⁵⁸ Timasheff, N.S, *The Great Retreat. The Growth and Decline of Communism in Russia*. New York: E.P. Dutton, 1946

Gronow, Jukka, *Caviar with Champagne, Common Luxury and the Ideals of the Good Life in Stalin's Russia*. New York: Berg, 2003, Dunham, Vera, *In Stalin's Time, Middleclass Values in Soviet Fiction*. Cambridge, London, New York and Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1990.

⁵⁹ Timasheff, *The Great Retreat*. 1946.

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her examples on post-war Soviet literature and interprets the radical change in cultural policy as an exchange of ‘middle class’ values between Stalinist regime and wider society. In her argumentation Dunham says that:

*“In Stalin times- and even in Stalin’s worst times-the regime was supported by more than simple terror, a truism still overlooked from time to time. The system did possess regenerative powers, and it was capable of responding to the pressures of post-war reconstruction.”*⁶⁰

As a part of the USSR “big deal” the notion of the ‘ideal’ woman had changed. From the proletarian, masculine, industrial worker type of woman to a more subtle and feminine type. The new policy promoting *middle class* values had changed as well values attributed to the ideal type of woman. Women had to be labour worker, but at the same time with feminine appearance, emancipated but competent housewives. Slezkine describes the change in concept of the emancipation of women in the context of a change of national and minority policy which took place in the USSR:

*“In fact, just as the newly emancipated Soviet women were expected to become more “feminine”, the fully modernized Soviet Nationalities were supposed to become more national.”*⁶¹

About the value change reflected in emancipation policy Dunham says:

*“the overworked run-of –the mill professional woman wont something else. She struggles for private comfort at least as much as for public recognition. Bypassing the amazons, the Big Deal is adaptable to the average woman’s judiciously modified feminist goals.”*⁶²

⁶⁰ Dunham, *In Stalin’s Time*, 13.

⁶¹ Slezkine, Yuri, The Soviet Union as communal apartment, or how socialist state promoted ethnic prularism. In Fitzpatrick, Sheila, *Stalinism New Directions*. London and New York: Routledge, 2000, pp.313-348, 330.

⁶² Dunham, *In Stalin’s Time*, 224. and compare with Gronow, *Caviar with Champagne*, 2003, 11. Gronow says that “value transformation, in culture had direct parallel in the politics of material culture. In the analyses of Stalin’s times it has become almost commonplace to interpret this ‘value transformation’ as an indicator or proof of the increasing weight of educated specialists engineers, teachers, doctors of medicine and so on. As previously mentioned, the intelligentsia was codified as a separate social group in Stalin’s new constitution of 1936 together with the working class and *kolkhoz* peasantry.”, *ibid.*, 11.

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In the narratives of the enactors these ideas in Cherna Mesta we can see, that similar values which can be classified as ‘middle class’ were assigned to the new type of ideal Muslim women in the Rhodopes. For example, in the narrative of Ceca, (see above the narrative Ceca and Stanka 1), we can read that the values promoted in framework of the emancipation of women had concerns about attributes of social status. As it was said, in the wishful desires of the local promoters of the emancipation programme the Muslim women from the mountain shepherd’s hamlets are educated and know history. They are economically self-sufficient and their physical appearance is like something from the fashion house of Coco Chanel. At the same time the ideal women has all the values of ‘good housewives’ as demonstrated in cooking, sawing, hygiene, and care of the household.

But the actual realization of the emancipation of women required an enormous personal engagement from on the part of its promoters. And again, likewise in the other case which I have described, its promotion required more than the power of political institution, the Communist Party, but also of the National Front and all the other non-party institutions. The actual demands of re-dressing campaign were carried out on the basis of the enthusiasm, faith and convictions of local Communist agents. This is presented in the narratives Pavol and Angel 1, Parcev 1 and 2, Ceca and Stanka1 mentioned 1, but also in the narratives of the villagers below and in chapter VI. Resistance. Its promoters in Bulgaria wer the so called ‘cadres’, representatives of the Communist “middle class”. And also in this regard the situation was similar to the USSR in the 1930s. Fitzpatrick about that says that:

*“the new Soviet middle class or intelligentsia, ideally of proletarian origin and schooled in Soviet educational institutions, became the new reference group of Stalin’s policy by 1939, replacing the working class.”*⁶³

The generation of the political Communist party functionaries, the so-called ‘cadres’, was in Bulgaria formed after the WWII and had been brought up in non proletarian

⁶³ Fitzpatrick, Sheila, *Cultural Front: Power and Culture in Revolutionary Russia*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992, 44.

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values and aesthetics. As we can read from the narratives, of the Communist ‘cadres’- which is part of my argument-the promotion of women emancipation and its aesthetics was by this generation of the Communist political elite perceived as something what I would call a “mission for beauty”, rather than merely an ‘exercise of power’.

In the end a conceptual question remains: Was the re-dressing that took place in Cherna Mesta a “Big deal” for the Pomaks? On basis of my ethnography, I argue, that in the case of Cherna Mesta the ‘civilizing process’ described by Chartier as ‘substantial changes in the social organization of everyday life, the standards of hygiene, speech, food, space, of manners and public comportment’ were introduced by force.⁶⁴ Although, the aesthetic forms promoted by cultural the cultural policy in Cherna Mesta and in the USSR were similar, in the case of Cherna Mesta the relationship between the official cultural policy promoted by institutions of power and its perception can not be defined as a ‘Big deal’. In the Cherna Mesta case, as we can see in the narratives, the re-dressing campaign was perceived by both sides, by the local organizers and by the villagers, as violent and as proceeded by force. That is why the application of a cultural policy as a part of the modernization project in Cherna Mesta can not be interpreted as having a character of a ‘big deal’ as it took place in USSR in the 1930’s. On the other hand we say, that in spite of the fact that the new aesthetic policy was introduced by force that it was responded to in a way which created a compromise between the aesthetic politics of Communist modernization and the ethical and aesthetic concepts of the villagers. In this respect this corresponds with Foucauldian concept of power, saying that power is not necessarily negative, that its effects are not limited to imposing constraints.

*“Power should be equally seen as carrying positive effects, creating possibilities for individual and group actions. On the level of the state, the exercise of power takes the form of a combination of the political structures of individualization techniques, and totalitarization procedures”.*⁶⁵

⁶⁴ Chartier, Roger, ed., *History of Private Life. II-IV*, London: Belknap Press, 1989, see also Chartier, Roger, ed., *Passions of the Renaissance. III*, London: Cambridge, Mass. 1989.

⁶⁵ Dreyfus, Hubert & Rabinow, Paul, eds, *Michel Foucault: Beyond structuralism and Hermeneutics*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983 cited in: Volkov, ‘The Concept of ‘Kulturnost’, 2000, and see

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My material shows that in spite of many similarities of cultural policies there were still differences in responses and conceptualization of modernity in each socialist state and period. I have used the description of the situation which was taking place in the USSR to illustrate and to interpret the political meaning of aesthetics which were applied in the Cherna Mesta region in the 1970s as a part of the emancipation programme and the re-dressing campaign carried out by the Communist state.

The subchapter argues that the process of change of aesthetic forms and their political meanings which took place in Cherna Mesta was similar to those in the USSR during the so called 'Big Deal'. That the aesthetics promoted by the redressing campaign were oriented towards that which would be called 'middle class' values rather than the proletarian values. In spite of the similarities of the political processes in the two cases I avoid interpreting the re-dressing in Cherna Mesta as a 'Big Deal' in the sense of 'middle class' values given to the Pomaks viewed as an exchange for political support given to the regime. The imposing of the re-dressing measures was perceived as violating and intruding the aesthetical values and everyday practices of the villagers. The subjective perceptions and practical appropriations of re-dressing by the villagers in Cherna Mesta is elaborated further in subchapter called 'Nakedness and Shame of Modernity'.

IV.7. Beauty, Purity and Hygiene in an 'Ideal House'

One of the essential parts of the 'civilizing project' conducted by the Communist modernization project was the introduction of a certain concept of purity and hygiene.

The concepts of purity and cleanness of the body were introduced in the USSR within the framework of the cultural policy of *kul'turnost*. "A person can not be referred to as cultured if he does not keep his body clean."⁶⁶ Slezkin, in his account *Arctic Mirrors* describes the fight for purity which took place in the USSR:

"Back in the Tundra the easiest and most obvious first step to attack the dirt...this was usually done by women –teachers, doctors, and

also to Bernauer, James & Rasmussen, David, eds, 'The Ethic of Care for the Self as a practice of Freedom', in *The Final Foucault*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1988, 120.

⁶⁶ *Stakhanovets*, 2 (1937) 53, cited in: Volkov, 'The Concept of 'Kulturnost' 2000, 218.

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ethnographers-who were the first to be offended by 'incorrect' practices. They tried to teach their native 'sisters' how to wash themselves, clean their tents, do the dishes, bake bread, and in general to do everything that a self-respecting Russian wife and mother would be able to do. Direct persuasion hardly worked, so the most popular method, in tune with the spirit of the times, was to organize kind of contest: a contest for the cleanest tent, the best meal (as judged by the Russian palate), and so on. To qualify for the competition, the women had to take a bath and discard their loin cloths, "that malodorous symbol of a woman's submission and remnant of the stone age".⁶⁷

I have recorded a narrative of a very similar content, when a former teacher in Cherna Mesta recalls how he and his wife were going around Muslim villages located higher in the mountains and how they were teaching children to clean their teeth. In the narratives of local modernizers the concern about unhygienic living conditions of 'Pomaks' is presented very often. (See the narrative Parcev 2 in chapter II. Modernization at the Periphery).

Similarly, as in the Sibirean tundra, also in the Rhodopes a contest called "ideal house" [in Bulgarian 'obrazcov dom'] was introduced.⁶⁸ The award had a form of a little metal tablet with the inscription 'obrazcov dom'. They are today still proudly displayed on the front doors of some of the houses. I have seen these tablets only in ethnically mixed urban areas, apart from the township of Velingrad, also in North East Bulgaria, in the towns of Sumen and Razgrad).The houses with award were usually newly built modern houses with large windows, with full façade, with orderly kept front garden. From the first sight they gave the feeling of tidiness and purity. The counterpoint to the ideal houses were the wooden houses of urban Turkish neighbourhoods, residua of Ottoman urban architecture, with its specific architectonic features; an urban pattern of

⁶⁷ Slezkine, Yuri, *Arctic Mirrors: Russia and the Small People of the North*. Ithaca. London: Cornell University Press, 1994, 232.

⁶⁸ I have seen most of the houses signed by the small tablet with the award in township of Velingrad. Velingrad was formed by joining of three originally settlements with predominant Muslim inhabitants (three original neighbourhoods Kamenica, Chepino, Lozenec). Is one of the most important urban settlement in the Western Rhodopes and as such was on of the targets of Communist urban development.

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narrow streets, terraced balconies typical of Ottoman residential houses (*chardaks*) and wooden grids on the windows.

The nationwide contest for the most beautiful house was organized by the National Front. I interpret the contest on one hand as a way to control the space between what is public and what is private. Similarly as to the symbolical control over body, dress and name, the house is a concept at the edges of the two spheres. A part of the contest was not only the interior, but also, and even more, the external parts of the house, the windows, the garden and the façade. On the other hand, the ‘ideal house’ award could be interpreted also as the process of introducing the new politics of aesthetics. The aesthetic values of the awarded houses like the patterns for women dresses can be read as the aesthetics of the ‘middle class’ or ‘petit bourgeoisie’. Viewing it in this context, I interpret the nation wide contest of the ‘ideal house’ as a response to modernity as a part of that idea of Communist modernization which can be called a ‘fight for beauty’.⁶⁹

IV. 8. ‘Nakedness’ and Shame of modernity

This subchapter is focused on the responses and subjective appropriations of the re-dressing campaign by the villagers in Cherna Mesta. As a ethnographic base are used the oral histories of women from the village recalling the actual ‘re-dressing acts’.

For instance Emine. She was emotionally very moved when she was telling me about her experiences with re-dressing and even after the thirty years which separated us from the past, she related all the stories with a feeling of trauma. She, as all of the women from the village, described the re-dressing acts mostly as oppressive and violent. During my fieldwork I lived in her house. She is emancipated in the sense that she is having her own income and as most of the women in the village she is not financially dependent on the other members of the households. At the same time she struggles, as most of the women in the village, through all the hard physical work required by the household based economy. As most of the villagers, she increases her budget by

⁶⁹ The idea of ‘model house’ resonates with the responses to modernity undertaken in pre-war Czechoslovakia in the industrial complex of Bata in Zlin. According to some oral histories which I have collected, the Bata factory established committees which were checking the cleanness of the houses built up within building estates of the shoe factory.

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engaging with the local business of the ‘black market’ with natural raw materials from village surroundings, (mushrooms, herbs and timber). She has her own political and world opinions. At the same time, she is in favour of ‘traditional’ family values. She always wears a headscarf. She wears *salvari* together with dress, the combination of the two what makes the outfit of ‘Pomak’ women distinctive. In her narratives she always recalled the re-dressing campaign as being for her and local women oppressive and disrespectful.

Emine 1.

“Angel, Marx and Starkov, local Communist functionaries, were going around the village with police and urging us to take off our trousers [salvari] But we could not go naked!”

What role had the concept of *nakedness* played and how it was conceived in the discourse of villagers as opposed to the liberating concepts of ‘beauty’ which were promoted by the Communist modernizers? What made the local political elites, the former Communist functionaries, so heavily engaged with the aesthetics of a woman’s body? Why is the Communist ‘civilizing process’ described by the villagers as applied by physical violence?

The notion of *nakedness* is linked with the experience of social disgrace and public shame.⁷⁰ It is used to describe a situation, when women in the past would appear in public without wearing a veil or headscarf and *shalvari*. A woman who would wear the ideal model of women dress, as it is for shown in the image from *Rodopa*, consisting of a small urban style elegant dress of a length just below the knees and decorated with pearls would at that time probably have also been perceived as naked. And that was exactly the outfit which in the dreams of the local agents of modernity should replace the outfit consisting of *shalvari* - the trousers which cover the entire leg combined with the long skirt - dress and a veil or scarf which was covering most of the head and part of the face.

⁷⁰ The meaning of the notion *nakedness* what people described in relation to the redressing acts was very similar to that one which was used in the time when I was doing my fieldwork. Pearson, women, wearing certain combinations of cloths, and not necessarily just that one religiously symbolic, would be marked as ‘naked’.

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But this concept was in clear opposition to what the Communist modernizers had tried to promote. The new politics of aesthetics also gave new aesthetic meaning to certain parts of the dress. The veil or head scarf and also the combination of the trousers-*shalvari*- and the dress was viewed by the modernizers as ‘dreadful backwardness’ or as *ugly*. (See the narratives of above, Pavol and Angel 1). The concept of *nakedness* defines the conflict which exists between these two aesthetic meanings. The aesthetics of the villagers based on cultural and religious ethical values on one hand and aesthetics of the modernizers based on the ethics of the Communist responses to modernity on the other.

Under the influence of the Communist enlightenment enacted by the official institutions, (mainly the schools) and also under the pressure of an occasional pestering from the local functionaries themselves the ‘ugly’ elements of dress, the white veils covering the whole head and half of the face and the *shalvari* were to a certain extent eliminated at least among women of younger generation.⁷¹

The re-dressing efforts organized by the Communist state and party have been always been responded to by the local women in an effort to reach a certain compromise between the ‘new’ form of dress and their own concept of nakedness and shame. The compromise would be taken in terms of the cultural patterns and conditions of every day life.⁷² Pomak women never fully abandoned their way of dress. Women gradually replaced the banned combinations with other varieties with the same practical and symbolic function.

According to the oral histories, for instance narrative by Sase bellow, and some ethnographies about the first wave of re-dressing in the 1960’s⁷³, women in the village adopted the officially offered designs but in their own way. They abandoned the white scarf but they kept covering of their heads. Instead of the white scarf they wore a colourful scarf. Instead of the *shalvari* and the vest they wore a blue working dress

⁷¹ Compare with Markova, ‘*Muslim Bulgarians (Pomaks)*’, Neuburger, *The Orient*.

⁷² For comparison see how Muria Gonds of Madhya Pradesh invent their own uniforms for public occasions reveals the dynamism of what he calls ‘collective styles’, see Gell Alfred, ‘*Newcomers to the World of Goods: Consumption among the Muria Gonds*’, In Appadurai, Arjun, *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, Cambridge University Press, 1986, 120.

⁷³ See for instance description of appropriation of the Cooperative uniform in: Markova, ‘*Muslim Bulgarians (Pomaks)*’.

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which was part of the work uniform donated by the agricultural cooperative. Elderly women would wear white scarves, which used to be forbidden and a blue dress which part of the work uniform donated by the Cooperative.

Thus the cultural concept of 'nakedness' slowed down the introduction of the 'modern' aesthetics. Besides that there was another aspect which played an important role. It was the almost absolute isolation of that region from the rest of Bulgaria and also from outside world. Because of the border zone character of the region and the special treatment for its inhabitants, there were also only minimal cultural contacts outside the official propaganda of the regime. The relative captivity of the region and its inhabitants continued for more than a decade after the collapse of the Communist regime.

IV.9. Perceptions of the Re-dressing on the Side of Villagers:

In spite of the fact that the aesthetic and moral values of Communist women were suddenly more like the 'western' values of the emancipated middle class, then the values of the prototypical Communist, they were not accepted by the village community easily. The way in which the re-dressing is described depends on the political and ethnic background of the respondent. As we can see in the narratives quoted below, members of the former ruling elite, Communist and National front functionaries describe the re-dressing campaign as a liberating act which might have been adapted to local traditions but which was eventually positively appreciated by the women themselves.

The re-dressing in the narratives of local women is mostly presented with negative connotations and sometimes by even using images of physical violence. During my fieldwork I never heard a single narrative which represented the re-dressing in a positive light. Oral histories about the re-dressing have always been recalled with strong emotional engagement and memories of dislike and disgrace. Restrictions on wearing certain parts of women's dress were imposed at the same time as the measures of changing Muslim names and the resettlement. Villagers in their oral histories occasionally recalled re-dressing as one of the immediate motives for their resettlement. For example, while speaking of resettlement, Medzu Saranski recalled when he stepped onto the green grass of the actual place of his former house in Konarsko recalled:

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Medzu Saranski 1: "What can one do if they are chasing you around forests because of your name and if they want to strip the cloths off one's daughter. Emine [his daughter] was yang at that time when they came. She was alone in the house waiting while we were hiding in the forests nearby. What you can do in such a case? You will move! It was terrible when they caught you. They did what they wanted. The names of your brother or sister remained the same. Along with that they were chasing us to throw down our scarves [in Bulgarian *zabradki*] and trousers. We should go naked like them, but we were not used to it like the young ones today. Some of them again veiled. And we were not allowed to veil. But what you can do if they don't give you anything to eat? They did not pay you? No, not until one has changed his name. It was very offensive."⁷⁴

In the women's narratives is very often presented the efforts Communist functionaries wandering through the villages and trying to convince women by using the symbolical power of their status to take off their veils. Another recollection from Emine:

Emine 2: "Stary and Marx went around the village with the police and pestered us to take off our pantaloons. But you can't go naked. It was [the banning of the cloths] offensive. Bulgarians never say that it was forced. That it happened by force. Q.: And what actually did the Bulgarians want? They wanted us to be the same. Like Bulgarians. Later there were a lot of people at the meeting against our taking back our names. They said that three hundred years ago we were the same as them, Bulgarians. Yes, but we already are something different. We aren't like them. We are already something different."⁷⁵

(Stary and Marx are nicknames for the former mayor of the village and the Communist functionary.)

or, Sase, another lady from the village:

Sase 1: And I was working on the relays [at the factory]. As soon as they taught us the relays, I began to work at the saw mill. I got an apprentice, but the sawing wasn't going well, because they forbade us to wear long veils [the *chergi*] and our clothing. Because they changed our names and insisted that we dress either in dresses or trousers only. [The classic dress of Muslim women in the Balkans combines both at the same time. Under the dress or long apron they wear trousers.] And they forbade us to wear such peasant clothing as

⁷⁴ Notebook, visit at Konarsko

⁷⁵ Notebook, 2004, 2/116.

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we used to wear before. Q: And what is this peasant clothing? Such as we wear now. Muslim clothing. We were supposed to wear trousers. Trousers or dresses... mainly we could not wear clothing which Muslims had formerly worn. We should wear colourful scarves not white ones [veils]. Shalvari.. You couldn't wear them at all. At that time the different modern models did not exist as they are today. It was forbidden to sew these models were forbidden to sew these models and people had no pay so that they started to make the relays."

I have also recorded also a story from the time of renaming which has a plot and logical structure very similar to a story from the Arabian Nights. This narrative would suggest that the re-dressing had the character of a 'deal' or political exchange.

Parcev 3.

"A man who worked at the council told me. He was a cleaning man. He was very good at work and the secretary summoned him. He said to him, the 'unwrapping' campaign has begun. And he said [the secretary]: 'You must set an example'. The cleaning man said: 'I was frightened and went home.' What did his wife say to that? He expected that she would scream and weep and faint. But she said to him perfectly calmly: 'I will take off the veil, but I have nothing to wear.' And so he went to the president and said to him: 'My wife is quite prepared, but she has no clothes,' because she has lived her entire life with just one veil. The secretary gave him a voucher: 'Go and buy your wife some clothes. And he said: 'I went with my wife and we bought something so that she took off the veil'. And so it began. That is the way it was in his case."

10. Design of the Women dress in the 1990's

I have followed women's responses to re-dressing in the narratives and as well in my own observations which I made during my MA fieldwork at the end of 1990's. When I came for the first time to the Rhodopes region in 1998 the design of women's dress was of a very particular character. It was in a sense a hybrid combination of several elements. They were of 'modern' design but at the same time they were set up in a way which has allowed them to fulfil all practical, aesthetic and social needs.

The outfit of young women from the villagers in the Western Rhodopes in the late 1990's consisted of combination of 'modern' and 'traditional' elements. There was a colourful scarf made out of artificial silk, designed with golden elements, flower patterns, which was a remnant of the re-dressing of the 1970's, when the white scarves

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were forbidden but were officially allowed to be replaced by their colourful variants. Another characteristic element of yang women's outfits of the 1990s was a combination of cloth which was called a 'working apron', a cloth of a form between an apron and dress. Again it was made of artificial silk and long 'fake' sport trousers. The 'fake' sport leggings came to be an alternative to the *shalvari*. Women wear the apron and the leggings together with a leather jacket and high heels shoes. This kind of aesthetic expression 'still existed as the main aesthetic pattern in Muslim villages in the Western Rhodopes in the late 1990's. It has survived all the changes of aesthetics during 'transition' years, which took place in other regions of Bulgaria and in other countries. One of the reasons is that the Rhodopes even after the modernization effort remained at the periphery. Thus despite all the modernization and emancipation effort of 'Pomak' women, the blue working uniforms distributed by the Cooperatives to their employees together with the false 'addidas' trousers as a variation on the *shalvari* and the colourful headscarves maintained the distinctive character of Muslim women's outfit until the late 1990's.

The above mentioned concept of *nakedness* functioned as a 'break' to the modernization process which was intruding the aesthetical concepts of the Bulgarian speaking Muslims. The concept of *nakedness* has broken down only in recent years as we can see from the responses during the 1990's. It was not even at the end of 1990s but only later in the years 2002-2004 when the old concepts started to be abandoned at least by the younger generation.

The interpretation given in this chapter supports the more general argument of the thesis that all these measures were part of broader concept of 'modernity and civilization' and its application at the periphery at 'any cost.' In other words I interpret the re-dressing campaign not only as an awkward way of national assimilation, but also as a part of the entire modernization project conducted by the Communist state. In this context we can see redressing as one of the local responses to certain ideas of modernity.

I have interpreted certain aspects of re-dressing as part of the creation of new Communist men and women. In the framework of my analyses the re-dressing it seen not only as a radical and awkward way of assimilation imposed by a nationally oriented

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Communist states or exercise of a colonial discourse while subduing Muslim women, but as a response to Communist modernity. A new Communist woman possessed of aesthetic and moral values which were represented 'middle class values' rather than *proletariat* ones.

The conduct of the re-dressing campaign in Cherna Mesta in the Rhodope Mountains had for its promoters the meaning of carrying out a 'civilizing process' at the actual periphery of civilization. Images from regional periodicals, ethnographic journals and oral histories show that 'civilizing process' promoted by Communist modernization and the aesthetic forms which it brought were in sharp contrast to and conflict with aesthetic and ethical concepts of the villagers. The new concept of 'beauty', disposed by what we can read as 'middle class' or 'petite bourgeois' values, was in conflict with the cultural concepts of 'nakedness and shame'. Thus the Communist response of the aesthetics of modernity had to be imposed at the periphery of 'civilization' by force. All that took place under the shelter of an ideological program created by the Party and executed by the National Front and state institutions. At some stages it found its articulation in 're-dressing' acts executed by the local Communist functionaries themselves.

The modernization project through the three campaigns affected the liminal spheres of social life, the liminal spaces between public and private, name, dress and living space. The redressing was accompanied by changes imposed also on other domains of private and social life. Beside the personal names it was the living space of the house and care of the body.

This chapter supported the argument, that the three processes, which I interpret as the imperatives of modernization project in Cherna Mesta, to rename, re-dress and resettle, imposed at the same time were not just chronological coincidence.

The assimilation triplet was a response to modernity carried out in the framework of the ideology of 'development and progress'. At the same time it corresponded to the demand of the modern state itself regardless of Communist power. The aim of the creation of new identity-a new name, dress and village- was not just minority assimilation but also the creation of the ideal of 'new men and women'. And this ideal had more of a 'middle class' than 'proletarian' values.

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The specificity of the re-dressing conducted by the Communist state is that it is not only about symbolic power exercised over groups and individuals through introducing cultural values, in this case 'new' and 'modern'. The case of re-dressing even more than other cases reveals the general character of Communist modernity. Communist concern about people's bodies and dress are demands which any kind of modern state would have for its citizens. What was then specific? Cherna Mesta shows how its Communist elite, the bearers of modernity held it imperative to be 'in advance', to get the Communism as soon as possible. They have extended the demands of the 'civilizing process' to such a level and they have applied them in such an environment that they encountered with rejection and resistance. Therefore the whole application of the civilization measures relied to a huge extent on the enthusiasm of its own agents: Party functionaries, teachers, technicians, veterinaries, medical doctors; and its measures had to be introduced by force of both symbolic and physical violence.

In order to illustrate the relationship between the dressing campaign and the ideology of Communist modernization, the assimilation campaign which took place in the Western Rhodopes was compared with the cultural policy applied in the USSR in the 1930's. However, and this is again part of the main argument, the re-dressing and its perceptions and the response to it reveal that in the Western Rhodopes Region the re-dressing and the whole assimilation campaign did not have a character of an exchange between the people and the Communist regime. In contrast to the concept of *kulturnost* in the USSR described by various authors as an example of process that took place without recourse to open violence and terror, the redressing campaign as a cultural policy was perceived by the villagers as violent and forced. In the oral histories of villagers it is always represented as having an oppressive character, often as preceded personally by local Communist functionaries and accompanied at certain levels by physical violence.

Thus it can be summarized that the re-dressing campaign was one of the major concerns of Communist modernization and it can not be reduced to a simple de-veiling or a power exercise of the totalitarian state. Its implementation was indirectly supported by Bulgarian ethnography and folklore studies. It is argued that it was part of the Communist version of emancipation of women, the effort to promote 'civilization' at the

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periphery, fight against 'tradition and backwardness', a national fight against the 'Ottoman legacy', and at the same time, a fight for 'civic beauty'. The re-dressing was articulation of general move towards 'middle class' values and of the effort of the modern state to create modern citizens. Nevertheless, the women in the village perceived the re-dressing as imposed against their will and violating their aesthetic and cultural norms.

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As it was mentioned in Introduction the village Cherna Mesta is not ideal residential place. The place itself is the bottom of a valley which has the microclimate of a frosty hollow. The whole horizon is covered by hills and mountain edges. A sharp wind blows here during all seasons and the surrounding hills shade the sun until late in the morning and from early in the evening. In contrast to the rest of the region and even to the other mountain villages, no fruit trees grow there and very few vegetables. Only potatoes and beans. From this point of view the place itself is not very comfortable to live in. But when the modernizers, the former communist bosses, speak about the new village, they are using an aesthetic terms 'nice', 'ordered village' or 'proper or genuine village'. Also villagers speak about the new village using terms 'proper ordered place' or even a 'city'.

The argument of the thesis says that the village development was part of the ideological programme of Communist modernization carried out by the Communist states and Communist party in Eastern Europe.¹ The aim of this chapter is to analyse the details of the foundation process of the new village and to answer to the question why people resettled from original village Konarsko to Cherna Mesta? What were the reasons to establish a new village at place which is not particularly good for living? What were their responses to the resettlement and how is the whole process of resettlement reflected in the memory? This chapter tries to give an answer to the question why was the new village created? What character had the reasons for its foundation? Was the village founded only as settlement for 'mobile labour force' which was needed by the local economy or were there also other, aesthetical reasons which resonating with the aesthetical dimension of 'Leninist' modernization? And to what extent was the resettlement linked with the other two 'civilization' processes the re-dressing and renaming? To what extent was the resettlement linked with the 'civilization' attempt of Communist modernization to create 'new citizen'? And how was the resettlement perceived and responded by the villagers?²

¹ Simic, Andrei, 'Urbanization and Modernization in Yugoslavia: Adaptive and Maladaptive Aspects of Traditional Culture', in Kenny, Michael & Kertzer, D.I. *Urban Life in Mediterranean Europe: Anthropological Perspective*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1982.

² Some of the narratives used in this chapter correlate with those ones used in the chapter VII. Cherna Mesta case of a Communist Development. In these cases I make cross reference in between the respective chapters. The Chapter VII. focuses on analyses of the village as a case study of the modernization project. The

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The chapter analyses representations of the experiences of local Communist politicians, the organizers of the resettlement and they are given into contrast with the experiences of the villagers who were subjects of the organized resettlement.

V.1. Magic Power of Electricity and high modernism in Cherna Mesta

Electricity has a crucial symbolic role for Leninist concept of Communist modernity

*"[Lenin] was famous for claiming that 'Communism is Soviet power plus the Electrification of the whole countryside.' Electricity had for him and most other high modernist a nearly mythical appeal. That appeal had to do, I think, with the unique qualities of electricity as a form of power. Unlike the mechanism of steam power, direct waterpower, and the internal combustion machine, electricity was silent, precise, and well-nigh visible. For Lenin and many others, electricity was magical."*³

The recollections of the Communist functionaries about the village foundation corresponds with these concepts of Leninist modernization. The motive of electrification as a feature of 'modernity' and progress and as one of the conditions of Communism is in their narratives often present.

The two former Party secretaries in Cherna Mesta, Angel and Marx, about the urbanization recall:

Angel and Marx 1.

"It was thought that we are neighbours of Greece, Yugoslavia and Turkey. It was necessary to keep an eye on those border regions and therefore electricity was task number one. Even Smoljansko, Kardzalijsko and all the settlements were electrified in order to make a contrast. When you stand at the border, Greece is in darkness, Bulgaria is light up. Cherna Mesta was my child. It should shine with lights at night".⁴

According to this narrative of Angel and Marx the electricity had symbolical meaning for the Communist modernizers and that was an important part of their thoughts. Electricity is

following chapter called Resettle!, concentrates on analysing of the aspects of Communist urbanization and economic and aesthetical dimensions of the organized resettlement.

³ Scott, *Seeing like a State*, compare an original text in Tucker, Robert, C., ed., *The Lenin Anthology*. Princeton University. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1975, 166.

⁴ Notebook 2004/1/ 53

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power, *progress*, and modernity. Electrification of countryside is the first and most important step of Communist urbanization. The need of easy access to electricity was reason for policy of ‘centralization’. As the modernizers say, “You can not introduce electricity around the mountains!”

According to the oral histories of the Communist officials, the officers from the cadastral office and the villagers, the constructions of residential houses outside the urban plan of the original village Konarsko in the *machalas* were abolished⁵. (The process was made through the local cadastral office which did not issue a building permission outside the ‘centre’ of the village.) And this was one of the reasons for people to resettle from Konarsko to Cherna Mesta.

Scott argues on basis of the Leninist conceptions of modernity that the establishing of new or modelled settlements within the framework of development programs is led predominantly by high modernist ideology in visual, ethical and aesthetic sense. “*The expansion of production, the growing satisfaction of human needs, the mastery of nature*”.⁶ In our case, this was one of the mechanisms used by the Party through the institution of the state, to coerce people for resettlement from Konarsko to Cherna Mesta. In the following analyses is the Scott’s argumentation used as a contrasting background for my ethnographical material.

One of the reasons for creation of Cherna Mesta village was simplification of the village pattern and significant role had the aesthetic dimension. (See figure 5). It has certain resonances with the case of the Tanzanian development which took place in 1973-1976 described by Scott.⁷

*“Only by radically simplifying the settlement pattern was it possible for the state to efficiently deliver such development services as electricity, schools, clean water, asphalt roads and a clinic...”*⁸

Angel, the first secretary upon the ‘centralization’ of Konarsko and establishment of the new village remembers:

⁵ *Machala* is a word for hamlets or small settlements of few houses dispersed around the mountains. In urban context it means a town neighborhood.

⁶ Scott, *Seeing Like a State*, 4.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 223.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 224.

"The first problem was the significant dispersal of the dwellings. A second problem was the children going to school in winter. Bel Kamak has an altitude of twelve hundred, thirteen hundred . The snow would come. Children lived one and a half or two kilometers from the school. The father would have to take them to school. And there was more. If something happened, health care was needed and so forth. It was difficult. One couldn't make it. To start some sort of small enterprise, it was necessary that people were near each other. It wouldn't do if they were scattered. But they had other interests. They had pastures there. Usually where there was a house, there was land around it. they had to leave it to go for work. That was difficult. One had to leave the land to go for work. That's rather complicated, isn't it? It kept them there. We explained to them. There is no future here. "Why?" Because it's infertile. Nothing grows here. Only potatoes. But we told them that even a machine wouldn't do it is so dispersed. They replied that it isn't so. Perhaps in some sense we weren't entirely correct." Q: And Cherna Mesta was actually your project? "Yes. Cherna Mesta was my idea, that it should become a village. And when did you get that idea? "Me? Well, when I went up to the villages and saw how they lived here and there. And then I thought to myself: will this continue like this? Why should they spend such large amounts for houses that they will abandon after a while. They built large homes somewhere far from the road, over there somewhere. How do you get pure water there? You might do such a thing by bringing in a pipe? Good, we will bring electricity there. You see that there is no life there. That's how it had been, but no more. They could make summer houses of them. I thought that sometime they would return and it was just in my time that the resettlement began."

These two narratives put the creation of the new village within a wider context of Communist modernization. The primary aims were in terms of improving standard of living of the 'Pomaks' and 'economic progress'. And again this concept relates with the question what was the goal of the resettlement. To create new *Communist man* or rather a new *middle class citizen* ?⁹ Unlike Roma gypsies in socialist Hungary, the Bulgarian

⁹ The phenomena creation of *middle class citizen* is examined in relation to the emancipation and aesthetics of the female dress in the chapter Re-dress! More about the ideological turn from working class model towards middle class which is described in USSR after the 1934 when the middle class values were replaced 'working class' see for instance Gronow, *Caviar with Champagne*, 11, but also the accounts of Dunham, *In Stalin's Time* , Fitzpatrick, *The Cultural Front* and also *Stalinism New Directions*.

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speaking Muslims had not meant to be turned into a *proletariat*.¹⁰ According to the oral histories it can be argued that the creation of the new village was part of the effort to create *middle class citizen* and that is what makes Communist modernization proceeded in Rhodopes Mountains different to other modernization attempts applied on marginal groups in other socialist countries in Eastern Europe.

V.2.Cherna Mesta as a Source of a Labour

It can be argued that the principal motive for establishing new villages in Bulgarian Communist state was rooted in symbolical power of electricity and political meanings of visual order. However, according to the ethnographic material which I have collected, it seems, that in case of new village Cherna Mesta, the aesthetical side of high modernism anticipating political power, the magic of electricity and highly acclaimed efficiency was rather secondary. Some of the oral histories of the former Communist leaders suggest that the pragmatic reasons, as an income, working force and rapid development, played a primary role. As Angel, the first secretary of local Party Committee says: 'Labour overcame Cherna Mesta'. Labour was not only an instrument for rising to the level of a 'genuine', 'labouring' person, but it seems that in this case it was important mainly for securing an *income*.

The former first secretary responded to the question what was the reason establishing Cherna Mesta. 'Did you establish Cherna Mesta in order to have a work force? Or did you already have a work force and therefore you established Cherna Mesta?' I have put this question to those who were the official organizers, actually the patrons of the village development. And they have responded as follows:

Pavol and Angel 1:

"The labour overcome Cherna Mesta. We needed a work force more than that there should be a village there. We weren't doing anything. There were big enterprises there. [In the 1970s]. Two, three. And there was

¹⁰ The Gypsies in socialist Hungary were supposed to be 'purified' through *labor* in order to become fully-fledged 'productive workers' in the 'working society' "*Hungary was a ,working society', and the people were working people who belonged to the society. Less as citizens', than as ,productive workers'.* Manual work was thus talked of (mostly by intellectuals, of course!) as having the moral and uplifting qualities more commonly associated with unalienated metal or artistic effort", Stewart, *The Time of The Gypsies*, 99.

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work for men and women. Especially for young girls. Because the relays which they produced required good vision. It came to some thousand people. And Jakoruda could not get so many people. To find a thousand people for specialized work is not easy. For this reason it was most important for us that we have an income for the people.' He continues, 'firstly, so that they would have an *income* and could decide what they wanted to do and secondly, so that they could have their children educated. To be able to educate their own children. It was not easy. [...]Do you know? One of the first girls here was a Moslem, my friend, who begged to be educated. I asked her father. I went to tell him that she is corker. They wouldn't allow it.'[...] "Cherna Mesta was seen as a prospect source, as a place which provided people. It was not for its own produce but for its work force which is conveniently located, because it is at the centre and above it there is there is plenty of soil. A work force that can be mobile. That was one of the main reasons to maintain a work force, to establish a village which would be a source of working hands. In the end not even a brigade was established. And that is an indication that in agriculture there wasn't a brigade nor was there a person who to make a brigade out of it. A brigade is an economic division. That means that in OSS¹¹ it is a part with clear tasks and plans and so forth. In one brigade you must have breeding – cattle breeding. You must have agriculture. Potatoes." [cursive by LN]

In another occasion Tonchev recalls about the reasons for the village development and urbanization:

"The most important motive was to lift the standard of living and existence. The policy was that there will be economic progress for both groups, Christians and Moslems. It was necessary to equalize their standard of living."¹²

The collectivization was the final blow for the pastoral economy in the Rhodope region and transhumance practices. The region was hit by collectivization and migration in the 1950s and in the 1960s and did not offer any real possibility of income and had very limited possibilities to find an economic strategy outside of the Cooperative. It was one of the reason why request for the 'speed development and industrialization' of the region came from the Central Party Committee at the beginning of the 1960's

¹¹ OSS means Regional Production of Agricultural Seeds [in Bulgarian Okrazno Semenoproizvodno Stopanstvo], was based in Jakoruda and was specialized in production of potatoes seeds.

¹² Notebook 2004 1/ 47, pp. 55-56.

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And according to the oral histories at that time was chosen tobacco industry to insure so much need income for all-the state, region and the people. The tobacco industry and the export of tobacco to the huge market in the USSR represented one of the main sources of income for the Bulgarian state. The first secretary recalls about that policy:

'There were requests from the centre to develop tobacco production in this region which would strengthen the state budget with much needed income.'

(More about tobacco campaign see in the Chapter VIII.)

He continues about the relation between growing tobacco and the village foundation:

[...]“ Some planting, some sort of a campaign. As the need might be. We took them officially as a work force for the tobacco. But later we dropped tobacco. We went up and down with tobacco. In Jurukova, in Bel Kamak. Was there such a brigade in Cherna Mesta? The question is if there was some sort of organization, some unity in Cherna Mesta. They belonged to Leve or were added to Sufrichen. (These are smaller units of the local Cooperative). There wasn't an independent brigade in Cherna Mesta? There wasn't. It wasn't independent. And in Jurukovo? There was an independent brigade in Jurukovo, in Konarsko, in Ilansko also, and in Avramovo. Every village had its independent brigade. But in Cherna Mesta there wasn't an independent brigade. It was conceived of as a place, where the labour force was mobile. *The idea was to establish a village that became the source of a labour force.* [...] “Because in this way [tobacco and free parcels of land given in Cherna Mesta] people were *kept at work*. Yes, there were people there who worked at another place and in order to get a parcel without paying they made an agreement and worked in another place and at the same time began to cultivate tobacco. And they fulfilled the obligations arising from the agreement. And they sowed tobacco. And in this way they got parcels. In principle was it possible to buy a cooperative farm land for money? It was always with a contract with transferred rights for construction. The state did not have the right to sell it.”

As it will be shown in more details in the Chapter VII, after the efforts with tobacco which was unsuitable for growing at upper altitudes the Communist bosses despaired and turned to speed industrialization through highly specialized production of parts of electronic dives, the relays. Angel recalled how they asked the central Party Committee to introduce and support some industrial production in the municipalities of Jakoruda and Razlog. This specialized industry then became the main engine of the

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industrialization and consequently also urbanization of the valley. It brought an income to the people, proud the Communist leaders, and it also allowances to the state budget. That the industrialization was related to the resettlement to the new village demonstrates the following narrative. I have asked Angel:

Angel 1:

Q: And who was so interested to introduce relay production? "The committee. The party: We tried to win, because it was a young 'work force' here. In order to get things under control. And when we showed concern, there was pressure from the higher authorities. 'Fine, you wanted the relays to come here when there were other candidates in another place. The relays came here. Then we gave you work and you couldn't fulfil the task?!? You persuaded us that there were five hundred without work in Jakoruda? Where are those people?' That's what they said, Lenka. In fact there were five hundred people here without work, but not all of them were working on the relays. It couldn't be everyone. Just as everyone is not in farming. Just as everyone cannot go to animals. You might have people, but at the same time no one to go for the cows for you. [laughing]. It was the same with the relays. We caught with the mayor by heads. Later we wrote a lot of letters here and there which said that Jakoruda is lagging, because the income of the population is not supported by the *incomes of the women*. When we did so, we went through the villages, sometimes peacefully, sometimes with some sort of economic threat, and sometime with such ... how can I put it to you...Production was introduced and of course the plan, as I recall, over assessed the need for a labour force. For the production of the relays it was necessary to bring people down from the mountains to the valley, to one place, to one village. For their production had to take place in one place and not scattered in the wilderness."

Thus Cherna Mesta should have been a base for skilled workers who were then working force for an industry.¹³ As it will be demonstrated later, the resettlement was one of the points of negotiations between villagers and the Communist bosses.

"[...]We had meetings there, a meeting at Buncevo, a meeting at Bel Kamak. [upland villages] To all of them I stated firmly. We have a clear idea that we will develop Cherna Mesta as a village (municipality) and here are the reasons: Firstly, stiffened with the relays. Finally, if you want to know not only for agriculture but for people who were young. We took them as a work force for the relays. Everything went to the

¹³ In this respect Cherna Mesta is comparable to the case of Magnitogorsk, see Kotkin, *Magmetic Mountain*. where a new estate next to the industrial complex was founded in order to fulfill the need for mobile working force.

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relays, the young work hands and there arose the question whether we would give parcels, because we didn't have a work hand. That was already after 1975, 1980. Aside from the relays they hardly fulfilled the plan. The plan was overstuffed. Every village had a production unit. And we were forced to introduce production there [in the upland village]. But it appeared that the quality of production, one after the other, you couldn't have everything in one village. Then there was the question of quality and the technicians and we said that it wouldn't work. That's not industry!! It isn't working. I told them: You can stay on the soil, but you must go to the relays!!"

The last sentence has of this narrative has the connotation with the resettlement. On other words, people could stay in their houses of Konarsko, they did not need to resettle, but in exchange they have to regularly go to work in the industrial mill. This case reveal the close relation between the particular parts of Communist modernization, between the urbanization, industrialization and finally also integration. Another important and distinctive point is the personal role of the Communist functionary who is personally responsible for the regional development and personally negotiates the new village project with the villagers. This example confronts the usual image of the planned economy, where everything is ordered 'from above' by hegemonic power of the Communist Party. And this case reveals again that the procedures of Communist modernization were so high extent dependent on the personal engagement of its modernizers. Another point which the last narrative reveals is the importance of 'getting people to work'. And that behind these efforts were both, the pragmatic as well the ideological reasons. As we can see, aside from guaranteeing income in general, the income for women had to be guaranteed above all. The emancipated woman within the parameters of work and of her evaluation on a par with men was one of the aims of emancipation programme carried out by Communist modernization.

Everything attests to the foundation of village Cherna Mesta is recalled by it organizers as a complex process addressing several needs and goals. The fulfilling of the ideological goals was conditioned by the fulfilling of material needs. Thus in the foundation of the village both the pragmatic and ideological needs merged together.

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V.3. New Villages in the ‘Border zone’

In the 1950’s the borders with Greece and Turkey were hermetically sealed by the *iron curtain* and until 1989 the whole region was a ‘border zone’ with heightened police control and restriction on movement. The fact that the Cherna Mesta region was within the border zone¹⁴ was another reason for the Central Party Committee to have special concerns about the foundation of the new village. As demonstrates the narrative Angel and Marx 1.,(see above) one of the reasons for the foundation of the village was to develop the ‘border zone’ in order to compete with the capitalist neighbours on the other side of the borders’. The proximity of the state borders with ‘capitalist Greece’ and ‘Islamist Turkey’, both of which were at that time part of alien NATO, had an important meaning for the Bulgarian state in general but also for the local bearers of the modernization project. The aim was to keep the borders with hostile Greece and Turkey (NATO) well settled. The urbanization and electrification of the villages was intended to prevent people from going off the cities. In the narrative of the Communist officials the development of the village as well as of the region is often represented as a contest with Greece or even with Yugoslavia. About that Angel recalls:

“In Blagoevgrad there was a policy that the villages would not ever be permitted to disappear. And we said: we are a border district and we need large villages along the border. That is Bulgaria! Elsewhere there are empty places. A person would look to his neighbours and say that there was no one there. And a policy was conducted to keep them there. But it doesn’t happen with words. Everything is resolved in a more complex way. It isn’t always easy, but in fact in our district there are villages of two and three thousand [inhabitants] each. It is a border region and it seems that the policy was successful. And the district was preserved, even in Jakoruda.”

The notion of ‘borders’ remains a strong motive also in the social memory of the villagers. In the villagers narratives the notion of ‘borders’ always refer to the Ottoman past. People often speak about the borders between the Bulgarian Kingdom, Eastern

¹⁴ For more about the ‘border zone’ in relation to the renaming campaign in the Muslim villages and the details about concrete distances and levels of the border zone, see in: Konstantinov & Alhaug, *Names, Ethnicity in Bulgaria*, 28-29, for comparison about politics of border zone in the GDR see Berdhal, *Where the World Ended*.

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Rumelia and the former Ottoman Empire which ran in close proximity to the village.¹⁵ Many times when I walked around the surrounding hills with my friends and respondents from the village, people would always point to the locations in the landscape which were the former Ottoman border. Borders are recognized by the villagers as a significant element which gives to the village its specific identity and political meaning.

Cherna Mesta was not the only village to move from the mountains to the valley. At the time when Angel was the second secretary of the region further villages moved into the Blagoevgrad district. I have asked him about it:

Q: And are there other places like Cherna Mesta? “Yes, there are such in the district. Gadeshnica-Sandansko, Novo Delchevo, as a village. These are villages which are high in Pirin. In our district there are two rivers which flow around Pirin from two sides. Here it is the Mesta and on the other side it is the Struma. There are villages that were high in Pirin and that were resettled down below to the valley. There is even a map. Wait and I will show you, here is Gradeschnica, but now it is named New Gradeschnica. Its not by chance that it has the name *New* at the beginning. New Delchevo. That’s high up above. Another is Pervomaj. That was in the Petrich district. Wait, from which mountains are they coming? There was a special ordinance for Orgazden...”

Cherna Mesta was not the only case of a newly founded village in the framework of the particular resolution which was designed for the Blagoevgrad region. As a part of the urbanization program other new settlements were founded. Many towns in the region were extended into completely new modern neighborhoods. For example, Velingrad also got its modernistic twin, or the winter curort Bansko has its new parts from the 1960’s. There is also New Gradeshnica, New Delchevo, Pervomaj and Ograzden in Petrich district. There were also other new and resettled villages in the Rhodopes massive itself, for instance Sarnica was created as a new city when most parts of the old one ended under the metallic waters of the Dospat water reservoir. The reasons for creation of all these settlements were various, but all of them had a specific feature. They were part of the urbanization of

¹⁵ Until 1912 the region was actually at the triple border between Eastern Rumelia, the Thessaloniki villayet and the Bulgarian Princedom, more about the perceptions of that among villagers see in the Chapter II. The borders were reorganized only by Versailles treaties of 1918. During the Second World War the borders of Thrakia plains (part of Northern Greece) were temporally reopened, but from 1948 these borders were part of an *iron curtain*.

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countryside. They were surely response to one of the leninist ideas of the Communist modernization project, the idea of dismantling of the distinctions between the town and the countryside.

With the fact that the village of Cherna Mesta was placed in a border zone is related another aspect which played a role in the foundation of the new village and that was a fear of the Communist modernizers of the emigration, both the external and internal. After collectivization the Western Rhodopes region was economically in decline and in the beginning of the 1950's there were still the visible effects of the latest waves of a continuous emigration of Turks and other Muslims from Bulgaria.¹⁶ And at the same time there started a process of internal migration of the Muslim population from the Rhodopes to the North East Bulgaria. Former officials often recall the fear they had that the 'Pomaks' would abandon the unfertile mountain region and move to the north-eastern parts of Bulgaria around the towns of Sumen and Razgrad; regions traditionally populated by the Turkish minority. The image of a depopulated and economically stagnating 'border zone' represented a danger for the Communist state and the reputation of the Communist regime.

Thus apart from the fact that there was a pressing need for labour there was a further reason for establishing the new village. The fear of depopulation of the region. The Communists bosses constantly referred to the 'fear of fleeing' as one of the central reasons for the village foundation. Angel recalled how they feared that the people would leave the region. And not simply the fact that they would leave. But even more that they would depart for the 'Turkish region' and there they would be 'Turkified' [in Bulgarian 'poturcheni']. Because it was a fact that Bulgarian speaking Muslims who moved to north-eastern Bulgaria, took often the houses abandoned by Turks during the waves of Turkish emigration.¹⁷ Thus, to found a new village and give to the people income and work was a way of controlling of that process. In this case, the situation resonates with that one described by Scott when he says that:

¹⁶This emigration of Muslims from the former Ottoman territories took place continuously from the middle of the 19's century. The accounts about the issue of Turkish emigration are of course related to the respective national historiographies, but to see and compare for instance a Turkish account see Simsir, Bilal, N., *The Turks of Bulgaria, 1878-1985*. London: K. Rustem, 1988 and for a Bulgarian account see Stojanov, *Turското Naselenie*.

¹⁷ For more on the internal Turkish emigration see, Stojanov, *Turското Naselenie*, 1998.

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*“Mere administrative convenience was hardly the only objective of state officials...the subtext of villagization was also to reorganize human communities in order to make them better objects of political control and to facilitate the new forms of cooperative farming favoured by the state policy.”*¹⁸

Angel and Pavol recalled of the fear of an exodus in one of the conversations with both of them in the following manner:

Angel and Pavol 2:

“At that time they were already moving from the mountain villages. They went from the mountain village, from Jakoruda, somewhere far off. Do you remember that we had such fears that we would lose them? (This question is addressed to Paul) One part went off to Northern Bulgaria, another part to Plovdiv, Bele said, to Razgrad. Many people went there.’ [...]’They began to go to other districts. For example, they went from Bel Kamak (one of the villages up in the mountains) to Razgradsko (fertile plan region in north east Bulgaria, inhabited by Turks, Pomaks and Bulgarians) – at the beginning four or five families. That was from seventy to eighty three. A that time. From seventy three to seventy eight. That means at the time when I was working. Those five years. I was a younger worker then. What I want to say is that the first group returned and told the people. There are wonderful homes and wonderful soil, because people went of to the big cities and began to sell them. They don´t have the problems that we have here. Cows, sheep, hens. They had never before seen such a thing. A rich land. Razgrad district. Other dozens of families began to leave. It horrified us. Why must the people of Jakoruda go away? Why not keep them here? Why do they have to go there? Why did they go? They liked it there, but they missed it here. It´s not so simple to move away five hundred kilometers. To go off to somewhere where you don´t know anyone and to these Turkish districts. That was one of the reasons. They moved to the Turks. That upset us very much. That they moved to Turkish districts and learned Turkish. I said: Once again that is Turkification and we shouldn´t allow it. That upset us very much and I said: let´s move them down!”

The reasons for foundation of the village were many. Why was Cherna Mesta founded? I have put this question to the Communist modernizers many times and each time I have obtained a different answer: ‘to get people to work’, ‘to prevent them from running away’, ‘to emancipate the women’ in other words to prevent an internal migration, to get them

¹⁸ Scott, *Seeing Like a State*.

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better living condition or to get a mobile working force which would supply the growing local industry. So the task of the day was to move people down. At any cost. The following sections demonstrates the mechanisms of the resettlement.

V.4. Mechanisms of Resettlement

One of the biggest tasks of the local Communist policy was then to stimulate people for resettlement. Thus apart of the income in form of regular wage for skilled worker the organizers of the development could offer the land and building plots. In parallel with the resettlement was taking place the so called ‘small de-collectivisation’. People were given back the agricultural land which was originally expropriated in the big collectivization in the 1953-1956.

Pavol, the former head of the local Cooperative Farm Goce Delchev recalls:

“We went off to the forestry, because many people want to leave, to flee. They didn’t have insurance, they didn’t have anything. They couldn’t get money. Later it appeared from above that it was taken as a short term affiliation. But from the beginning people were afraid. And at that time we simply joined the forestry [the Cooperative] and we distributed a large amount of forest soil to afforest it along the edges. Technically it couldn’t be ploughed. Technically it would be ploughed in order to remain what could be ploughed by machine. This. The soil wasn’t returned to anyone. The soil remained as it was, only some was distributed to more people who had animals. Land for private use. He was considered as an owner. Yes, already it was farming.”

Not all people from the village Konarsko have not been very much enthusiastic about the resettlement. Local authorities therefore tried to stimulate people to move by distributing cheap building plots in the valley, building up a new road, transport connection between the original village and the new one and finally even by redistribution of formerly collectivised agricultural land.

Despite of the fact that the village was ‘a child’ of one of the highest Party functionaries, the most powerful man in the region, each little step within the development procedures had to be renegotiated. An important part of the negotiations was the new road demanded by villagers who agreed to resettle. My two main respondents recalled again with the same emotional engagement as they had thirty years ago when they tried to

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respond to the political tasks send from higher Party place and fulfil the ethical demands of their own believe in 'better future' for the 'backward' Muslim shepherds.

Angel and Pavol 3.

"In the seventies there were many requests that we make links to other places. One problem, Lenka, was that people wanted us to build a new road. That we link Konarsko directly with Cherna Mesta. Because at that time there was a road. It descended from Konarsko to Bela Mesta and then re-ascended to Cherna Mesta. And there was one way which was much nearer from those villages, from Bikovec. They said to us: You want us to come down but we don't have a convenient road. I and the mayor of the village, him and me who was the first secretary, we went to ascertain what were the possibilities and what steps were needed to build a shorter road. And we got them interested. And we said well, You have the homes up above and we don't want you to leave them, one after the other, and we want the soil up there to remain under cultivation. I remember that very well. It was 1970 and there was a great interest in us on the part of the people who wanted to come down. And those who wanted to come down made demands of us. One of those things was a different road. 'Is there such a road there?' There isn't. 'Is there a road from Bikovec to Cherna Mesta?' No. The question remained unresolved. That was one of the greatest demands. I knew that it wasn't much. It was a question of two kilometers. It's near to there. Which could be added and it would make one circle. From the present road to Konarsko and then it would descend into Cherna Mesta. That was my idea. But after I left things took a different turn. Tonchev was than an advocate of Konarsko's development. He wanted to develop Konarsko. Like a village. And possibly there was a subjective factor, but he was first secretary and precisely during his time the road to Konarsko was paved. He put out the idea that they build a road from there and pave the road which would support Konarsko. And somehow that held up the process. [meant of Cherna Mesta development] That was in 1971. Then I was first secretary and went through the village and spoke with the people who were somewhat enlightened. I was going there and saying that the future is there. I went there and told them firmly: the future is in Cherna Mesta!"

Thus we can see the almost desperate effort of the former main Communist politician to convince people for resettlement and consequent *progress, income and emancipation*. All that was in the play. In this respect the effort for modernization resemble a religious

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mission. (See the recollection about the missionary character of Communist modernization in chapter VI. Resistance).

Negotiation of the Location of the Village

There was an alternative to Cherna Mesta, a place with the name of Bila Mesta. The place is actually on the confluence of two rivers the Bila Mesta (White Mesta) and the Cherna Mesta (Black Mesta). The valley broadens there and opens more in the direction of the south and so in winter months it is relatively sunny and warm. For establishing a village the place was suitable and for living it would be rather attractive. Cherna Mesta by contrast is cold and damp. But here there was a better possibility to build homes on infertile soil. Bila Mesta moreover lay on the route which links Konarsko (the original village) with the outside world. From Bila Mesta it is not far away to the local central town of Jakoruda and also the original village of Konarsko. All the conditions here then were exceptionally advantageous for establishing a new village. And the people of Konarsko, those who would actually make the move, favoured Bila Mesta. Nonetheless there was no urban plan for Bila Mesta. By contrast, there was a plan for Cherna Mesta. In 1936 local entrepreneurs planned to create a small industrial zone at the bottom of the valley. The war prevented these plans of the entrepreneurs, but the land plan remained. This old land plan was finally used as the basis for the development of Cherna Mesta in the 1970's. The final decision about the village was made not by the Communist Party but by the local Land Office. In the next narrative it is shown that it was a state institution, the local land office, which had the decisive authority in deciding where the new village would be. Even Angel, the first secretary, hadn't enough authority to decide where the new settlement would be, he recalled:

"They [the villagers] were very glad to leave Konarsko. People wanted more than Cherna Mesta, Bila Mesta. And they came here and said: 'Yes, we are agreed that we don't want Cherna Mesta but rather Bila Mesta. Bila Mesta is a bit nearer and there are orchards. They liked the place. I said to them. Cherna Mesta has a plan. It is planned to be a village sooner or later. While here [in Bila Mesta] even I don't have a part in the decision. It will take a lot of time for Bila Mesta to be a settlement, while Cherna Mesta already had a plan to be a settlement. For this reason they came down. I said to them: 'Be here. [in Cherna Mesta]. Buy here. Besides you will find work here more easily than in

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Jakoruda. If you don't like it in Jakoruda, you can go elsewhere. There is a railway there. At that time we didn't have roads..."

The chiefs of the local socialist enterprises (the cooperative, mills, relay factories, etc.) needed an extended amount of labour force which would turn the wheels of industrialization by hand down there in the valley. The land office did not allow them to build Bila Mesta, because village there would destroy fertile river meadows next to river. The local Communist Party committee was not all-powerful and was not allowed to build a village 'from the ground up' just anywhere. In the opposite, the construction of Cherna Mesta was strictly tied to the old urban plan. But finally even in Cherna Mesta they also broke the rules of the land office and the village grew without reference to the original urban plan. Angel bitterly and at the same time passionately recalled about the negotiations with the villagers:

Angel 2.

"I met with them and they said: we don't want Bila Mesta. I said: it's not a question of Bila Mesta. There was cadastral plan and there was the project of the village. Everything was simpler. We don't want Bila Mesta. Beside that I must tell you that there already were some people there who were working. I said that Konarsko isn't a municipality but it has a mayor. But they weren't at all interested in going down. Because they felt that they would lose what they had. The school director didn't want to go. He said: If I go down, will I still be director? They knew the propaganda against our policy of moving down. And these were people who were state employees, I ask you, and still are. They were opposed. Ordinary people agreed with it, but there property owners and some other people who were opposed. Then there was the father of one Bojko. He was mayor of Konarsko. He told me directly. Comrade Rosnev, I don't accept it. Finally at the meeting. We here have to move down? Why should we leave here and move down? No? He didn't want to. It meant, I said: don't listen to him. He is wrong. This must be. This must be. Perhaps I wasn't right..." Where did the settlers at Cherna Mesta come from? [Angel is asking Pavel]. At Cherna Mesta they are for the most part from Konarsko, Ilansko and from Bel Kamak. Ilansko and Smolevo are one and the same. Now Smolevo has a new name. Formerly it was Ilansko and now it is Smolevo. Those were the sources of the people for Cherna Mesta (Angel). Ilansko, Smolevo a Bel Kamak. There were also people from Buncevo there. But people also left there. Then there was the father of one Bojko. He was mayor of Konarsko. He told me directly. Comrade Rosnev, I don't accept it. (The resettlement). Finally at the meeting. We here have to move down? Why should we leave here and move down? No? He didn't want to. I

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said: don't listen to him. He is wrong. This must be. This must be. Perhaps I wasn't right".

Mechanisms of Expropriation of the Building Plots

Among mechanisms which were supposed to stimulate people for resettlement was distribution of a cheap building plots. But these plots had to be taken from somewhere in order to be given. The mechanism of the expropriation of the building plots from the original owners through the state and the Cooperative farm to the new holders in Cherna Mesta demonstrates in the following narratives. In the next narratives is described the specific nationalization of land through the urban plan which came about in Cherna Mesta. It shows the sophisticated process of expropriation by means of the state, not by means of the Communist party. The main administrator of the Cadastral Office in Jakoruda, who was in that office for more than thirty years recalls about the procedures of expropriation and distribution of the land:

Stanka 1:

"People entered the cooperative farm with their property. Later when the time came and when the cadastral plan was drawn up [1936], the state parcels are only in that part of the *obshtina* where these parcels are located. And the property which is outside the village borders is the property of the cooperative. And then with the property which remained within the framework of the plan the property owners got into the plan after the establishment of the cooperative and the property became state property. And it is precisely these parcels which are the ones which are in principle distributed to the people in this manner. And the parcels were in the plan and that was the peculiarity of Cherna Mesta. These parcels were in the plan even before the Cooperative farm was established. What I mean is that the land which is in the plan of Cherna Mesta after the creation of the cooperative farm is state land. And these parcels were already distributed to the people as *the forwarded right* of this term to build on state land.

A great part of the parcels in the village of Cherna Mesta are the property of the people, because there had already been a plan in the year 1941. They didn't enter the cooperative with this soil. And they had notary documents, because they had bought them. The second plan was in 1985 and then as you say other places were added from the side and were recognized in the plan and distributed to the people. You see that at the centre the parcels were not dividend. That's how it is. That's how it was. The owners of the

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parcels sold them. Q: ‘And it was special for Cherna Mesta?’ The way of distribution?’ No, no, that was based on principle.”

In other words, plots which got into the urban plan after the establishment of a cooperative farm were nationalized. Plots which had owners and were already included in the previous urban plan were also nationalized but they were maintained under a different regime. In contrast to the other plots which became the property of the Cooperative Farm (the state) after the creation of a new urban, the plots which were already included in the previous urban plan (1936) could be sold. The new owners paid two payments for such a plot. The official price was determined by the National Committee and the new owners paid the official price. The new owner paid a second payment to the old owners. This payment was not required by law, because the plots actually belonged to the state. Based on what I have learned the new owner however paid the old owners in every case “for better relations”. (See in the Chapter VII). The new owner however paid the original owner unofficially. Thus they paid both the National Committee and also the original owner of the plot.

Mechanisms of Distribution of the Building Plots

In oral histories of the non-Muslim respondents, of Bulgarians from Jakoruda the development programme of the village is represented often in terms of the ‘generosity’ of the socialist state towards the members of the ‘Pomak’ group. Wages, working places and building plots were distributed to the ‘Pomaks’. In the case of Bulgaria and particularly of the Cherna Mesta valley, the generosity was supposed to be directed towards the ‘Pomaks.’ But let’s have a closer look at the data, the archival documents and the oral histories which I have about the development of the village itself. I asked what the ‘generous distribution’ of wealth actually looked like and who paid for all that?

The following narrative is from the interview with an administrator of the cadastral office in Jakoruda. He himself was one of the people who resettled from the hills of Konarsko to the valley of Jakoruda. About the distribution of the houses and building plots he recalled:

Q: For example your house in Jakoruda? “ It’s ours. Our ancestors were the old owners. No, no, it wasn’t nationalized at all, it is our property. Those are our own lands. Because here in Jakoruda there was since 1922 a land plan. And in Jakoruda we had parcels that were

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distributed as state land. But very little. And in Jakoruda for example was there always agreement with the cooperative? Not in Jakoruda, no. How was it? They paid. They paid for the forwarded right to construction with one state tax. Not as if you bought it freely. For this reason there was no payment in the villages. They gave it a priority because it was without payment. They didn't at all give money, some tax of fifty leva. In Jakoruda how much did you pay for the transfer of the right to construction? In Jakoruda we had a thousand and something. It depended on the area of the land on which you built. And how big were the parcels? Three hundred square meters. There were also bigger ones. There were five hundred square meter lots also. It depended on the plan undertaken. It was good. Many people built on land without paying."

Application procedure of the Cooperative Farm (actually the state) to get the building plot was quite complicated as shows the recollection of the lady who worked at that time at Jakoruda land offic:

Stanka 2.

"He [the villager] has no right to get such governmental housing. It is only for people who are in an extreme material situation and have an agreement with the committee and make the request and take possession of the land and transfer it to the National committee. He brings with him this confirmation, this claim, this about the family and its material situation and the agreement with the National Committee and these things and submits this request and takes possession of the land and thus transfers it to the National committee. And after that he got from the council (National Committee) a sketch of the plot and this This and this. And then there is this and then when permission is granted he deposits a small sum. And those are the expenses for carrying out the service. And the agreement is concluded. That's the last. And we have come to agreement one with the other."

About the stimulation which their organized themselves Angel and Pavel recall:

'They stimulated people to come down from the mountains with these parcels. Later they organised the Cooperative. Later to draw a work force, a work force of shepherds and cattle breeders and people who would work permanently. They were given parcels. They also gave them the right against payment. A minimal payment. They made an agreement. Minimal payment. And they legalized the agreement. As though he bought it with documents. And he worked ten years. Ten years in agriculture. The executive committee of the cooperative made the decision. It decided. But they gave some land without payment. They committed themselves and said that this man is

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irreplaceable. And he signed that he would be an animal breeder for ten years. And it could be. Previously it was with notary documents. That was for seventeen or eighteen years. Just then the cooperative began, because there was no longer a work force. They would go up the mountain and give it to him; it would be legalized and it would be as though it was his. It was legalized like a document. For that reason there was the minimal payment. That they could confirm that it was decided. For this reason there was a minimum of money as payment. Simply stotinky Fifty stotinky.' But at that time we had the state policy that we would go down, then we also gave them land. Come down! Build here! That was a rewarded for work in TKZS? [the Cooperative]You work in the cooperative, build here and it is!!”

Recalled Angel very much in the manner of real *homo faber*. The narratives above reveal that the foundation of the new village, the distribution of the land and its further development was a complex process. That it merged economic, political and aesthetic and also ideological demands.

V. 5. Responses to the Resettlement

People were resettled from the mountains to the valley where there was better transportation links and which was nearer to job slots which had to be filled. The new settlements have been thus created deliberately in the valley. It had its pragmatic reasons, but it seems to me, that a considerable role had played the concept of the valley itself. Valley supposed to be always better for living from the point of view of the modernizers. Even if, like in case of Cherna Mesta, the place in located at lower altitude appeared finally as not best for living.

The opinions of villagers about Cherna Mesta and also their conceptualizations of what is 'good place' varied. There were people who spoke highly about live in valley but in one breath were referring to the places up on the mountains as to the 'the place'. They always considered the former village Konarsko which is located in the upper altitudes as 'beautiful', 'nice', 'as the genuine place'.

Shase, one of the villagers on the question why people have resettled responded:

“[...]We were very far away there. There was nothing in the village, just 'village stuff'. It took the children two hours to get to school. Through the woods. On a black path. In the winter there were wolves and snow. Down below it was more convenient. There was transport

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there. My husband began to work on the railway....Q:What do You like better? Here or Konarsko? (the original village). Here is better. But Konarsko...this is The proper place! Beautiful!"

The following narrative is with on of the oldest inhabitants of Cherna Mesta. A man who is regarded the first settler of Cherna Mesta is Baku. His family belonged before the collectivization to the most powerful in the former settlements of Konarsko. His nickname is Baku and he recalled:

"Q: And when did you come from Konarsko? And how was the village founded? I came from Konarko as a first one. And what year it was? Fifty. And from which *machala* did you come? From Bikovi. [The name of a family]. And why? Because here it is nicer [pretty], then up there. When they have founded Cooperative, we had run away. There was nothing for us. They have taken everything, also the animals. The Cooperative took everything. And I had there a property and I went down and built a house down. And what kind of property did you have up there? Many. Fifty hektars. [...] The year 1955 or 1956. And so the TKZS was founded. And what kind of job did you have down? I was 'zeepeec' [railway worker] in one kanton. Twenty two years. And who had advice you to go down? None. I have decided myself, that I will go down. None has not advised me. They took everything. The cooperative. Also the livestock. [...] Here I bought ten hektars from Jakoruda, from Bulgarians from Jakoruda. Here, we Pomaks bought ten hektars."

This narrative reveals the typical double sided effect of the organized resettlement. People had to resettle because of the fact that they have de facto lost their land in collectivization. On the other hand they were supposed to gain better living standard down in the valley in the new village Cherna Mesta. And about these practical advantages of resettlement speaks Shase:

Q: And why did you resettle down the valley? 'Because here is more...how can I say that. There we were too much on side....There is a village there, there it is a peasant stuff. Childen had to go two hours to school. Through the forest. Along black road [means no asphalt]. In the winter there used to be wolfs and snow. My husband started to work for the railway but down there is more comfortable. There is a transport connection[..].'

Another villager, en elderly man from Cherna Mesta, recalled about the circumstances which made him to resettle from Konarsko to the new village:

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"My home burned. They set it afire up there where I lived. For that reason I wanted to go to Jakoruda and build a house with my brother. Well. There was a free plot there. There it was free. At that time the Cooperative farm did gave the right to buy a plot elsewhere. They did not give. And they didn't allow. Let's say, a person to buy a plot. When the TKZS went down, I would say, it was more free. And there they settled and a village arose. For that reason I myself built a home. And how old are you? 'Thirty.' You are young. My child is forty two, three. At that time he was a tiny tot.

The house burned. I stayed on the way. I told myself what I would do. I made a purchase and built a house there. Q: Did you buy it from the TKZS? (The Cooperative) No, from the owner. At that time they weren't coming from the TKZS, because they sent for them to come. (Is this right?) I paid the owner, not the TKZS. It's better, isn't it? What year was that. That was in seventy-one, seventy-four. And the second was this one. And later that one who has the store. Q: And who advised you to come here? Fire advised me. The fire advised me. I was in Kazanlak. But living there didn't go well and so I came here and built a house. We built in the spring. And who advised you to come precisely here? No one advised us. The fire simply arranged it for us. And because we couldn't go to Jakoruda. We brothers were already separated. We came here, one or two were down below in Jakoruda. His children are highly educated. He has two sons."

We can see that the responses to the resettlement depended on personal circumstances of each villager. However, there is one common denominator. People left their houses under a certain pressure. And they perceived it as a necessity rather than a real choice. The subjective appropriations of the urbanization and of the other measures of the Communist modernization campaigns are presented in the following subchapter .

Perceptions of the Space

All these narratives reveal that that resettlement was in most of the cases rather pragmatic decision made more or less by 'free will' or by 'circumstances' than by force. But what had all the inhabitants common was special kind of nostalgia for Konarsko 'up in the mountains' They would often say, "here in Cherna Mesta is nicer, but Konarsko is proper". Despite of the fact that the distance is no more than 6 km, about two hours of walk up to a steep hill people do not go to visit Konarsko very often. This counts especially for older and middle age generation. People from young generation visit

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Konarsko rather more, because lot's of social event - as for instance celebrations of Buyuk Bayram - take place at Konarsko. But there are cases, like the housewife of the family with whom I lived, who despite having sister and other relatives at Konarsko has never visited the village again after her and her family removal to Cherna Mesta. When I have asked her how it was to move from Konarsko to Cherna Mesta, she always glossed: "I was said".

During collecting oral histories for my thesis I made a methodological experiment. I took family of Buzgovi to a car and took them for a trip from Konarsko to Cherna Mesta. Some of the members of the family have not been there for several years, some of them for a few decades. We made a tour around all the *machalas* of the village spread on the plateau.¹⁹ They have meeting far relatives and old friends on a dusty road. In some cases the meeting was after several years. (Younger people have of course better chance to meet each other at the weekly market in centre town Jakoruda, but this is not case for elderly people).

The most emotional experience was nevertheless the visiting of the place where used to stay the old house of the family. There they started to tell me different story about their resettlement. The evaluations and advantages of the live in the new villages were represented in opposite meaning. In other words, at the actual place of their former house came out rather negative memories. Suddenly, the resettlement was represented as negative. There, Medzu Saranski recalled how the resettlement was only option of escaping the oppression and violence from the side local Party officials and their armed supporter during the processes of renaming and re-dressing. See the oral history of Medzu Saranski in chapter III. Resettle. When we went back to the village Cherna Mesta, people in the car were again saying: "Here [in Cherna Mesta] is better. Here it is city, town. Up there are only bushes." The concept 'up and down' in the sense of an altitude is quite common among people in Cherna Mesta. They often say "here it is nice' but at the Konarsko is 'proper', there is clear air, good water and beautiful view on the mountains".

¹⁹ *Machala* is a Turkish word and means part of urban or rural settlement. Can stand for quarter, neighbourhood or hamlet in rural envoroment.

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People in the village would have similar high regard also to the people who are through their profession or other activity related to the work ‘up in the mountains’ This was the case also regarding Baba Vakchla. Wife of Baku, who had already died, but I still had have the chance to meet her. She was considered to be a local witch, highly regarded by villagers as ‘the woman who knows’, who knows ‘*da baja*’, [in Bulgarian stands for a divination], and who knows ‘*the herbs*’. She was one of the people, few of them women, who worked as wage herders. These people would take the cattle of other villagers to the summer pastures high up, usually to the neighbouring Rila Mountains. They would spend whole summer in a solitude. All these people were within the village community highly regarded precisely for that kind of work and also for that fact that they live and work ‘up in the mountains’. She had the respect of many female companions when I visited her. In my opinion, this regard for those who has anything to common with ‘the high mountain’ resonates with the concepts applied for evaluation of the places to live.

The above narratives and other examples reveal, that in the end, Konarsko was in the memory but also in the presence, always evaluated better than Cherna Mesta. The resettlement was experienced by the villagers within both pragmatic and aesthetic categories. The oral histories of the villagers represent the foundation of Cherna Mesta and the resettlement process as being experienced as ethically ambivalent.

On the other side, the oral histories of the modernizers demonstrate that the foundation of Cherna Mesta was politically crucial. It was for a while the flag-ship of the modernization of the region. But at the same time the foundation of the village was an experiment fully dependent on momentous circumstances and patronage of few Communist functionaries.

It is hard to say what reasons had more importance, if the aesthetic ones or the practical. The resettlement of people and foundation of the new village was caused not only by pragmatic need of a mobile working force. Behind its foundation were ideas of Communist modernization which were articulated in aesthetical forms. In the words of the min organizers, the man who call himself the ‘father of the village’, Cherna Mesta should have been an ideal village, had ‘to shine by light during night’, had to have ‘a proper centre’ and an ‘asfalt road’. These were the attributes of a settlement built up in the frame

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of Communist urbanization. In other, more pragmatic words, the village had to be electrified, had to be centralized and have to be well connected. All these attributes are linked with creating of ‘new man’. Cherna Mesta was actually founded as a settlement for the people who were supposed to be a mobile workforce needed to fulfil the ‘speed industrialization’.²⁰

But the ethnography suggests that the pragmatic goals the need of *income* and *progress* were primordial. Moreover there still a question to which level the private passions became public virtues and to which level all the effort was drawn from the developmental ethos of Communist modernization. The case of Cherna Mesta is even more complex since as I said all that was happened along with forced renaming and re-dressing campaign and was followed not only by everyday disobedience but also by open act of resistance. The resistance to the resettlement is analysed in the next chapter VI. Resistance.

Thus establishing the village of Cherna Mesta did not come about with a single decisive act as might have been expected, with a newly founded settlement created by the Communist state, but that it was rather very complicated process which finally lasted three decades and actually is still not at the end. The asphalt road is not finished, water pipes, and electricity often does not function and sometimes the TV signal drops out. In respect of reaching the material goals of modernization, the development of the village remained unfinished. The effort to develop the village was wholly dependent on political patronage of one of the Communist functionaries and was abandoned immediately when he left the region as a consequence of his political failure during the conflict with villagers. (See chapter VI. Resistance). The political garniture of Communist functionaries which came afterwards changed then completely the priority policy and at one point, all effort was invested into development of the original village, Konarsko. The village of Cherna Mesta thus remained in on a half way, between rural settlement and urban setting, and who knows, my be in this sense it actually accomplished the Lenin’s definition of Communism when the difference between the town and countryside disappear.

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VI.1. Ethnographical Approaches to Resistance

To write ethnography is to make an interpretation. This is a rule which we know already from the times of the big theories of culture and their critics.¹ At the same time we know, that ethnography can not be reduced to field notes and tape recorded transcripts. Scott quite nicely says about ethnography as an interpretation:

*“if it is true that events are not self-explanatory, that they do not speak for themselves, it is also, alas, true that human subjects do not entirely speak for themselves. If they did, it would suffice merely to turn on the tape recorder and offer a complete transcript to the reader.”*²

It depends on the anthropologist to make the decision about which voices will speak and what they will say. And since anthropology is not fiction, the choice we have to make is not completely random. In contrast to the writing of fiction, in writing ethnography there is a strong obligation that the text conforms to reality. In an ethnographic text, “any resemblances to persons living or dead *are not accidental*”.³ In the case of writing about resistance these methodological conditions count doubly.

Resistance is as an analytical term ambivalent. To interpret certain social and economic practices as resistance always has political and ethical consequences for the interpretation of the whole social phenomena or historical period. I argue that the reactions of members of the Bulgarian speaking Muslims to assimilation measures and to some aspects of the development project which was driven in Cherna Mesta by the Communist state can be interpreted as a resistance. Within the studies about socialism is well known that ‘both compliance and resistance characterize state socialism’⁴

¹ Marcus, George, E. ‘Contemporary Problems of Ethnography in the Modern World System’, in Clifford, James & Marcus, G. eds, *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986. Comaroff, Jean, *Body of Power, Spirit of Resistance: The Culture and History of South African People*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985.

² Scott, *Weapons of the Weak*, 138.

³ Ortner reminds us about vice versa rule which counts for a fiction in: Ortner, B. Sherry, ‘Resistance and the Problem of Ethnographic Refusal’, *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 37 (1995), 173-193, 189.

⁴ Watson, Rubie, S. ed., *Memory, History and Opposition Under State Socialism*, 2.

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For purposes of this chapter resistance is defined as set of cultural values, symbolic meanings and political ideas articulated in a particular historical situation as autonomous acts by individuals or groups. In my approach to analyses of resistance in Cherna Mesta, I follow Scott's argument which is based on the concepts of resistance of Foucault, Bourdieu and Gramsci.⁵ In Scott's approach the subordinate groups have the potential of 'historical agents'.⁶ At the same time their resistance is not explained merely in terms of 'moral economy', or 'survival strategy', but as set of practices which are called into by sets of ideas and values.⁷ Resistance of subordinated groups is not seen as a simple reaction to the dominating power, since subordinated groups in this approach have at their disposal a certain level of cultural and moral autonomy.

Arguments raised by the historical school of Subaltern studies allow us to avoid dismissing the autonomy of individual actors by uncovering the bounds between resistance and culture, when the individual action is seen as simple opposition.⁸ According to the subalterns responses to domination are ad hoc and incoherent, but nevertheless they have their own sense of order, meaning and justice. They are not generated by ideology or by particular culture, but they are sets of ideas called into being by the situation of domination itself.⁹ But taking this argument to its ultimate conclusion leads to another danger by admitting that the resistance of those subordinated, the subalterns, exists only in relationship with the situation of dominance itself. Acts of resistance are thus relegated into a mutually dependent relationship between hegemony and resistance, between those in power and the powerless or in concrete case of socialism, between the Communist regime and the dissidents. Therefore, subalterns can say that the subordinates 'can not speak by themselves'¹⁰, their voice is always in

⁵ See for instance Bourdieu, Pierre, *Outline of Theory and Practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977, Bourdieu, Pierre, *Acts of Resistance: Against the new Myths of our Time*, Cambridge, Polity, 1998, Foucault, Michel, *Discipline and Punish: the Birth of Prison*. London Penguin books, 1991, Forgacs, David, ed., *The Gramsci Reader: Selected writing 1916-1935*. New York: New York University Press 2000.

⁶ Scott, *Weapons of the Weak*.

⁷ 'Economy of poor' is a term taken from Thomson, Edward, P., 'The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteen Century', In *Past and Present* 50 (1971), 79.

⁸ Guha, Ranajit, ed., *Subaltern Studies: writings on South Asian History and Society*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1982.

⁹ Ortner, 'Resistance', 180.

¹⁰ Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty, 1988a. 'Can the Subaltern Speak?'. in Nelson, C. and Grossberg, L. ed. *Marxism and the Interpretation of Cultures*, 1998, 271-316. Urbana, III. University of Illinois Press.

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interrelation with the dominating power. On the other side, another misunderstanding would be caused by the creation of a romanticized image of revolted individuals without any cultural, political or economic context. Therefore, in this chapter I try to avoid the notion of resistance defined as culturally determined, and at the same time not to reduce resistance to a random opposition.

In this point I get back to the introductory question how to write the ethnography on resistance. Writing a 'thick ethnography' on resistance would lead to the danger of overloading links between culture and resistance and creating of the notion of 'culture of resistance'. On the other hand, writing a 'thin' ethnography, would mean letting just to speak one predominant voice. This chapter is written with an attempt to keep a balance between the two approaches.

An interpretation of resistance in the Cherna Mesta, as in any other account of resistance, is unavoidably loaded by moral and consequently political issues. And my position as 'anthropologist', as presumably a 'neutral' storyteller, doesn't make me free of the ethical load included in the interpretation. I have to admit, that the story which I tell about resistance in Cherna Mesta, is in a Hegelian sense a story of winners, of 'Pomaks' who after the failure of the Communist regime, gained an ethical superiority of those who had formerly been oppressed. The conversion of roles, as well as the character of the events, is confirmed by the narratives of the main organizers of the oppression and the actors in the 'critical events' and the narratives of the former Communist functionaries. Their narratives about their roles and the positions they took in the past in relation to the assimilation measures, to local developments as well the acts of opposition and resistance from the side of the villagers have had often the character of a confession.

The narratives of all of the actors who took part in the 'critical events' are shaped by memory based on individual experience and on political, academic and cultural discourse and ethical and moral judgments.

In this chapter the ethnography of the resistance is written in a way which leaves space for a certain level of cultural and moral autonomy of the individuals and subordinated groups. In my approach I use the advantage of ethnography which consists

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mostly of oral histories and various source of memory and therefore contains a dimension of time. This chapter presents the role of memory in the process of creating the meaning of the past. The resistance in Cherna Mesta is seen as a continuous relationship between the dominance and the responses to it and the dynamics of this relationship are determined by a set of social, psychological, cultural and historical circumstances. The resistance is interpreted not as a 'moral economy' of those subordinated, or as a product of a 'culture of resistance', but rather as an autonomous political event.

This chapter attempts to give insight into everyday practices and responses to the campaigns of Communist modernization. This part of my interpretation makes a link with the general arguments of the thesis, saying that the development project run in Cherna Mesta was imposed 'at any cost'. This chapter argues that the renaming, re-dressing and resettlement parts were by the villagers mostly experienced as intrusive and violent. There were the 'critical events' which took place in the Cherna Mesta region in the 1970s, acts of resistance, and acts of conflict between two competing groups or survival strategies? And if they are represented as resistance, then what was this resistance against? It is questioned how people 'remember' or 'forget' resistance. What role has an individual and social memory in representing and interpreting the 'critical events';¹¹ and how conceptualizations of the past, in this case the historical event of the resistance, influence the present cultural forms and current structure of social relations? This chapter contributes toward answering the question about the role of the resistance for the construction of social memory under the Communist state and afterward.

¹¹ I am borrowing the term 'critical event' from Tarlo's account about a memory of so called "Emergency" events which took place in slums of Delhi in the years 1974-1977. Tarlo, Emma, *Unsettling Memories, Narratives of the Emergency in Delhi*. London: Hurts & Company. 2003. About memory as an alternative history exists in Eastern Europe exist a huge scholarship, about the relation between memory, forgetting and resistance see Watson, ed. *Memory, History and Opposition*. In this edited volume Peter Burke uses a term 'social history of remembering' for the situation that despite the official production of history, alternative histories prospered in Eastern Europe.

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VI.2. 'Critical Events' in Cherna Mesta

The history of the modernization project in the Cherna Mesta valley can be read, like all history, as a history of remembering and forgetting.¹² The following chapter describes a particular event which took place as a reaction the development project over 30 years ago. The chapter analyses the role of that event within the memory of the Communist modernization using the approaches and assumptions of Kaneff, Pine and Haukaness and saying that:

*“Underpinning contested and changing histories, and the tension between public and hidden memories and commemorations, is a struggle for power. Conflicting memories are not only about what ‘really’ happened. They are also about identity claims, identity formation and identity politics.”*¹³

The story about the event is articulated in two contesting narratives which are circulating around the Cherna Mesta region. One narrative which circulates only among Muslim villagers tells a story about how a few hundreds villagers conducted a ‘demonstration’ march to the ‘head of state’ in Sofia. The aim of this march was to complain about the approach of the local authorities to the ‘renaming’ campaign. For the purposes of this chapter I call this story the ‘march to Sofia’. The other story is in a way its continuation. It speaks about events which are depicted as consequences of the ‘march to Sofia’. It depicts a violent conflict between the villagers from the new village of Cherna Mesta and the original settlement Konarsko on the one hand and the state and Party officials, the main organizers of the assimilation campaigns and development on the other hand. People from the village of Konarsko, the group of hamlets (*machalas*) from which they were persuaded to move down to Cherna Mesta, violently attacked only two functionaries, the two main promoters of all the restrictions on names, clothing and on building permits. One of them died. This event had many direct consequences both for individuals and also for the development of the region. The death of the high Communist functionary lead to a political trial. Several people were condemned and imprisoned as ‘political prisoners’. The functionary who survived the clash had to leave

¹² This is a paraphrase from Tarlo’s account. Tarlo, Emma, *Unsettling Memories*, 21.

¹³ Pine, Frances & Kaneff, Deema & Haukaness, Haldis, eds, *Memory, Politics, Religion, The Past Meets the Present in Europe*, 4, Munster: Lit Verlag, 2004, 3.

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the region. (That was that one, who was considered as the ‘father’ of Cherna Mesta, see in previous chapters.). He was promoted in his post, and became head of Department of Propaganda and Ideology at the regional Party organization in Blagoevgrad. This event, the public attack, and its consequences were the primary cause of a rupture in the development of Cherna Mesta village. Angel’s successor Tonchev, man who was previously a second Party secretary, already had different dreams, ideas and tasks. Under his reign the development of the region had gained a different character, motivated more by pragmatic needs and less by Communist idealism. In this chapter I will refer to these events as ‘critical events’.

I was told these narratives when I asked questions about the ‘history’ of the village and the region. The collective memory of both communities, the Bulgarian speaking Muslims and Bulgarians, recalls the act of public physical violence exercised by the villagers against the two most powerful Communist functionaries. But only the Pomaks speak about ‘march’ to Sofia. Members of the Bulgarian community, even the Communist functionaries, never mentioned that story.

The part of my field work, when I was collecting material related to these events had a different atmosphere than the rest of it. The interviews which I made about the ‘critical events’ were emotionally demanding for both sides, that is for me, as well for my respondents and friends. Respondents from both sides of the old conflict, Muslim villagers and Communist functionaries, wished to tell me ‘their stories’. In both cases the interviews had often the character of a confession. Only during this stage of my fieldwork have I experienced the ongoing ethnic division and the relationship of the character of the ‘forgotten conflict’ between the ‘Bulgarians’ and the Bulgarian speaking Muslims within the community of the Jakoruda valley. (My fieldwork almost ended, when it became socially inappropriate for me as a ‘guest’, and thus a ‘member’ of ‘Muslim’ community, to conduct public meetings with the “Communist” side of the conflict. This situation was just another sign that the conflict is still even if latently present.)

My analyses is mostly based on interpretation of narratives told by the people who were themselves the main figures and heroes of the two stories. These are the two Communist functionaries who survived the public attack against them; two men who

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were as a consequence of that violent crash imprisoned as ‘political prisoners’; and villagers who took part in the ‘protesting march’ to Sofia. While I was collecting the narratives and mapping memory linked to the ‘critical events’, I felt myself as a detective investigating some sort of crime rather than as an anthropologist. And in the end, in some respects, some of what happened in Cherna Mesta during the ‘critical events’ and subsequently during all the thirty years of the Communist development project can be categorized as a ‘crime against humanity’.

The gaps in memory of the ‘critical events’ highlight the violent features of the development projects. Acts of resistance against the development and assimilation in the region are articulated in different forms. They have the form of narratives: oral histories, narratives of self-representation of the community, myths and legends of folk Islam based on Koranic stories. The ‘critical events’ are also imprinted in official documents and other material artefacts. And the memory of these events is also very well embodied in official documents of the state-renaming documents, passports; but also in the official names of villages which went through the process of renaming. These artefacts are not only historical evidence of the events themselves, but they can also say even more. They are also product of the state and therefore they reveal the relationship between the Communist state and its citizens.

IV. 3. Remembering of Resistance

This topic of the resistance was not an original part of my research. When I came to Cherna Mesta I had not expected any resistance against the hegemonic power of the Communist state and its official ideology. Narratives commemorating resistance came to me, I did not look for them. During my first visits to the village and the region, in 1998, I was told narratives about a march to Sofia carried out by villagers, which then flowed into a violent clash with the former holders of power.

Narratives containing this one particular story about ‘the march to Sofia’ and presenting it as a kind of resistance were among the first stories and references I was told when I came to the village. At that time I did not recognize them for what they are since I did not have enough knowledge of the history of social relations in the valley. It was only when I have looked back at my diaries that I realized that people were referring

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to *'that'* event very often. When, in the beginning of my research people mentioned their resistance, it was always a way of presenting themselves to me as to the 'stranger'. But they would not say more and they would not speak about these events easily and openly. The talk they made about 'critical events' and things related to it had always the character of transferring an important and rather secret sort of knowledge. It was only later, when I was more 'accepted' in the community, that they would speak about *'it'* and tell the whole story.

In this particular case of resistance and conflict in Konarsko, the history of these events is part of the social memory and is articulated in the narratives of both side of the former conflict. These were the villagers, the Bulgarian speaking Muslims, on the one hand and the perpetrators, the armed volunteers and high officials, who were mostly 'Bulgarians' from Jakoruda, on the other hand. Recalling memories about the events was similarly significant for the former power holders, the Communist functionaries. Especially for those two Party functionaries who are represented as having crucial role in the plots of both stories. Their recollection of these events, more than those of the others, had a character of speaking about a sort of 'taboo'. They would always refer to the event as something important, something which is ethically and politically loaded and related to secrecy and shame. My main respondents were often remembering various acts of resistance against renaming while making a straight interconnection between the story told and some sort of material object.

Memory in the Objects

The material objects which people relate to the memory about resistance are official documents, like for example passports, identification cards but primarily 'renaming documents'. These were issued by the state authorities for the purposes of the renaming campaign and had an administrative form of 'request' or 'application'. These documents give a very good guidance for interpretations of the renaming and resistance acts. They reveal the actual relationship between the individuals and the power holders, the promoters of the particular acts of renaming.

Even today, some villagers keep their old identity cards and other personal documents with their 'Bulgarian' names. (See Figure 2) The document itself reveals the

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character of the event, and we can read it together with the narrative which I was told while Medzu Musa was holding that document in his hands. (See below narrative called Cholakov Burial). He recalled with a sense of bitterness and humiliation how he was caught at “Bela Mesta” in his little potatoes field. How he objected to sign the renaming document and how he was finally renamed under the threat of death. He recalls how the commander of that ‘hunting group’, (the groups volunteers which assisted to the Party officials with renaming), the former mayor of the village of Starkov saved his life by giving the command not to shoot and then by mistakenly inscribing in the ‘application’ document the original Muslim name.

Memory about renaming and consequent resistance was made in relation to other artefacts, for example amulets containing inscriptions of short Koranic quotations, mentioned already in the context of the discussion of the chapter II Rename! These amulets are of two types. The ‘new’ type, which are sold at the markets and in shops selling religious objects, or ‘home made’ ones, made from paper, plaster and thread. Memories about renaming and the acts of resistance were often recalled by these new amulets. They were part of the self- representation of revitalized religious and ethnic identity. Thus the official document is one of the objects which retain the memory of the ‘renaming’ and of the ‘critical events’.

Memory in Landscape

The memory about resistance was recalled not only by the official documents. The memory of resistances and experiences of symbolic and physical violence are embodied as well as in other artefacts of everyday life, such as landscape, house and body. In the narratives depicting both the ‘march to Sofia’ and subsequent violent conflict which took place at Konarsko, the concrete places in the surrounding landscape have an important role. In the narratives there is a mention for example of fields at the ‘Bila Mesta’ river, the mountain lake of Belmeken, the Iskar river and also places which were given symbolic names to commemorate the event itself, for example, Cholakov burial mound. Many of the narratives about resistance were called back to memory by the immediate presence of the landscape. For example, the narrative about the

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'march to Sofia' was recalled by my friend just at that particular place called called 'Cholakova mogila'. (see the narrative Cholakova Mogila at the end of this chapter). The narratives often referred to and corresponded with concrete and real physical objects, as for example, trees, hills or wells, which were part of surrounding landscape. For example, in the following narrative we can hear:

Vrub, is one of the villagres and remebers:

Vrub 1.

„[...]You asked me about the renaming. There were two or three apple trees here. Ten people came from Jakoruda especially for me. With one jeep, machine guns and pistols and they found me up there in a little swale where I had hid. They caught me there. There were curses and fighting and then they brought me here. And there was an old man here. I should be grateful to him. He said: they came to destroy you. Do something, give them a name and so forth. I simply saw that there was nothing else that I could do about it and so I agreed.“

Memory of the Body

Apart from the objects which are parts of the landscape surrounding the village, the official documents, talismans, and perhaps also many other objects, an important role of being a medium of transmission of memory was also the human body. The role of the human body as a container of memory is most markedly presented in cases of the prisoners' narratives. Two men, whom I have interviewed, former prisoners, mentioned during their talk their health condition which was negatively affected by years in prison. Many of the oral histories of Muslim women are associated with the body. They often recalled the re-dressing campaign and the resistance against it through their body and body experience. In their memory they recalled images of the 'naked' and 'covered' body. (See the argument about the concept of 'nakedness' in chapter IV. Re-dress!). The concept of 'nakedness' and of the 'naked body' was the most important reason for their resistance against the re-dressing campaign. Oral histories which recall the renaming and the subsequent resistance often mention physical violence as the main experiences (see, for example, the narrative above, but also the long narratives about march to Sofia and the 'lynching at Konarsko'). Also, in the narratives of the Communist functionaries we can follow the traces of memory at the body. Finally, it is the 'body' of Angel, who is

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mortally attacked, which plays an important role in the plot of the second story. The body is thus a significant source not only of an individual's memory but also a constituent part of the social memory and functions as a mediator between the past and the present.

The ways in which the 'critical events' are remembered have a constitutive role for current social and political relations on the national but also on the regional level. The 'critical events' are in many ways remembered, but at the same time they are in many respects forgotten. 'Forgetting' has the same, if not a bigger social impact than 'remembering'.

IV.4. Forgetting of Resistance

In spite of a huge interest in research on the 'Pomaks' among Bulgarian but also among foreign social scientists and despite the number of ethnographic and anthropological accounts written as a product of that interest which arose especially in the 1930's, I have never come across a single work, either historical or anthropological, which mentions or researches the 'critical events' or resistance among the Bulgarian speaking Muslims in general.¹⁴ There is only one account about these events which approaches it from point of a view of Turkish nationalistic discourse.¹⁵

The lack of interest by public and academic institutions is even more striking if we compare it with the academic as well as political attention directed to the "Process of rebirth", which was applied to the Turkish population in the middle of the 1980s. When it comes to the Bulgarian speaking Muslims' resistance a public silence still dominates.

Nevertheless, on the level of every day encounters in Jakoruda and the Cherna Mesta valley the 'critical events' have not been forgotten. The two narratives which commemorate this resistance of villagers against the renaming and re-dressing

¹⁴ The only secondary account which mentions these events is account of Czech historians there as a notion about an events of protest in Pazardzik (Notrhen part of the Rhodopes Mounatins) and in Samokov, menationing of twleve dead people, these events are related as to a Turskih poplutation, see in Moulis, Vladislav & Valenta, Jan & Vykoukal, Jiri .P., *Vznik, krize a rozpad sovětského bloku v Evropě, 1944-1989*, Ostrava: Amosium Servis, 1991, 290.

¹⁵ Memisoglu, Husein, *Pages of The History of Pomaks Turks*. Memisoglu. Ankara: Memisoglu, 1991.

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campaigns are remembered in two variations. The story about the 'march to Sofia' is told exclusively by the villagers, when what the humiliating and brutal suppression at the end is highlighted. The story about the 'attack' at Konarsko in the narratives of the villagers is interpreted as consequence of the march. On the other hand there exists also another variation of the same story which is contained only in the narratives of the former representatives of power. The story in these narratives is conceptualized as a story which refers to an attack made by 'wild' villagers against 'one of our people'.

The sense of interpretation of the plot and its ethical sense were always identical for all the respondents from each of the respective communities. The former Communist functionaries, the 'Bulgarians', do not tell the story of the 'Pomaks', and the same rule holds true the other way round. Even if these narratives were a quite important part of self-representation, they had at the same time the character of a taboo, as something which is important but something which is not part of everyday talk.

Remembering and forgetting the 'critical events' shapes the way of self-representation of the two communities in the Cherna Mesta region, the Pomaks and the Bulgarians. Memory of the past and its articulation is one of the constitutive elements of the perception of the past and the self representation of the present by the Pomak group as a community. The events which are described in the narratives and the ways in which they are articulated reveal the relationship between historical event, memory and present the structure of social relations.

A significant aspect of these narratives depicting the 'critical events' is the fact that they are not contained in any wider public memory. Thus these events are largely 'forgotten' in Bulgarian but also in foreign academic research.

IV.5. Everyday Forms of Resistance in Cherna Mesta

Within the discussion about resistance there developed two main arguments. One of them, which is represented in the work of Scott¹⁶ is based on the assumption of a two dimensional world and a two dimensional power. Along this assumption power exists in terms of material force on one side and power at level of consciousness and culture on the other. As such power at the level of consciousness and culture never

¹⁶ Scott, *The Weapons of the Weak*.

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dominates.¹⁷ The metaphor of this division is the relationship ‘body’ and ‘mind’. Scott’s argument then suggests that the ideological domination never dominates at the level of culture and consciousness and therefore within the hegemonic domination there exist spaces for resistance. Scott sees reactions and acts of opposition of subordinated groups against the dominating power as acts of resistance and not only as an act of ‘moral economy’. Individuals and bearers of that subculture have their own moral autonomy, independent of economic aspects, and the actors, and as well as the events, have their own historical agency. According to this argument the ‘every day forms of resistance’ are then evidences of that discontinuity within the hegemonic power. Ortner discuss this relationship between power and resistance in her article as a kind of binary opposition:

“Domination was a relatively fixed and institutionalized form of power, resistance was essentially organized opposition to power institutionalized in this way. This binary began to be refined (but not abolished) by questioning both terms. On the one hand Foucault (for example 1978) drew attention to less institutionalized, more pervasive, and more everyday forms of power, on the other hand, James Scott (1985) drew attention to less organized, more pervasive, and more everyday resistance [...] When poor man steals from a rich man, is the resistance or simply survival strategy?”¹⁸

The second of the arguments about resistance denies its autonomy. According to this interpretation all the subaltern’ groups do not create any autonomous culture and exist only within a symbiotic relationship with the dominating power. With this approach hegemony and resistance are always in a mutual and complementary relationship and are dependent upon each other. To accept this approach would mean to undermine the political and cultural autonomy of all ‘dissent’ groups which were opposing Communist regime in Eastern Europe and in my interpretation I confront this argument.

I interpret the material I have about Cherna Mesta both in the form of narratives but other source of memory as well in a way which demonstrates the ‘critical events’ which took place in Cherna Mesta as acts of resistance and not merely as acts of

¹⁷ Scott, *ibid.*

¹⁸ Ortner, Sherry, B. ‘Resistance and the Problem of Ethnographic Refusal’, 1995, 174

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opposition. On this point my interpretation confronts Mitchell's argument which says that within the hegemonic structure there is not any space for resistance.¹⁹ In Mitchell's approach, all individual actions would be turned into relatively passive responses to power and people would have the role of 'figures' in the system. Even if I try to depict the individual actions of resistance and avoid their romanticizing, my respondents retain their own autonomy to act.

In the following section of the chapter are interpreted narratives depicting events and demonstrate that the events which were taking place in Cherna Mesta in relation to the assimilation campaign and the development project as having character, in Scott's terms, of every day forms of resistance. Most of these narratives are associated with reactions to the renaming and re-dressing campaign.

The various acts of resistance, both open resistance and also 'every day forms', were conducted by villagers as responses to the measures undertaken within a framework of the industrialization and urbanization project which was conducted in the valley and as well within the framework of the assimilation project. In the narratives told by the villagers the resistance is mostly represented as opposition against organized change of personal names or against the re-dressing. On the other hand, the narratives of the Communist functionaries represent the villagers as being 'resistant to everything'. In these narratives are the villagers represented as retaining some culture of opposition.

In 1974 the second and stronger of the two main 'renaming campaign' in Western Rhodopes and Cherna Mesta region was culminating. (See the Chapter Rename!). In contrast to the first 'renaming' which took place in the late 1960s (1967), when people were supposed to change their name just of their own free will, in the years 1973 and 1974 the names of all members of the Pomak group had to be changed.²⁰ State and Party institutions used various tactics of coercion. There were bureaucratic obstacles in every day communication with administrative institutions. For example bureaucratic procedures had to be conducted only with the new 'Bulgarian' name, withholding of wages, restrictions on the use of the old names in every day communication, restrictions on giving names to new born children and also dead people, and eventually even the use

¹⁹ Mitchell, Timothy, 'Everyday Metaphors of Power', *Theory and Society*, 9 5 (1995), pp.545-577.

²⁰ Stojanov, *Turskoto naselenie*.

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of physical oppression. (See chapter III. Re-dress!, narrative of Medzu Saranski 1 and chapter Rename!) In the region of Cherna Mesta, but probably also elsewhere, so-called 'hunting groups' [lovni grupi] were formed. These were armed volunteer units, members of which were local 'Bulgarians' but also some local Muslims. They were operating on behalf of the Party Committee. Their task was to, literally catch Muslims, Pomaks and force them to change their name from a Muslim name into a Bulgarian one. According to the oral histories people were caught during their everyday activities in their small fields or on their travel to work or in the forest and they were violently forced to sign a 'renaming request'. Signing of that official document meant abandoning the original Muslim name - consisting of three names - and accepting a new 'Bulgarian' name. (See the narratives in the chapter III. Rename! and the renaming document in Figure 2)

In the memory of people from the village the reactions to these parts of the renaming are represented as having the character of opposition and resistance. The oral histories tell us that people had opposed the official pressure on renaming in various ways. (About the different sorts of resistance and opposition see, for example the narratives below, Rosnev and narrative Salih1 in chapter III. Rename!)

What I do find important for my argument saying that the resistance and former conflict is latently present is that recollections of the 'renaming events' never took place in an emotionally neutral context. The context and atmosphere in which these narratives were told was always emotionally affected, either negatively or positively. The memory of the renaming and of the subsequent resistance had either the character of trauma or ridicule. The 'renaming' acts, as well the symbolical and physical violence accompanying them, were represented in these narratives in ways which undermined the authority of power by joking. Also the very situation of remembering often turned into making jokes about the political power. For example, when I have asked about the renaming group of middle age people, they would use the situation to ridicule the former authority and power by making jokes about the 'renaming'. (See the narrative Salih 1 in chapter III. Rename!)

The renaming acts are often remembered with both the bitterness of humiliation; and at the same time with memories about undermining of power through ridicule. We

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can see that what gives to the acts of opposition the meaning of resistance is precisely the way in which people recall those events.

And apart from that there are quite a few narratives which show that the hegemony was undermined already at the time of renaming. We can read from a number of narratives of which the content is linked with the oppression exercised during different phases of the development project that quite often there took place a situation where the political power and authority of the Communist party and its representatives was undermined through ridicule. One example of that sort of narrative is an oral history of one of the Communist functionaries who was directly responsible for sometimes quite brutal measures undertaken by the official institutions during the renaming campaign, (see below narrative Rosnev).

I have asked those who were the main organizers of the renaming acts, those who took part in the “hunting groups”, about the reasons for that level of brutality and violence which was used against villagers who resisted the renaming and which remained imprinted in the memory. I have got an answer from one of the main modernizers who later became one of the victims of an attack conducted by the villagers and who remains today one of the main figures, the ‘negative’ hero of the ‘critical events’.

‘Why have you changed peoples’ names?’ I have asked the Communist functionary who was taking part in the ‘hunting groups’ of volunteers. He answered:

Rosnev 1

“[...] they always acted spitefully toward us. They found a way to counteract any of our acts. Jakoruda was the fortress of this approach. The young people always had the impression that they could act against the [Party] Committee. Like small children. We played. For instance I would go with Tonchev on inspection to the wood manufactory in Jakoruda. People got to know that we were coming and whistled a warning. ‘Rosnev and Tonchev are coming!’

We came to the plant and it was empty. We would look up the

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nearby hill and there all two hundred workers were laughing at us.

Well, wouldn't you have renamed them?"

(This narrative is quoted as well in chapter III Rename!)

This oral history describes an almost classic example of what would be in Scott's terms a 'soft form' or "every day' form of resistance. The fact that this narrative is recalled by the Communist functionary', by the representative of the other side of the old conflict, allows us speak about 'resistance' in the context of Cherna Mesta.

Another example of opposition against renaming is in the narrative of Vrub. (See above the narrative Vrub 1). Vrub also remembers the renaming as oppressive and in retrospect it presents the act of resistance as violent and the reaction to it as opposition. This is another example which suggests that renaming and the reactions to it are in recollections presented as having the character of a relationship between hegemony and resistance.

Another narrative which reveals how villagers resisted to the modernization measures is that one describing resistance in context of re-dressing and organized sewing of the ball dresses. (See in chapter IV. Re-dress!, narrative Parcev 2)

An interesting case revealing how is the individual memory constructed through a myth give the following narrative. It is a commentary on a wall painting on the wall of a mosque in the village of Medeny Poljany. I was told this narrative by an elderly man who was an imam in that mosque. This mosque is one of the few mosques in the region which survived from the late Ottoman period. On the wall of this mosque there are several images which are illustrations of Koranic stories.

'Eschabikeiv', People in the cave.

„The last horizontal calligraphy represents a dog which is in the picture and is part of the legend even if it is a 'dirty animal', similarly to a pig. Six people, one of them a woman and a dog, hid themselves in a cave, because the officials did want to change their names. They stayed in the cave for three hundred and nine years. They have not died and for them time did not pass. They slept and the angels were turning them. Through a crack in the ceiling the sun filtering and

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mevlijas, in sense of angels, were turning them so that they could stay in the sun. They woke up and they collected money among themselves and because they have thought that they are still under threat, they sent one person to buy bread. Their money, nevertheless, was old and thus they realized that they had slept so long. They died after that. And the dog also, but in spite of the fact that it was a dog, they have changed him into a man and let him into the paradise.”

This narrative demonstrates the process of formation of the social memory and the creation of the political meanings of the historical events. In this case it shows how the assimilation measures conducted by the Communist state are absorbed by social memory and the mutual interrelationship between the two- the event itself and the memory. This Koranic story, *Eschabikeif*, is a story about resistance. The story about the historical event, which in this case is the Communist renaming campaign is appropriated and incorporated into the narrative connected with the Koranic image. The renaming and the reactions and events linked to it gain their social meaning through their representation within the contextual framework of the Koranic legend.²¹ The reactions to the Communist renaming can be thus interpreted as a parallel to the ancient story, and are given in this way the meaning of resistance.

The renaming and the reactions to it from the side of the villagers which resulted in the ‘critical events’ are represented and perceived as a binary opposition to domination on one side and subordination and consequently the resistance on the other. The fact that these events are imprinted in social memory in this way supports the argument that the assimilation measures and some aspects of the development of the village and the region were perceived as oppressive and intruding upon the every day life of the villagers.

This interpretation of the narrative supports the argument that the development and assimilation measures are perceived by the villagers not only as acts of opposition to

²¹ Sura 18, Cave, LXVIII, translation in: Hrbek, Ivan, *Koran*, Praha: Academia, 2000, (1972), pp. 266-280.

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one particular action or process, but that the opposition had the character of resistance determined by social, economic and also cultural factors.

Another type of soft resistance was political anecdote. People remember them even now and that fact supports the argument that assimilation was not perceived as a 'natural' and positive but rather as intrusive and oppressive. One of the anecdotes from that time which people recall in relation to the names changing is for instance: You would have to change your name 'dobrovolno ili dobrozorno', means in Bulgarian 'by will or by force'.

This subchapter has argued, that the reactions to the assimilation measures in Cherna Mesta represented in the narratives, can be interpreted as every day forms of resistance. If the 'soft' forms of opposition are not to be called 'resistance', then the 'resistance' will be ascribed only to revolutionaries and partisans and actions other than open forms of resistance will be categorized only as a 'survival strategy'

The ridicule contained in the narratives undermines in retrospect the dominating power and thus the reactions to assimilation, which also could be interpreted only as an opposition, gain the character of 'resistance'. This interpretation also has wider political consequences.

Retrospective undermining and persiflage of the renaming acts demonstrates the role of memory as a constitutive element for the creation of the political meaning of the past and its relationship and impact on the current cultural forms and structure of social relations. In the case of Cherna Mesta memory gives to the historical events, which could also have been conceptualized as mere acts of opposition, the meaning of resistance. The interpretation of the 'critical events' as a conflict between the dominant power, the Bulgarians and the Communist, and the local villagers, Muslim Pomaks, affects the current dynamics of creating the Bulgarian speaking Muslims community.

Thus the narrative about every day forms of resistance in Cherna Mesta demonstrate the process of the functioning of the triangular relationship between the 'historical event', social memory and formation of the structure of social relations.

IV.6. Open Forms of Resistance in Cherna Mesta

Open forms of resistance which took place in Cherna Mesta in reaction to the assimilation measures, the renaming and the redressing, are depicted in two main narratives which are related to each other, but they have two different plots and can be interpreted as two independent stories. From the point of view of chronology, the first narrative speaks about a symbolic act of resistance which took the form of a public demonstration. This demonstration had the form of a ‘protest march’ of Muslim villagers addressing the highest political institution, the Central Committee of the Communist Party in the capital city of Sofia. The ‘protest march’ was organized by members of the Muslim (Pomak) group from the whole region of the Cherna Mesta river valley.

The plots of the two stories are briefly as follows. People from the village organized a demonstration march through the mountains to the capital city where they wanted to complain about the renaming campaign directly to the president of the Republic, whose political function at that time was called the “head of state”, and the First Secretary of the Central Party Committee, Todor Zhivkov. On the way back, the villagers were stopped and dispersed by army, police and volunteer groups. The tension of the situation led to a physical attack carried out by the villagers against the two highest secretaries of the Communist party in the region. They were also the main organizers of the renaming campaign and they were commanders of the armed volunteer groups. One of them, the main figure of the three narratives (see below the narratives 1.Cholakov burial, 2.Protesting March and 3.Political Prisoners) was also one of my respondents, his narrative entitled Homo Faber is below.

The ‘critical events’ described in these narratives had a significant impact on the lives of the people in the valley and on the subsequent development of the whole region. The events remain alive in the memory of both sides of the conflict, the villagers and also the Communists bosses and other modernizers. And that is so in spite of the fact that paradoxically the ‘critical events’ have the character of a secret, social ‘taboo’. Even after thirty years from the times when they took place, they still remain something about which it is not appropriate and common to speak openly. This was the case especially with the Bulgarians, the former Communists functionaries and the people who

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were engaged with the modernization project. In their talk there would be always a shadow of shame and bitterness. When I joined a meeting of the former local Communists functionaries, all of whom are now retired, the ‘critical events’ were among the first things they mentioned, although indirectly. They asked each other: ‘Did you tell her about it.’ ‘It’ meant the violent conflict between the villagers and the local Communists which took place at Konarsko during the renaming campaign. The second narrative speaks about a violent attack which was carried out by the Pomaks against Communist functionaries in Konarsko.

These two narratives are told in different versions by people from both sides of the community of the Cherna Mesta valley, by the Bulgarians, and also by the Bulgarian speaking Muslims, but with opposing political and ethical meaning. The Bulgarians victimize themselves and blame the Pomaks, and the Pomaks blame the Bulgarians and victimize themselves. In this subchapter are presented samples from these narratives. They are used in this chapter in the narratives called ‘Cholakov Burial’, ‘Protest March to Sofia’ and ‘Homo Faber’.

Elderly people, especially those whose lives were affected by measures undertaken as a consequences of the ‘critical events’, imprisonment and other ways of oppression, remember the renaming campaign as forceful and violent. They speak about it with much more negative emotions, bitterness and a feeling of insult.

One of the men who took part in the ‘protest march to Sofia’ recalls the event as it follows:

I. Narrative: Protest March to Sofia

“They began in 1967. At the time they were acting illegally. They stopped paying us [wages] During one of these persecutions by the party they chased us. We weren’t working. We refused to work. At the time we didn’t stay at home. We slept elsewhere. With one of our organisations we went to Sofia to complain. We went from here to Belovo by foot through Jundula. Even I was in one of the groups. There were forty two of us. In Belovo we got onto a large train and went to Sofia. We came to the secretariat of the central committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party, but they wouldn’t receive us. We went to a lawyers’ cooperative and found there one lawyer. This man took us to the secretariat with the permission of the president of the

cooperative and thus they received us. We went inside, two or three of us, and they asked who was our leader. We don't have a leader, we said. Each of us came out of the woods and then we got together. And he said that there was another two hundred people, some group in another place. Elsewhere there are five hundred people. Only we were already in the capital city. We complained of what they were doing to us. And he said that it would continue, but not violently rather voluntarily. And one man came out, Donjo Donev, and said: 'I am called Donjo Donev.' He said for us to go peacefully. No one would arrest us. We said that they would beat us to death on the way. They won't beat you to death, he said. We have made an announcement and you have our telephone number with you. And so we took a taxi and returned. No one arrested us. But some time passed and in 1973 and 1974 it began again, but forcefully. And already in 1974. It was May. They formed armed 'hunting groups' which chased us. Even some of our people were with them, but everything was according to the tactics of the party central committee. And some thousand of us gathered together in order to go to Sofia to complain. We climbed up to Rila. We went to Samokov and we reached Samokov, but they were waiting for us there. Civilian jeeps. They said: 'You won't reach Sofia.' And those who were ahead of us, they went off and forced them to enter a large building. There were perhaps two hundred people. And we, when we saw this, thought to ourselves that they would want to kill us. We saw this clearly, and we couldn't retreat and so we rushed across the river Iskar. We clung to each other in groups of seven and eight. And we crossed the river. We were barefoot, wet and there was spring rain and snow. We ran away across the mountains. At the time some people died in the mountains. Also one guy from Jakoruda. We were walking two or three days in the mountains and then we returned home. Three, four, five days passed and they came to assess how the situation was. And the party secretary came from Jakoruda. He was called Rosnev, and one Zajkov from state security. One died. Our people killed him. He was the partisan elder Goso Gencev and a driver. They had come to reconnoitre, but they played chess. That party man said something to our women. I don't know what, because I wasn't there. He asked why we returned the tobacco seedling. One of the women told him, 'we work here and you are chasing us because of our names and you want to change them. We are working and you are idle and let us feed you.' And some sort of unpleasantness occurred. The people ran together and there was a fight. And at that time they beat that elder Goso and after three days he died in the hospital at Razlog. And those who beat him declared themselves to be witnesses. They lied and in place of them others suffered who were innocent. Even one boy who had come two hours later was under surveillance for a year and they determined that it was

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not him, but it didn't make any difference to anyone. And even in the night they came with projectiles. Armoured people surrounded the village. We didn't see the army, but there were colonels, doctors... they all surrounded the village. Even I hid at home and the next day no one dared go out. Whoever went up to the woods they fired at and he fell down. And so they renamed us violently. Whoever they seized, they took away. They renamed ten women and the next day they continued from Jakoruda to Cherna Mesta and other villages. A so in perhaps a month everything was done. And then they continued in Kardzhalijsky district."

This, and as well as the following narrative contains a motif of relationship between the periphery and the centre and reflects the character of the Cherna Mesta region as a place at the periphery of the state. It is also an example of the conditions of trust. People at the 'periphery' did not trust social and political institutions at the level nearest to them. Instead of that they invested their trust in the highest centre of power. In this case they went to complain to the highest political institution, the 'head of state' and the first secretary of the Communist Party.

Another aspect, which is significant for such a kind of spontaneous symbolic action and political ritual is the unclear leadership and organization of the protest. In the narrative a high official asks who is the leader of the resistance and the answer is that 'we do not have a leader, we just came out of forests'. This motive also supports the argument which interprets this reaction as a resistance linked with some kind of grass roots culture, rather than an opposition organized by some dissident or political group.

The following narrative is about the "Protest March' to Sofia and about the subsequent conflict. I was told this narrative at a place in the mountains next to the village of Konarsko which is called Cholakov Burial. It was during my journey to meet another two of my important respondents for this story, the two men who were imprisoned as a consequence of that conflict.

2. Narrative: Cholakov Burial

'It was at one point already in Italian or Greek times. When Turkey came here, these people were helping the Turks, because they were Muslims. They were helpful to the Turks. It is based on the verb

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“Pomagat” [in Bulgarian to help], from which in turn is derived “pomagaci” [helpers] and then Pomaci.

This place is called Cholakov’s burial. Here on the thirteenth or fourteenth of May around fifteen hundred people were organized. We fled to the woods, because they chased us, caught us and there were fights. I will show you the documents. That was in 1971, 1972 or 1973. It was gradual, by a desire, or by force - or members of the party. It was on May fifteenth in 1972.

There was some two thousand of us. Eight hundred of us went to Samokov. They seized someone. Why have you come together like this? They didn’t give us bread. They chased us through the forest. It was a volunteer unit from Konarsko. Some thirty six or thirty seven people were bought off. They got payments, money, rewards. If they seized someone to change his names, then that evening they ate and drank at the expense of the Konarsko committee. The president of that village of Konarsko was called Musa Mehmed Krcev in Turkish and then he renamed himself to Bojko Marckov. He was the commander of the volunteer unit. When they seized someone in the woods, they would blockade the crossroad with jeeps, with military cannon and with pistols. And so it finally happened to me. I was seized at Bela Mesta. They seized me there and if Starkov had not been there, they wanted to kill me. I have the document if you want to see it.

On the seventeenth of May there was some sort of conflict in Buncevo. There was a mobilization from the entire Razlog district. In the night they blockaded everything and the next day they seized the entire village and renamed them. Everyone. Whoever ran away, they seized. The next day they began at Jakoruda, Cherna Mesta, Konarsko, Bely Kamak, Ilansko, Avromovo, Jurukovo, Dagonovo, all the villages. After the seventeenth they got through. Later they resolved the complaints. It was the job of the party Central Committee.

And already along the streets there were colonels, doctors. They thought there would be some sort of conflict. We had nothing. We had women, children and we had no weapons. We all worked for the forest service, in agriculture or some private things.

And because they seized me, they wrote my name here, but I...[rejected]. They had special requests with them. Q:You mean that you had to write a request? They signed the requests and I had to fill in my name – Musa Ali Abdulev – but I didn’t agree that they would throw on me a different name and so that line remained empty. And he could write whatever he wished. And then it was with lots of fights. They wanted to kill me. Here you can see that they wrote in red. Musa Abdulev and then they wrote Matej Sabrinov Andreev. And there by mistake they wrote Abdulev again. He changed also my surname. Look here, it’s written with a red pencil. And here I was forced to sign.

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It was exactly when I descended from Buncevo to Cherna Mesta. Exactly, at that moment.

Eight people were in prison here. Two death sentences. One got twenty years in jail. They carried out one death sentence. There was a boy who lived here. They said he was the organizer and for that they gave him the death sentence and the other twenty years and three more fifteen years in prison. One of them fled and built a house in Sv. Petka. One is in Belica. One was eight years in jail and one was there one year. What were their names? Cholakovi, two brothers. One was condemned to death and the sentence was carried out and the other was fifteen years in jail in Stara Zagora. How did that happen? The first reason was the name. And the second was later as I was coming from Samokov and they came from Belovo. Once again they screened with jeeps and once again a fight broke out. They wanted to frighten the people and make them come out. But they had reason to frighten the people. And one of those people died in the hospital in Razlog. He was a man from the party, because the first secretary of the town party committee was attacked here. Rosnev. He was attacked. And for this reason they were frightening people. They caught who they caught. They held a woman for a week in Blagoevgrad. The frightened woman came back from Blagoevgrad, but she was afraid to say anything and that's the way how it was. She said nothing. And for that matter what was she supposed to say – nothing.”

In this narrative a ‘renaming document’ is mentioned and this state artefact was present during the interview. (See Figure 2) The object itself describes how the renaming was conducted and perceived. An illustrative moment which tells us about the perceptions of the renaming by the villagers and also by the power holders, the Communist functionaries, is the situation with the mistaken name. It shows that the renaming proceeded in a humiliating way and also perceived as such.

These two narratives of the villagers who took part in the actions of resistance refer to the open forms of resistance. Both narratives support the interpretation of the reactions to the re-dressing and renaming as a form of open resistance.

The contra version of the story is given by the narrative of a former Communist functionary as it follows.

3. Homo Faber

'You said that I am certain it is a Bulgarian population. Yes. They are Bulgarians, I said myself before you and before them. We said it to ourselves and to them. Some time one or two generations ago they were Muslimised ['Islamizirani' in Bulgarian] They suffered. It didn't happen all at once. And not everything was forceful. As I said of it, they themselves were Muslimized. It often had an economic form. Then a new lot befell that generation once again. They suffered more for the sake of the young. So we thought that we are doing it for the sake of the young. And we sensed that here there was some sort of horrible revulsion toward everything. You know, we felt intuitively that that situation constituted a threat to socialism. That very situation. That there is some sort of constant danger. That there is some sort of constant danger of a fifth column or alien propaganda, an alien influence which was there. I don't know how things would have developed if Turkey had been in the socialist camp. I don't know how they would have developed. If they would have proposed such a thing. We had the clear feeling that that situation constituted a threat. That sooner or later it would turn out that...We knew it wouldn't go smoothly. But we were clear that the situation must be resolved. The situation that there was a Bulgarian Muslims in Bulgaria? Yes. Their sense of backwardness, their sense of being a group closed off which showed in every possible way that they were something different. Isn't it so? Beside that even efforts to do things differently showed that the outcome - wasn't irresolvable. The efforts of the young people to go it alone met with terrible opposition from the old people. They didn't want it. Intimidation and other things. They had a very strong sense of backwardness. We felt a strength in ourselves. Possibilities. When so much had been done, we said: that's enough. It couldn't have been done sooner. It was supposed to be only one political action. Up till then the state had not had any possibility, not even material, to turn its attention towards those villages. Thus we assumed that we were doing something good. Not merely the renaming. I have already told you and I will tell you again. Our own people did not take it well. Not that they weren't convinced what those people were like and that previously there had been three unsuccessful cases. Three. In 1912 and in the 1960's. Isn't it so? And the irresponsibility when you are playing with the destiny of the population. In such a manner. [Tears came to the eyes of Angel, formerly the chief renamer and one of the most powerful men in the district.] Well, if during the 'revivalist process' there wasn't time... They didn't say anything to you about me? The people you live with? I was in the meadow with my wife near Cherna Mesta. One woman came up and asked where we are from. Was it a fate? From here I told her... CVAK.

At this point the recording stops. Only later I did remember that I had turned the tape recorder off. Intentionally. At that moment I did not have the strength to record it

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further. It seemed to me unethical to record such a profoundly personal and emotional statement. Or, rather, in this a case real confession. A confession of a weeping man who in the past as some sort of *homo faber* had influenced the destinies of many people. The confessions of a man for whom as a *zoon politicon* politics became life's destiny. And who acted in such a way that politics became the destiny of many other people. After I switched of the tape recorder, he finished the story, telling how he was attacked by villagers at Konarsko. How he fled and hid himself behind a stump. How they struck him on his back with a hoe, but fortunately he had a revolver in his belt. So, the hoe slide off and thus saved his life. And how an innocent person was finally jailed as a consequence of these events. How he then asked someone how the captive and his wife were getting on. And then he went from the region to the district of Blagoevgrad and became second secretary of the district Party Committee and later chief of the propaganda department of the Party.

In this narrative, the conflict at Konarsko is represented as a conflict between 'backwardness' and 'otherness' of the Muslim Pomaks and the 'modernity' and 'socialism' of which he was one of the most prominent representatives. At the same time, the narrative articulates a strong moral and ethical aspect and a confession of moral and political defeat and thus it acknowledges the reactions and opposition of the 'Pomaks' as having wider moral and political dimensions. The reaction of the Bulgarian speaking Muslims is thus not simple 'opposition' or 'survival strategy' but through the moral confession of this Communist functionary it gains the features of resistance.

The next narrative I have recorded at one of the houses of the machalas of Konarsko. Two elderly men were telling me their memories about renaming. These were two men with health broken by a difficult life on that mountain plateau in a hidden corner of Bulgaria and by years of captivity in prisons of the Communist state. I try to avoid any romanticising of them as heroes or victims of crimes against humanity conducted by the Communist state. But at the same time, I have to let their voices speak, however they are 'coloured' or 'dramatised' by borrowings from different kinds of discourses on ethnicity, minority and human rights, as represented in that region by media, academic scholarships and Bulgarian and foreign NGOs'.

4. Narratives of the Political Prisoners:

Dzamal Mehmed Sirachki and S. Mechmed Buncev, Buncevo in July 2004

recalled:

Our story begins in the year 1973. The renaming began. Later in the year 1973, by May 12th. We got together and we went to complain to Todor Zivkov. 'Names are getting changed by force, or by wish?' [It was the enquiry of the protest marsh to Sofia addressing Zivkov and high functionaries of Communist Party].

But, we got to Samokov and there the police stopped us and pushed us into a large room, a large room of a cooperative building. I looked in one direction and there is cement and iron. Some people ran away. They caught whomever they caught. At sunset some people started to give up. They came through Belmeken [a mountain lake in Rila]. And after five vehicles, they loaded us into five vehicles to Belovo. And, [they said] that we go to Belovo. There people were arguing in the doorway. They ran away. They fired at them. As though there were some sort of coup d'état. And then they took us to Belovo. Whoever run away, run away, and they took us into a large room with many people. Two districts. Razgradski district and Pazardicky district. They gave a report to comrade Rosnev, the commander who already was there and they divided us by district and the renaming began. They brought in one boy, a small boy, to Samokov. And what happened with him, we didn't know. Whether they renamed him, whether they beat him, we did not know. And then an old woman from Jakoruda surrendered. And I say: still one more and then I go. And then they took us there, they took us into something like a little room. Just as if for one person. Right into the fray. They had prepared statements ready for signing. They prepared everything. I said: 'I do not change my name.' And he said in response: 'Why not?' I said: 'I say no!' A name is not easily given. The head one can give but not a name. And there were two boys there. If they were they from Jakoruda? But certainly they were from Belovo. It was the 13th of May. And it began. The drubbing. They struck me several times. 'Sign! You will not able to walk. Come for one more!' They saw that it doesn't work with me. I said to myself let these people beat me... Struggle, struggle... I signed... And who had signed they led into another room. Some people had already signed. And we, who have already signed they gave us cheese, kashkaval. We eat something. Others stayed there and they took us to Jurukovo, there we got out, they were from another districts and we got out at Bela Mesta. And we get home. 'We have changed out names... cry.... And that is how it was...on the 17th of the May commander came. After five days. They drubbed people the whole month and they came to rename the whole village. Already people came back. People went away [, to a place far away. And it

happened that... - One was wounded and died in Razlog. And then there was fighting - terrible things. The same as it was in Bosnia. Such a slaughter. Then they seized Cholakov. First they seized him and then me. And after me Ilansky, and he has already died. Three people died, because of that killing... And they seized us. Those here, us here and then these there... And they put us on trial 'behind closed doors'. They condemned us. And they started also there...Rosnev [the former Communist secretary] asked: how did it happen and why did it happened. I said because of the names. That's how it happened, because of the names'.

And they sentenced Cholakov to the firing squad just as they have condemned the Bulgarians in Libya. And they also sentenced me to shooting. Others fifteen years each, one boy got eight years and one Salski one year. The others fifteen years and two death sentences. We waited thirteen months. We went to the supreme court. The supreme court confirmed that we would be shot. We already had the right to go to the supreme court, both... And precisely on September 3rd they shot this man. I sat for fourteen days after that. They reduced my sentence to twenty years. And we sat out those twenty years. When I came out before the gates, I fell down. Dead. A person died. The doctor told him. He said that is because he had constantly laid down. He hadn't walked. From there they transferred us to Stara Zagora as political [prisoners]". And I sat for thirteen years, eleven months and forty days, I sat. And from there I came here."

I recorded this story during my visit at Buncevo one of the machalas of Konarsko. I was directed to these two men by one of my main respondents. As they have told me, I was not a first interviewer who was interested in their experiences with the persecution of the Communist regime. They had previously told their stories to 'some journalists', as they say, and also to 'some people' from a political party the Movement for Rights and Freedom (in Bulgarian Dvizenie za prava I svobody).²² One of the programs of DPS is the investigation of the persecution of the Muslim population in Bulgaria conducted by the Communist regime, but their interest is directed mainly to the Turkish population.²³ Activities in that field have had until now a rather superficial character and they have

²² The political party, DPS, was founded at the beginning of the 1990s as a part defending the interests of ethnic and religious minorities in Bulgaria.

²³ Another institution which is active in the field of investigating the past in regard to minority rights is the International Centre for Minority Studies and Intercultural Relations Foundation in Sofia.

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not reached any wider publicity on the national level. However they still had an impact on the community level.

The new political parties and NGO's which arose during the 1990s brought new concepts of human and minority rights, rooted in post-modern critique and based on the multiculturalism as a political doctrine. They were very different from those ones which were conceptualized in the discourse on the Communist modernity. Their use had an impact on the re-interpretation of the past in general historical narratives in Bulgaria and inevitably they also hit upon the new concepts of reconstructing the past in the public memory in the Cherna Mesta valley. The assimilation measures were re-conceptualized in these new discourses. For example the violence and coercion which accompanied the development and assimilation measures which were conducted by the Communist state are now conceptualized by the members of the 'Pomak' group in terms of a humiliation of human and minority rights. (See the narrative of the Prisoners). The forceful renaming is not seen by the official discourse as an 'act of liberation' or 'correcting history' or 'getting back to the bosom of Bulgarian nation'. Such interpretation continues only in the presentations of Bulgarian nationalist discourse.

And as a consequence the social memory conceives of the acts of opposition against the Communist assimilation as acts of open or every day resistance. According to this narrative-for instance the passage "the head one can give but not a name"-the resistance was directed against the violation of religious and cultural values, conducted by the dominating power of the institutions of the Communist state.

Narratives of the prisoners contain borrowings from the concepts and discourses introduced just in the 1990s. The notion 'political prisoner' was rarely used during Communist times and its use in relation to the Communist regime itself was practically banned. Another example is a reference to Bosnia which contains the identification with the Bosnian Muslims and their victimization during the civil war in former Yugoslavia. The discourse about religious minorities and rights supports here the construction of a sense of belonging to particular group, religious and ethnic. Also the reference to the 'Bulgarians in Lybia' means here the identification with "victims" of the system or unequally oppressed people.

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Paradoxically, the narratives of the former political prisoners have a character of social memory and contain more elements of public discourse than the narratives of other villagers referring to the acts of resistance. The narratives of other people from the village which were describing the ‘critical events’ or the situation which I have classified as every day forms of resistance have more character of an individual memory and often the form of an anecdote rather than the character of testimony, as in the case of the prisoners. (See the narratives above in the section above called Every day forms of resistance).

The newly introduced discourse which redefined concepts of ‘rights’ and freedoms thus provides the apparatus to express the political and moral legitimacy of the victims of the Communist regime and allows it to interpret the acts of opposition as acts of resistance. The narratives of the prisoners illustrate the process of appropriation of the myth by personal memory. The scene of the ‘renaming’, which has quite brutal and violent moments, is very similar to the different sorts of representations of ‘forced islamization’ in Bulgarian film and literature. The ‘forced islamization’ was a central motive in the cultural hegemony of the national state.²⁴

In the case of ‘Pomaks’ narrative it is just the other way round. Instead of forced ‘islamization’ it is the ‘renaming’ what is the subject of the scene. The individual memory thus accommodates the Bulgarian national historical myth for purposes of personal memory and the history of a member of the Pomak group. And again, this particular passage in the oral history of a former prisoner demonstrates that the social memory represents the renaming as an oppressive and violent.

The fact that the narratives of the prisoners are in some respects less personal and contain less of personal memory and more have public discourse doesn’t make this account less valued for the analysis of this chapter. Just the opposite. This discourse is

²⁴ For instance, it is a novel by Anton Donchev *Time of Parting* [Vreme Razdelno]. The plot revolves around the story of a priest who, faced with a violent attempt on the part of the Ottoman authorities to force the population into Islam, in the end leads part of his flock to conversion in order to survive. The novel is partly based on a chronicle describing the seventeenth century islamization of the Rhodope Bulgarians, the predecessors of today’s Pomaks. Verification of the originality of this manuscript were continued through the whole century and were part of the reinterpretation of Bulgarian history. (See in Introduction).

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another instrument which allows to construct the reactions and acts of oppositions conducted by the villagers against the assimilation measures as a resistance. In spite of the general physical decline and economic poverty of these two former prisoners, their narrative which have the moral superiority which is just strengthened by that new concepts of human and minority rights' which allows their story to become 'the story of the winners'.

The narratives present the relationship between the individual experiences of the 'critical events' in the past and the public memory. It demonstrates the process of forming of the individual memory by dominant discourses and also reveals how the individual memory of the experiences of the past is constantly reshaped by social memory. Thus social memory through reconstruction of the past influences the power relationships of the present. The traumatic experiences and the negative past is in the narrative of the prisoners reconstructed in a way which gives them as the representatives of formerly subordinated group a moral superiority and political legitimacy what allows us to interpret their acts of opposition as resistance.

New ethical and political concepts influenced also the memories of the Communist functionaries. The memories, which are associated with the concrete applications of the assimilation measures, and the resistance to it, as it is for example in the remembering of the 'critical events', are articulated either in terms of the 'old' discourse of the Communist modernization project (see for example Rosnev, when he recalls how the villagers were making a symbolical sabotage), or in terms of a discourse of morality of an individual, on the ethics of politics (see for example the narrative Homo Faber). These narratives which refer to the resistance but also narratives about other issues related to the assimilation and development of the village have a very personal and almost anecdotic character. What is also significant about the narratives of the Communist functionaries and what makes them different to the memories of the villagers and of the prisoners is that they are not re-conceptualized by the new discourses. The narratives of the former Communists do not influence the general narrative of the public memory in the Cherna Mesta valley. The currently dominant discourse, which is internalized and serves very well the formerly subordinated group, does not offer an apparatus which could be appropriated by the former holders of

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dominant power for their interpretation both of the ‘critical events’ and of ‘the past’ in general. Members of the former Communist elite use in their narratives either the ‘old discourses’ of the Communist modernization project or refer to rather ‘universal’ ethical values and in this framework mostly to individual failure. (See, for example the narrative Homo Faber “And the irresponsibility when you are playing with the destiny of the population. In such a manner. [...]” or in the narrative of Pavol Angel, see the first chapter Modernization at the Periphery, “Our mission failed [...]” In spite of all the ‘comebacks’ of the Communist party in different versions, the dominant discourse doesn’t offer the former Communist functionaries any ‘metanarrative’. Therefore, the past in their narratives is conceived of rather more as an individual story and personal failure or as a story of the grand project of Communist modernization.

All these three narratives, (‘Cholakov Burial’, ‘Homo Faber’, ‘Political Prisoners’), support an argument that some of the reactions to the assimilation measures which were imposed in Cherna Mesta are reconstructed in the memory as an open form of resistance.

VII. Culture of Resistance in Cherna Mesta

Among people in the Cherna Mesta region there circulate a number of narratives, jokes, legends and metaphors which represent the community in a way which suggests that the Pomak community shares some sort of common ‘culture of resistance’. However, in spite of the fact that there are many forms in which the Pomak tendency to resistance is articulated, I try to avoid an interpretation of the ‘critical events’ and their representations and memory as generated by any kind of ‘culture of resistance’. This way of interpretation would undermine the moral and political authenticity of the individuals and the historicity of the events themselves and at the same time it would correspond with all the discourses on political power. (The Communists functionaries, for example, in their narratives always label the Jakoruda region as ‘reactionary’, ‘backward’, ‘stubborn’ or ‘difficult’. The discourse of Bulgarian official ethnography and historiography uses similar qualities and images.²⁵ We can see that the meaning of

²⁵ Pecilkov, *Istoricheska sudba*, Vasilev, *Rodopskite bulgari mochamedani*.

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resistance is given to the 'critical events' by memory. These narratives show that the character of resistance or culture is a way of self-representations of the Bulgarian speaking Muslims. But the Pomaks are represented as being traditionally 'resisting' also in the narratives from outside; in the narratives told by respondents from other side of the conflict, that is by the Communist functionaries.

Approaches which link the resistance with a culture usually put it into relation with religion. Ortner suggests, while criticizing Scott for his detraction of religion, that religion should be seen as a reservoir of cultural beliefs and values which is often having close affinities with the resistance movement itself.²⁶

The lifestyle and everyday cultural and social practices of villagers based on religious rules and habits of Islam were in conflict with the ethics and with the demands on every day life introduced together with the Communist modernization project and industrial development. In the narratives of the Muslim Pomaks, the resistance and opposition is represented as defense against measures which were violating their aesthetic feelings and cultural values. Personal Muslim names, as well as the shape of the body and the dress of both genders had strong religious connotations (in terms of the Islamic concept of ritual purity of the Muslim body) and were part of a value system of Bulgarian speaking Muslims.²⁷

However, the resistance and religion in the narratives of the villagers is never put into a straight connection with the term religion, but rather with a concepts if a culture, (for instance, Emine when she comments: 'we are not like them, we can not go naked', see in chapter III, Re-dress! Narrative Emine 2).

To lesser extent is this aspect presented in the narratives of the Communist functionaries. For the bearers of Communist modernity the assimilation measures aimed at the elimination of religious symbols and thoughts. The narratives of the Communist functionaries, apart from the spitefulness and sabotage of the modernization project, represent the villagers as a 'threat to socialism' stemming from the fact that in the *past*

²⁶ Ortner, 'Resistance', 180.

²⁷ For instance in Moulis Vladislav &Valenta, &Vykoukal, eds, *Vznik, krize a rozpad*. is the closure of 1320 mosques given as the main cause for the open acts of opposition of the Muslim villagers in the region towards the political powers which then led into a violent conflict with armed forces, Moulis Vladislav &Valenta, &Vykoukal, eds, *Vznik, krize a rozpad*, 291.

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the Pomak population which was converted to Islam 'Islamized' (The whole narrative see the beginning of the Homo Faber narrative in this chapter and also the narrative in chapter III. Rename! Angel 1.) The elimination of this 'threat' of religion, and particularly Islam, is then given as a one of the main reasons for the rather brutal assimilation. On the other hand, the villagers do not perceived them as violating the religious values, but they have perceived them to the same extent as intruding into the private spheres of their life.

All these are examples of the linkage between religion and resistance which took place in the Cherna Mesta region suggest that the role of religion as a reservoir of resistance should be considered. In the context of the relationship of Pomak minority and the Communist state religion did not have the function of an immediate source of political resistance against the socialist regime. (As it was the case within the context of the Sufi brothers in Chechnya and their opposition towards the Communist regime in the USSR.)

The fact that both forms of resistance are represented in the oral histories and other narratives supports the argument of this chapter that the reaction to Communist modernization in Cherna Mesta had a character of resistance. And it can be said that the resistance of the villagers was directed against the development and modernization project run by the Communist state rather than against socialism as such.

This chapter has attempted to answer a question about the reactions to the assimilation measures which took place as a part of Communist development project in Cherna Mesta. How it is remembered and what role has in individual and social memory in representing and interpreting the common past in this case of the 'critical events'. It also asks how a conceptualization of the past influences the current structure of the relations between the two groups of the Bulgarians and the Bulgarian speaking Muslims? Were the 'critical events' which took place in the Cherna Mesta region in the 1970s acts of resistance, or were they just an escalation of the conflict between two competing groups or had they the character of a survival strategy? And, if they could be classified as a resistance, was that a resistance against socialism or against something else?

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Members of the Bulgarian group, who are at the same time the former bearers of an ethos of Communist modernization and the former organizers of the village development, remember the 'critical events' as an attack by 'barbaric' villagers against the attempts for a historical redemption which took the form of a 'renaming' campaign and against the advantages of the development project which were both projects run by the Communist state.

The rejection of the villagers of the assimilation measures is still interpreted as a sabotage of 'the fight for a better future' and for 'civilization and progress'. The opposition of the villagers against the assimilation measures appears in the narratives of the Communist bosses as if they conceive of them as an attack against the modernization project. In spite of that a moment of shame and guilt is still present in the narratives of the Communist modernizers. They do not internalize the concepts of 'human and minority rights' as the Muslim villagers do. Their memories have more a personal character and in the narrative they use either the 'old' discourse on 'Communist modernization' or discourse on universal ethic values.

On the other hand, the narratives of the villagers conceive of the 'critical events' at Konarsko as a defence against the humiliation of their human rights. As a defence against the intrusion of the institutions of the Communist state into the intimate spheres of their lives and as a humiliation of their culture, aesthetic understandings and value system.

The memory of both sides of the conflict, the Bulgarian and as well the Pomak community, represent the reactions towards the assimilation measures which escalated into the 'critical events' as a resistance. Resistance in Cherna Mesta had two forms. The every day forms of resistance were accompanied by the open forms. The fact that we can speak about two forms of resistance which were carried out by the Muslim villagers against the measures conducted by the local power holders suggest, that the opposition had wider cultural and ideological meaning and therefore a character of resistance. The way in which the resistance is remembered reveals the functioning of all the social institutions; state, community, media, non-governmental organizations, international organizations, academia and also reveals their constitutive role in creating a new structures of social relations.

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Villagers in the Cherna Mesta region were resisting against certain parts of Communist modernity and some articulations of the development project. The every day form of resistance was directed against the intrusion of the state into every day practices and spheres of private life which inevitably accompanied the introduction of the assimilation measures and some aspect of the development project. The reaction which developed into open forms of resistance were against the measures of the renaming and re-dressing campaigns and directed at the concrete power holders, the Communist functionaries in the region and also the highest representatives of the Party and the state in Sofia.

The resistance of the Bulgarian speaking Muslims was a resistance against re-naming and against other parts of the nation wider modernization and development project run by the Communist state. As such the resistance can not be interpreted as a resistance against socialism, but it can be interpreted as resistance against the responses to modernity which were conducted by the Communist regime. It was a resistance against those aspects of modernization project which were conducted 'at any cost'. The fact that there *exists* a memory about the acts of resistance gives to the 'critical events' a political significance.

Not only the fact of the resistance, but also the memory of it, on both sides, the villagers and the power holders, gives the evidence, that the assimilation measures and development project, were was perceived as violating the cultural values of the local people. The social memory of the resistance of the Bulgarian speaking Muslims shows, that within the hegemonic power of Communist ideology there was space for resistance.

The memory of these events and the re-construction of the resistance have an impact on the current stage of relationship between the 'Pomak' group (which creates a majority in the region) and the Bulgarian part of society. On the basis of the memory the two communities, 'Muslim-Pomak' and Bulgarian, remain divided. We can say that the memory of the 'critical events' even reinforces the sense of each belonging to their respective communities. The social memory of the 'critical events' thus renegotiates and influences current relationship between the two communities.

It reveals how the structure of social relations is constituted and formed through the construction of a continuity between the past and present. The narratives

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about the 'critical events' which took place in Cherna Mesta thus reveal the dialectic character of the relationship between the past, the narrative and the society.

VII. Cherna Mesta: Case Study of Communist Development Project

This chapter analyses the development project which was taking place in the village Cherna Mesta and surrounding region as a response to ideas of ‘enlightenment’ carried in the ideological framework of Communist modernization.¹ It focuses on interpretation of representations of the social and economic practices of the development project run by the Communist state. The ethnographic material demonstrates how the ideas of Communist modernization project were responded by the members of Communist political elite. In contrast to the elite’s narratives are analysed the narratives of villagers from Cherna Mesta, people who were ‘renamed, re-dressed and resettled’ and who were according to the official development discourses subjects to the modernization process. Focus is given on the question how was the whole development project functioning on the microlevel.

The ethnographical material and its interpretation presented in this chapter challenges the argument about the hegemonic relationship between the Communist Party and the state. The ethnography reveals how was this power relationship between the Party and the state exercised on the level of an every day practice. It says that the relationship had a character of continuous negotiation, of an every day discussion about the elementary aspects of a public life. The hegemonic power of the Communist party over the society and state is seen as something which had to be constantly reproduced and renegotiated. At this point my argumentation partially confronts one of the central arguments of Verdery’s about the relationship between the Communist Party and the state.²

¹ The name Cherna Mesta region stands for the village of Cherna Mesta, the valley of the Cherna Mesta river and the hamlets of the village of Konarsko located at the upper altitudes of the mountains. In Cherna Mesta there are today 56 residential houses. In the end of the 1980’s the number of houses was approximately the same as today, since after the collapse of the Communist regime due to the economic decline of the post-socialist transition, there was no finished construction of one single residential house. In the 1954 the first settler, Baku, came and the end of 1970’s when approximately started to be used the new way of contracts. To two ways of resettlement refer oral histories from officers at the Cadastral office.

² Verdery argues that the Communist Party in Romania gained its hegemonic power through the gradual expropriation of control over time, in: Verdery, *What was socialism*, 40.

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In the book *What was socialism and what comes next* she uses the term 'etatization' to describe the tight relationship between the Communist Party and the state and assumes the alliance between the Party and the state when she says:

"[...]because in Romania the "state" and the "nation" have not necessarily been isomorphic: the activities of the state -occupying regime have often been at odds with what some would see as the interests of other inhabitants, the nation or "people".³

Among anthropological literature on socialist Bulgaria there are also two other influential books which indirectly discuss the relationship between the Communist state, Party and Communist modernization. The accounts of Deema Kaneff (2004) and Gerald Creed (1998) are both based on a case study of village community ⁴ These accounts undermine the model based on Party-state relationship. Kaneff makes her argument on basis of the conceptualizations of time and temporality. She says:

"Despite the centralized nature of the socialist time, state control was never absolute. In fact, precisely because of the highly politicized position of time brought about by the attempted totalising control of the state, the past remained a highly contentious domain of socialist life."⁵

Creed demonstrates his argument which undermines the assumption about the hegemonic power of the Party-state alliance on the examples of the relationship state versus household. About the character of the state control he says:

"Ironically, then, the attempt of the socialist state to control everything did not lead to total state control as old models of totalitarianism implied (e.g. Friedrich and Brzezinski 1956 and Arendt 1966), but to an uncontrollable system more in keeping with models of chaos theory (Gleick 1987). Not only were there too many components to manage, but they were increasingly linked to each other in multiple, incompetently understood ways. Planning thus became more and more ineffectual: the socialist state retained total responsibility but could actually control less and less-an ominous combination."⁶

³ Ibid, 40.

⁴Kaneff, Deema. *Who owns the Past? The Politics of Time in a 'Model' Bulgarian Village*. New York, Oxford, Berghahn Books, 2004 and Creed, Gerald, W. *Domesticating Revolution, From Socialist Reform to Ambivalent Transition in Bulgarian Village*: University Park, Pa: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998.

⁵ Kaneff, *Who owns the past?*, 9.

⁶ Creed, *Domesticating Revolution*, 8-9.

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Other anthropological literature on socialist system is mostly based on case studies of modernization and development projects which took place in the Soviet Union.⁷ For instance Slezkine in his book *Arctic mirrors* says that:

“*The socialist offensive*” was to involve a wholesale cultural revolution that would replace all antiquated customs, beliefs, and practices with civilized norms of behavior and the new scientific ideology.”⁸

Slezkine interprets the industrialization and urbanization run by the Communist state in the Soviet Union as a ‘colonial imperialism’ of a ‘superior nation’.⁹ Kotkin in his account *Magnetic Mountain* interprets the Communist urbanization project as an effort of the Communist system to distinguish itself from the capitalist system.¹⁰ Humphrey in her account on collective farm in Buryatiya *Karl Marx Collective* argues that it is a ‘culture of a Collective farm’ what stays behind the Communist development project in the USSR.¹¹ My argumentation sees the Communist modernization as a central idea of the socialist system and makes thus a challenge to all these approaches.

First part of this chapter discusses the theoretical and methodological approaches to the study of modernity in the region of Rhodope Mountains. In order to illustrate the specificity of that project, the Communist modernization is given into contrast with the previous modernization attempts of the national state. It analyses the representation of economic and social practices of the pre –Communist times in the narratives and oral histories of the villagers and it reveals the differences in perceptions of modernity which was brought by the national and by the Communist state.

⁷The most influential are accounts by Humphrey, *Karl Marx Collective*, Slezkine, *Arctic Mirrors*, Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain*.

⁸ Slezkine, *Arctic Mirrors*, 219.

⁹ In this account Slezkine conceptualizes the Communist civilization effort as a story of the ‘otherness’, as a confrontation of ‘civilization’, the ‘Russians’ and ‘the others’ or ‘the native’ He speaks about ‘Communist missionaries’ and the development which was run by the Communist state interpret as actual replacement of the Russian internal colonization. Similarly to the modernization in Cherna Mesta, the industrialization in the 1930’s in the USSR was conceptualized as a mission and fight against ‘backwardness’, Slezkine, *Arctic Mirrors*, 265, 271.

¹⁰ Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain*.

¹¹ Humphrey, *Karl Marx Collective*. In this account Humphrey argues that cultural forms remain the same and their content changes in relation to the different social structure. Thus the collective farm is interpreted as a new cultural element absorbed into the existing social structure. Humphrey did her field work in the 1960’s and published it in the 1980’s. Her research reflects the political atmosphere of that time when the socialist forms of social and economic system were still a relevant political question.

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Second part of the chapter focuses on the actual social and economic practices of the Communist modernization programme. First it analyses functioning of particular administrative, political and economic institutions, the ‘agencies’ which were organizing the development. The focus is given on the question how the development programme functioned? And why it in many cases did not function well? I use the metaphor of ‘vicious circle of development’ to describe the enormous demand for logistical and organizational skills, human resources and personal involvement which was caused by the development ethos and articulated in a concrete demands from the Central Party Committee articulated in official document called *Resolution for speed development and industrialization of Blagoevgrad region* .¹²

VII. 1. Commencement of Modernity in the Rhodopes Mountains

With just a little exaggeration we can say that the Communist state was the first promoter of modernity in the Rhodope Mountains.¹³ This is a paraphrase of a statement that the first promoter of modernity in such places as, for example, the former Yugoslavia or the Caucasus, was the Communist state. But if we assume in agreement with Gellner’s argument that it is the state, or rather the national state, which is the transmitter and promoter of modernity, then we have to admit that Bulgaria including the Rhodope Mountain region had experienced modernity already before Communist state came into power.¹⁴ Then when has modernity commenced in the hidden corners of the Balkans? Was it the national state or the Communist state or even the Ottoman Empire who first brought modernity to the western part of the Rhodope Mountains? And what made the Communist modernity distinct from the other kinds of modernity?

This issue, how to approach modernity on periphery resonates with the theoretical discussion elaborated in Kosseleck’s account *The Practice of Conceptual*

¹²I did not have a chance to find this document in the archive but from the group of former Communist functionaries refer to that document as ‘Resolution for speed development of Blagevgrad Region’, [in Bulgarian ‘Postanovlenie za uskoreno razvitie na Blagovegradskija Okrg’], issued several times by the Central Party Committee in years 1961, 1968 and 1973.

¹³R., Haluzik, MA, *Válka světa s horaly*, Praha: Universita Karlova, 1998.

¹⁴ Gellner, Ernest, *Nations and Nationalism: New Perspectives on The Past*, Oxford & Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers.

History.¹⁵ In parallel to Kosseleck's question, who brought modernity to Prussia and when, I would ask who brought modernity and potentially Communist modernity to the remote parts of Bulgaria and when? Was it already the national state or only the Communist regime? To answer this question we have to decide what we will use as a measure of modernity. Kosseleck says:

*“Depending whether one places the emphasis on the legal liberalization of economic conditions or on the employment of new production techniques, one can ask: Since when may the social conditions in the countryside be characterized as modern?”*¹⁶

Since when can the social conditions in hidden mountain Region of Bulgaria be characterized as modern? According to this definition we can say that the Communist response really speeded up the process of modernization by its enormous focus on both the cultural and social changes and on the implementation of the new technology of production.

At the same time the attempt to answer the question what is the difference between the Communist and other kind of modernity should not mislead us to methodologically and also theoretically misleading question: what would have happened if the society and the Rhodopes region were to proceed on its ‘normal’ path? Halfin resolves this methodological issue by saying:

*“Instead of immersing ourselves in the question of continuity and change in Russian history and so asking how close Russia was to modernity at the turn of the century and whether the revolution was a logical conclusion or a derailment from prescribed, “normal” course of historical development (all questions firmly locked within the eschatological metanarrative), we may turn to the investigation of how historical figures interpreted their historical present and located themselves along the temporal continuum ranging from capitalism to Communism.”*¹⁷

¹⁵ Kosseleck illustrates the complexity of grasping of the term modernity on the example of post revolutionary Prussia. As a response to the French revolution, he says, that the economic conditions changed immediately, when the feudalistic institutions of compulsory labor were abolished, but “[...] only since [1945 year] then has agriculture been functionally and significantly integrated into the economic system of capitalism or –in the GDR-socialism, as well bought up to the standards of a modern industrial society in terms of the internal structures of business operations and working conditions.”, Koselleck, *The Practice*, 159.

¹⁶ Koselleck, *The Practice*, 159p.

¹⁷ Halfin, *From Darkness to the Light; Class Consciousness and Salvation in Revolutionary Russia*, University of Pittsburgh Press, 1999, 2.

But how can we speak about modernity and distinguish between the responses to modernity brought to the region by the Communist state and those which were brought by the national State? How can we define the responses to the Enlightenment and ideas of French revolution, if they were significantly and functionally integrated into the social structure much later and in different ideological context? Should they still be regarded as epochal changes? In other words, how can we set up the definition of modernity and eventually of Communist modernity in the social and historical context of Cherna Mesta? To introduce the following parts of my chapter I cite Kosseleck once again who says that:

“Depending on the way questions are asked, a very different organization of time –in terms of specific strata, regions, nations, continents, or the world as whole –can be found for defining an epochal boundary that marks the commencement of something like “modernity.”¹⁸

What then makes the specific primacy of Communist modernity in the Rhodopes Mountains? And what are the distinction and the parallels between the Communist responses to modernity and the other ones?

The modernization which was promoted by the national state could be understood as a kind of ‘pre-history’ of the Communist modernization project run by the Communist state. There are not many secondary sources about the social and economic practices of inhabitants of the Western Rhodope Mountains in the pre-war period. What we have is the ethnography and historiography about the group of Bulgarian speaking Muslims, which was constructed for and instrumentalized by the political discourse of the newly established Bulgarian state.¹⁹ Another type of secondary sources on Pomaks

¹⁸Kosseleck, *The Practice*, 159.

¹⁹ For instance, Shishkov, *Balgaromohamedanite (Pomatsi)*, Shishkov, *Pomatsite v Trite Bulgarski Oblasti*.

Primovski, *Balgarite-Mohamedani v Nashata Narodna Obshtnost*. Cholakov, *Balgarite –Mohamedani v Minaloto i Dnes*, Vranchev, *Bulgari-Mohamedani (Pomaci)*, Miletich, *Lovchanskite Pomatsi*, Deliradev, Pavel, *Rodopite kato selishtna oblast I planinska systema. Istoriko-geografski ocherk*, Sofija, 1937, Deliradev, P., *Rodopite v Bulgarskata Istoriya*, 1974. Sofija. For economic character of Batak and Devin in the end of the 19th century see Zachariev, Stefan, *Geografiko-istoriko-statisticheskoto opisane na Tatar-Pazardzishkata kaaza*, Vienna, 1870, 30, and Blagoev, Nikolai, G. ‘Sovremenite Religiozni Izmerenia v Zivota na Mjusulmanskoto Naselenie ot Iztochnite I Zapadnite Rodopi’ In: *Etnicheskata Kartina v Bulgaria*, Sofia, 1993. p. 79-82.

Etnicheskata Kartina v Bulgarija, Sofija: Izdatelstvo “Klub”, 79-82.

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represent regional journals, for instance *Rodopa*²⁰, oriented towards promoting local patriotism and nationalism. A specific source is an account by the Czech historian Konstantin Jirecek.²¹

Secondary sources, as well as the narratives depict the dramatic changes in the economic, social and cultural practices of the Muslims which took place, due to the geopolitical changes, at the beginning of the 19th or 20th century.²² The new concept of state, the new state borders, the new state ideologies, the new concept of citizenship, both modern and national, were gradually established in the successor states which appeared after the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire.²³ Transhumance and the pastoral economy as a main economic strategy of the Pomaks, or of similar 'nomadic' groups, Cincars, Vlachs, was gradually declining during the whole pre-war period and completely disappeared after collectivisation.²⁴

All the political changes were accompanied by the economic and social consequences of the enormous emigration of the Turkish population from the territories acquired by the two new states, the Bulgarian Principdom and Eastern Rumelia. The continuous emigration of Muslims national identity was not at that time yet common a category from the Bulgarian territories started already in the last decades of the 19th century. In the 1980's the emigration rose again with the forced exodus organized by the political centres of the Communist party.²⁵ The 'Turkish' emigration affected the Cherna

²⁰ *Rodopa* was a regional journal of the Rhodopes region discussing economic and social issues of the region in the patriotic conservative rhetoric, paradoxically, it reincarnated after the WWII into the journal *Rodopa* which was one of the regional columns of the Communist state.

²¹ Jirecek, *Cesty po Bulharsku*, 1988. Jirecek was a philologist of Slavic languages, historian, an unusual scholar in the field of Slavic and Balkan studies. The way he uses sources makes his accounts on Bulgaria valuable as a secondary material. Lots of the sources he uses are essential accounts in the field of the Slavic studies and balkanology. *Cesty po Bulharsku* one is a travel book but which gives an orientaling picture of society at the Rhodope Mountains in the two last decades of the 19th century. At the same time, and that is another reason what makes him as a source valuable for this part of my research, representations of social and economic practices as well as an ethnic content of the Western Rhodopes correspond with the representations of 'past', with the concepts of 'ancestors' and of the 'ethnicity' which are present in the contemporary narratives and oral histories in Cherna Mesta region.

²² See Simsir, *The Turks of Bulgaria* and Stojanov, Valerij, *Turskoto naselenie v Bulgarija mezdu poljusite na etnicheskata politika*, Sofija, 1996. Stojanov, *Turskoto Naselenie*.

²³ See for example, Jelavich, Barbara, *The Establishment of the Balkan States 1804-1920*, Seattle, 1986, Palmer, Allan, W. *The Decline and the Fall of The Ottoman Empire*. London: Jon Murray, 1992.

²⁴ The discussion about definitions of 'nomadism' and 'mobile pastoralism' in Eastern Europe see for instance Vinsthain, *Nomads of south Siberia*, Humphrey, *The End of Nomadism*.

²⁵ See Simsir, *The Turks of Bulgaria*, Stojanov, *Turskoto Naselenie*.

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Mesta region economically and socially and as one image of the 'past' it is still present in the local narratives.

The way in which the socio economic changes are represented in the oral histories is for example as in the following narratives. For example, a young man from Borovo, when he explains his interest in Islamic studies, recalls the emigration of his 'great grandfather who came as a refugee to Serres, a town in Northern Greece which was at that time the Thessalonica Vilayet, where he became an imam'. Or another example gives narrative of Medzu Saranski (74). When he recalls his personal past, he conceptualizes the collectivization as rupture, discontinuity and loss. And so did most of my respondents. At the village cafe called 'the 10' while drinking his coffee he recalled:

Medzu Saranski 1.

"They [his fathers and ancestors] had 300 head of sheep, 23 bulls and 3 horses. When they give you only 6 ha of meadows and 5 ha of fields, what you can do? There, in the direction towards Rila, there used to be similar - they call them Vlachs. And how do they call them? Vlachs, Karakachans, Cincars? No, they were of very special specie. How should I tell you? This specie came into existence already a very long time ago. They were *Pomaks*." [emphases LN].

Another narrative of many from Medzu Musa (cca 70), which he told me on one of his busy days:

Medzu Musa 1.

'Somewhere between years 1947-1956, when the mobilization of the land [meant collectivization] was taking place he said 'enough', that he will finish with the bulls. He said: 'Tomorrow they are over, [meaning they are slaughtered] and he slit their throats and they went down. Now we have 259 hectares, but we are many heirs. Five people are dividing them, so there is not much from them for each. So I went there and throw the documents on their heads. '

or another villager recalls :

"I came from Konarsko as the first one. And what year was it? Fifty. And from which machala did you come? From Bikovi. And why? Because here it is much nicer. Up there the Cooperative took everything. And we had to run away. There was nothing more for us. They took everything, also animals, everything. "

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In contrast to that, local Bulgarians never conceptualize collectivization in these terms. As it is for example in Denisa's narrative. Denisa's mother was a primary school teacher in Jakoruda, and she belonged to the local intellectual elite. She was one of the people who were most engaged with the ideas of Communist enlightenment which in her perception were understood as a source of liberal thoughts. She has created and kept her own archival records about the history of Jakoruda, especially about the modernization achievements reached during the development project run in Jakoruda by the Communist state. Denisa's representations of the historical past of Cherna Mesta are then influenced by the knowledge obtained from that private archive. She once said:

“Before the year 1944 there were millionaires in Jakoruda. They got rich out of the forest economy and the strong pastoral economy. In 1936 they introduced the railway.”²⁶

Angel, the former first Party secretary, the main organizer of the Communist development had also his own image of a glorious past of Jakoruda:

“Before WWII there was a real labor force and bourgeoisie in Jakoruda. In the Osmanic times [in Bulgarian *osmanskoto vreme*] the main source of income was the production of resin [in Bulgarian *katrandzija*]. They [the ancient Jakorudians] were calmly trading that and they traveled and they were open to the world.”

The past is represented in these contesting narratives in three different discursive times. They correspond with social, political and economic changes: war, collectivization and the collapse of the socialist regime. It is mostly expressed in the following frameworks: ‘before Communism’, before collectivization and ‘before the war’, meant the Second World War, then also ‘during Communism’ and ‘after the collapse’. At the same time all the three discursive times are represented in relation to the economic practices. The time ‘before the collectivization’ is in the local oral histories represented in relation to a ‘pastoral’ or ‘transhumance economy’ and ‘nomadic’ cultural and social practices. Respondents, especially from the older

²⁶ Notebook, 2004, 2, 12.

generation, depict the 'nomadic' and 'pastoral' life of their ancestors by recalling the individual past in relation to the time 'before the war' or 'before collectivization'. The 'nomadic life' of the ancestors is always represented as a life which is somehow honoured and related to economic wealth and a higher social status.

In the narratives of the villagers about the time 'before collectivization' reference is always made to the various 'nomadic' ethnic groups. Most of them are ethnographically and also generally well known groups in the Balkans; Juruks, Pomaks, Cincars, Arnauts, or the Karakachans or even the Vlachs. Those are represented in the narratives as the 'ancestral tribes' of the Cherna Mesta villagers.²⁷

The individual past is conceptualized in terms of ancestral economic practices and ancestral ethnicity. The living places of the ancestors are usually represented as being located at the higher altitudes of the mountains in small solitary hamlets, the *machalas*. Economic activity is usually transhumance with periodical journeys between the Rhodopes Mountains to the lowland of the Mediterranean Sea, the so-called Belomorie.

At this point the narratives and oral histories correspond with some of the secondary literature on the topic of the economic practices of the Muslims, potentially the Pomaks at that time in that region. We can say that after the war the Rhodopes were densely populated. The settlements were small and dispersed. The collectivization in the 1950's, in the year 1953 and then on a bigger scale in the 1956, struck a last blow to transhumance and the large pastoral economy.²⁸

Most depictions of the life of the 'real' ancestor peoples in the village of Cherna Mesta and also in no the other villages very often compare their ethnic ancestors with

²⁷ The Karakachans are a 'nomadic' group living in Bulgaria and also in Greece. Karakachans are supposed to be of Greek ethnic origin, of Greek Orthodox religion with an economy based on pastoralism. The Karakachans were re-invented in the 1990's and are still having their regular meetings and their specific social structure.

²⁸ Jirecek speaks about transhumance economy of the *Juruks* in Western Rhodopes in Jirecek, *Cesty po Bulharsku*, 294; and in that connection he is using the term *Bulgarian Mohamedans*, *ibid.*, 295. For comparison with the period between the war see as a primary source Pop Filipov, N., *Jakoruda*, Sofija 1933, for comparison with the after war period see *Kompleksna nauchna ekspedicija prez 1953 godina, Dokladi i materiali*, BAN Sofija, 1955.

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various nomadic groups; the Karakachans, Vlachs²⁹ and Juruks.³⁰ However, in this connection the narratives always underlined the religious difference between the Juruks who are Muslims and the Karakachans whose religion is Christian Othodoxy.³¹

Both of these ethnic groups, are described in the ethnographic studies and in the narratives at the nomadic groups and called by the name Vlachs. The category of the Vlachs is known in the Balkans as an ethnographic category but also as a category used in every day usage. The notion Vlach has very often aside from its ethnic connotation also a social meaning and functions as a social category. In general narrative it is often used in association with categories of marginalization, as 'rurality', 'poverty' and 'lack of culture'.³²

²⁹ About Vlachs in the Balkans see for example historico-ethnographical account on Vlach minority in Rumania, also some recent statistical figures, Vlachs as Romanians. Birgul Demitra-Coskum, 'The Vlachs a Forgotten Minority in the Balkans', *Ankara Paper*, Ankara, 2001, as an example of ethnographical account on Vlachs from the beginning of the 20th century see e.g. Wace, A.J.B. & Thompson M. S., *The Nomads of the Balkans: an account on the life and customs among the Vlachs of Northern Pindus*, London: Methuen, 1914.

³⁰ For Bulgarian ethnographical accounts on Juruks see, Dimitrov, Strasimir, 'Za Yurushkata Organizacija I Rolyata I v Etnoasimilatsionnitate Protsezi', *Vekove*, 1, 2 (1982). Antojevic, D., 'Prilog Prouchvaniju Stocarskih Migracija na Balkanu', *Balkanica*, (1976), Zeljazkova, A., "Jurucite v rodopovedskata literature". *Rodopi*, (10), 1977pp. 32-34, Manolov, M. & Manolova, M., 'Jurucite v otnoshenijata im s mestnoto rodopsko naselenie', *Rodopski ustrem*, 91 (1971), 91, Karpat, Kemal, *Ottoman Population, 1830-1914*, University of Wisconsin Press, 1985, Djordevic Dimitrije, 1989. „Migrations during the 1912-1913 Balkans Wars and World War One,“ *Migrations in Balkan History*, Belgrade: Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, 1989, pp.115-119. Zeljazkova, Antonina, "Jurucite v Rodopovedskata Literatura". *Rodopi*, (10), 1970, pp. 32-34.

For example, the Arumuns in Western Rhodopes represent Karakachans and Juruks as representant of European nomadism, in: Kaljonski, A., 'Jurucite I Etnicheskoto Samoopredelenie na Turskoto Naselenie v Devinsko', 1993. *Etnicheskata Kartina v Bulgarija*, Sofija: Izdatelstvo "Klub", pp. 97-104, 98-99.

³¹ Jirecek, 1888, 295, the Bulgarian ethnography usually depicts Vlachs as Christian Orthodox. There is also a political bias behind this. Jirecek for example also speaks of the converted Vlachs, see in: Jirecek, *Dejiny naroda Bulharskeho*, 1876, 430.

³² The ethnonym 'Vlachs' as a negative category was revived during the civil war in the former Yugoslavia in the 1990's. As such it is a part of a 'rural versus urban' conflict which has been given strong expressions in the cultural space of the former Yugoslavia and in the Balkans in general. To see more about 'urban' versus 'rural' see for example Ching, Barbara & Creed Gerald.W., eds., 1997, *Knowing your Place: rural identity and cultural hierarchy*. New York: Routledge, 1997. or about changes of conceptualization rural –urban relation through socialism and post-socialism see Kaneff, Deema, 'Work, Identity and Rural-Urban Relations', In: Kaneff, Deema & Leonard, Pamela, *Post-Socialist Peasant? Rural and Urban Constructions of Identity in Eastern Europe, East Asia and the former Soviet Union*. Palgrave Publishers, Ltd., 2002, p. 160-180.

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For the interpretation of the development project in Cherna Mesta village it is important that the notion 'Pomak', in the Bulgarian context has similar cultural and social meaning as the term 'Vlach' in the Bosnian context. In the narratives of the Bulgarians, (non-Muslims), who consider themselves the 'urban' part of the society, the term 'Pomaks' also has not only an ethnic but as well social connotations. 'Pomaks' are described by Bulgarians as a marginal group related with the rural culture and consequently with material poverty. (See chapter II. Modernization at The Periphery)

And as the previous chapters presented in the oral histories of the enactors of Communist modernity, the 'Pomaks' were also conceived of in the times of the socialist regime as a dangerous legacy of the Ottoman Empire, the 'fifth column' of the national enemy, the Turks, who were hostile to the Bulgarian nation and were represented as materially and culturally poor and backward. And this image of the Bulgarian speaking Muslims is presented also today, when similarly as the 'Vlachs', the 'Pomaks' are represented as 'materially and socially poor', as the wild mountaineers lacking culture but having a 'good heart'. (See the narratives of self-representation see at chapter II. Modernization at the Periphery).

In all kinds of narratives, the historical sources and oral histories, the 'Pomaks' similarly as the Vlachs, are considered as a group 'at the periphery of civilization. And if according to the ethnography I have one of the specific responses of Communism to modernity was the effort for a 'speed development and progress at the periphery', then 'Pomaks' were more than anyone else in need of 'enlightenment' and 'civilization' as promoted by the Communist state.

From this perspective the Communist modernization had primacy in introducing modernity in the Rhodopes Mountains. Along its directives and ambitions Pomaks had to be not only assimilated but also 'integrated' into a 'civilized world'. On the other side the Bulgarian speaking Muslims themselves conceptualized the commencement of Communism as 'rupture' and 'loss'.

VII. 2. Chronicle of the Cherna Mesta village¹ I

The chronicle of Cherna Mesta village presents meaningful material and very well reflects the experimental character of the village's development. The physical appearance of the chronicle itself illustrates the argument that the village development occurred in an 'ad hoc' way a way and that the development procedures were not always backed up by state institutions. The chronicle itself is a record of major events in the urban development of the village written on a single sheet of paper, size A4. It was written by the mayor of Cherna Mesta who served in that function from beginning of the village's existence of the village for fully 28 years.³³

It was only before the war in the year 1936 that the first cadastral plan for the village of Cherna Mesta was created. The plan was for a settlement situated next to the planned sawmill which was supposed to use the water energy from two rivers, the Black and White Mesta. The place itself creates a natural crossroad. There are natural entrances to the two mountain systems of the Rila and of the Rhodopes. At the time the Cherna Mesta settlement consisted of three buildings: a railway station, a military checkpoint and an Ottoman inn (in Bulgarian *han*). The inn was at the time owned by two Bulgarians (non- Muslims) from Jakoruda. The family who bought the *han* from them moved to Cherna Mesta in 1953 as its first inhabitants who were first newcomers from Konarsko. The original building of the *han* has recently been rebuilt in the 1990's, and converted into a modern residential house, but nevertheless it had had an important function in the collective memory of the village community.

The village chronicle continues by giving a brief report about the first school years of 1954-1955 when the village school was established and says that the first school teacher came from Razlog. According to the recollections of my respondents recall, there was not t a secondary school (classes 5-8) until year 1984. The chronicle continues by saying, that the first village school was located in the *han* and its owner, Ibrahim

³³ For instance, in case of another Muslim village in the region - Medeny Polany, but also for example in case of Bulgarian village Tetovo in Pirin mountains, where I had a chance to see the village chronicles, the village documentation is properly kept by the village mayor at the village council office. It contains quite contentious record of social events - weddings, burials, public celebrations - and represents a matter of proud.

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Jusufov Karafizov, took 'an active part' in the preparations and opening. In 1960 a first shop was opened and in 1965 an electricity plant was introduced and 'the first electrical bulb was turned on in the autumn of the same year.'

It was only in 1974 that Cherna Mesta was officially declared a village.³⁴ (Until the second wave of resettlement which took place in the late 1960's and 1970's the village consisted of just a few houses those of the Baku's family, for additional information and narratives see the chapter Resettle) Later a few families moved from Konarsko and two from Ilansko (renamed Smolevo).³⁵ According to the chronicle in 1971 there were 26 houses altogether in Cherna Mesta. In 1984 an asphalt road was built which connected the two parts of the village, the upper part (*gorna machala*) and the lower part (*dolna machala*).³⁶

In the year 1976 the village got a new water supply from spring water in 'Alishkovo dere'.³⁷ Telephone connection was introduced in 1975 and according to the chronicle record the first and only telephone station was located in the house of the village mayor Starkov.³⁸ 'The first excavation for the TV transmitter began in 1983 and the TV started to function in the year 1985.' 'The first asphalt leading from the main road to the house of Ibrahim Karov was laid in the year 1984.' The last record of the chronicle says that the first excavation for the 'house of prayer', was done on 20. 11. 1993.

³⁴ By a governmental resolution, by Ukaz No 885/74 of Governmental Committee issued by Darzaven Sovet, 1974.

³⁵ The landscape of Konarsko has the character of a plateau. It is divided by small valleys and ravines where there are narrow roads. Today the relief is strengthened by erosion which was hastened by the extensive use of the surrounding forests during the time of speedy development and the demographic explosion after the war. Usually the residential houses where are located on the knolls not far away from each other. Their toponyms correspond with family or lineage names. So that in the Bikova machala lived people with the third name of Bikovci, in the Fakirska machala lived the Fakirski family and at the Buncevo was the family of the Buzgovi. (Notebook, 2004/3). Electricity was introduced here in the early sixties and was built by the villagers themselves.

³⁶ What was finally asphalted was only the main line of communication in the lower part of village (*dolnata machala*), the upper part (*gornata machala*) remains without asphalt streets until today.

³⁷ Drinking water for our house was brought by a pipe connected with a place at a higher altitude of the Rila Mountains. Issues about water for agricultural purposes, important especially in summer season for the irrigation of gardens and meadows, are part of the every day politics of the village. Water issues reflect the power structure of social relations.

³⁸ The telephone station in the house of former mayor Starkov remained the only one in the village until the late 1990s. It was only mobile phones which made telephone connection accessible for most of the villages.

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What is important in regard to the perception and experience of the development of the village as a Communist modernization project is the fact that the chronicle doesn't contain any commentary about the political changes in 1990. The record of events which took place during the Communist regime continues without any interruption and after the last record about the achievements of urbanization there follows an entry about the construction of the new mosque. The fact that there is a complete sense of continuity in the description of the achievements in the development of the village under socialism and after its collapse says a lot about the perception of the development project from the viewpoint of local officials, (who were at the same time a local political elite). Another example of the experience of the paradigmatic shift at the subjective level is the fact that the author of the chronicle, the former Communist mayor of the village who held that function for twenty eight years, represents himself today as an imam who is to certain extent recognized by the official religious community but not so much by the local community of people who believe and who conduct religious practices.

Thus the history of the village, despite all political changes, is by its political representatives experienced and represented rather as continuity than as rupture.

VII. 3. 'Vivid Circle' of the Development in Cherna Mesta

The modernization efforts which were taking place in the remote corners of the Rhodope mountains should be seen as a response to one of the demands of the Communist modernization project aiming at Leninist condition of dismantling the difference between urban and the rural.³⁹ The measures of economic, political and

³⁹ Urbanization in the early Soviet period has been discussed largely in general terms, without reference to the experience of actual cities, and almost always only in the context of industrialization. Moshe Lewin, for example, has written of the large –scale “ruralization” (*okrestianovanie*) of Soviet cities during the industrialization drive, arguing that the movement of millions of “backward” peasants into urban areas transformed Soviet urban society for the worse, ultimately paving the way in combination with the characteristics of the growing bureaucracy for the deepening of political authoritarianism. Between Bolshevik modernizers and the great mass of peasant *muziks* Lewin sees a clash of almost two nations or two civilizations” whose outcome turned out to be tragic for both.” Lewin, Moshe, *Making of the Soviet System*, cited in Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain*, 107. For more about the rural –urban interface within the socialist system see Greed, *Domesticating Revolution*. He says: “This crisis resulted from what Ofer (1977) calls „economizing and urbanization“ and what Konrad & Szelenyi (1976) refer to as the ,underurbanization“ of Eastern Europe. While underurbanization has symptoms similar to capitalist overurbanization, the cause is different. The latter results from urban population growth or from urban population growth outstripping industrial

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ideological investment accomplished by the Communist state in the socialist countries of Eastern Europe were enormous and this aspect makes the Communist modernization distinct from any other response to the ideas of *Enlightenment*. No other development project which was supported by the state carried out such an enormous investment in terms of time and space. However, there appears to be a paradoxical situation. In spite of the fact that a huge investment stood behind the development of the village in reality it was taking place on a relatively *ad hoc* basis. The functioning of institutions which were carrying the whole development project was not always synchronized. As a consequence of that incoherence the every day practices and economic strategies were actually denying and damaging the official ideology. Drawing on my ethnography I will describe the social and economic practices which took place as responses to the development project run by the Party and the state in Cherna Mesta. In the following section are described these responses in the form of every day practices of the Communist modernization project. The development project had its concrete articulation in several resolutions of the Central Party Committee about the '*speedy industrialization and urbanization of the Blagoevgrad region*' which were backed up by the Communist state.⁴⁰

My assumption was that the actual development and construction of the village had to be given consideration since it was part of one of the most important governmental projects requested by the Resolution. The general assumption is articulated for instance in Sampson's statement that "*Socialist societies are not planned societies, they are societies with a plan*".⁴¹ According to that and similar assumptions articulated in accounts on socialism I also presumed that in spite of all the shortages and economic difficulties which were an inherent part of the socialist economy there would be a certain level of development planning and organization in Cherna Mesta. For instance that the material supply, infrastructure, technological park, etc., would be

growth, whereas underurbanization results from excessive industrialization at the expense of the infrastructure". Bulgaria is listed as one the worst offenders, with only 2,9 % of national income going to housing construction compared with 32 % in „developed capitalist countries“ and 17 % in the Soviet Union”, *ibid.*, 165.

⁴⁰ See above in this chapter.

⁴¹ Sampson, Steven, L., *The Planners and the Peasants: An Anthropological Study of Urban Development in Romania*, Esbjerg: Sydjysk Universitetsforlag, 1982,8.

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planned and ensured by an alliance of Party and the State, at least to the same extent in which it was ensured on its ideological side. But according to the oral histories of the villagers but also of the ‘planners’ (borrowing here Sampson’s term) the actual construction process of the village, the building up of the infrastructure, of the living houses, roads, public spaces, etc. was not a carefully planned process.⁴²

The ethnographic data I gained about the economic, industrial and urban development of the village reveals that the development in Cherna Mesta region lacked a coherent strategy. The functions of institutions which were supposed to insure a smooth procedure of the development of the village and the whole valley-the Communist Party, the National Committee, the Cooperative Farm and Cadastral Office - were not overlapping. And paradoxically on many occasions they were even competing with each other. The efficiency of particular projects was therefore dependent on the enthusiasm of the individuals involved, the functionaries who had to go beyond their remit and act on their own. The former mayor of the village recalled how in order to get a TV transmitter he had to make visits, literally a ‘detour’ around politically more powerful places, the ‘higher places’, the more central organization of the Party and state institutions.

What is significant about these examples of the functioning of the development project at its micro level is the fact that the actual practices were so often in contradiction not only with each other but also with the ways in which the Bulgarian Communist state represented itself. The official representations of the development could be found for instance in the local journal *Rodopi* which was promoting the Communist enlightenment, but also in bulletins and publications which were celebrating the local achievements of industrialization and urbanization.⁴³ In contrast to that the oral

⁴² In this sense the Cherna Mesta case resonates with the Sampson’s statement saying that: “*Planning in the socialist countries is based on a common Marxist foundation, but it also reflects problems of ‘building socialism’ under diverse historical conditions. Marxist theory puts emphasis on productive over spatial and large-scale redistributive planning over small –scale incremental programs*”, *ibid*, 21.

⁴³ Munev, Anderej, *Iz Minaloto na Jakoruda*, Okrazen Istricheski Muzej, Blagoevgrad, 1972. Strandzev, Kosta, *Goresthi Verchove, Ocherki za Sytroitelite na Kaskadata “Belmeken-Sestrimo.”* Plovdiv; Christo G. Danov, 1971.

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histories and also the representations in written sources, for example Starkov's chronicle of Cherna Mesta village, reveal that there were 'gaps' among activities of the particular institutions, contradictions and conflicts between various development institutions. On the other hand the task which was in front of the 'modernizers', to urbanize and to modernize the remote mountain region was not an easy one. How can one introduce industrial production in the remote hamlets in the mountains? How can one introduce electricity and running water to the solitary houses far away from the village centers? How can one to get women emancipated if they don't go to work? And all that should be done fast, as fast as possible, because as the former Communist official said "we were very backward and wanted to be faster and better than in the USSR". The first secretary recalls still with apparent emotional engagement the huge demand that he faced. He said:

Angel: "We caught our heads with Tonchev! How can we get the women to work! How can we assure them a job?' [...] You can not make an industry like that!"

In contrast to my assumptions and also the official representations of the development the oral histories of the villagers represented the development and construction itself of the village as difficult, without any plan or institutional support. For example Emine, one of the newcomers from Konarsko, a housewife and due to the modernization an owner of one of the houses in the village recalled the construction of their house:

'[...] we had to make everything by ourselves. We even had to make the bricks for the house by ourselves. We hired Gypsies from Ruse to help us. And we used the soil from behind our village'

Similar type of recollection makes Mustafa from the 'Office for Agriculture, Land and Forests' in Jakoruda. He recalls how the building plots in Cherna Mesta were all the same size, 400 metres square. Therefore quite often two brothers, for example, took building plots next to each other. In the Down Machala which was developed earlier already in the 1960 the building plots are of a different size. One villager about that recalls:

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Mustafa (55) 1 Q: Where was the material for the houses?

“We bought it. It was rather difficult. There was a lot of building. But the construction industry did not pursue the production of accessory materials. It wasn't easy. I would say that the big problem was bricks. To enclose the house. Something that couldn't be managed. But they found a way. That was the time when they were building in Jakoruda and they put a limit on the annual average, because it was the municipality that granted permission to build. A technician came and every year permission was granted on average for the construction of ninety homes. Ninety five homes. Annually in the municipality. Aside from that they granted loans. That's when Jakoruda became a town. Some asked: what is the advantage that we are a town. But there was one small advantage. In the villages they did not grant loans. But in Jakoruda you had the right to take six thousand lev from the treasury.”

Other villagers, mostly men recalled how they were getting wood for the construction of the living houses which were 'dropped down' from the lorries passing around the village with material to supply for the huge water constructions which were taking place in the surrounding mountains.

This logistical complexity was one of the most difficult tasks which the organizers of the 'speed progress and development' had to face. The whole modernization project contained many different aspects, from urbanization and industrialization of the countryside to cultural assimilation and the 'rebirth' of the Muslim community.

For instance, shortly after, when people were trained as skilled workers in technology of textile production, the production of textile manufactories for the local market was decreased because of the ban on the religiously symbolical part of women's dress. Thus the women who were trained in textile production technologies had to be retrained. To create an employment which would assure a stable and high income demanded unconditionally by the emancipation program was according to the oral histories one of the most complex tasks for the local modernizers.

A lady from the village, a woman whose life was quite dramatically influenced by the Communist development as well as by the post-Communist transition, recalled in telling me about her and her family's resettlement:

Sase 1.

“As soon as they taught us to saw and I began to work at the saw mill, the sawmill closed. I got an apprenticeship, but the sawing did not go well, because they forbid us to wear long veils and our clothing. Because they changed our names and insisted that we dress either in dresses or pants only. (Classic dress of Muslim women in the Balkans combines both at the same time. Under the dress or long apron they dress in pants.) And they forbid us to wear such peasant clothing as we had before. And what is this peasant clothing? Such as we wear. Muslim dress. We were supposed to wear pants. Pants. Mainly we could not wear clothing which Mohamedans had formerly worn. Shalvari. One was not allowed to wear ‘shalvari’. One was not allowed to wear them at all. Multi-colored scarves, not white ones. At that time the different modern models were not as they are today. These models (Muslim) could not be sown and people had no pay so they started to make the relays. And thus I was working on the relay.”⁴⁴

Lots of obstacles which appeared during the development and construction procedures were overcome only due to the ethos, enthusiasm and paradoxically also to the entrepreneurial spirit of the people who were involved, the party functionaries, state and regional administrative officials and the villagers. The infrastructure necessary for the construction as well as its material supply was planned only as a framework of more general direction (in this case the ‘Resolution for speed development of Blagoevgrad region’) and its realization, although in theory organized hierarchically - through the executive committees of the Communist Party - was left to the responsibility and ability of regional Party functionaries.

Another feature which distinguishes Communist development from other types of development is the fact that the development of the village fully depended on the personal patronage of one or two functionaries. In the case of Cherna Mesta it turned out to be an advantage but at the same time the weak point of the whole project.

At one point the main promoter and ‘a father’ of the ‘ideal village’, who referred to the village by saying ‘Cherna Mesta is my child’, had to leave the village when he got promoted to higher party structures, left the region and practically abandoned the whole

⁴⁴ This narrative resonates with the narrative Sase 1 in chapter Re-dress! She told me that on different occasions and I have decided to quote both because of their value as a source.

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project. The patronage of the village was taken over by the second secretary Tonchev who was at the time Angel's political cooperator, but also and especially with regard to the direction of the development his biggest opponent. Under his leadership, from the late 1970's onwards, the development went exactly in an opposite direction. He ended the development of Cherna Mesta and started to promote Konarsko, the original shepherd village from which people were resettled at Cherna Mesta.

The difficulties which appeared during the development of Cherna Mesta village and region (the issues of logistic and organization) were enormous and sometimes almost stopped the whole development. Accounts in socialist and post-socialist studies give various interpretations of the 'inefficiency' of what is called the 'socialist system'. Kotkin in his account of Magnitogorsk describes the process of construction of a residential area next to a new metallurgical plot (Magnitogorsk). There he refers to 'indecisiveness' as an essential feature of Communist development which he interprets as the result of an effort of the 'socialist system' to distinguish itself from 'capitalism'.
45

According to my ethnography the explanation of the question 'Why the modernization project did not work?' would be different. The uncertainties of Communist development were the inevitable consequence of the attempt to fulfil the enormous requirement which caused by the Communist response to modernity. To build up a new village, to industrialize, to urbanize, to integrate and at the same time to fight against the backwardness of tradition and against the medieval darkness of the Ottoman residuum, all that required good organization and logistical skills. But such demands in the conditions of a remote mountain region were hard to fulfill. Moreover what comes out the oral histories of the main organizers and of the 'ideological' fathers of the development of the region, what the priority was not clear even to them. At one point the priority was to integrate the 'Pomaks' into middle class society, the national state or the international Communist community, because the 'national enemy' and as they say, the 'Turks had left only 60 years ago', another time the priority was 'industrialization, because we needed to achieve progress' ⁴⁶

⁴⁵Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain*, 110.

⁴⁶Notebook 2004/2, 24.

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The investment in introducing ‘civilization’ in the Rhodopes and fulfilling the modernization project demands could only have been sponsored and carried out by the Communist state. And state had not only to cover but also to coordinate all the subsidies and expenses.⁴⁷

This kind of production required a huge amount of skilled workers which had to be available at one time and in one place. For the local Party functionaries it meant not only a big logistical but also ideological challenge. How to get people from mountain hamlets to the factory in the valley every day on time? Angel and his former colleague had a very bitter memory about how they were trying to organize all that. He recalls how he and his colleague were desperate when they could not get people to the factory mill in the valley and how difficult it was to get women out of the household to work in public places the like factory. How he and his companion went from one house to another asking, chasing, pushing and threatening people, in order to get them, and especially young women, to work in the newly opened industrial manufactories down in the valley. He recalls how he was desperate when he said:

“we had 500 people without work, but not everyone is capable of such a kind of job” [skilled work in relay production].

This enormous demand on human resources, investment and logistics was one of the specific responses carried out by the Communist state. In the narratives of the modernizers the motive of the demand to be fast and better is repeated and represented as an almost messianic task and the whole development and civilizing effort is usually presented as a failure. The narratives about the organization and logistic of the development are generally emotionally rich with a strong sense of failure. “Our mission failed” says one of the modernizers with a certain level of bitterness in his voice.

But how was it possible that such a system was working? To get the system to function despite the fact that the activities of the particulars agencies did not always

⁴⁷ For illustration, we can compare the wages in the relay factory. The average wage of a woman working in the relay factory was 300-350 Leva per month. by comparison the salary of the head of Propaganda office of the Regional Party Committee was 250 Leva per month. On the basis of the Resolutions of the Regional Communist Party Committee, the specialized industrial production of electronic devices, the relays, was introduced in the years 1975-1980, in: Notebook 2004/ II, 24.

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overlap required that people at their bureaucratic posts do more than their post officially required.

When two new secretaries, Angel and Tonchev, the main heroes of modernization, came in 1968, immediate action was undertaken. They were charged with new tasks - to develop the municipality, to introduce and speed industrialization, to emancipate the women, to get women involved with the 'working process', to make them financially independent, to get children regularly to attend school and to introduce a whole new 'modern' lifestyle including diet, personal hygiene and women's dress. To fulfill these tasks there was a whole army of carriers of that particular ideas of modernity. In the process of 'modernizing' of the Bulgarian speaking Muslims teachers, secretaries of local party committee and the National Front were involved. They all were mobilized by their engagement in this political and ethical project of 'progress and development'. They put all their personal effort into getting the program running. In the next section it will be shown how was the development project was dependent on every day negotiations between the state and Party institutions.

VII. 4. Tobacco campaign: response to demands of development

The Cooperative Farm in Jakoruda "Goce Delchev" tried to introduce the production of tobacco as a main agricultural product. The production of the tobacco represented a challenge for the local Party functionaries and as well for the villagers. The climatic conditions did not correspond to the needs of tobacco production. Tobacco was traditionally cultivated in the villages on the southern slopes of the Rhodope Mountains Tobacco simply did not work so the modernizers decided to swap quantity for quality and oriented the production toward the production of special sorts which could be cultivated at the higher altitudes of the mountains. The narratives reveal the logic of this particular case of the 'planned economy'.

Angel and Pavol 1:

"The Blagoevgradsky district issued the order from on high. It was part of the development plan for the district. There simply had to be tobacco. And people in Cherna Mesta worried what to do about it and also in Konarsko and Jakoruda. Who should be assigned to the work and whom to employ. The tobacco was hellish work. Hard work - watering, bending, gathering, etc. The teachers set an example. Or

they had a party man's wife to set an example. Even if she had high blood pressure and in watering that's no small matter. She simply had to accept. Even the children worked. It was common to see seven year old children gathering tobacco. There was so-called family piece-work here. It was typical here where there are mountain field and infertile soil. It is different in Rusensko and Razgradsko where the fields are large, etc. Here every household had to plant. The entire family was engaged. The cooperative farms made payments during the year according to how much one sowed. Then when the harvest came, the tobacco was sold to buyers. The cooperative farm took the money from the sale. It spent it on mechanization, planting, administration, etc. The cooperative farm set the conditions for work and a person merely had to cultivate. Some money was taken for setting the conditions. Pay was very poor. Money for the state and work for the people. Every spring in April and May there was a campaign in the newspapers. How to sow, how to water. People here didn't know how. [...] Animal production did not develop here. The reason was that the numbers and facts did not show that there was adequate feed. Therefore, we told Zivkov. Blagoevgrad lacked milk. There wasn't enough milk, because all the plots were used for tobacco. Thus he said: we will give you milk, we will give you food, you give us tobacco. Only. it was gold. The state got five hundred million annually for tobacco. Five hundred million dollars. In all we supplied the Russian market with cigarettes. That was something enormous. And they said: you give cigarettes. Give this, give that. And at that time I told Zivkov: you can't make cigarettes in Sofia. You must do something with it. At the time the economy of Blagoevgrad moved." We made fifteen thousand tons of cigarettes. A modern factory."

'Money for the state' and 'work for the people' were the central needs which led to the development of the village. The execution and procedures of the economic plan were taking place through the negotiations between the centre and the periphery. The economic relations between the centre and the periphery are represented as having the character of 'barter'.

According to the argument which says that the inner logic of capitalism's rests on accumulating surplus value, the inner logic of socialism was to accumulate means of production".⁴⁸ These oral histories reveal that the reality within the socialist system was more complex. The Communist leaders in Cherna Mesta did not accumulate surplus

⁴⁸ Verdery, *What was Socialism*, 26.

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value. At the same time they were not oriented only on the accumulation of the means of production

According to the oral histories of the Communist leaders, the official 'facts and figures' showed that the pasturing and livestock production, which was for decades the main source of income of people living in upper parts of the mountains is not insufficient to supply the needs of the growing population of the region. The state needed money and the local Communist bosses needed an income for people. At first in the 1960's tobacco was chosen as the best product which would satisfy these needs. And thus in the first decade of development the production of tobacco was introduced in Cherna Mesta, despite the fact that the local climate was not suited for such kind of production.

At one of my endless interviews with the Communist developers I have asked again:

Q: "Was the cultivation of tobacco successful?" "No. In the end it was a great effort of the leadership. First of all because tobacco was not known in Jakoruda until 1961, 1962. It is the one settlement in Blagoevgrad district where tobacco wasn't planted. The district committee at the time when there was still no industry said: 'Look at the money and work for the people that can be gained from tobacco. It requires a lot of work, many people to work in it and earn money. And we began to persuade them. It is necessary to cultivate tobacco. Especially in Konarsko. I told them and they said: 'We have never cultivated tobacco. We don't know how. We will teach you. An agronomist will come and show you. It wasn't at all easy. Yields at the beginning were very small. Quality was low. But after four years they got used to it and tobacco was cultivated. When was that? Before the large enterprises came. Before industrialization. Before these enterprises, relays, the factory for wood working machinery and then in 1964, manufactories and carpet mills. Before industrialization we tried to give people work principally through tobacco.'" Q: "And who gave you funding?" The ministry of agriculture, TKZS [the Cooperative], the national economy. The production of tobacco was number one in Blagoevgrad. And the district committee had a special program for that. To which level the production of tobacco should go."

Another my question was:

Q: "Why precisely did you choose tobacco?" "The soil was weak here and there wasn't anything else. Also the estimates of the district committee indicated that one hectare of tobacco cannot be replaced

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even by any other growth literally though, both with regard to yield and with regard to money. And also the engagement. One family can work three to four hectares of tobacco. And at the toughest times the children can join in. Tobacco gives people work and money. It came up, that there isn't such a growth (plant) that would give them such a thing. In Blagoevgrad region it was twenty four thousand tons. That is twenty four thousand millions kilograms. We were a small community. We were the smallest municipality (obshtina). It was a formidable campaign for example for the planting of tobacco. It was apparent that in our district there was drought which came after the month of June. It was necessary to plant the tobacco earlier. People traditional planted it in May. There was a major campaign, the press, the party organization, meetings with the people to tell them that they would plant the tobacco a month earlier. To avoid the dryness. Fine, but here we are on upland planted places. They said: we will plant and the frost will come and the work will be in vain. One year we lose and the next we won't have anything to plant. There exists one book, 'Dynamics of the development' I will give it to you".

And Angel and Marx at this point with certain extent of proud recall how it was when the highest representant of the state, the 'head of the state', came to the region.

"Zivkov personally was in Blagoevgrad. I was a part of his reception. But for the most part it was at the district level. The district was oriented in three directions. In the first place tobacco. In the second place early vegetables, cultivation of wine, fruits, peaches. Grape wine. That was the specialization of Blagoevgrad district."

VII. 5. Party versus State in Cherna Mesta

In the section of this chapter analyses the relationship between the Party and the state. It gives a challenge to the Verdery's model which defines the Party-State relationship as hegemonic introduced in the introduction to this chapter. This theoretical challenge is supported by examples of the power structures which occurred during the village development.

The relations between the Communist party, the state and society within the socialist systems are classically interpreted as hegemonic. That the main argument of the

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‘totalitarian school’ of theorizing socialism.⁴⁹ In many accounts of socialism it has been argued that the alliance of the Party and state institutions was the main platform which created bases for the hegemony and the totalitarian regime.⁵⁰ Another example of this approach is Kornai’s account describing the power relations between the state and party as ‘cohesive forces’.⁵¹

The aim of the discussion presented here is not to question the totalitarian character of the socialist regime but rather to demonstrate how the institutionalized hegemony was practiced and experienced. The attempt is to analyse how the supposedly hegemonic alliance between the Communist party and the state functioned at the level of the every day experience of village development.

The ethnography here aims to give evidence to for the argument that the relationship of the state and the Party was not sovereign and on an every day level always had to be renegotiated. The ethnography allows me to say that both sides of the Party –State alliance were on the contrary in competition and the power relationship had to be continuously renegotiated. The state institutions, as for example the cadastral office, had the authority of the legal framework and the juridical order. The Party had the potential sovereignty given to it by the ideology, however its power over the state was not absolute or automatic. The cooperation of the two, the state and the Party, always required the personal engagement of the representatives of the both institutions, of the party functionaries and the state officials.

During the development project of the village ‘from the ground up’ and the whole development of the valley there were many occasions in which the relationship between the Party and the State had a chance to come to the surface and actually revealed itself as competitive and conflicting. The representatives and high functionaries

⁴⁹As one of the authors with that kind of approach see for example Todorov, *Hope and Memory*, he uses the notion ‘monism’ to describe an institutionalized hegemony of the Communist state, as another example of that school see Arendt, Hanna, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. New York, Schocken Books, 1991.

⁵⁰For the key notion of the Party-State exercising a hegemonic control of the Party leadership over the ‘nation’ see Verdery, *What was Socialism*. 39-57, 40, quoted above in this chapter.

⁵¹Kornai, Janos, *The Socialist System, The Political Economy of Communism*, Oxford: UP, 1992. ‘Cohesive forces’ is a term used for ‘functionaries of the party, the state, the mass organization and the managers of the state owned sector’. He uses two terms to describe two types of institutions- the *apparatus* and the *bureaucracy*, *ibid.*, 40-41.

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of the Communist party were given superior power by the constitutional law of almost every Communist state, but as we can see in the Cherna Mesta case in every day practice each legal or executive act of the Communist party representatives had to be renegotiated and reconfirmed. (Examples of such negotiations between the party and the state are shown in the narratives of Starkov below). And they show that the formal juridical superiority of the party did not lead to an automatic *sovereignty* over the ‘civic’ institutions of the state.

Paradoxically, even if it was the state which had sponsored the enormous investment of the Communist modernization project, it did not always respond to the demands given by the modernization ethos of the Communist party. On an everyday basis and at the local level the state institutions were not flexible enough to respond to all the demands. Nevertheless, it was the state which subsidized the prices of the building plots in the new village, albeit through the local Cooperative Farm. According to the recollections of the villagers the buying prices which they had to pay for the building plots were very low. For example, some of them recall 0, 04 Lev/ m², 2 Lev/ m² or 15-20 Lev/m².⁵²

The construction and the whole development were under the control of two institutions, the Cadastral office and the Executive Committee of the Communist Party (in Bulgarian Izpolnitelen Komitet). From a legal point of view the Cadastral Office and the National Committee had the control over the juridical framework of the construction, and were in this sense superior to the Party. The Party had as in all socialist states a superior position, the ‘leading role in the society’ as provided by the Constitution. Former functionaries remember how an *ad hoc* commission was established which consisted of the representatives of the two institutions, the Party and the State, the state represented by the Cooperative farm, which was taking control over the residential constructions in the village. The representative of the Party had to negotiate and actually ‘corrupt’ the state representatives in order keep the constructions of houses and the whole development running.

⁵² Notebook 2004, 3, 32.

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In case of Cherna Mesta, the situation, where the two *sovereigns*, the Party and the state, had to negotiate with each other took place already at the early beginning of the project. It had to decide on the location of the new village.⁵³ In this concrete case there were two options for creation of the new settlement. One option was for location of the new village to be at a place called Bila Mesta. The other option was a place called Cherna Mesta. Both places were for the same river). Bila Mesta was located downstream at the point where the valley gets wider and opens towards the south. This place had a direct connection with the original village of Konarsko and because of these two reasons it was preferred by the villagers. All objective parameters would suggest that Bila Mesta was more convenient as a residential place. There was however an administrative problem. An urban plan for Bila Mesta did not exist. The urban plan was, of course, within the jurisdiction of the cadastral office. That was what had created the problem. The situation revealed that even highly positioned party functionaries could not demand that the cadastral office make such a plan nor could they build the village without the permission of the state institution. In spite of the fact that the development plan to build a 'proper', 'ideal' village on the green ground was part of one of the priority programmes adopted by Central Party Committee Resolution, the local cadastral office did not acknowledge the location of the village. And therefore, the new settlement could not be at 'Bila Mesta' and had to be at 'Cherna Mesta'.

Cherna Mesta had its urban plan made in the 1930's and therefore the cadastral office approved building a village there. From the state administrative point of view it had the status of a rural settlement. It was only in the year 1974 that Cherna Mesta was officially declared a village. The original urban plan from 1936 did not contain enough of the building plots which were needed at the time when the village development started. The new urban plan for the village was issued only in 1986 after three decades of village development. Therefore, more than half of the houses which were built in the period of the two decades from the 1960's till the 1980's were built illegally outside the urban regulations. And these plots were again always a matter of negotiation between the cadastral office, Party officials, Cooperative representatives and the villagers.

⁵³ See the narratives of the party functionaries and state officials about the negotiations over the village urban plan in chapter IV. Resettle!

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The following narratives are from interviews with two former high Party functionaries – Angel, the former first secretary of the local Party Committee, and Starkov, the former mayor of the village of Cherna Mesta. These two officials ran the development of the region together. They organized the village development, controlled the distribution of the building plots and mobilized the villagers from Konarsko to go down to Cherna Mesta. They were personally engaged with the village development, but after its failure they never met again. If it were not for a third person, in this case the anthropologist, they would not easily have met for coffee. And surely they would not have met at a public place as they did with me one sunny morning at the main square of Jakoruda. While drinking their coffee they recalled the beginnings of the village development, alternately supplementing or opposing each others recollections. Their narratives reveal the way in which the building plots were distributed and the power structure of the relations between the Party and the state institutions represented by the National Committee including the Cadastral Office.

These narratives uncover that the power relations between the state, the Party and villagers had the character of a patron client relationship and that the Party power position was not the always the strongest one.

Angel and Starkov 1:

“The head of the Municipal Party Committee [Obshtisnkijat Partien Komitet] and the head of the Cadastral office, which was related to the National Committee [Naroden Sovet], went around the village [Cherna Mesta] and where there were buildings left half built they sealed them. It was in the years 1965-1975. And they imposed a large fine on the owner who had been prohibited from continuing to build if he resumed building. And he trying to manage things with this friend or that and then finally when he got the permission, he began to build once more. Before 1987 when there was a resolution of APK⁵⁴ roughly 50-60% of the buildings in Cherna Mesta were illegal. They were called ‘black’ constructions.”

Then Starkov, the mayor of the village commented:

⁵⁴ APK is Agricultural –Industrial Complex [in Bulgarian Agrarno-Promyslenyj Komplex.]

Starkov 2:

“When served in Konarsko and Cherna Mesta, the [Party] secretary there was Sterjanov. Someone came to me and said: Listen. I bought a parcel in Cherna Mesta, but it was outside the regulations. And I told him that the highest organ is the Party Committee. Go to them and ask them! And if you wish, tell them that it was me who sent you. Baj Ivan allowed someone to do that. He said: ‘Go and build! If they come and forbid you, go on building.’ They [the Cadastral Office] also have to come to me and complained.’ He then twitched and twitched but went on building. Baj Ivan was a powerful man. He had contacts with the centre. When someone came to Baj Ivan and told him. ‘This one’s an orphan.’ He said: ‘Go, run off and build!’ [...]

‘Could it be that the OSS [the State Forestry] had so much authority that it would enlarge the village? “Yes, it enlarged the village. Because I assume that some buildings were constructed outside the plan. For sure because the plan, when it was devised, covered only one part of the valley up to here. Later we made a sheep-fold in the direction from here to there in the valley. And there we distributed parcels. And they legalized them later like the land plan. This wasn’t possible in Jakoruda. They [the Cadastral Office] didn’t permit it there.’

My following question was: Q: And why did you built at Cherna Mesta? How did you get what was outside the plan? ‘But it was the case that there was also some sort of decision. Some sort of decision by the committee.” That means that the cooperative asked the committee to give the order? ”Precisely. Something like that.“ Q: Do you recall for whom it was so important to build outside the plan?” The forestry created it. Outside the plan they built on forestry land. On the OSS [forestry] or on the Cooperative. The proposal came from them and it was then accepted by the Committee. [the Executive Commitee] They knew [the executive Committee] that they were violating the plan, but they acted as though they didn’t know.” ‘That means that the chairman of the cooperative (Chadzicenev) had to give the order?’ Yes. I don’t know, if he was a member of the executive committee, if he was the director of OSS, but I do know that he was a member of the executive committee. All the leaders of large enterprises entered the system of the executive committee. And he brought it there as a proposal. Because as a member of the committee he could do it and there would be something, but the management had a terribly big need for people for the sheep-fold. There was no way they could disagree. It wasn’t possible not to agree, because the tendency and need of that enterprise was that there will be progress. And if there were no work force, how could there be progress?’⁵⁵

⁵⁵ Notebook 2004/ 2, 30.

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These narratives show that the construction of residential houses outside the urban plan of the village was not an easy task even for the powerful Party functionaries. More than half of the residential houses in Cherna Mesta were built outside the legal urban plan on the land of the State Forestry and Cooperative Farm which gave to these two organizations an enormous power. These two agencies, the State Forestry and the Cooperative Farm, approved the decisions of the executive committee of the Party (Izpolkom) which actually went beyond the legislative right of the state. We can see that the Party had sovereignty over the other agencies (the Cadastral Office and the National Committee). But its power was not legitimised by any legal authority of the bureaucratic post but rather by the charismatic authority given to the representative of the Party by the ethos of progress and development. It can be concluded, that the sovereignty of the Party or the State was not automatically recognized and had to be re-negotiated almost with each case of a particular house.

In Cherna Mesta there are two types of property contracts.⁵⁶ About one third of all contracts are residential houses which were built during the period which I call the first wave of the resettlement.⁵⁷ These houses are owned on the basis of casual buying contracts purchased from the original owner of the construction plot by the buyer. The original owner of these plots was usually one of the Bulgarian bourgeois families from Jakoruda and their buyers were the newcomers, the people who left Konarsko. The villagers in the oral histories of ten recall these kinds of contracts and the strategy of buying the building plots. In reality they had to pay twice for the property which was by all assumptions in sense given to them (the National Committee), because it was sold under market price. The building plots which were in the old cadastral plan before Collectivization were not expropriated absolutely but their selling price was determined by the National Committee. Usually it was about 15-20 Lev/m². The selling prices of the building plots set up by the local National Committee (in Jakoruda) were low and were

⁵⁷ I divide the resettlement and the development of the village into to chronological sections. I decide to divided the period of village development into to parts, which I define on basis of chronology represented in oral histories, the second determinant is the way of property hold and house contracts, 1954, the year when the first settler, Baku, came and the end of 1970's when approximately started to be used the new way of contracts). To two ways of resettlement refer oral histories from officers at the Cadastral office.

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meant to attract people for resettlement from Konarsko to Cherna Mesta. These houses were bought by a selling –buying contract and their owners had not major problems in proving their ownership of the houses during the time of transition. While standing in front of his house Medzu Mustafa (66) recalls:

Medzu Mustafa 1: “The price was for example one Lev per square meter. The ex-owner of the plot would say that he will not sell it to me if I will not give him also one Lev per meter. And I paid him the money for good relations”.

Or Medzu Musa comments:

Musa 2 “I paid to the Committee [National Committee] and to the original owner as well. Just to keep good relations. Now, I am glad that I have the proper contract and that I pay to the owner. No one can anything say to me Those who don’t have a proper contract are now in trouble.”

According to this and also other narratives the difference between the two prices the underestimated price made by the National Committee and the ‘real’ price was defrayed by a second unofficial payment to the original owner of the building plot.

The former chairman of the local Cooperative Farm recalls:

“The National Committee designated people and gave a plot to them. That was to ensure that they paid. That it didn’t come from the state. That means that the committee permitted people to sell it at that price. And then the committee determined the price. They set the price. Here it was somewhere between fifteen and twenty Lev per square meter.”

All the plots with this kind of buying –selling contract are located in the centre of the ‘upper part’ *gorna machala*. (See figure 5 XY)The rest of the houses was built outside of the village plan on a land which was expropriated during collectivization and which became to be the property of the Cooperative farm. The second stage of the village development started in the middle of the 1970’s and finished with the failure of the whole socialist system at the end of the 1980’s. During that time all the legal and administrative procedures were of a different character. In that period the village grew into the outskirts of the old urban plan (issued in 1936). New residential houses which were built in that period were constructed outside of the old urban plan. Building outside

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the regulations of the urban plan was illegal from the point of view of the state as represented by the Cadastral office.

Approximately during the time of the second period of the development, in the late 1970's and in the beginning of the 1980's, occurs another sort of contract for the building plots of the residential houses. From the whole number of residential houses in Cherna Mesta (56), the holdings of 33 are based on this kind of contract. Due to the fact that all of the land which was outside the old urban plan (1936) was expropriated, the new method of property holding was based on the contract between the owner of the house and the former Cooperative Farm or the State Forestry (OSS). Or, more precisely, through the contract with the Cooperative or OSS the right to construct a residential house on the land owned by the TKZS or OSS was leased. The lease of that right was made in exchange to a number of years of work for the Cooperative farm. In this sense the 'new owners' were actually subcontractors of the Cooperative farm. These contracts were based on a property relationship which is similar to the system of leasehold. Most of the residential houses in Cherna Mesta are thus built on an expropriated land and the leaseholders who are de facto the owners of the houses are mostly women.⁵⁸ They lease the right to have their house on the Cooperative land⁵⁹ In contrast to the people with 'proper' purchase contracts the 'leaseholders' for obvious reasons were more hesitant to share their memories about their beginnings in the village. Some of them, especially those who had not paid off their lease, because the Cooperative and the whole system collapsed before they could work of the particular number of years, had to go through legal procedures in order to prove the ownership of their house. The legal status and the ownership of some of the houses in the village are not clear even today. Since the employees of the TKZS were mostly women this led to a situation in which the actual owners of the building permissions and of the houses are *de jure* women in an otherwise patriarchal society. Thus the legal loophole which was made in order to support the development of the village has indirectly supported the emancipation of women.

⁵⁸ Just about 8 out of 56 owners are men.

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These aspects of the village development reveal the experimental character of the development project. The organization strategy for such basic elements of development as for instance the property holding of the residential houses and the arrangement of the contracts had changed many times in response to the actual needs. The procedures related with the village development were very often situated at the borders of the legal framework of the state itself and therefore had to be conducted with the strong political patronage of the Communist Party. We can see that the renegotiation of sovereignty of one or the other, party or state, almost always had to be renegotiated for each particular house. In the particular case of the Communist development in Cherna Mesta the relationship between the state and the Communist party was not automatic and had constantly to be renegotiated and reconfirmed.

This chapter aimed to give response to several questions. What makes the Communist responses to modernity in Cherna Mesta different from the previous modernization processes? What made the Communist modernity so powerful and at the same time what was the cause of the inglorious end of the Communist development project in this particular case? And eventually, what makes Communist development different from capitalist development or any other kind? What is the difference between Communist development and other kinds of development?

In the first part of the chapter I have tried to sketch the economic and social situation in the region before collectivization on the bases of the representations of social and economic practices contained in primary and secondary sources. The aim was to illustrate the circumstances which the bearers of Communist modernity had encountered when they came to the Cherna Mesta valley at the periphery of 'civilization'. As I have stated already earlier, the Communist modernization did not place an absolute primacy on 'civilizing' the region, but in spite of that fact its impact is historically unique and unprecedented.

The foundation of the village itself and also the development of the region had the character of an experiment and every day practice resembled the complexity and randomness of the capitalist system rather than a socialist planned economy. Everything

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from the urban plan for the new village up to the bricks for the construction of the houses, running water, electricity, a telephone connection and the proclaimed asphalt road was built up by an *ad hoc system* rather than through careful planning. With a little exaggeration one say that the development of the village hugely depended on the enthusiasm and improvisation of state officers and other bureaucrats involved. Its realization always required negotiations between state and party institutions.

The specificity of the Communist modernization project at the level of social and economic practices in Cherna Mesta could be described in three points. The activities and functioning and negotiations of three institutions were the champions of Communist development, the land office as the defender of state interests, the Cooperative Farm, the Municipal House (National Soviet), the Communist Party Committee. Personal engagement and initiative were eventually what kept the whole system functioning. The development programme was thus dependent on the personal involvement and patronage of the local Communist party functionaries and bureaucrats. The third feature was the particular relationship between State and Communist Party which did not have the character of a cohesive power structure. In everyday practice their mutual positions had always to be renegotiated.

Investment in this huge development project was sponsored by the Communist state and in contrast to any kind of 'capitalist development' was never profitable. The ethnography presented in this chapter revealed that in many respects the project of the Cherna Mesta region resembled a development programme run within a capitalist system rather than a strictly planned socialist economy.

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This chapter presents the epilogue to the development project of Cherna Mesta village. For the period of the 1990s is normally used the term post-socialist transition.¹ Post-socialist transition is usually conceptualized and evaluated as historically an almost inevitable transfer of the socialist society from the ‘socialist system’ to the ‘capitalist system’, from the ‘planned economy’ to the ‘free market’, from a Communist ‘totalitarian society’ to a ‘liberal democracy’.² As such the term post-socialist transition is very often used as a concept which evaluates the level of political development of the country. The economic theories of the post-socialist transition are mostly influenced by neo-liberal economic principles and they usually stand behind the argument for “shock therapy”, according to which the economic recession which afflicted much of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union is a sign of success which assumes that the more quickly the old economies reach the bottom of the valley the sooner they will rise up the other side.³ Among the critiques of the neo-liberal conception there was for instance Janos Kornai who already in 1992 in his account *The Socialist System* based on detailed analyses of a Hungarian economy of the late 1980s pointed out the continuity between the institutions and practices of the two systems.⁴ From the point of view of social anthropology it was Verdery who pointed out the non-finiteness and open character of the post-socialist

¹There is a huge anthropological scholarship on the topic of post-socialism, but Verdery had the major influence on the definition of that notion, and also for evaluating political context. Katherine Verdery, apart from Verdery’s account *What was socialism*, see also Verdery, Katherine, ‘Notes Towards Ethnography of a Transforming State: Romania 1991’, In Schneider, Jane & Rapp, Rayana, eds, *Articulating Hidden Stories: exploring the influence of Eric, R. Wolf*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1991, pp. 228-242, Verdery, Katherine, ‘Theorizing Socialism: A Prologue to the Transition,’ in *American Ethnologist* 18 (1991), pp. 419-39. For examples of a anthropological accounts on post-socialism see for instance Hann, Chris, ed, *Not the Horse We Wanted! Postsocialism, Neoliberalism, and Euroasia*, LIT Verlag: Munster, 2006.

² Such interpretations of post-socialist transition are theoretically based on the argument of the totalitarian school, which was mentioned in the Introduction. For the defenders of totalitarian theory, Communism was such a evil order, that anything would be better, as an example of that school approach to interpretation of socialist society and its end see for instance, Malia, Martin, *The Soviet Tragedy: a history of Socialism in Russia 1917-1991*, Free Press ; Maxwell Macmillan Canada ; Maxwell Macmillan International, 1994.

³ As an example of such an approach see Boycko, Maxim & Schleife, Andrei & Vishny. Robert, eds, *Privatizing Russia*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1995.

⁴Kornai, Janos, *The Socialist System*. For his critique of the neo-liberal approach see for instance Kornai, Janos, *The Road to a Free Economy*. New York: Norton, 1990, Kornai, Janos, ‘Transformational Recession; The Main Causes.’ *Journal of Comparative Economics* 19: 39-63 (1994), Stiglitz, Joseph, *Whither Socialism?* Cambridge: MIT Press, 1994.

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transition. In her account (1993) Verdery points out the variety of ‘socialisms’ and that the post-socialist transitions also took different measures, brought different actions and responses.⁵ In my approach I use both, Verdery and Kornai, perspectives which allows me to approach the transition as a specific continuum between the two systems. At the same time I approach the two periods, before and after 1990 as essentially distinct from each other.

The concept post-socialist transition has at least three meanings. It refers to the historical period of 1990s. As a space related term it refers to political, economic and cultural processes which took place in the Eastern Europe, or in a wider sense it relates to social, economic and cultural processes which occurred after the ‘collapse’ of socialist states and regimes. This chapter does not attempt to challenge that notion but rather tries to demonstrate its alternative. The post-socialist transition is approached not as a journey from ‘socialism’ to ‘capitalism’, but as an epilogue to the development and modernization project run by the state in Cherna Mesta. In this sense the theoretical framework of the analyses is similar to the approach Gerald Creed.⁶ The ethnographic material is chosen so that it reveals the every day contents, the practices and activities of the transition. In the particular context of the village Cherna Mesta the post-socialist transition is the last stage or rather the epilogue to the Communist development project which had started in the 1950’s. The question is: was the infamous end of the development project in Cherna Mesta caused by socialism or by its failure?

To answer this question I analyse everyday practices. My ethnography aims to illuminate the micro processes, ‘the small transformations’ to borrow the term from Róna –Tas Ákos⁷ through which the transition took place. The way in which the post-socialist

⁵ Verdery, *What was socialism*.

⁶ Creed makes the interpretation of late socialism in Bulgaria and the post-socialist transition on bases of the anti argument to the totalitarian school. He analyses the socialism and post-socialism as a continuous process. See for instance his account Creed, *Domesticating Revolution*, also Creed, Gerald, W. ‘Deconstructing Socialism in Bulgaria’, In Burawoy, Michael & Verdery, Katherine, eds, *Uncertain Transition, Ethnographies of Change in the Postsocialist World*, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc. Lanham, Boulder, New York, Oxford., 1999, pp. 223-243, Creed, Gerald, W., ‘Between Economy and Ideology: Local Level Perspectives on Political and Economic Reform in Bulgaria’, *Socialism and Democracy* 13 (1991), pp. 45 -65, Creed, Gerald, W., ‘Rural-Urban Oppositions in the Bulgarian Political Transition’, *Sudosteuroopa* 42 (1993), pp. 369-82.

⁷ Róna –Tas Ákos, *The Great Surprise of the Small Transformation: The Demise of Communism and the Rise of the Private Sector in Hungary*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1997.

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transition was the real end of the development story in Cherna Mesta as experienced by the villagers should partially give a response to this answer. In this chapter practices and activities brought about by the collapse of the development project are discussed and demonstrated. It gives the ethnographical examples of the experiences of the time, working time and leisure time, space as the appropriation of living space and also religious practices and spiritual experiences which occurred during the transition.

This chapter interprets the material which I have collected while using the methodology of participant observation and semi-structured interviews during repeated field-works in the village which started in the 1999 and ended with the last visit in the summer 2004. During all these stays I lived in the house of one family and lots of my material comes from the shared experience of every day life. Other parts of the ethnographic material for this chapter come from interviews and observations which I made when I was working in the *mandra*. The third part of my ethnographic material used in this chapter comes from the interviews with villagers and with the former Communist functionaries and to less extent also from written sources which are the documents obtained in the Cadastral office of Municipal house in the township Yakoruda.

The ethnography in chapter demonstrates the every day practices and responses to the failure of the state run economy which took the form of a 'black market'. It analyses economic strategies as the responses to the proclaimed 'free market' and to the new politico-economic concept of an 'efficient' way of production - in contrast to 'socialist production' which is in the new economic discourse conceptualized as inefficient - on the example of the functioning of the local dairy manufactory (in the dialect called '*mandra*'). In the context of the analyses of the social and economic situation of the village community in the post-socialist period methodological questions arise. How can we analyse 'Pomak' village community in the process of transition? Is the post-socialist economic and social situation of Pomaks in the village which experienced the communist development comparable with the situation of post-socialist peasants? ⁸

⁸ Here is possible comparison with analyses within the East European space in Kaneff, Deema. & Leonard, Pamela, *Post-Socialist Peasant?*, and particularly for Bulgarian environment Kaneff, *Who owns the Past?* New York, Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2004.

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Most of the accounts on post-socialist transition in Eastern Europe are based on case studies of a rural environment and particularly peasant communities.⁹ In the period of late socialism Cherna Mesta village represented an urbanized but rural settlement. From an economic point of view people were no longer semi-nomadic shepherds as their ancestors (only one generation back) had been but also not even sedentary peasants. They were urbanized, skilled workers employed in the mills producing electronic devices, in the textile manufactories, at the water constructors and in the uranium mines. That is what makes the Cherna Mesta case different from cases dealing with the post-socialist transition of peasant communities. Another distinctive characteristic which makes the situation in Cherna Mesta specific and different is the fact that the collapse of the socialist system had immediate consequences for Bulgarian speaking Muslims brought about by legislative changes regarding the human and minority rights.

These changes were accepted immediately after the collapse of the former regime. The central Party Committee had already in December 1989 accepted a resolution which allowed the members of Turkish minority to regain their original personal names. This resolution was one of the two most important legislative acts which took place as a sign of the dissolution and the change of the political regime and functioned as a transfer of political power from the Communist state to its successor.¹⁰

The Muslim villagers of Cherna Mesta characterised this legislative change which de facto meant the return of their original Muslim names as identical with the actual

⁹For examples of case studies about transition in rural environments and peasant communities in Bulgaria see Creed, *Domesticating Revolution*. For post-socialist transition in Eastern Europe see for example: Verdery, Katherine, 'Notes Towards Ethnography', pp. 228-242, Verdery, Katherine, 'The Elasticity of Land: Problems of Property Restitution in Transylvania', *Slavic Review* 53: (1994) pp. 1071-109, Bridger, Sue & Pine, Francis, eds, *Surviving Post-Socialism: Local Strategies and Regional Responses in Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union*. London: Routledge, 1998, Kaneff, & Leonard, *Post-Socialist Peasant?* and Kaneff, *Who owns the past?* Ragaru, N., 'Rendre service': Politique et Solidarités Privées en Bulgarie post-communiste. *Cahier d'études sur la Méditerranée Orientale et le Monde Turco-iranien* 31(2001), pp.9-56, about transition in Eastern Europe see also *Anthropology of East Europe Review*, special issue, 22, 2 (2004).

¹⁰ Konstantinov & Alhaug, *Names, Ethnicity in Bulgaria*. On 29. December 1989 Central Committee of the Communist Party disowned the 'process of rebirth' by acknowledging the return of the Turkish names to the Turkish (Muslim) population. See for instance Zagorov, Orlin *Vazroditelnija Proces*, 168.p. The second resolution was an amendment of constitutional law which abolished the absolute sovereignty of the Communist Party. The fact that these two legislative acts, the law suspending the sovereignty of Communist party and the return of personal names to the members of the Muslim community, were accepted as the first legislative acts reveals the great extent to which the Communist state was legitimized and identified with the narrative of 'Process of rebirth'. Oral histories about these legislative changes reveal the two polar perceptions of the political change itself. For more details about the resolution and about the reactions of the local population see the chapter II. Rename!.

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collapse of the old regime. In the oral histories and also in other narratives of the people from the village, the return of the original Muslim names is always mentioned as a positive factor of the political change. The possibility of returning to the original Arabic-Turkish names is regarded as liberation and as a sign of political freedom regained. This aspect is what makes their evaluation of the changes and also nostalgia for the former regime different from the majority of the population. The element of political and religious freedom is in the opinions of the Pomaks regarded often as the most important achievement, more significant even than the economic difficulties brought about by the complete dissolution of the former state. In many cases people from the village speak of it as something which compensates for all the negative economic aspects and difficulties which occurred as a consequence of the collapse of the development project and of the whole system. In recalling the forced renaming Medzu Saranski remembers.

Medzu Saranski 1

“[...] Do something, give a name and so forth. I simply saw that there was nothing else that I could do about it and so I agreed. And five or six months of that affair passed and it was good again. [recollection of the renaming campaign] And then came a time when people asked to have their names returned. Then the imams came and everybody made the request. Perhaps they came from Europe or wherever. Possibly from some other state more powerful than us, could it be? And thus arose the reason and it was so. I understand that. It was definitely during the regime and then it passed. Then now there is freedom as anywhere else.”¹¹

The complete failure of the development project which started in 1990s came right after the period of relative blossoming in the 1980s. Villagers recall the 1980's as a time of relative prosperity. However, there is not a strong sense of nostalgia for 'socialism' as the 'golden times' as is the case among the broader Bulgarian majority. The narratives represent the 1980's mostly as a period, if not of a full prosperity, then at least of social and economic security. The feelings about the socio-economic situation in 1980s were often expressed by the saying: 'uncle Tosho was giving money and to those who

¹¹ Tape record, 2004.

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were industrious was sorrowful'.¹² For example, Medzu Mehmed Saranski, the man who had bitter memories about the assimilation campaign in the 1970s (see the chapters *Rename!* and *Rezistance!*) recalls the 1980's as a period of relative prosperity. At that time he lived already in Cherna Mesta and he remembers that time with memories positively evaluating the outcomes of the modernization project in terms of urban aesthetics. He says for example:

Medzu Saranski 2

“And we liked it here. Here it is nicer. Here they let us build the streets more in a row. Not like we used to have in the mountains. Just by one. Everywhere here the streets are bounded. On the right side and also on the left side. And so on. It even resembles a little village. Here it is much better. Another thing is the transport connection. Everywhere you went you had to go by walking to get to some transport connection. And here is a centre. In one word: like in Jakoruda. [a local town-centre] You go down and you get a connection, you go up and you get a connection. Previously there was lot's of trains. And now they have canceled them, because there are no jobs and it is private. Twenty, thirty years ago there were many more trains. From the evening till the morning. I worked in Jakoruda and in Bansko as well [...]

Changes which were brought about by the dissolution of the Communist regime in the sphere of 'human', 'minority' and 'religious' rights are viewed by Muslim respondents as fully positive, as something which to certain extent is equal to all the negative consequences, especially in the economic sphere.

A contra-narrative to that again represents the oral histories and opinions of the members of the Bulgarian community in the Cherna Mesta valley. They are in contrast to the perception of the political changes by the Muslim villagers. Here the Bulgarians, (non-Muslims), were the former 'modernizers', the former bearers of modernity. These people who had been ethically, emotionally and personally involved in the modernization project, members of the Fatherland Front, teachers, doctors, state servants, would see the return of the Muslim names in particular as a complete undoing and failure of their lifelong efforts.

¹²The original Bulgarian quotation is “Baj Tosho davashe pari I mnogodelni gi prostavashe”. ‘Uncle Tosho’ stands for the former ‘head of the state’ and ‘head of the Communist Party’ Todor Zivkov.

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The opinion of these people is expressed in the recollections of the couple, the veterinary doctors - mentioned in the context of the chapter II. Rename! - who used to be one of the bearers of the modernization, recalled with nostalgia and bitterness during one of the long evenings which we spent together:

“[...]They had to change their names back, they were already so nicely renamed, they were already so nicely used to it. We organized a demonstration against it, here in Jakoruda. [...]”

VIII. 1. ‘Black economy’ : Response to the Failure

It was the Rhodope region which became economically the most weak and socially problematic area during the process of the post-communist transition in the 1990's. I conducted my comparative research in several other villages, but the village of Cherna Mesta is the most representative case. Along with the loss of the economic and social background, unemployment and apathy reached their highest point here. Moreover, this village today has the image of ‘outsiders’ among the people from other surrounding villages and even its own inhabitants identify themselves often as the ‘losers’. In the following text responses are presented to the failure of the development project and perceptions of the new economic strategies based on experiences of time (labour), space and religious revival as they took place during the post-socialist transition. In the examples based on participant observation examples are presented of the perception of time, work and labour and reconstruction of social status during the period of the economic decline. The 100 percent rate of employment as well as the intensive agriculture which was not suitable ecologically for such a high altitude disappeared almost overnight. The local population lost their jobs not only after the bankruptcies of the local collective farms and factories, but also after the closing of the “constructions of socialism” which were underway in the region and after the break down of local transport. Quite simply, the 1990's were the period of the deepest economic crises and moral decline, but at the same time of a new entrepreneur spirit within a liberal economy.

The development project in the Cherna Mesta valley collapsed gradually throughout the 1990s. The consequences of the collapse strongly hit the country as a whole. In general, the deepest decline of the Bulgarian economy dates from the years 1996 and 1997, when the economic crisis together with the complete dissolution of the state and

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other institutions reached their climax.¹³ In the Cherna Mesta region which was built up by state sponsored programmes the collapse of the state was more apparent than anywhere else. The region of the Western Rhodopes including Cherna Mesta became during the 1990s one of the regions with the highest unemployment rate,¹⁴ another aspect which had a significant impact on responses to the economic decline is the climactic condition of the Cherna Mesta valley. They are of a very different character in comparison with other regions, for example the southern parts of the Western Rhodopes for instance, Gorno Drjanovo in Goce Delchev district where I did a small comparative research. In the other parts of the country at the time a strategy was used of alternating parts of the household budget with as self-supplied agricultural products. This model, countryside supplying city, is often described in context of Bulgarian transition.¹⁵ But in Cherna Mesta, due to the mountain climate, this model could not work. Cherna Mesta did not have enough of products to supply itself.

The industrial enterprises - textile manufactories, specialized industrial production - as well agricultural enterprise - the cooperative Goce Delchev - has gradually stopped their functioning. In the late 1990's the landscape of the valley was spotted by traces of the former development, the ruins of former factories, mills, water cascades, buildings of mechanized agriculture, asphalt roads. The infrastructure of a public transport completely collapsed and the only reliable mean of transport remained a narrow railway line - in local slang 'tesnolinejkata' - going through the western Rhodopes connecting the two townships Septemvri and Razlog. The formerly frequent time schedule of the narrow railway was gradually cut down to two trains per a day. Many villages in the Cherna Mesta region were fully dependent on the railway connection especially in the winter months. But because of the fuel prices and due to the collapse of other means of public transport the local bus

¹³ The Bulgarian government obtained subsidies during the whole 1990s from the World Bank and the International Monetary Fond. In summer of 1997 the food market (granaries) was artificially frozen by speculators.

¹⁴ Figures of an unemployment from villages in the region where I was doing my fieldwork were: Borino 96, 4 %, Strumyani 94, 2 %, Gotse Delchev 91,9 %, Kirkovo 91, 9 %, Devin 91, 7 %, Kresna 91 %, Nedelino 90, 3 % in *Bezrobotni v Republica Bulgaria*, 13. cited in: Todorova, 'Identity (Trans)formation Among Pomaks in Bulgaria', 81. Todorova refers to Michael Wyznan who noted that the definition of the unemployed was especially inclusive in this census. There was much official criticism over the inclusion of anyone without a salary as 'unemployed', in: Wyznan, M., L., 'Economic Transformation and Regional Inequality in Bulgaria', In *Search of a Meaningful Unit of Analysis*, paper at American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies, Honolulu, Hawaii, November 1993.

¹⁵ See for example Kaneff, & Leonard, *Post-Socialist Peasant?*

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connections were not reliable and were reduced to a minimum, in some localities to once every two or three days. The railway line thus remained for most people the only way of connections with the rest of the country.¹⁶

As a consequence of the collapse of the transport infrastructure and the gradual reduction of the railway connections, the access to the region became more difficult after the fall of an *iron curtain* and thus even after the 1990's when its 'border zone' status was abolished it retained the character of a periphery.

Timber 'Black Market'

In the years 1997-2004 the crucial part of the household economy was dependent on economic activities related to the 'black market'. In the 'black market' network in the Cherna Mesta region was trading raw products from the surrounding mountain forests. Through trade of these products were the local 'black markets' connected with the 'globalised market'. The main commodity of the 'black market' in the Rhodopes Mountains was timber.¹⁷ The forests were owned by the state and run by the state enterprise called the State Forestry (in Bulgarian Darzavno Gorsko Stopanstvo). The network of the 'black market' involved several actors: the State Forestry, the local police, villagers and traders, who were Muslims or Bulgarians, but usually from outside of the Cherna Mesta valley. The harvesting of timber in the state forest became one of the daily activities of the local men. The black market was specialized in trading precious timber. (Most valued at that time were beech, elm and ash, the so called, 'black pine' and 'wild sherry tree'.) The most expensive was the timber of the wild cherry tree. Timber of the birch tree was sold at high price, at that time 800 Lev per square meter. Pine sold at the lowest price, about 300 – 400 Lev per square meter. But other raw materials were also

¹⁶ The railway line was designed as a military artery for the invasion planned by revisionist Bulgaria into the Greek south in the 1930's. The narrow railway is link here with the old path going in south-north direction through the mountains connecting the south of the country with the capital city in the north.

¹⁷ A detailed account on property restitution in the Central Rhodopes, in the surrounding of the town Smoljan gives Cellarius, Barbara, A., 'Property Restitution and Natural Resource Use in the Rhodope Mountains, Bulgaria', In Hann, Chris, ed. *The Post-socialist Agrarian Question*, Property Relations and the Rural Condition, Munster: Lit Verlag, 1997, pp. 189-218. Cellarius does not mention the anything about 'black market' with timber.

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traded in large quantities, herbs for instance. In one year it was mostly St. John's wort, spruce cones and mushrooms.

During the harvest season of these natural materials there was constant talk about the final industrial use of each particular commodity. According to these narratives the St. John's herb was sold to pharmaceutical companies for production of the medication Viagra, mushrooms were sold to the Knorr company in Italy and juniper was supposed to be sold for gin. Only the narratives about spruce cones were always rather vague and people were saying that the final destination of the cones was toy factories in Germany.

Around the year 2002 a black market in timber was coming to its climax. By that time the beech tree forests covering the slopes surrounding the village as well the forests along the Cherna Mesta river valley were gradually disappearing. Also the old birch trees which grew as solitary trees in the forests and the timber of which was very precious were becoming hard to find. In late 1999 the illegal harvesting of the state forests in the Rhodopes reached a critical point and the Bulgarian government undertook certain measures. However, the medialisiation of the illegal harvesting and trade of timber in the Rhodope Mountains had an ambivalent effect. On one hand the publicity in the media revealed the problematic economic situation of the Rhodopes' inhabitants, but at the same time labelled, even if indirectly, the Muslim minority as socially and also legally problematic.

The timber 'black market' which consisted of cutting of the trees in the forests, transporting them to the village, working them into required measures and then distributing them to the traders who processed them into furniture and smuggled them to different destinations - generally believed to be Greece.

The Bulgarian government tried through legislative changes to eliminate the corruption which was one of the driving forces in the whole system of the 'black market' in timber. Due to all these factors which took place in the end of the 1990s - the gradual diminution of the forest resources themselves, the legislative and executive measures undertaken by the government, strengthening of the local police control over the forestry and over the 'black market' - were the causes for that situation in which the illegal trade in timber became less profitable not only for traders from outside the region, but also for the people involved at the village level. However, the governmental measures undertaken

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against the exploitation of the forests were not compensated for by a development programme which would improve the economic situation in the Cherna Mesta region. Therefore, in desperate need of cash income the people found another commodity to trade - mushrooms. Especially in the summer seasons of the years 2002-2004 the mushrooms picked up in the mountain forests became the main source of income and the main commodity in the 'black market'.¹⁸

The 'black market' in timber also had an immediate impact on the power structure of the social relations in the village community. Cutting of the trees, and especially on the barely accessible terrain of the mountain slopes, is physically and technologically demanding work and requires special skills, technological service and coordination. The men who were involved in that work were usually gathered in groups of five or six people, usually with someone who owned a chain saw together with the means of transport (most commonly horses). The season for an illegal timbering was usually winter, since the forest was damaged by the weather conditions. Because of the police and forestry control the actual cutting of the trees had to be carried out during the night. There were additional factors which made the already physically demanding activity even more difficult and risky. The networks and configuration of power relations of the 'cutting groups' were never stable and changed according to the current power relations in the community. The cutting groups were random and did not follow any pattern based on kinship. (The actual physical work was, of course, carried out by young men, but the old men, as I had a chance to observe, were not completely excluded from the networks. On the contrary they had often quite an important power position in the structure of the network.

(For example they provided a place of the storage of the timber as it was in case described in the following observation. Once a local police patrol came to one of the village cafes to investigate a theft of timber. In a response to their question about the timber the two policemen got either a deep silence or an evasive answer from all attendees. Also present was one Kaprov, an elderly man a grandfather from one of the families. During the police questioning he would occasionally wink at someone in the

¹⁸ In 2004 1 kg of dried mushrooms of 'first category' costed 80 Lev, the exchange at that time rate was approximately 0,5 Euro/1 Lev.

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group of young men. After the policemen left, a chaotic and loud discussion started up in the cafe during which people were swearing and trying to blame each other or to find a culprit. The grandfather again winked at his youngsters. Among the people who were present was also a grandfather of one of the families. Later in the evening when I was in complete darkness entering our house, there was a chain of a few people who were getting wild cherry trunks out of our the cellar.) Similar situations were part of every day life at that time).

The 'cutting' groups were competing with each other. During the time when I was in the village there were quite a few cases when the competing groups were stealing 'stolen' timber from each other. To steal someone's timber which happened usually when it was already cut into meters and prepared for transport was often used as a way of taking revenge in interpersonal conflicts, different sorts of revenges and jealousy. Another kind of competition was denouncing each other's theft to the police. Since the police and also the State Forestry were to certain extent involved in the 'black market' practices and thus corrupt, the practice of 'stealing of the stolen' and mutual denouncing gradually obtained the character of a power game but as a source of regular income was unstable and risky. The high level of risk and instability involved in the timber business was one of the reasons why people who were involved in that business were mostly from two age groups, either young or elderly men. For middle aged men timber harvesting and trading did not represent a stable income and they therefore tried to find other, more stable alternatives for their income.

The timber was cut by electrical saw mills which were installed in the interiors of the houses. At that time such saw mills were in many houses of the village was. Also in the house where I lived there was such a room. Despite the fact that I lived in the village for quite a long time I was told this kind of information and I was shown the 'secret' room only when I was considered to be a full member of the family. The timber was cut into standardised shapes and measures - desks and prisms.

Thus the infrastructure built up by the development project of Communist modernization, was used for responses to its failure. The spare rooms of the huge modern houses built according to 'modern' demands of space, hygiene, light and material. These practices reflect on the transition which was taking place on the macro level. The

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responses to the neo-liberal economy were carried on structural bases of the former Communist system.

Mushrooms 'Black Market'

If harvesting timber was an activity of the winter seasons, picking mushrooms was among the main activities of several summer seasons. In the late 1990s there were two economic strategies. Young women and housewives would through occasional gathering in the nearby forests occasionally enrich their own budget. Other people had mushrooms picking as their main source of income.¹⁹ They were usually young men, but also middle aged people were involved in the mushrooms business. On those occasions they usually formed groups, pairs of friends, married couples who would go on more distant gathering trips up into the mountains together. During such a trip they would usually stay for a couple of days in the forests in distant mountain areas at the higher altitudes of the Rila Mountains. Then they went back to the village or to the usual selling points to sell their mushrooms to the 'black' traders.

The cash they have got for the raw mushrooms represented quite an important part of their annual income. Some of the families, especially young, couples saved their seasonal income from the mushrooms and invested it usually in different kinds of home equipment - for example one young married couple bought a fridge for their mushrooms.

For young unmarried men the cash obtained from mushrooms represented an important part of their private budget which they usually did not have to share with the rest of the family. In the case of my family the male members, father and son, were involved in picking mushrooms. A part of the cash income which they got was brought home and was given to the housewife to support the family budget. The other part was often spent in the village cafés whose owners were also involved in the mushrooms trade. And since this was quite a common pattern, part of the cash stayed and circulated in the village. The mushroom business had an impact on social relations in the village. The

¹⁹ As a main source of income picking mushrooms is a demanding activity, requiring physical strength and knowledge of the terrain, therefore as used as a permanent source of income mostly by men.

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owners of cafes which were connected with the 'black market' became important figures in village political and economic power.

The impact of economic activities on social relations was less with the mushroom market than with the timber market. However, there existed friendships, alliances and also animosities which were based on the seasonal activity of 'mushrooms trips'. The configuration of the networks survived from one season to another and people would join the mushroom business always with the same companions.²⁰ The raw mushrooms were distributed through a middleman who regularly made the rounds of the picking places in the villages and along the roads and collected the mushrooms.²¹ The middleman in the village it was usually one family - cut the mushrooms in slices and dried them on specially prepared sieves.²²

This way of economic activity and income were considered by many villagers as proving their peripheral and marginal status. In the context of the timber and mushroom trade they would often self-represented themselves as people 'at the periphery'. 'We just live in the forests here' or 'we live like a wild people' they would comment in that situation. But they would also relate picking up of the mushrooms with a 'healthy lifestyle'. In most cases they still would not in that particular context express a nostalgia for the times of 'socialist economy.'

Thus after the failure of the development project, the former specialized industrial workers and emancipated woman ended up walking around forests and making their life out of unsecured income. In that perspective the Communist modernization project failed. However, from the point of view of the villagers, the mushrooms as the 'golden source' were considered as a way of entrepreneurial experience.

²⁰ Mushroom trips considered were in the village also as a ways of escaping the social control of the village community and as occasions for 'love affairs'. At the same time it was a way to make an official love relationship outside of marriage. (When people said of a particular couple that 'they are friends' or that 'they went for mushrooms' they meant to make a statement about the relationship of the couple in question.)

²¹ Mushrooms were traded in three main qualities. The so called first and second category, 'parvo' a 'voro kachestvo', The so-called *manatarki* were considered the most precious.

²² At this point I lost track of the chain. For obvious reasons it was quite difficult to get information as to whom and where the mushrooms were resold and since this was not at that time a main topic of my research I did not trace that information down.

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VIII.2. Perceptions of time and labour during the post-socialist transition

In the following text are presented two ethnographies about the perception of time and labor during the post-socialist transition in Cherna Mesta.

Mandra: the post –socialist enterprise

From point of view of the villagers another, more legal income was the production of dairy products. In the village there was only one producer who was producing dairy products for trade. These families used to have the bigger herds of livestock, but they lost their huge property during collectivization. One of these people tried to run his business during the economic times in the 1990s. He often complained about the low prices of milk products.²³

Among the few new enterprises which appeared in the Cherna Mesta valley in the late 1990's was the so-called *mandra*, a dairy. During the 1990s there were at least two attempts to convert former socialist enterprises into running businesses. Both were made by an outsider, a Bulgarian (a non Muslim) businessman from Sofia. During the years of my visits he had twice tried to run a business based on the production of different sorts of dairy products. This production was supplied by dairy goods bought from the village households. (Home products such as milk were usually consumed within the household or sold or exchanged with people coming from the lowlands. To sell the milk to the *mandra* was an opportunity to enrich the household budget and also for women to get a little cash for their own budget. Thus the activity of the *mandra* was in general regarded positively by the villagers.) Production took place in the ruins and with the remnants of a former socialist enterprise, its administrative buildings, some parts of a technological park, pasteurization vessels, cellars for the maturing process of cheese and electrical generators.²⁴ During the time when I worked there the *mandra* had seven employees, five men from a village neighbouring Cherna Mesta and one woman from Cherna Mesta.

²³ At that time, the years from 1999-2002, the buying price from producers for 1 liter of cow milk was about 0, 20 Lev -cca 0,1 EUR. By comparison an example very often cited by the villagers who were involved in milk production, 1 Liter of Coca Cola cost at a shop 1 Lev, 1 liter of fuel, 98 octane petrol was 2 Lev. in 2004.

²⁴ I have worked in the *mandra* five weeks during his second attempt. At that time he directed his efforts to producing yoghurt and as I came to know later the enterprise survived just a few months longer after I left.

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Besides the economic aspect the revitalized business in the mandra had also a significant social role for the local community. In this case two villages, Ilansko and Cherna Mesta, were involved. Despite the fact that people in Cherna Mesta knew very well that those who worked in mandra got a very low salary the job in mandra was a source of jealousy directed at those who worked there. The social status gained through the work in mandra extended also to the members of the whole family or of the household.

From the talk and gossips circulating in the village about the ‘mandradzijas’ (mandra worker) and also what I concluded on the basis of what the people told to me regarding the employees of that enterprise²⁵, I learned that the cause for the jealousy was not only the economic advantage (which was not very high since the income was in this case *de facto* zero), but that it was rather the social status and social advantages achieved through that job. What was so much appreciated and wanted was the social satisfaction. In a situation where more than 90% of the village was unemployed in the official sector of economy, people who worked in the mandra had a different social status. People who worked in the mandra had all the social activities which people in general lacked during that time of general collapse. They had a job, a work place, a work collective and working hours which because of the specific situation were voluntarily extended to almost ‘24 per 7’) and in their own words they had ‘moabet’. (Moabet is a very important social concept. The word means ‘talk’ or ‘speech’ but also a good company).²⁶ In contrast to the others whose activity were related exclusively to the timber trade they could hope for a ‘normal life’, in terms of the every day rhythm of activities, income, status, social relations. All these qualities people remembered very well from the previous times of the development programme.

The production process itself was not well organized. The technology of diary production is quite demanding with regard to the organization of time. Most of the working time was spent waiting for the prerequisite necessities. We were waiting either for the milk delivery or for the cash to purchase the milk from the villagers or for other

²⁵ My employment in the ‘mandra’ was one of the turning points in the relationship between me and the village community. The employment raised my social status within the community.

²⁶ More about cultural concept of *moabet* see in Vodenicharov & Pasova & Popova, *Iskam chovekat*.

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items which were part of the production technology, as are plastic bottles and labels. Many times the employees themselves made these purchases from their own money in order to keep the business running. The business went through a series of leases between the boss, another man who was in charge of the 'working group' and occasionally sharing the lease with a third person. This man was running a potato trade-he was only one in the region-which gave him an income and he could occasionally lend cash to the mandra. Despite all these difficulties and despite the fact that people did not get their wages and were working for free, the experience of that job was something positive for the employees in the mandra. These people anticipated to a certain extent that they will never be paid for the time and work they have invested into the business, but in spite of that fact they kept coming to work which had become an important part of their sociability, the *moabet*. At this point one of the important factors was that was that the enterprise was running during the winter and spring months when the seasonal agricultural and other activities have yet not started.

In these times of general crises, when the whole country went through a decline which resembled the situation after the war, in a situation where there was nothing else to do except to hang around the road and speculate where to cut some trees an enterprise however non- profitable and bankrupted was regarded as something which offers at least a little sense or even a hope of security and order in every day life. With little bit of exaggeration we can say that people were working for free and exchanged their labour not for money but for social comfort. The process of production, everything from collecting the milk, pasteurization, adding artificial colouring and flavours, creating the labels, filling the bottles, packaging and distribution, was made on the basis of a combination of the technological support given by remnants of the bankrupted socialist *mandra* and by bricolage made by the 'boss' and the employees.

For instance the milk was pasteurized in two old vessels and an old wood boiler was used for another part of the procedure which requires a stable temperature for several hours. Plastic and gas fire was used for the packaging of bottles. Every step of the procedure was attended by all the member of the working group. The adding of the colour and flower was work done exclusively by the 'Bambera', the owner of the business. We all crowded around one of the vessels when he while smoking a cigarette ceremonially

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added drops of artificial flavour - raspberry and blueberry). and colour into the milk. The bricolage of the technological process was very often a source of a self irony about the 'backwardness' of the region. On the basis of that people were contemplated their own depressed economic situation.

The mandra stopped working shortly after I finished my fieldwork. People never got paid their wages and the owner never returned the cash which he borrowed for the milk. The 'mandradzijas' went back to their every day activities, to cutting and trading timber illegally, to casual work in the gardens and little fields. "Bambera" left and joined the rest of his family in United States. The mandra never recovered. When I visited the village two years later people still recalled with pleasure about how 'we had worked at the mandra'.

The paradoxical situation where people worked 'for free' in the period of general economic decline and struggle revealed that it was the employment, rather than the wage which played a key role in the evaluation of social status. And this is situation is symptomatic for post-development economies. Thus the *mandra* enterprises can be seen as another example of a 'small transformations' from the development economy run by Communists state to the liberal economy of capitalism.

A story about a missed train:

On the following story illustrates changes in perception of time after the collapse of the development project. The period of the highest level of unemployment when the only thing which was functioning was the 'black market' in timber and herbs and the village rhythm was slowed almost to a complete standstill. The only things which were at the time setting the phases of the daily rhythm were the evening 'azans' from the newly built mosque and the train which twice a day passed through the village. Due to the high percentage of unemployment people everyone's daily time table had changed. The illegal activities required a different type of daily time schedule. Harvesting the timber usually place during the night and thus it seemed that the rhythm of the day at that time had

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slowed to a minimum or very nearly stopped. The situation is well illustrated by the following story.

It was a Saturday morning when everyone was preparing to go to the weekly market in the nearby town of Jakoruda. The only mean of transport was the morning train. It got to the time when I and my friends were supposed to leave the house in order to catch the train. But no one was leaving. People were waiting 'when the neighbours' will leave. And thus it happened that everyone was waiting for the moment when his neighbour would go. Finally the train was already at the village station when people realized what had happened and that they are about to miss the train. Than everyone started to run. The whole village was running to catch the train. And the train which normally follows a fixed time schedule waited until even the last one got on board. The whole situation immediately created a strange atmosphere of shared euphoria. For most of the villagers this running was only running they have ever done in their lives and the story 'how we have run to catch ' was recalled again and again for the next several weeks.

This story is a metaphor for the socio-economic situation brought by failure of the development project. The speed modernization failed and together with that also the time gained different value. It was not phrased any more by the speed modernization, but by alternative economic strategies which appeared during the transition. Thus the time had a different dimension and social value.

Living space in a modern house

This subchapter demonstrates examples of the appropriation of the living space of residential houses built up as a part of the Communist modernization project. The ways how people used the living space of residential houses reveal the economic and social strategies by which people responded to the situation brought about by the decline of the development project in the 1990s. The next analyses are based on an assumption that from the materiality of the spaces we can read the perception of ideas. In this case it would be the ideas of modernity and development. How was the living space of these 'modern' houses used by the people who were formerly nomadic shepherds who were resettled from

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their shepherd's hamlets to 'urban' houses? And how were they used when the development project collapsed?²⁷

According to the oral histories (see chapter V. Resettle!) and also according to the other material in the old settlements of Konarsko the houses were of very different character. (The houses at Konarsko village did not have their own source of water supply. The houses did not have an access to a stable road. Until now in some of the Konarsko hamlets a water supply does not exist and an asphalt road interconnects only the central parts of Konarsko while the other more distant neighbourhoods (*machalas*) remain without any communication during the winter months.

From architectural point of view Cherna Mesta gained a character of the socialist modernism. The constructions of residential houses were going on until the late 1980s when the construction boom culminated. As the traces of the unfinished development remained a few unfinished constructions.

Cherna Mesta is created by three types of houses. They correspond to the chronological order of the three waves of resettlement, 1950's, 1960's and 1970s-1980s. (See more in chapter V. Resettle. The oldest houses in Cherna Mesta are from the 1950's.) These are the houses of the first settlers, Baku and Karafizov, and are located in the 'lower part' (*Dolnata Machala*) of the village. In the central part the village are located houses most of which were built during the second wave of resettlement during the late 1960's and early 1970's. They are built according to same architectural plan and are usually two floors houses with a quadrangle plan. Most of the houses in the village are built in the 1980s and are of a different design. They are mostly three or four store houses. (See Figure 6). They are built out of a combination of bricks with a skeleton made out of concrete. All the internal parts of the houses, the floors and the staircases are also made of concrete. The houses are thus difficult to heat up and their interiors remain cold also outside of the winter seasons of the year.

²⁷ For more about the methodology using material culture as a source see for example Buchli & Lucas, 'Between Remembering and Forgetting', In Buchli, & Lucas, eds. *Archaeologies of the Contemporary Past*, London and New York; Routledge, 2001, pp. 79-83.

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As it is very often the case in the 'urbanized' and 'modernized' rural settlements - for example in other rural settlements as in some villages in Moravia and Slovakia which underwent urban development - the first generation who moved in does use the living space of the house differently than the third generation. For instance, in Cherna Mesta bathrooms were used mostly as a storage place for dairy and agricultural products made by the household. It was only the second generation which started to use the living space of the house in a 'modern' way. Also in many other cases of every day practice, it is usually the young generation which takes care about the 'modern' facilities of the house as for example bathroom. For instance the bathrooms are very often used on a regular bases only after the daughter of the house has gotten married and the young couple has moved into the house. Houses in Cherna Mesta do not have central heating and during the winter season there is usually only one room which is heated. All the energy consumption of the house, energy for cooking, heating and hot water, is based on wood as a fuel which is gathered from the surrounding forests.

It is very rare that people use all of the rooms of the houses. The most used space of the house is usually the kitchen. The kitchen is also the only room which is heated during the winter months. The houses built in the 1980's usually have a minimum of two but mostly three floors or sometimes even four floors. Each floor can usually function as a separate unit. In the houses usually two or three generations live. The oldest generation live in the lowest floor or in a space which could also serve as a basement. The main part of the houses is usually used by the children or the grandchildren. In general, people are patrilocal. The male descendants stay to live with their families in the parents house. Female descendants marry out of the house. Woman comes to the house of her husband as so called bride. Cases when a daughter remains after a marriage to live with her family in the parental house are very rare and are usually caused by a conflict in kinship relations.

I have met one such case during my field work. It was a daughter of the family with whom I lived. After her marriage she remained to live with her husband in the house of her parents. This situation was acceptable for the family only due to the fact that her older brother, the first son of the family, has not yet married. The fact that the daughter stayed in the house of her parents to live with her husband after their marriage was considered something exceptional. The young couple lived in a marginal space of a single

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room in the basement of the house in a space which is usually assigned to the grandparents. Even after the birth of the first child they were not allowed to move to a better location in the house, since house belongs to the male descendants. It was only after two years when the marriage was recognized by both families, especially by the family of the groom, that the young couple was allowed to move to the house of the groom and gain a living space and as well social status. There were several reasons for this conflict. As I was told, one reason for the obstructions given by the mother of the groom was the fact that the marriage was a marriage between neighbours. Marriage between the immediate first neighbours is often considered as marriage between the first cousins. It is not forbidden but at the same time it is not regarded as a preferable marriage. In specific situations like the case described above the neighbourhood could be used as a reason or as a pretext for obstructing the marriage. Another factor which played a role in this case was the fact the couple was in a kin relations of second cousins. The two aspects, the fact that the couple were first neighbours and that they were second cousins was considered by the members of the families as equally objections to the marriage. However according to the talk circulating in the village the main reason for the unusual living arrangement of the couple was a conflict between the mothers.

This case supports the argument that the cultural forms remain stable and only incorporate new social contents. Communist modernization changed the quality of living space however people retain to live according to their own value systems. Despite all the social, economic and spatial changes they the cultural forms remained to be the same.²⁸ The spatial qualities of the 'modern' houses did not have an impact on the social relations and the cultural forms.

Responses of lifestyle during the post-socialist transition

Another aspect of the life style which reflects on the level of a development success of the Communist modernization project is the diet of the villagers. Despite all the modernization efforts made in the field of lifestyle by the National Front - a particular concern of the enactors of modernity regarding the household was hygiene, diet, womens'

²⁸ This situation is comparable with the reactions to Communist modernization in Buryatia in the USSR in the 1960s as it is analyzed in the account of Humphrey, *Karl Marx Collective*.

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dress and appearance - the diet of the villagers from Cherna Mesta is simple and from point of view of a modern ,rational diet‘ lacks some important components.

The essential parts of the every day diet pattern of the villagers is sugar, white bread, animal fat and to lesser extent dairy products. Pork meat remained excluded from every the day dietary pattern and despite of the all previous attempts at the cultural assimilation Bulgarian speaking Muslims do not keep pigs and do not consume pork meat. Due to the climatic conditions of the high altitudes of the villages in the Cherna Mesta region the diet lacks vitamins and minerals. This has an inevitable long term effect on the health conditions of the people.

Fruit and vegetables have to be imported from other regions, mostly the lowlands around Plovdiv or Blagoevgrad. Consumption of fruit and vegetables on an every day bases became an unattainable luxury during the years of crises for many families. (This is an unfortunate specificity of that part of the Rhodope Mountain region where the climatic conditions are too harsh for the cultivation of most sorts of fruit and vegetables. In that respect the situation in most other regions of Bulgaria is very different.) There the production of fruit and vegetables is a traditional economic activity and especially in the years of crisis the production of fruit and vegetable at a household level fulfils an essential part of the every day diet and thus indirectly subsidises essential parts of the household budget. In the Cherna Mesta region there was as an alternative to the imported seasonal fruit-the forest fruit from the village surroundings which was at the same time a commodity on the ,black market‘. The consumption of marketed food was reduced to a minimum and in their food supply people have tried to be maximally self-sufficient. For a while in the years 1998-1999 there existed also a non-monetary exchange. In Cherna Mesta home products, usually dairy products, were exchanged for other commodities which were difficult to cultivate in sufficient quality and quantity. What was brought from outside was usually seed potatoes, flour and sugar. In many cases the product which was produced for selling was not consumed within the household.

For instance in the household where I lived was producing a cottage cheese for market and in spite of its huge quantities it was never part of the family’s daily diet. The only commodities which people bought in local shops were bread, sunflower oil, sweet drinks, and confectionary. Others which were produced by the households were meat,

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beans and flour or exchanged through that non-monetary exchange for other products with traders who were regularly coming to the village.²⁹

A village doctor who was one of my respondents complained many times about the bad dietary habits of the villagers. According to him the diet of the villages is one of the main causes of the high percentage of heart disease and other health problems, especially of women who often suffered from overweight and related health issues. He often commented about the fact that for sorting out of their medical problems people in the village preferred using the skills of local 'witches' and healers, and they relied more on using various sorts of herbal therapy than on his treatments. He ascribed this fact to economic reasons and to the fact that after the break down of the Communist regime the national health care system collapsed and any medication is far behind economic abilities of the villagers. But he attributed the attitude of the villagers to their general 'backwardness' and their beliefs in 'magic' and 'witchcraft'.

The ethnography presents that the appropriation of living spaces of the residential houses, the diet pattern, health care strategies and life in Cherna Mesta remained only 'half way' on the path to 'modernity'. The question presented at the beginning of this chapter is to what extent was this situation caused by socialism and to what extent by its failure? We can say that to a certain extent the situation was caused by the Communist modernization project itself, by its high demands both on the ethical side as well on the technological side. The project had to be applied as 'fast' and therefore by force and that is what contributed to its failure. The infrastructure brought by the development project broke down together with its biggest supplier, the state. The social and economic consequences of the state failure then reinforced the negative outcomes of unfinished modernization. Thus Cherna Mesta remained only the 'half way' on the path to modernity.

²⁹ More about barter and its importance for post-socialist economies see Seabright, Paul, ed. *The Vanishing Rouble: Barter Networks and Non-Monetary Transactions in Post-Soviet Societies*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000 and Humphrey, Caroline, 'How barter is done? The social relations of barter in provincial Russia', In *ibid*, pp. 259-298.

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VIII.3. Religious revival in Cherna Mesta

The religious revival which came together with the collapse of the socialist regimes had its manifestation in all of the former socialist societies in Eastern Europe. Bulgarian speaking Muslims were not an exception. Numerous accounts were written about the religious revival and many of these accounts were part of the creation of new political discourses.³⁰ A religious revival of the Muslim minorities in Bulgaria was to certain extent influenced by the religious situation which appeared in the first half of the 1990s in former Yugoslavia as a consequence of the civil war. In my approach I avoid any direct comparison between the two cases, between the situation within the community of Bulgarian speaking Muslims and the situation in the Western Balkans and particularly Bosnian Muslims. References about cases and material in the Western Balkans are used in order to illustrate or to compare particular aspects of the religious revival.

In Cherna Mesta village which was founded as an 'ideal' within the framework of the Communist modernization project a mosque was never planned and never built until 1990. It was only in 1994 when the construction of the mosque in Cherna Mesta started. The construction was funded from a budget which according to the narrative of the villagers was given to the village by a 'religious foundation in Syria'.³¹ Since the donation from the religious foundation covered only the building materials the construction of the mosque itself was done by the villagers.³² Resources given by the foundation were partially lost and thus for several years the mosque remained an unfinished construction.

³⁰ In the Bulgarian context see for instance Zeljazkova & Aleksiev & Nazarska, eds, *Mjusjulmanskite Obshtnosti*, Zeljazkova, Anatonina, 'Formation of Muslim Communities and the Complexes of Balkan Historiographies', in *Mjusjulmanskite Obshtnosti na Balkanite i v Bulgarija, Istoricheski eskizi*. Sofija: MCPMKV, 1-56pp, Zheljazkova Antonina, ed., 1994. *Relations of Compatibility and Incompatibility between Christians and Muslims in Bulgaria*. Sofija. International Centre for Minority Studies and Intercultural Relations Foundation Sofija, Georgieva, Tzvetana, 'Pomaks: Muslim Bulgarians', In Anna Krasteva, Ed., *Communities and Identities in Bulgaria*, Collana di sturdy Balcani e l'Europa Centro-Orientale, University of Bologna, 1998, pp. 221-238.

³¹ I have never succeeded in getting to know the exact name of the foundation which had sponsored the construction. In the region there are several cases where) mosques were reconstructed in the 1990s (e.g. villages Ribново, Pobit Kamak, Avramovo).

³² I was in the village precisely during the time of the final work on the mosque's construction so I can to evaluate the whole process. The final work in mosque had an impact on the village community. For comparison see for instance the case of building of the church in relation to a community identity in Kaneff, 'Work, Identity and Rural-Urban Relations', 'The building of church, school and church and *chitalishte* were precisely such examples of the community being constituted through projects involving shared work.', *ibid.*, 182.

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Finally the construction was finished in the spring of 1999, but as a consequence of the problem with the finances the minaret never reached the intended height. Until the main praying room was completed, provisional space was used for praying and for the ritual purge. The newly built mosque was used as a main seat for the public ceremony of an 'Atim'.

The religious revival and the emergence of spirituality which took place in Cherna Mesta can be interpreted as a response to the failure of the Communist modernization as an ethical project. During my repeated visits to the village I was able to see the dynamics of the religious revival of which the culminating point can be seen in the celebration of the 'Atim' in 1999. An immediate manifestation of the religious revival at the level of political representation was a return of the original Arabo-Turkish names in 1990s. According to the villagers most of the people in the village had used the possibility to return the names. (See chapter III. Rename! and chapter VI. Resistance) People refer to that 'returning' of the names very often in context of speaking about their religion and religious beliefs). All these objective manifestations of religious revival, the return of the original names, construction of the new mosque, the public ceremonies of religious rituals such as the 'Atim' or the 'sjunet' (male circumcision) were typical examples of manifestations of religious revival. These activities can be interpreted in terms of political utilization and instrumentalization. However, at the same time, they were an important part of subjective appropriations of the changed ideological conditions during the post-socialist transition. As an example of such appropriation we can see in the following case.

Angel in Cherna Mesta Village:

In the spring 1999 the community of the village was visited by an angel The story appeared in the time when the construction of new mosque was near to completion and a 'young' imam was working in the new mosque. He was for a short periods of the years 1998-1999 substituting for the so-called 'old imam'.³³ The 'young chodza' was about twenty years old. His personal interest, as he said, let him to study at one of the Islamic religious schools newly established *madresas* in the region (in Goce Delchev and Sarnica).

³³ It is in accordance with the rules of religious Muslim community that there can be more than one imam, *chodza*, since this status is assigned to those who are the most knowledgeable Islam and well-read in text of Koran.

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These school have tried to revive theological knowledge.³⁴ In that time he was running religious classes and taught children to read (*sing*) the verses of Koran. The end of his classes in religion and recitation was then publicly celebrated as the *Atim*.

At that time of his activity in the village the story about an angel appeared. If we can speak about any level of integration ‘into’ the visited community by that time I was already integrated, although not fully accepted by the village community. I was not told about this event immediately when it happened, but only when my friend came to visit me. My friends visit served as if it had pushed down a slight block which at that time was still present between me and the village community. Suddenly when a new guest came, a new social perspective appeared. Whereas she was the new outsider, I had a more of the status of ‘the local’.

Once in the evening we sat in the village café ‘No10’ while other people were chatting with my friend, I was invited to sit at a table with elderly men who are highly regarded in the village community because of their age, political status and what could be called ‘religious knowledge’. They were the former village mayor and the so called ‘old’ chodza (imam) who had the nickname ‘Radio’. He is one of those who due to a family tradition kept a certain level of theological and practical religious knowledge during the Communist regime. Today he is not regarded as a ‘proper’ imam due to age related mental inabilities, but still he has a certain political power within the village community. Another man who was present, was the former chief of propaganda department of the local Party Committee in Jakoruda, who is nowadays regarded in the village community as ‘religious’ - His son was attending one of the higher Islamic educational institutions in Syria - and few other man were present.

The men in the café had let me know that they would like to speak with me. When I sat with them at their table they welcomed me with a tablet of chocolate and gave me a little calendar of the Islamic religious year. Then they told to me:

“We had an Avlija in the mosque. You know what an Avlija is - an angel [...] Once in the evening the young chodza remained behind in the village and decided to stay in the (new) mosque overnight. [In the building of the mosque there is always a room where visitors or

³⁴ Another state sponsored religious school [in Bulgarian ‘Islamskoto Uchilishte’] is Momchilgrad in the Eastern Rhodope Mountains.

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travelers can stay.] He switched off the light and lay down in to bed. Suddenly someone talked to him. He groped around to see if there was something. But there was nothing. He was frightened. And then again and again. He again scabbled around to see if there was something. And then again. He should not tell anybody that there was an angel next to the bed. But he told it to Redzep. He told him about it. He should not tell it to anyone, because he (the angel) wanted to talk with him. He [the angel] just wanted to have a chat with some human being. He would surely tell him a lot's of things. But why did he appear before him? – Because the young chodza is a strong believer. He would not appear before us. We do not believe in anything! [strong laughter]. Only before strong believers does he [the angel] appear. After that the mayor took me to the new unfinished mosque. When we got there, he took me around the mosque and told me: "Under the mosque there are graves underground. During the nights the dead people come to pray in mosque. Here are the ibrics. [Jars for ritual purge]. Water left in them disappears until the next morning."

The story about 'avlija' then circulated in the village in slightly different variations. It was told by people of various ages, professions, and strength of religious believe:

"Once the young chodza from Jakoruda lay down in bed in the mosque. Then he heard a noise. He put on the light but he did not see anybody. He lay down again and he had a feeling that someone was lying next to him. He turned on the light again. There was anyone there. If he would light up it, would continue and he would see avlija. This happened to the young chodza because is very saint."

The story about an angel in Cherna Mesta reveals a multiple subjectivities and alternative ideologies which appeared as one of the responses to the failure of the ethos and ideology of the 'development a progress'. But not only that, for a while this narrative in Durkheimian sense created the village community.

Another example of forms of spirituality which appeared after the failure of the Communist modernization project is the case of Ceca. (I use her narratives as oral histories about the modernization project and also about the resistance in the several chapters, see chapter III.Rename!, IV.Redress! and VI. Resistance). As it was said before, Ceca is one of the former bearers of the modernization project. She used to be chief of local branch of the National Front, the cultural agency of Communist Party and at the same time she was a director of the regional School for Bulgarian Muslim (Pomak) girls. This woman devoted

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her life to the emancipation of women and to the ethical project of Communist modernity. She was the kind of person who could be called a proper Communist. Nowadays she works as a healer and diviner having her own small business in the regional capital town of Blagoevgrad. After an interviews and talks about her activities as a director of the Communist boarding school for Bulgarian speaking Muslims girls, after her confessions to the ethical project of Communism, after her recollections and talks about her work and activities as of a proper Communist she took out of her hand bag a crystal hanging on the thread. She told me proudly that this is her essential healing and divination instrument. Then she gave me her business card and offered her services in the field of healing and divination.

Similarly, as the man who told me about the angel's visit, who used to be a chief of the village Communist propaganda and now he is politically active in the official institution of Muslim Religious Community (The Mjufti Office, *Glavnoe Mjuftijstvo*). Former high officers of Communist Party in the region remained orthodox believers of the communist religion, but at the same time they also changed a bit. From keen defenders of internationalism, progress and modernism they became promoters of local patriotism and 'traditional culture'. There could be many more ethnographic examples of such kind of religious conversions in the post-socialist era.³⁵

All these cases rise similar questions: Do all these conversions fit into the post-modern shift? Was this a turn from belief in progress, development, modernity, risk and the future to a belief in spirits, angels, and divination stones? Can we see the decision of the local Communist official as not very much different from that of the local diviner?

The chief of the National Front was wielding enormous power over the young women when she taught them the modern ways of living. Her healing and divination was may be not that different. The former enactors of Communist ideas continued to influence people's lives by using other kinds of instruments and techniques.

The religious revival in Cherna Mesta could have had its culmination in the second part of the 1990's. According to interviews with people in the late 1990's the religious

³⁵ About the imagining of a 'lost' religious knowledge in post-socialist Mongolia see Hojer, Lars, 'Absent Powers: Imaginary effects in Post-socialist Mongolia', article proposal, Department of Regional Studies, University of Copenhagen.

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‘Sunday school’ was functioning more or less regularly. It was established and attached to the village mosque. Children from the village attended this mosque in relatively high numbers. During my visit there were about 20 children regularly attending the classes. The teaching programme consisted of lessons in the history of Islam and reading, (in Bulgarian *peene*), or ‘singing’ of the Koran. The second part was the teaching of passive reading of Arabic script through the recitation or ‘singing’ of verses of the Koran. The teaching was provided by a volunteer, a young man who was a graduate of a *medresa* in Sarnica. The last grade of that school finished in Cherna Mesta in the spring of 1999 and was celebrated by a public ritual called in the local dialect ‘*atim*’.³⁶

The celebration of ‘*atim*’ in the village was perhaps the only one which had ever taken place. The event also had its political value. It was attended by representatives of the high officials from the Muslim Community (in Bulgarian ‘*Glavnoe Mjuftijstvo*’) and made into a political event of regional significance. The *Atim* ceremony in the 1999 was the last public event of that sort which took place in Cherna Mesta.

According to my observations the religious revival in Cherna Mesta as well as in the whole region has not led to any form of religious extremism. Potential religious extremism and Islamic fundamentalism in the ‘*Pomak*’ villages in Bulgaria were a notorious concern of the media during the entire 1990’s. The religious revival had the form of a mixture of popular Islam, revitalized official doctrine of the Hanafi law school supported by official Islamic institutions and to certain extent an influence made by other Islamic law schools. These were in general foreign and often in conflict with the local religious community and the practices of a local population and in general were not accepted.

This chapter aimed to contribute to a response to that query and thus to contribute to the general discussion about the character of the post-socialist transition. The chapter illustrated the epilogue of the development project rather as a complex mosaic than as a

³⁶ *Atim* in Turkish pronunciation it is ‘*chatim*’ is a public ritual which celebrates the end of learning of reading and reciting verses of the Koran. (For a description of celebration of *Atim* in Cherna Mesta, see L. Nahodilova, *Bulharofonni Muslimove, Pomaci*.)

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linear development of one phenomena which allowed to grasp the whole complexity and intensity of the situation at the end of the Communist development.

At the beginning of this chapter the question was put: why the development project collapsed? Was it because of socialism or its failure? Can we see the post-socialist transition as a last stage of the Communist modernization project? During the post-socialist transition Černa Mesta changed its face. The distinctive nature of the village founded from ‘the ground up’ as well as the whole region, challenged the new economic and political milieu of the post-socialist transition. Local people from the Rhodopes, and people from Černa Mesta especially, were not able to engage in an open market economy and had to seek alternative economic ways. They started in a primitive way to exploit seasonal and short-term natural resources and to sell them for low prices through an illegal network of resellers to the global market: herbs to western pharmaceutical companies, cones to Germany, mushrooms to the branch of the multinational *Knorr Company* in Italy and illegally cut timber to Greece. But the incomes generated did not cover even basic living expenses. The main resource – the exploitation of timber from the government forests - was not only illegal but also threatened the ecological sustainability of the whole landscape, because it aggravated soil erosion. The people here do not see their own prospects optimistically and some of them nostalgically remember the “golden times” of their youth, when they “came down from their mountains” to the valley and the government policy was just securing a “better future”.

The ‘black market’, the capitalist enterprise and the emergence of spirituality were interpreted as responses to the failure of the development project run by the Communist state. The new economic strategies responding to the economic decline had a direct impact on social construction and perception of the time, labour, on appropriation of living space and formation of power structure of social relations within the village community.

All these responses were taking place on bases of the social, economic, technological and mental infrastructure left by the development project. (This was as demonstrated on the examples of an appropriation of the ‘living space’ of the ‘modern’ houses, which were built according to the demands of the Communist development project but were used during the period of its decline in the post-socialist transition.) But, and this

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is what makes the ends of Communist modernization different to any other kinds of development, the infrastructure in many cases collapsed as a consequence of the collapse of its biggest supporter the Communist state.

The experiences of revived religiosity and spirituality which are demonstrated in the story about an angel visiting the village reveal an urgent need of the ethic element within the social relations of the village community. In relation to the experiences of time and spirituality examples of multiple subjectivities on the experiences of spirituality and religion by the former Communist elite were demonstrated. The way in which the former Communist functionaries transformed their social status based on Party membership into publicly esteemed roles of imams, healers or promoters of the 'local culture' and patriotism is interpreted as a continuity rather than as a rupture in their subjectivities. They kept their role of 'bearers' of 'public welfare' and transcendent ethics. (A certain extent of continuity could be also seen in the way that the particular events are represented in the village chronicle, see the Chapter VII. The description of the events and material achievements which took place during the Communist time is followed without any interruption by the descriptions of the events which took place after the 1990s.)

The failure of the development project was caused paradoxically by its own measures. Communist state could not support all the ethical, technological and political ambitions of the Communist modernization and therefore the Communist modernization project failed. The failure of the state and the development programme were closely related and that was one of the reasons for deep economic, social and moral decline during the period of the post-socialist transition. The failure of the development project of the Communist modernization was caused by its own measures and the break down of the Communist state. In the words of the original question, the failure of the Communist modernization was caused by the 'socialism', and by the failure of the Communist state.

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According to Lenin society can reach Communism through a process of 'socialist transformation'. Communist society is conditioned by the elimination of three major contradictions: the contradiction between men and women, between city and countryside and between physical and mental labour. In other words, Communism should be reached through the emancipation of women, urbanization of the countryside and through the elimination of class distinctions.¹

These postulates of Communism, formulated by Lenin, were with various modifications articulated in the political ideas of the organizers of the modernization project in Cherna Mesta. In their recollections we can hear that a central part of their political thought echoes and responds to Lenin's postulates. Thus former Communist apparatchiks always glossed: 'the village should have a proper centre and should shine with light', or 'women had to be emancipated and beautiful', and 'they [the Pomaks] should not feel like second class citizens'.

This was the ideology, but what was the practice? Did the massive state sponsored development and modernization programme finally realize these postulates? And if not, then why did the Communist project of modernization not work? What caused its failure? These are the major questions which the thesis has attempted to answer. While approaching this rather historical topic I have used an anthropological methodology analysing the relationship between memory, practice and meaning.

The argumentation of the thesis is based on the assumption that modernity is not related only to one political system and that modernity is the point where socialism and capitalism 'marry together'.² On basis of this theoretical assumption

¹ For Lenin's writing about women question see in: Tucker, Robert, C., *The Lenin Anthology*, 679-680. Lenin, Vladimir, I., *The Development of Capitalism in Russia*. Moscow, Progress Publisher. 1977.

(More details see in Chapter IV. Re-dress!) Urbanization as a part of Lenin's political concept of electrification is expressed for instance in his famous proclamation "*Communism is Soviet power plus electrification of the whole country.*", *ibid.* 620, made in the year 1920 on bases of the VIII. Congress of Soviets meeting in Moscow.

² Bauman, *Intimations with Postmodernity*.

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Communism in the sense of a political and ideological regime can be understood as a specific response to modernity. And the realization of that response was exercised through the programme of Communist modernization. Thus the thesis is an attempt to reinterpret socialist society and post socialist transition in Eastern Europe. It asks how was the doctrine understood by its political promoters, the local politicians, and how was it implemented in every day political practice and what were the responses of the 'ordinary people'? Why did people commit their entire lives to this ideology? And in contrast to that why did those who were supposed to be 'modernized' respond negatively to some aspects of this processes of 'civilization' and 'modernity' which was meant to improve their lives? These important questions have not been answered sufficiently by scholars studying in the fields of socialism and post-socialism.

In my thesis I have tried to give an answer to these questions while analysing socialism and Communist regimes through a concept of modernity and modernization. Modernization was conceived by the Communist agents as an ambivalent but *ethical* project. And rather than a will to power it was their strong belief in the concepts and ideas of *enlightenment* as realized by state organized modernization that made these people committed to the 'Communist ideology' and to the Communist regime. On the basis of their commitment to of these ideas they were able to make ethically ambivalent political decisions which had fatal consequences for thousands of people.

Another concern of my work has been the question of ethnicity. Was it because of their ethnicity that the people who were supposed to be modernized actually rejected the 'modernization' measures? The relationship between Communist regimes and ethnic groups in Eastern Europe is often analysed in the interpretative framework of the theories of nationalism or post modern theories of culture. Should we concur with Bhabha's contention that the 'old Balkan tribes' would form again'?³ But then why is it that Bulgarian speaking Muslims have not formed any 'tribal' identity or any political formation after the socialist state failed?

³ Bhabha, Homi, 'Cultures's in Between' In Stuart Hall & Paul de Gay, eds, *Questions of Cultural Identity*, London: SAGE Publications, 1996, pp. 53-60, 59.

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And if it is not ethnicity, then what it is that makes the village community and the whole region of the Cherna Mesta valley distinct from the other rural areas in Bulgaria? What specific experiences influence the present-day responses and practices of people in the region?

The relationship between Communism, modernity and ethnicity has been discussed in my thesis through analysing the experiences and practices of Communism and its failure by the Bulgarian speaking Muslims and former Communist elite. Most of the anthropological and ethnographical accounts have approached the group of Bulgarian speaking Muslims by using analytical frameworks which rely on the theory of ethnicity.⁴ I have attempted to deconstruct the 'ethnicity' of the Pomaks and answer the questions about the specific character of the 'Pomak' group through the concepts of modernity and Communist modernization.

Another concern was that Communism is usually discussed only in terms of political power. However Communism was not only high politics. My research was therefore focused not only on the power structures of formal politics but also on the mechanisms of power used in every day practice. To study Communism in rural settings and at the periphery gives a better perspective for understanding of the practice of Communism and Communist modernization. Research of the periphery of Communist power demonstrates how the ideas of modernization were introduced not only through oppression and force but also through an ethos and enthusiasm, through the *ethos* of the 'ideology of development and progress'. Not all of the political practices of Communism were totalitarian and not all of the instruments of power involved terror and repression. I have asked what was the ideological engine which drove the Communist regime for so long?

The first chapter of the thesis II. The Communist Modernization at the Periphery answered the question about specificity of Communism and its program of modernization. In this chapter it was argued that the assimilation measures

⁴ See for instance, Christian Giordano & Kostova, Dobrinka & Lohman-Minka II, Evelyne, *Bulgaria, Social and Cultural Landscapes*. Studia Ethnographica Fribourgesia, Fribourg: University Press Fribourg, 2000. The work approaches 'Pomaks' from point of view of ethnic categories.

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introduced by the Communist state upon the Bulgarian speaking Muslims group were one of the expressions of an *ethos* of modernization. It argued using ethnographic evidence that the ideas about modernity, modernization and 'civilization' were crucial concepts of Communist ideology. In the discourses of the Communist enactors 'Pomaks' were represented as a threat to their 'modernization mission', Pomaks were the bearers of 'backwardness' and 'traditions' and they represented a danger of slowing down the progress towards Communism. Thus the main goal of the assimilation measures of the Communist regime was to incorporate the 'backward' Pomak group into a 'civilized' world. This is the heart of the ethical project of Communist modernization. The fact that the civilization process had to take place *at the periphery, fast and at any cost* were reasons why in their implementation all instruments of power were used and why the assimilation measures were applied by force.

The chapters III.Rename!, IV.Re-dress! and V. Resettle! analyse and interpret the ethnography related to the triplet of assimilation measures imposed upon people in Cherna Mesta. The analysis gives focus to the renaming campaign as a part of the process of Communist modernization. It argues that the primary aim of the renaming was to make new citizens, and that the national aspect - to make new 'Bulgarians' - was secondary.

Chapter IV. called Re-dress! Is central to the thesis. It argues that actual aims of Communist modernization were not always 'Communist' in proletarian terms as the secondary literature about Communism often claims. The argument is demonstrated in the ethnographic material about the aesthetical representations of the re-dressing campaign conducted among Muslim (Pomak) women. The ethnography reveals that the aims of the modernization were not clear even to the Communist enactors themselves. The aims were experimental, because their common denominator was *modernity*. Thus actually the goals of Communist modernization were also a balancing between 'proletarian' and 'civic' values. Very often the aim was to create a 'new man/woman' possessing civic values of a 'middle class' rather than those of a 'proletariat'.

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Norbert Elias's theory of the 'civilization process' is used as an interpretative framework for this argument. If we approach Communist modernization through this analytical framework it allows to see in it similar striking resonances with the process of civilization and individualization which Elias considered as one of the conditions for the creation of an absolutists and consequently for the modern state. The Bulgarian case study is put in comparative context with the ideological shift which took place in the 1930s in the USSR.

Chapter V. Re-settle! analyses the mechanisms, responses and experiences of state organized urbanization. It is argued that re-settlement from Konarsko and the foundation of the new village of Cherna Mesta had two motivations which can be described as pragmatic and ideological. On one hand, Cherna Mesta was created as a source of 'mobile labour', while on the other it was intended as a concrete articulation of the urbanization aims of the modernization programme. As a model village which was supposed to 'shine by electrical light during the nights' Cherna Mesta remained 'half way' between town and village. The ethnography represented in the chapter supports the argument that the re-settlement was an instrumental part of the modernization program and of the creation of a 'new man/woman'.

Chapter VI. Reactions to modernity focuses on the analyses of reactions to modernization which was organized and imposed by the Communist state. The reactions of villagers are described as 'resistance' and through that characterization support is given to an argument undermining the absolute hegemony of the Communist regime. They are approached through representations of the various acts of resistance in the narratives. On this particular topic memory is considered as having a major influence on creating the cultural meanings of these narratives. According to the analysis, the acts of resistance carried out by the villagers were resistance against Communist modernization rather than resistance against the Communist state.

Chapter VII. *Cherna Mesta as a case of Communist development*, interprets the foundation of the village and the modernization processes in the whole region as a special case of a development project run by the Communist state. This chapter

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challenges the argument of Katherine Verdery, which has been adopted by most subsequent accounts of socialist society and Communist regimes. Was the relationship described by Katherine Verdery by the term party-state⁵ always in the position of an indivisible power alliance working against the interests of the 'nation'? It is revealed that the alliance of party was not taken for granted in every day practice and had to be renegotiated at every moment of the development process. The power of the representatives of the Party was not absolute even in regard to the procedures related to such prestigious projects as the development of Cherna Mesta region. The Party and state powers were in alliance only to a limited extent. The power relationship between the two can be characterized rather as a permanent competition. This chapter discusses the inefficiency of the 'socialist system', which is usually explained in terms of 'shortages' as an inherent part of 'planned economy'. It is argued that the specificity of the development run by Communist state was grounded in its enormous scale in regard to time and space. The demands made by the ideology of development and progress were enormous and in this respect the development programme run by the Communist states in Central and Eastern Europe represent a unique case.

We can assess the real aspect of Communism only if we study its practice after the collapse. The chapter called VIII. 'Epilogue, focuses on the post-socialist transition in the village. Studying the post-Communist transition reveals the face of the political doctrine. In this chapter the focus was given to the analyses of the social and economic processes of the post-socialist transformation. Thus the post-socialist transformation was a continuous process of transition from the socialist system to the capitalist economy rather than a rupture between the two systems. The chapter attempts to answer the following question. Why did certain places in Eastern Europe have to go through a course of social and economic decline during the so-called post-socialist transition and why did others not have to? Why does this village not have a village centre why does it not have the atmosphere of a beautiful place? The

⁵ Verdery, Katherine, *What was socialism and what comes next?* Princeton, New York: Chichester; Princeton University Press. 1996, 40.

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post-socialist transformation in Cherna Mesta can be understood as the last chapter of the modernization story.

From the point of view of living standards Communist modernization was successful. As a consequence of the urbanization conducted by the Communist state people finally live in a setting which has an urban character. There are houses consisting of several floors, the village streets have a rectangular pattern. Despite the fact that all the symbolic measures of Communist modernization were achieved - people have proper houses with windows, there is a school, electricity and an asphalt road - we can in no sense claim that the village has achieved the qualities of urban life. The asphalt road is just half built and the houses are half empty. The electricity occasionally does not work, there is no public space which would have the character of 'a centre' and the place is not at all beautiful. Thus, from the Leninist point of view, despite of all of the effort, Communism has not succeeded in bringing all the features of modernity.

From an economic point of view Communist modernization brought a certain kind of knowledge and infrastructure, but what is brought is not compatible with the needs of the economic system which came into being after 1990. People do not live in shepherds huts but at the same time they have to engage in the 'black market' in order to meet their everyday expenses. Thus because of the economic decline brought about by the collapse of the Communist system, there is not enough economic strength to make use of all the infrastructure and facilities which were created by Communist modernization.

People cannot cope with the new economy, but they can cope with the new politics. After 1990 people in the village can cope with the new 'democratic' political system and make use of the political utilities given by the democratic state. Thus, the conclusion is that Communist modernization in Cherna Mesta can be described by the classical adjectives as 'ambivalent' and 'unfinished'. Like the half built asphalt road Cherna Mesta remained at a half way point on its journey towards modernity. The end of the Cherna Mesta story gives a response to a more general question. Was Communism an ethical project?

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The development of the village and of the region was part of the wider project of Communist modernization. The former Communist political elite represents this project as having an ethical aspect however ethically ambivalent.

Villagers, the Bulgarian speaking Muslims, the 'Pomak' people who according to the modernization discourse were supposed to be the subjects of the modernization and development program experienced the modernization project differently. What is significant and what makes their memories distinct from representations made by non-Muslims Bulgarians is that in their narratives Communism or socialism is never represented as the 'golden times'. In recollections of the Bulgarian speaking Muslimism the modernization process, which took the triple form of assimilation-the Re-dressing, Renaming and Resettlement-was always presented with dismissively and with a negative evaluation. In the recollections and memories of the Communist past both aspects are always present. The positive memories of the 'social security' offered by the Communist state are always presented as in opposition with memories referring to oppression, repression and the 'lack of freedom' experienced under the Communist state.

The case study of Cherna Mesta demonstrates that Communist modernity was an ambivalent project. The consequences by far do not correspond to the deployment of economic investment, to the human and social sacrifices and never to the political crimes committed by denying basic human rights. Nonetheless, it is necessary to look at the process and its consequences, because some things which it brought with it to a limited, if negligible extent succeeded and others again arose as unintended by-products.

The most substantial fruit of modernization which the inhabitants gained through this not always smooth and voluntary process, banal as it may sound, were the grandly built homes as potential places of future achievements and the modernization which came with the bathrooms and the kitchens and the porcelain in their cabinets. Perhaps it is necessary sometimes to 'accommodate' modernity and its gains. Many achievements of civilisation completely lose their sense with the possibility of giving them their place in spatially large and functionally differentiated modern homes in their full special and functional scope in Cherna Mesta. The gains

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of modernization after the year 1990 were blocked on a day to day basis and the truly grand modern houses were only thing that remained for the inhabitants of Cherna Mesta.

When evaluating the outcome of Communist modernization in Cherna Mesta, it is necessary to take into account the actual terrain of the region. By European standards it belongs to one of the most difficult region - located at the border with giant mountain massifs beyond all communication routes and without agricultural soil. At this point we should make a comparison with similar rural place 'at the periphery' where such kinds of development projects of urbanization and modernization were not undertaken as for instance in the rural areas of Western Europe. In rural terrains of this sort in regions of developed western Europe modernization proceeded rather by the departure of the entire population and its resettlement to more convenient regions. (For example the depopulation of the Spanish countryside in the centre of the country, some districts of Greece, some mountainous regions of Yugoslavia, the Slovak Kysuce region etc.) Thus the western European rural and peripheral countryside, if not used for agricultural production, is in most cases simply abandoned or used only for various sources of recreation and alternative lifestyle. By that comparison Cherna Mesta is lively and 'blossoming' village. And we can extend that argument and say that the rural areas in the whole of former socialist Eastern Europe were similarly affected in this respect. The East European countryside remained populated precisely because of the modernization programme conducted by the Communist state.

Should we have expected that Communism would be achieved when the distinction between man and woman, between physical and mental labour and between town and countryside disappear? With just a little exaggeration we can say that in that respect Communism in Cherna Mesta did succeed. Cherna Mesta remained as a hybrid at the half way point on the path to modernity, somewhere at the edges of the urban place and the village. Women are stretched between their emancipation and the community rules and in general people use the political utilities of the democratic system, but at the same time they are strongly marginalized economically and socially by the liberal economy.

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Figure 1. Cherna Mesta village, 2004.

Замък 86

Селски общински народен съвет с. КОНАРСКО
ПОЛУЧЕНО НА 14.04.72 г.
ВХ № 942 ДЕЛО № 111

До Председателя

на ГНС

гр./с/ [redacted] /ска..

М О Л Б А

От Миря Самов [redacted] в
 жител на Ромарево том 14.
 СТРАНИЦА 56 . . . Год роден/а/
 на 6.7.1933 в гр./с/ Ромарево
 окръг В.с.с.

Др. Председател,

Моля да ми бъде променено името от

... Миря Самов [redacted] в
 на Миря Самов [redacted] в [redacted] в

19.05.1972 г.
гр. [redacted] с/с.

С ПОЧИТ: [redacted]

Figure 2. Renaming document, private archive.



Figure 3. *Rodopi*, 3, 1975



Figure 4. *Rodopi*, 3, 1974.

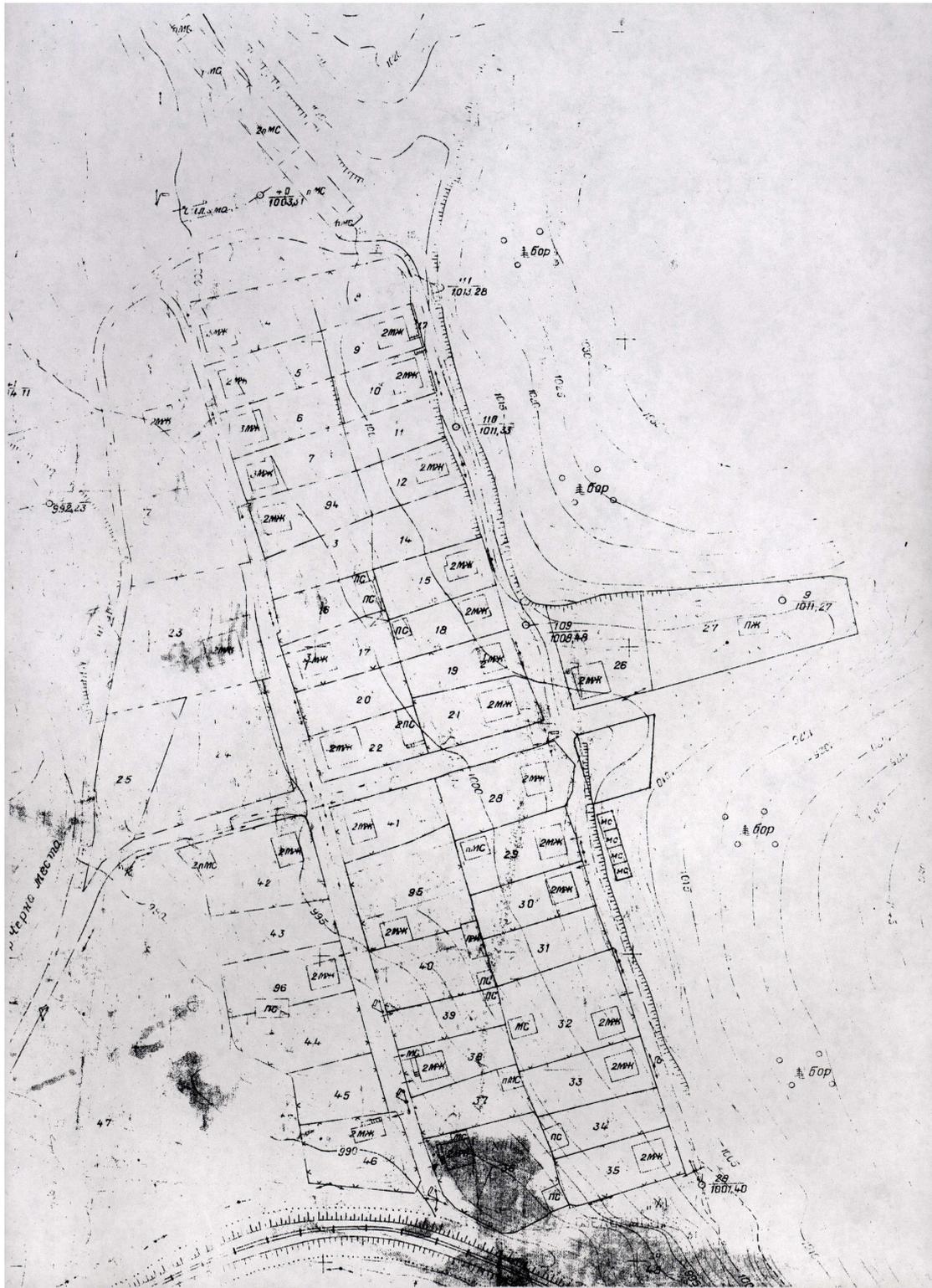


Figure 5. Cadastral Plan of Cherna Mesta, 1984.



Figure 6. Cherna Mesta, 2004.



Figure 7. Jakoruda, 2004.



Figure 8. Cherna Mesta, 2003.