

Thanassis Betas, University of Thessaly,

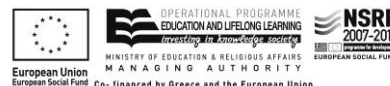
“The authoritarian state as ‘protector and guardian.’ Practices of the ‘guardian society’ during the first period of the colonels’ dictatorship in Greece, (1967-1969) through the pages of the magazine *Labour Inspection*”

The absence of the welfare state in Greece in conjunction with the increasing financial and social needs, along with the new cultural trends –in the 1960s–brought the Greek post-war state confront with the issue of control and management of the popular and the working classes’ private life. As it has been recently argued by Greek literature, the question of guidance and protection of the lower classes by the state, in order the multiple threats to be avoided –above all the moral aberration and criminal behaviour–, was found in the spotlight.

The issue of control and surveillance became even more imperative during the period of the colonels’ dictatorship (1967-1974). The April regime, besides the repressive practices and the use of brute force against the dissidents, would seek, in parallel, to propagandize –through its mechanisms– the profile of a friendly-popular state that wields social policy and copes effectively and immediately with the needs as much of the working class families as of each young worker separate.

Our hypothesis is that, the purpose of the regime was to wield a policy that aimed to enforce the social order, adopting mechanisms that related not only to the suppression and the violence but also to the practices of a ‘guardian society,’ practices that have been applied in other spatio-temporal environments too. This ‘guardian society’ would be shaped through the state intervention with mechanisms and ‘tools’ through which the state and the ‘experts’ sought to form a tight context of surveillance and control of the working classes: through the guidance of the family and young workers by the ‘experts,’ such as the Social Workers, the Boarding Schools and the Centre of the Working Girl.

In this paper, we draw our attention on some of these mechanisms. Watching the rhetoric and the practices of people who represent these institutions, through the pages of the paper *Labour Inspection* which circulated by the Service of Labour Hearth, during the dictatorship period as “Instrument of information and spiritual cultivation of the Greek



workers and employees,” the attempt of the regime to propagandize the picture of a ‘state-family’ becomes obvious: the state appears as ‘protector and guardian’ that deals separately with each family and person needs, propounding solutions that are based as much on its ‘great interest’ as, simultaneously, on each person’s activation.

The magazine, which was monthly, first came out in October 1967. The total number of 20 issues that we indexed and regard the 1967-1969 period, were found to be in a good state in the archive of the Matsaggos cigarette industry in Volos. The magazine was distributed free of charge. At the moment we do not know when exactly its publication stopped.

The topics discussed in the magazine cover a broad range: articles which propagandise the junta’s economic policy, responses from workplaces (mainly from but not limited to factories and craft industries) up to recreational, artistic and sports columns. The most interesting part of the magazine, however, to our opinion, regards the projection of the regime’s social policy: specialists (psychologists, social workers, lawyers, university professors, teachers) present and explain the work and the role of the government bodies and institutions they either represent themselves or they express their scientific opinions regarding matters that, according to their opinion, concerned and haunted the labour classes, the youth, and their families during that period.

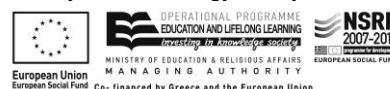
The image that is being outlined through these opinions is clear: the youth belonging to the working classes appear to be the weakest and most vulnerable against the dangers both in and out of the workplace. In the workplace –the industry and the craft industry– they are vulnerable to accidents at work, mainly due to their carelessness and their lack of concentration and discipline at work. The blame is always given to the employees (naive, careless etc.). Therefore, the ‘necessary policing of employees’ is proposed as a solution. During the entire period we examine, a series of the magazine’s articles, which are signed by lawyers, ministers of the regime and entrepreneurial institutions flatly repeat that young workers have to be educated so that they do not get into accidents and their education and enlightenment is the employers’ duty. “At this point exactly, the most important task of the state and the public power institutions as well as the entrepreneurs to enlighten the Greek worker arises ...,” the magazine’s columnist characteristically pinpoints.

Outside the workplace, the young employees and the working class families appear equivalently unable and weak to protect themselves and their children: they are misled by the dangers of the large cities, they waste their non-working time doing harmful activities, they become languorous and unteachable. Especially the younger people are corrupted by the cinema and the other venues for socializing. And here, as happens at the workplace too, the regime undertakes the role of the protector and guardian of the young people who are too weak to protect themselves from the social depression, sexuality and criminality that are caused by those corrupting centres. So forbidding young people to enter cinemas is characterized as salutary, especially for the labour class family, given that it “protects its children from certain corruption.”

Those worries, however, are not developed in this particular period of time but they seem to be heightened then. Since the beginning of the 1960s, more and more new types of socialization are noted, which are identified with ‘places which corrupt’ the youth: the cinema would be considered as the main venue of corruption. Dictatorship puts the youth’s new cultural practices much more in the firing line in relation to the previous periods as being opposed to the Greek standards of decency.

The opinion that affluence and not poverty causes the young people’s ‘moral degradation,’ which is repeated many times by various specialists –mainly university professors– in the pages of the magazine during the period we are examining strongly reminds of corresponding interpretations that have been expressed in Western Europe a decade before and specifically in Britain where the Conservatives attributed the moral degradation of the British youth to the affluence of the post-war era.

In Greece which was governed by colonels, however, the Greek-Christian ideal in combination with the toil of work are projected by the ‘intellectuals’-supporters of the regime, as a safety net of the threatened working youth. A characteristic example that epitomizes this opinion is the article by a professor at the University of Athens, who notes: “A worker’s struggle for making a living brings maturity to the soul and the healthy toil is the enemy of wildness and illness that mainly the idler young people present. Above all, the Nation should show love to the young working person, affection of the genuine Christian and real Greek spirit.” Thus, we see, that work combined with the Greek principles of morality is considered a moralising factor: on the one hand, the former puts



the underage person in order, it disciplines them, it keeps them away from the corruptive centres and on the other hand, the Greek-Christian ideal infuses them with principles and values. The regime –which represents the Nation– appears as a guarantor and protector of both.

In the framework we tried to describe the educational state-institutions are presented, which are able to preserve, protect and finally to prepare the youth, so that they are able to meet the needs of their social role. This role however, the anticipated regulatory standard is different for boys and girls, it has a gender-based character, as it has been proven by the formal language used by the people in charge of these institutions, which we will observe subsequently and which addresses boys and girls separately: the Centre for the Working Girl and the Apprentice Schools for boys.

The Centres for the Working Girl in Athens and Piraeus belonged to the Worker's Social Benefits Organisation, which in turn was subject to the Ministry of Labour. As we are informed, these were 'special schools,' where every young female aged 12-22, either a worker or an employee's daughter, could study. The course lasted for two years during which they were taught subjects such as sewing, embroidery by hand and by machine, cooking, handicraft, household economy, how to use the loom, knitting but also Greek dances, gymnastics, history, geography, Greek and English.

For the headmistress of the Centre however, the Centres for the Working Girls were something more than merely educational centres: the Centre is described as a warm family nest "where the working girl is entertained while being taught and is being taught while being entertained." The purpose of their existence becomes clear through her words. Characteristically we read: "When a girl attends the course, she can become a tailor, a seamstress..., she can learn cooking, how to rule her household, taking care of her family... Healthy social people, Greek mothers will derive from here." So, the Centres for the Working Girl prepare young girls so that they can meet the requirements of the anticipated regulatory standard: to become good workers but above all housewives and mothers.

The Minister of Labour's rhetoric shows the way in which the regime envisages women's position and role in society even more eloquently. While addressing the Centre for the Working Girl's students with an especially paternalistic attitude and patronising

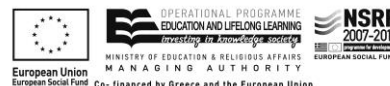
speech he clearly states the anticipated regulatory standard: “... The woman is the one holding together the family... the one working at factories and offices... she is obliged to be a worthy helper for her child, her husband, her entire household so that the family lives in harmony. Therefore we ask from you, young women, who will build tomorrow’s Greek family, to help. You will help if you have the will to become good Greek citizens, good wives and good mothers. The National Government is and will always be your supporter.”

Thus, the authoritarian state not only does not impose, not demand, not command ‘its children’ by force, but by pursuing to manage their feelings it takes on the role of the protector-father and appears as a guardian who takes care of them. Through the institution of the Centres for the Working Girl, the regime promises to prepare the young girls properly so that they can successfully meet the requirements of their future duties as: wives, mothers, workers.

If the junta’s anticipated regulatory standard for girls is summarised in the three following: housewife- mother- worker and can be cultivated through the Centres for the Working Girl, for the boys this differs: boys should be “trained technically and be educated mentally.” That is exactly what the operation of the Apprentice-Boarding Schools, which are intended exclusively for boys, aims at.

As in the case of the Centres for the Working Girl, the role of the boarding – apprentice schools is not only limited to the technical training– mainly of the youngsters from the countryside – that the apprentice schools offer but, as is underlined by psychologists and social workers, boarding school is a “useful substitute of the family and aims at the youngster’s mental stability.”

The rhetoric that is continuously repeated in the magazine’s columns is clear regarding the need of operating such an institution and regarding the role and its purpose: the existence of a boarding school becomes imperative due to the problematic working class family which is unable to help its child create a social character. This is exactly where the state interferes –through its educational mechanism– in order to correct and fill this gap. Thus, the ultimate objective of the Apprentice Schools for boys is to shape their character, to shape the right social behaviour. What exactly is understood by ‘right social behaviour’ by the regime is revealed eloquently by the Minister of Labour: “The child who attends boarding school learns to respect his teacher and later on his employer ... he



trusts his teacher and later on his employer and so he adapts well at school and at his work....”

The working class family and its members are ‘protected’ not only by these educational institutions, like the ones we saw above. The regime seems to be aiming at expanding its patronising web with other services and organisations too, such as the service of Social Workers by the Ministry of Labour, about which we will talk right now.

It concerns a special organisation which, as it is described by the Ministry of Labour, mainly deals with the problems people face and which keep them from leading a good personal and family life. These people’s inability to find a job and to be smoothly integrated into society is attributed to reduced mental and physical abilities. Their inability to use the means, with which they will achieve their social balance, due to defective relations or bad adaptation to their environment creates problems with which the organisation in questions deals with.

In the attempt to propagandise the regime’s social policy, the work of this organisation is shown in the magazine’s pages. The institutions which supervise and control the working class families, the social workers are the ones speaking. However, the image that is being created through their descriptions, regarding the reasons for the inability of working class families to adapt socially, often is different than the ones the Ministry of Labour claims.

When reading the descriptions of the social workers closely, between the lines, it is proclaimed that in many cases their interpretation of the working class families’ misfortune anything but agrees with the one the regime propagandises and which we mentioned earlier. Through their rhetoric, the subjects of observation, supervision and control, that is malfunctioning families, men and women of working class families do not appear as people with reduced physical and mental abilities; on the contrary. Their inability to integrate socially is not attributed to –even though not always directly– their inability to use the means but to the fact that they lack those means. However, in the end, in any case the regime –through this organisation– appears to be satisfying these ‘problematic’ families’ needs and to propagandise its protective and patronising character. Due to the fact that we cannot go into more detail here, we will only mention one example that greatly outlines the total of the cases we stumbled upon in the magazine’s pages.

Elena, who lived in the complex of working class apartment buildings, resorted to the services of the social workers, asking them to find a job for her husband. The social worker considered it necessary to visit the house herself in order to have an “immediate image of their life so that I can achieve a personal cooperation with each of them,” as she claims herself. The husband is described as hard working, active and a good craftsman, but he had been unemployed for a long time. They had three children. Elena, who is described as active, very young and smart was working as a helper at a cooking establishment, but she could not work because she had nowhere to leave her 4-year-old daughter. The result was –according to the social worker– that the family did not have the basics to be able to survive. At that time, they lived of the support of their village and loans. The social worker finishes her report stating: “They were hard-working and scared.”

In order for the working class family to cope with these situations and while searching for ways to survive, the family itself turns to the services the social workers offer. The regime propagandises that it is in state to take care of and to protect and the state is invited into the family’s private life. That way it can observe, evaluate, supervise and control it. Moreover, the social workers’ comments map the living conditions and the family relationships that characterise the capital’s working classes during that era. The almost utter lack of a welfare state in post-war Greece is once more affirmed.

So, in summary, our assumption is –an assumption that undoubtedly needs more thorough researching and studying– that the ‘April Regime’ during the period of time we are examining, “attempted to impersonate a visible form of the state family, of a patronising society,” if we use Donzelot’s expression. It might be supposed that practices of brute violence as well as notions of obedience and discipline were tempered by the paternalist role that the regime assumed. Furthermore, the opinions described (in the magazine) are strongly reflective of the 19th century paternalistic ideals and underline the dictator’s obsolete and archaic views compared to Greece social conditions at the time, and especially regarding those of the capital’s young population.

The state, however, was not alone in achieving this goal but was supported by a remarkable part of the employers’ world, as, at least, the rhetoric of the latter that articulated in the magazines’ pages indicates. State and employers many times seem to be

on the same side, having common goals to achieve: educating and thus manipulating the subordinate classes. The authoritarian state –by means of the educational and welfare institutions we saw– appears as a guardian: it takes care of, educates, protects, moralises young workers and their families. The regulatory standard that is brought forth –as we saw– is of course different for boys and girls, thus it has a gender-based content: responsible wives, mothers, and workers for women, craftsmen with an integer character (meaning respect and trust towards the employers) for men. A standard which is not differentiated from the respective standard during the period before the abolishment of democracy, but which is pointed out in an even more emphatic way now.

The employers’ world seems also responsible to educate, to enlighten the ‘naive, thoughtless and susceptible workers,’ thus the employers are obliged to act fatherly to the weaker and to protect the young employees. If anything, within this ‘patronising society’ which is being shaped – to a certain point jointly by the state and the employers – the latter hope to ensure an obedient, submissive workforce. So, one could claim that, if the authoritarian state aims at maintaining its political power through shaping a ‘patronising society’ and with other means apart from violence and repression, the ruling social classes, the employers’ world aims at maintaining and enforcing its own power, the power through social classification.

Against them stand the subjects of their observation, their management and finally supervision: the working young women and men belonging to the working classes and their families. In this paper, we gazed towards the ‘upper ones,’ thus the state and its institutions, thus leaving their own voice aside. Our material was the reason –to a great extent- that determined this point of view. In order for this voice to be located and noted down, research should turn to another direction and investigate the view and the actions of the subjects of management and supervision, searching for their attitude and behavior against the mechanisms we described.

Finally, however, I would like to point out that even through our restricted and particular material, one could detect possible attitudes and comportments which allude that the subjects of management and control of the ‘protective and patronising’ society did not accept this situation passively but on the contrary they often attempted to utilise it for



their own needs, developing survival strategies. Maybe, both some of the cases of girls and boys who refer to the educational institutions and the case of Elena’s family from working class apartment buildings we saw, seem to bear witness of this fact.