



# Images of the Balkans

The communist Balkans and the Greek conservative writers  
Political Ideology, travel literature and images of the Other

Seventh Lesson  
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# The historical context- A short summary

- After the end of the Second World War, the period of **socialism** begins for the Balkan states (1945-1990)
- The *iron curtain* and the socialist regimes
- **Relationship between Europe and the Balkans**
- **Relationship between Greece and the Balkans**
- The Greece and the West. How did Balkan communism affected the images of Greece in the West imaginary?

# The Greek Word over the Balkan regimes- general remarks

- **Isolationism and curiosity** (Greek authors, Greek reading audience)
- In terms of travel literature, texts increase largely
- Why does fictional production decline?
- Travel literature and **emphasis on political, social and economic aspects**
- **Ideology, propaganda and literature**
- A tendency to compare Greece and the Balkan states
- A **clear dichotomy** is created in the Greek imaginary

# Communism and the idea of Europe

- 'After Communism, **Balkans acquire a common historical destiny**' (Mark Mazower)
- **Communism as a separating factor between Greece and the Balkans, but also between Balkans and Europe**
- **Isolationism** and the creation of the '*Communist, exotic Other*'
- Greece's path towards **European integration**

# The Greek left-wing writers- A summary

- Where do these authors belong politically?
- Which are the recurring motifs and ideas that they refer to their work?
- How do they describe the socialist societies? On which points they emphasize?
- How do they define '**Homo Socialisticus?**'
- Why do they provide such images?

# Emphasis on education, social happiness, scientific progress and gender equality





# The other side: the authors that belong to the center or to the right



- Greek writers **opposed to communist ideology** most often provide completely negative perceptions of Balkan socialism
- **Writers:** Giorgos Theotokas, Minas Labrinidis, Maria Ralli, Pavlos Dimitriadis
- The existence of **neutral representations**
- What happens when the iron curtain falls?
- Contemporary depictions of Balkan communism in the Greek literary production
- Propaganda and ideology: deconstructing socialist societies
- Is Imagology interested in **objectivity** of those images?

# The other side: the authors that belong to the center or to the right



- The **cruelty** of the socialist regimes
- Lack of **Freedom** and *mass-production/ mass-architecture*
- Violating human rights- a recurring pattern
- *'Trying to describe reality based on objectivity'*
- Approaching the modern era: representations of the regimes become even more negative. Why?
- Personal political views, truth, propaganda, and the factor of the Greek reality



# Are there any positive aspects of the regimes?

- Progress in scientific and intellectual level
- Progress as **a pattern of contemporary societies**, not as an **aspect of socialism**
- Narration as hymn # narration as description of the reality
- How do the right authors have access to the communist regimes?

# Motifs and recurring ideas in the literary work of the Greek right and center authors

- Problematic aspects of social and political culture
- **Lack of freedom, poverty and backwardness**
- The parameter of **art**: lack of inspiration and the dedication to socialism
- **Intellectual lack of freedom and isolation from the West culture**
- **Persecutions, tortures and cruel policing**
- The 'Balkan Other' as a victim

# Defining 'Homo Socialisticus'

- Homo Socialisticus according to the Greek leftist authors: (happy, lack of egoism, gender equality, educated, scientific interest, intellectual, hard worker, respectful, loyal to the Party)
- **Homo Socialisticus and fear**
- **Ignorance of Western civilization**
- **Poverty, agony for the future and submission to the regime**

# Giorgos Theotokas' text on Bulgaria and Romania

- Travel text under the title *Travels: Persia-Romania-Soviet Union-Bulgaria*
- The author's visits to the aforementioned countries between 1962 and 1965.
- The year of publication (1971) and Greek dictatorship.
- Theotokas was one of **the most important Greek intellectuals** of the 20th century and, of course, one of the fundamental representatives of *the Generation of the 30'*
- Although ideologically opposed to communism, attempts to record impartially the situation in the Balkan communist regimes.
- Impressions from his tour of the countries he visited
- The **direct record of the Balkan reality**
- Focuses his narration on political, social and cultural issues



# Giorgos Theotokas' text on Bulgaria and Romania

- In his text he often insists on the sense of **unfreedom**, but also on the **massification of public opinion**
- Communist ideology and lack of freedom per Theotokas
- The image of communist regimes as *authoritarian systems*,
- **Monotony** of everyday life and **lack of individuality**
- Theotokas doesn't make any predictions about the future of socialism
- The '**totalitarian character of education**'
- References to '**spectacular technical advances**' in the communist Balkan societies and to '**the exceptional performance in the sciences**'



# Giorgos Theotokas' text on Bulgaria and Romania

- Theotokas' travel literature incorporates **cultural, political, economic and political** implications. So too here
- **A cultural examination** of the Balkan states
- He begins with his trip to Romania: interaction with Romanian authors and their interest in Greek culture
- Their surprise for Theotokas' trip (*Greek dictatorship*)
- Communism as dividing factor between Greece and the Balkans **culturally**



# Giorgos Theotokas' text on Bulgaria and Romania

- The **cultural dichotomy** between Greece and the Balkans in the Greek imaginary
- The idea regarding the '**Greek superiority**' and his effort to **deconstruct the stereotypes**
- **Communism and cultural isolationism**
- The author's impressions of Bucharest: the architecture of the city and 'the spirit of the new regime'
- Criticizing the restriction of human rights and the massification of life
- Impressions regarding Bulgaria: The narrative begins with a description of the dominant image of the Bulgarian nation as violent and hostile to the Greek nation
- Theotokas points out that this image dominated the **imagination of the children of his generation through "visions of medieval legends"**, (P.S. Delta and Ion Dragoumis)



# Theotokas, the monotony of the regimes and the cultural distinction between Greece and the Balkans

*An "architecture of the mass", which is judged to somehow express "the spirit of the new regime: industrialization and grouping of society, and subordination of life to a strict rhythm*

*My second observation is that our country is today, in Eastern Europe, is incredibly misunderstood and unjustified. That is to say, we are put in the same category as Franco's Spain, as a country where the spirit groans under the tyranny of the most brutal obscurantism*

# Minas Labrinidis' text on Albania

- *Albania today: Travel Impressions (1981)*
- Time of visit: Two years after the death of Hoxha (Ramiz Alia's administration)
- Comparing Labrinidis with other Greek texts regarding Albania of that time
- The Albanian state as synonymous with **propaganda and backwardness**
- The image of a '**vast, communist television**'
- The *cruelty* of the regime and the police
- The regime's policies regarding the Greek minority
- A **general atmosphere of fear and betrayal**
- Propaganda, level of culture and social happiness

# Minas Labrinidis' text on Albania

- The image of **contemporary Albania** and the image of 'Greece during the 1960s'
- The Albanian Other who '*can not even imagine the comforts of the Western world*'
- *Isolationism and the Greek steps during Europe*
- The readers' curiosity for the reality behind the sealed borders
- **Different perceptions of the same country-Why?** / The role of Imagology

# Minas Labrinidis: Albanian primitivism and lack of progress

*We are informed that a bridge is going to be built here. Indeed, 'works' have begun. Workers are using 'chisel' and heavy weights to break the asphalt. **Not even a jackhammer...**The incident was **strange** and one was puzzled.*

*But imagine **our surprise** later when we found ourselves in the main square of Tirana and saw the same spectacle. Workers sitting on stools were cutting the cement surface of the square with '**matrakas**' and 'chisel' to place decorative bricks[...] It was not only the breaking of the cement that was **primitive**. Even the sand and cement were **carried by women workers on cardboard.**'*

*"Here the **pollution** is huge. It must have exceeded the limits of what is permissible. But this means nothing to the **simple-minded Albanians** who are **completely ignorant of clouds of pollution and measurements.**"*



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Φεβρουάριος 2022