The Economy of Jars
Kindred Relationships in Bulgaria – An Exploration

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People transform inherited cultural patterns to serve their needs under new circumstances. Networks of kindred relationships exemplify this process. Under socialist conditions in Bulgaria, kindred relationships assist in people's transitions from cooperative farming to the working class, and from rural to urban life. Kin connections also contribute to solving life problems for which social solutions are not yet adequately institutionalized. Research should examine kin networks in their contemporary roles, rather than viewing the importance of kinship connections as merely an anachronism.

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Introduction

Some words of background about Bulgaria:

Only a century ago, Bulgaria ended its five hundred years "under the yoke" – as Bulgarians say – of the feudal Ottaman Empire. During the sixty years that followed, up to the end of World War II, Bulgaria had its brief experience of capitalism – as an economic and political hinterland of capitalist Europe. When the antifascist forces in Bulgaria overthrew the Nazi-allied government in 1944, they inherited an impoverished rural society.

During the forty years of socialist development since then, Bulgaria has been transformed from a society made up largely of poor peasants into an urban, industrial nation with a high standard of material and cultural life.

Building upon a pre-war base of experience with cooperatives, the Bulgarians were able to quickly cooperatize their agriculture. During the past thirty years, they have carried out mechanization and concentration of their cooperative farming, freeing much of the young generation for industrial, service and professional work. Not only have Bulgarians consequently experienced the burgeoning of cities and towns, but the life style of the old, formerly peasant villages has been urbanized as well.

Industrialization and urbanization have resulted in a reversal of the population structure. While in 1956 the population was two thirds rural and one third urban, it is now two thirds urban and one third rural.[1] Only twenty percent of working people are still occupied in agriculture.[2] Today, Bulgaria's exports of industrial machinery and equipment, such as electric trucks and hoists, and electronic components, are triple the value of its exports of agricultural products.[3]

For the people, socialist development has meant enormous gains in their quality of life – in material conditions, in security and diversity of employment, in access to culture, in publically provided health and education. Universal secondary education has recently been introduced; women have been incorporated into the work force and provided with long maternity leaves, which can now be shared with other family members if the woman prefers to resume her career; there is universal old age security with early pensions.

Socialist development has brought gains, and has nevertheless – as does all change – created its own new problems. Many of these

Grandfather, a cooperative farm organizer, entertains city grandchildren on a holiday. Kirilovo village. Photo, Peter Smollett 1980.

would provide fruitful and absolutely fascinating topics for field research for colleagues in cultural anthropology/ethnology who might wish to undertake them. An example: Now that education and jobs of some kind are available to all, by the application of *what criteria* can one achieve justice in allocating *which kinds* go to whom? What solutions have the Bulgarians attempted up to now, and what have been the results? Similarly, by what criteria does one allocate those things that are still in short supply, such as apartments in the capital for instance? Should priority go to young families? to workers? (And, for that matter *who* is a worker? Even the definition of the socialist working class becomes problematical today when so much work does not directly produce material things).

In my own research, I have explored such areas as problems in the development of cooperative farming (see Smollett, 1980); how problems that arise with urbanization (such as people's longing for the village) are dealt with in a particular socialist context (see Smollett, 1985); and problems regarding childcare that arise when both mothers and grandmothers have careers (see Smollett, 1987). Recently, I have been interested in the significance of the kindred network in the socialist context.

The discussion that follows was originally written as a conference paper addressed primarily to Bulgarian colleagues, with the goal of proposing the great value in the study of kindred networks for understanding sociocultural change during socialist development. For the present readers, I have adapted it somewhat. However, I have retained much of my discussion with Bulgarian sociology (there isn't social/cultural anthropology there), because I think the differences of perspective shown in such collegial exchange are in themselves of interest.

"The Economy of Jars"

During recent periods of residence in Bulgaria, I gradually became aware that my Bulgarian friends, particularly those whom I had known for many years, when they came visiting often arrived bearing a jar or two of home-preserved food – fruits, conserves and the like. In fact, I occasionally accumulated a surplus, which I brought along on visits to other friends! I realized that I had begun to be treated as quasi-kin, and therefore to be included in what I amused myself by calling "the economy of jars". I wondered whether anyone, other than the manufacturer of jars, knows how many such jars of food are passed from hand to hand in Bulgaria during the course of a year.

Urban son-in-law, an industrial worker, enjoys a Sunday in the village. Photo, Peter Smollett 1980.

Cross-cultural study in cultural anthropology has shown us the tremendous significance the giving of food has in world cultures, whether given through hospitality, ceremonials, or gift-giving. We are familiar with its significance in the distributive economy, and with its symbolic significance as a pattern of exchange that makes statements about the continued existence and characteristics of specific social relationships. Knowing this, I wondered what could be learned about contemporary Bulgarian society by tracing the movements of the thousands, nay millions, of jars of food that criss-cross the country. Who gives what kind and how many to whom on what kinds of occasions? What statements about relationships are built into these gifts? How much importance do these jars (and other gifts of food) have in the quantity and quality of a family's food consumption? How much impact on their budget? Has the latter been measured? (I recalled seeing examples of family budgets in a variety of publications, but could not recall ever seeing a mention of such food gift exchanges among the sources of income listed.)

Now I must disappoint you. I haven't carried out the task of tracing the patterns of Bulgarian social life by following the paths of movement of these jars. I leave that to my Bulgarian colleagues. Instead, my thoughts about the jars led me to think through my impressions on a wider subject – the significance of the networks of kinship relationships in contemporary Bulgarian life. On a number of occasions, I have observed this life for periods of months, and have participated in it in village and town. Therefore, thinking about the subject of networks of kinship relationships brought to mind dozens of examples. A search of field notes from various research visits over the past 15 years yielded hundreds more.

I should make clear at the outset that the kinship relationships I am referring to are those between an individual and his/her "kindred" – all the relatives of that individual with whom he/she has actual or potential contact, including relatives on both the mother's and father's sides, relatives by blood and relatives by marriage. These are the people I mean when speaking of "kinship relationships", or the individual's "kindred" or "network of kin". Most of these people do not live in the individual's household. I should say also that, at this stage of work on the subject, I am putting forward my thoughts not as conclusions but in order to raise questions.

The problem arises of why a foreign social scientist would presume to comment at all on such an ordinary matter. I do so because I see the dense web of kinship ties as so important in how people manage their lives in the course of

Rural and urban kin together, preparing for traditional feast at winter pig killing. Formerly at Christmas, now on any December or January weekend when urban relatives can come.

Urban industrial workers helping village relatives make sausage. Kirilovo.
Photos, Peter Smollett 1975.

Butchering the pig at above feast day.

the construction of socialism, and so important in the very process of this social transformation. This has made a deep impression upon me as a foreign observer. Yet the significance of this web of kinship appears to be almost invisible to Bulgarians. In conversation after conversation on the subject, Bulgarians have told me that kinship relationships are no longer important. "We are a modern, urban society now", they say, "and our family life occurs in the nuclear family household; the importance of kinship passed away with the other traditions of the peasant way of life". The web of kinship relationships beyond the household, with its multitudinous functions, appears to be taken for granted, even by sociologists, much as if it were merely a backdrop to life like the scenery around one's home. This is why I, as a foreigner, presume to comment. The experience of cultural anthropology tells us that even

social scientists, like other members of a particular society, sometimes so internalize everyday patterns of life that they take no special notice of patterns that are striking to an outsider.

The importance of kinship relationships

Perhaps there was indeed some attenuation of the ties among relatives during the period of intensive migration and urbanization of the 1950's and 1960's. *If* this was the case (and I am not at all sure to what degree it was, as at least young urban adults and their village parents remained highly mutually dependent throughout the period of urbanization), there may be a process of re-intensification of kinship ties now in the 1970's and 1980's – not only between city and village, but also between relatives in several different towns and cities, or co-resident in the same town or city. Incidentally, I think that the widespread availability and use of telephones and automobiles has made an important contribution to this, a contribution perhaps worth some study[4]; they facilitate more frequent contact with a greater variety of relatives than was possible in the past.

To this outsider, Bulgarian ties with their non-coresident relatives appear *extremely close*. This is evidenced by:

Groups of relatives (some from Kirilovo and other villages) gather in a plaza in the city of Stara Zagora. They await arrival of graduates for a secondary school graduation ceremony in a nearby hotel. Photo, Eleanor Smollett 1985.

1. A tremendous amount of visiting, both in person and by phone, both in town and out of town – including sometimes more than one phone call a day and frequent drop-in casual visiting, visiting for minor ritual occasions (birthdays, name day, koleda, etc.), and visiting for major life-cycle events such as weddings and funerals. People spend considerable time not only on visiting but also on travelling back and forth to do so.

2. Within households, there is a good deal of concerned, emotional conversation about non-resident relatives and their affairs, and about what role should be undertaken in various of these affairs.

3. There is a great deal of mutual assistance in short term practical tasks – helping one's brother to fix his car or one's cousin to build his villa; driving one's parents to their home village to pick cherries, or driving to one's mother's home town to transport her to Sofia for some occasion; doing an errand for one's daughter-in-law who is too busy at work; going to one's aunt's home in another town to help her prepare food in jars. Examples could go on endlessly. Assistance received is not necessarily reciprocated or, if it is, is not necessarily reciprocated with help of equal value.

Requests by relatives for such assistance ap-

pear to be responded to on a priority basis, with people often even dropping tasks they are doing for their own household or for friends in order to satisfy the request of a relative. Friends appear to take such desertions as "natural". (I might say as an aside that, for *foreign* friends or colleagues, accepting this pattern requires a period of adaptation. Without such adaptation, it can even lead to misunderstandings. I once heard a young American folklorist explain to colleagues, at a conference in the U.S., that Bulgarians are "afraid" to associate with foreign colleagues. Her "evidence" was that they often broke appointments with her on the "excuse", as she put it, of having been asked to assist a relative!)

4. There is a significant amount of assistance among relatives in longer term or repetitive tasks such as the raising of children, including care of pre-school children and care of school children before or after school or during vacations and summers; also, in care of the old or sick. People share their homes with relatives who need accommodation – not only with newly married offspring waiting for their own apartments, or with elderly parents, but also with others – an aunt, for example, providing a home for a niece and her husband and children while the niece studies in Sofia.

129

Café scene in the capital city, Sofia. Photo, Eleanor Smollett 1985.

5. Very considerable economic assistance is provided by relatives. This ranges from the intense efforts of parents, grandparents and others to help set up the younger generation with apartments, furnishings and cars (and the *assumption* that people "naturally" do this) to the continual stream of smaller-scale aid – food from village to town or from smaller to larger town, money from earners to those pensioners on small pensions, money from pensioners with surplus to younger relatives, and the like. Some of this is horizontal, among siblings for instance, in addition to the vertical aid between generations.[5]

6. Relatives rely heavily on each other for finding appropriate contacts to help unravel some of life's complexities – information is needed, perhaps, about apartments, or about job possibilities, or about finding the best tutor for one's child.

7. An individual's kindred provides a source of immediate and intensive emotional and practical support in personal crises, such as those that occur regarding health, marriage, and deaths.

In an appendix at the end of this article, the reader will find anecdotal examples of some of these types of kin interaction, taken from my field notes.

The subject of kinship in Bulgarian sociology

I would like to return now to my earlier remark that even Bulgarian sociologists appear to take for granted the above-described types of mutual interrelationships among relatives. I began to notice this while searching for discussions of the subject in Bulgarian sociology. For instance, Chavdar Kyuranov's excellent, frank and insightful 50 page booklet, *The Bulgarian Family Today* (Sofia Press, 1984), concentrates entirely on the family *within* the household. The same is true of his article, "The Contemporary Bulgarian Family – State and Problems", in the 1982 volume issued by the Bulgarian Institute of Sociology, *Sociological Theory and Social Practice in Contemporary Bulgarian Society*.[6] Kyuranov's analysis is founded on data from the most extensive recent study of Bulgarian family life, carried out between 1977 and 1982, and described in the above mentioned volume.

Very interesting, in the same volume, is an article by Zahari Staikov, summarizing results from the Institute of Sociology's much-referred-to major study of the *time budget* of the

Newer (contemporary) housing, Sofia. Photo, Peter Smollett 1980.

population of Yambol District (carried out in 1977). The categories given of activities on which people spend their time include no reference whatsoever to time spent socializing (visiting) with relatives or time spent helping them. It would be interesting in future research to obtain information on certain of these aspects of time use.[7] How much time do people in fact spend visiting with relatives (in person? by phone?) How much time helping them? What factors affect frequency and duration of visits or assistance: occupation? rural or urban residence? age? Is there any regular pattern regarding *which* members of the kindred people spend most time with, or does this vary greatly by personal taste and circumstances? For how much time, during the course of a given period, do sample households contain visiting relatives on either brief or extended visits?

Particularly interesting would be information about the movements of children. It is clear that large numbers of Bulgarian children, including many of those who are viewed in Bulgaria as dwelling with their parents, spend frequent and/or extended periods of time being cared for in the homes of relatives. Measuring this could lead into thought-provoking questions on the social psychology of Bulgarians. This is of course speculative, but it may

be found that a great source of strength within Bulgarian social life is derived from the fact that a growing young individual's emotional ties are dispersed among a variety of people, rather than concentrated within the bounds of the nuclear family. Perhaps it is *because* they are still accustomed to and capable of dispersed emotional ties that Bulgarians – even in the urban situation – show such an intense emotional *connectedness* to people around them. This is striking to a foreigner – even though Bulgarians say it exists less than in the past. Whether scolding a stranger in a shop or helping a tram passenger overburdened with bundles, people in the street seem *attentive to* and *responsive to the feelings of* a wide array of others, even strangers. Certainly this is an asset worth preserving in a socialist society! I have noticed also, in relation to married couples, that if one spouse is away for some time, working out of town or out of the country for instance, the remaining spouse is not left alone but is cushioned by the support and company of a wide array of kin.

To understand all these questions, it is obviously necessary to follow the web of kinship beyond the apartment door. Let us look at a recent article by a Bulgarian sociologist, which proposes that we do exactly that. While writing this paper, I received from my Bulgarian col-

leagues an article by the Bulgarian sociologist, Mincho Draganov, "Kinship Ties – An Important Element in Human Society" (from *Sotsiologicheski Pregled,* Sociological Review, No. 1, 1985). This article is precisely on our subject, and is thus enormously useful in several ways:

1. It confirms, by explicit statements, that the study of the network of relationships with relatives in contemporary Bulgaria has been neglected up to now, and it calls for study of the subject.

2. Draganov suggests that neglect of the subject can be *partly* attributed to a particular assumption: the assumption that in stratified societies, as these evolve from stage to stage, kinship relationships are more and more merely *leftovers* from past stages, that they are a form of relationship that is being – stage by stage – replaced by the relationships of *citizens*. But, says Draganov, the *persistence* of the importance of kinship relationships through successive socio-economic systems should suggest to us that its importance in human social life is as something *more* than merely a leftover, that it has an important *contemporary* role in human society.

3. This leads Draganov to the point I consider his most essential one: Even as the *importance* of kinship relationships *continues* from one mode of production (or socio-economic system) to another, the *content* of these relationships *changes*.

I agree with this, because I think we must be careful *not to reify* the characteristics of particular stages of society, their traditions or culture traits. If we imagine that social life at a particular stage is *composed* of sets of traits or traditions, we will assume that these evaporate somehow at a later stage, and are replaced by others. But society is not made of traits and traditions. Society is a process, involving the action, interaction, and thought of conscious human beings – people, *who actively transform the patterns of social behavior they inherit* from the past, including kinship relationships, *so that they will serve their needs in a new type of society*. Here then is the key point to which we must attend. We must do the research to discover *what is the content* of kinship relationships in their new context, in building a socialist society, and what might be their consequent possibly positive roles in socialist development.

Proposals

From what perspective should we formulate questions about the roles of kinship relationships in contemporary Bulgarian society? I will put forward some rough proposals, which obviously will need further clarification in the course of future research.

1. *Kinship as a source of personal support:* One of the roles of kinship relationships in social life is a highly personal one. It involves the shepherding of an individual through the life cycle, enmeshing the person in a web of material support (the economy of jars, the varieties of practical assistance) and of social and psychological support (and sometimes conflict) through the great occasions and crises of life such as marriage, deaths and funerals, and through the problems of everyday life, great and small. Though this aspect of kinship relationships gives support to the *individual*, it is not "purely personal". Through such support, it helps to keep the individual integrated in society. It is also crucial in forming him/her as a social being, for his/her childhood socialization and personality formation can be seen as part of this aspect of kinship. I think that this is the aspect of kinship relationships that displays *the most continuity* from stage to stage of society. This is so despite the fact that its content is being constantly eroded as society as a whole takes over more and more of the responsibility for such things as education and health care. This aspect of kinship relationships has been significantly altered, of course, by its separation from *productive* functions. In Bulgaria the above-described nurturing-supportive functions used to be largely integrated into a patrilineal corporate kin group (the Bulgarian *rod*) that held productive property and organized production (although matrilateral relationships were also of importance). Now, unhooked

from production and productive property, the nurturing-supportive functions have become dispersed through both sides of a widespread bi-lateral kindred.

Questions: What are some specific kinds of questions we can hope to productively explore through studying the interrelationships of individuals with their kindreds? A few suggested questions concerning the relatively "personal" role of kinship relationships, described above, may serve to illustrate the potential utility of such inquiries.

a) *The kindred and the life cycle:* In the way of life of socialist Bulgaria, how do individuals' relationships with members of their kindreds change during the course of the life cycle? Can patterns be discovered? Do certain potential relationships within the kindred become more active at particular stages of life, or are certain ones likely to lapse? Does the content (types of interaction) of the relationships change? The frequency or duration of contacts? Tracing the patterns of relationships with the kindred through the life cycle can shed light on some socially based "personal" problems such as the problems of women on maternity leave or the loneliness so often experienced by old people.

b) *Kinship based friendships:* To what extent, in the new circumstances of socialist society, is the kinship network a source of close personal friendships? Are friendships thus established any more enduring than those with one's *zemlyatsi* (people from the same region – a very important basis for close relationships in Bulgaria), or those based on companionship in other settings such as school, army, work, clubs or neighbourhoods? Can such friendships be more easily reestablished after a lapse due to such factors as geographic separation?

Do friendships founded on kinship serve peoples' needs differently than other friendships? Do they show a more or less multi-stranded character than those of other origins (such as the work place)? In other words, do they include a greater or smaller *variety* of interaction content, such as confiding intimate problems, exchanging small and/or large favours, common recreation, economic aid and so on, rather than just one or two of these? How do friendships *originating* within an individual's kindred compare with friendships that have been *drawn into* the kinship network through terms of fictive kinship (a godparent, the best man at a wedding)?

Studying friendships based on kinship will lead us to discover the *overlap* between individuals' various networks of relationships – kin and non-kin – and the extent to which there is any integration of these networks. It will lead us also to analyse the inner core of the personal relationships of an individual (and of a household) – the *bliski* (close ones) – which includes both kinsmen and intimate friends, how this core is built and maintained, and what role it plays in Bulgarian life.

The answer to these and related questions will tell us to what extent the kindred is in fact the network we should concentrate on studying to find individuals' most reliable relationships of personal support.[8]

2. *Kinship as a source of contacts or "ties":* A second role of kinship relationships involves the exchange and evaluation of information and personal contacts that help make the social system work to satisfy one's life needs. This role of kinship relationships brings to mind a matter that Mincho Draganov mentions – that some people interpret the very persistence of kinship relationships as being a reflection of the immaturity of new, alternate forms of social integration. There *is* an element of truth to this, which is related to the problem referred to as *vruski* (use of ties or connections) in Bulgaria, a problem which of course exists in numerous other societies. People tend to use kinship relationships to smooth the way in managing their lives in society. They do so in *precisely* those life problems for which social methods of managing are not yet fully adequately institutionalized – areas in which there is *lag* in institutional development as society moves from one stage to another. In an evolving socialist society, this use of kinship (and other) ties must be understood in its role in the contemporary context (not just as a leftover). It surfaces in a variety of matters. These

include allocating material necessities that are still in short supply (such as apartments or certain consumer goods); or enhancing information regarding job placement, or information regarding how best to succeed in entering particular educational institutions for which competition is stiff. This aspect of the role of kinship relationships is perhaps the most ephemeral, as some of the problems it deals with may decrease or disappear as socialist society develops further.[9]

3. *Importance of kinship relationships in the processes of socialist development:* A third role of kinship relationships in contemporary socialist society is perhaps the most neglected in research, while being of great importance – the connection between kinship relationships and the process of socio-cultural change and development. What can be learned about the interaction of kinship relationships with the very processes of socialist development? On this point, I differ from Mincho Draganov. If I understand him well, he is suggesting that the *reason* kinship relationships persist from stage to stage, even in societies with a state structure, is that the individual is not, in life, simply a citizen (and it is not sufficient to view him as such). The state accounts for only one "side" of the individual's relation to society, says Draganov, since the state organizes only society's political dimension. A human being is also integrated with society through other aspects of his life. Draganov proposes that it is in these *other* "sides" (aspects) of life in society that kinship plays its important role, and that *this* is why it continues to persist despite the increasing but separate importance of the individuals' relations as citizens. These "other" aspects of social life Draganov is referring to include such obviously crucial ones as the formation of the young individual's personality in the context of the circle of kin in which he spends his childhood.

I must part company with him somewhat on this question of *"sides" or aspects* of individuals' integration with society. Such a separation into sides can perhaps have an analytic or heuristic value for us. However, there is always the danger that this separation will *disinte-*grate precisely the interrelationships of kinship with society that we need to understand, and prevent us from seeing them. In a socialist society (as in any other), we should not assume a hard distinction between matters that are supposedly strictly "personal" and others that are "social". For the *"sides"* of an individual's relations with society *interpenetrate* each other. How they do so at a given level of society, such as in a socialist society, and *how* this interpenetration *affects* the *process of socio-cultural change and development, of socialist development* – these are precisely the questions to which answers will be, I think, most useful to us.

Let us look at processes such as class transformation or urbanization. The *socio-cultural processes* of such transformations *include* the so-called "personal" interaction of individuals with their network of kin. Rural people learn to be urban people partly through conversation with, and observation of, and practical assistance from their urban kin. Cooperative farmers learn to be workers. Such learning doesn't take place exclusively in institutionalized settings such as work places or political organizations. Much of it is absorbed in homes, around the table, along with the spirits and salami. This point requires some research attention. Former-peasants who are becoming former-cooperative-farmers don't develop a working class outlook/ideology *automatically*, in some mechanical way, out of their experience with new social relations of production. This transformation of class outlook within the social person requires *thought* processes – both individual reflection and *discussions* with significant others, discussions not only with work-mates but also with trusted intimate individuals in one's network of kin.[10] The social personality is indeed formed within the setting of kinship relationships, but *not only* during childhood. It continues its later development *at least in part* within this setting of kin. It is therefore partly *here*, in the midst of the network of kin, that we must formulate *some* of our questions regarding the *process* of socio-cultural change in socialist development. These should include questions about the creation of urbanized people; questions about *how* citizens form their

134

evaluations and opinions of ongoing social development and its quality, and perhaps how they generate some of their demands for further change; questions (as suggested above) about *how* people exchange information and assistance so as to make a not-yet-perfect system serve their life needs; questions about how a socialist working class consciousness develops.

Questions: We turn now to examples of the questions implied in this discussion of the interaction of kinship relationships with the very processes of socialist development.

a) *Working class consciousness:* In examining the formation of workers and of their socialist working class consciousness, we must bear in mind the newness of much of the Bulgarian working class. As recently as 1967, only a quarter of Bulgarian workers were of working class origin (Ivanov, p. 263). The recent absorption of numbers of people into the working class, with the development of the Agro-Industrial Complexes, has brought another contingent of new workers. At present, the kindreds of large numbers of Bulgarians are composed of people of more than one social class (as are many of their households).[11] What role does this mixture of social classes within the kindred play in the individual's transition from one class to another? Is his/her adjustment and ideological development aided by having some kinsmen who have very recently made the same transition, as well as some who are already experienced workers?

b) *Intra-class differences, and differences between classes:* Within a social class in Bulgaria, what differences can be discovered in the structure and uses of kinship networks on the basis of *intra-class* distinctions? Are there differences among occupational groups or between worker-intellectuals and others or between groups at different levels of skill and training or between workers of working class origin and those who have recently come into the working class?

In anthropological study of kinship in capitalist societies, an extensive literature has built up over the past twenty years, *comparing patterns of kinship networks in one social class with those in another class.* This literature on networks is of great importance, as it has dispelled conclusively the old notion that maintaining close ties with kin is a rural phenomenon, and that their attenuation is an urban phenomenon. Study after study has demonstrated that the characteristics of networks of kin differ *within* the urban setting, on the basis of social class.[12] There are differences in the number of active kindred connections, in the frequency and intensity of interaction among kin, in the degree to which the relationships are multi-stranded in content or not, and in the "density" of the networks (the degree to which the people with whom an individual has an active relationship also know and relate to each other – an important factor in the formation of opinions). As we were first shown by Elizabeth Bott for Britain, there are social class differences in intra-household relationships, especially conjugal relationships. These differences are *connected* to class differences in the characteristics of kindred network relationships and in the involvement of each of the spouses in such networks.

If we studied such questions about networks in Bulgaria, in a *socialist* setting, what would we find out about intra-class distinctions in patterns or about the differences between classes?

c) *The "economy of jars":* Finally, we return at long last to "the economy of jars". Bulgaria is a socialist society. It lays no claim to having reached communism. This means that people are remunerated on the basis of the work they do. Despite the levelling effect of the social consumption fund, there are still considerable differences in the incomes of households, depending on factors such as the number of workers, their levels of skill, and the size of the family. Here is where our famous jars of food play their role, along with all the other kinds of material assistance that travel along (and continually reinforce) the links of the kinship network – food in other forms, other goods, money, contributed work for repairs, other kinds of services. To what extent does this ma-

terial aid among kinsmen reduce the difference in standard of living between households at different stages of the life cycle, or in different income categories? Does this help people to live better, to be more satisfied, at the present level of socialist development? Does it therefore make a contribution to the further development of socialism?

Acknowledgements

Notes

1. Dossev, p. 5.
2. Ibid, p. 11.
3. Iliev, p. 7:
   1981 2.8% unprocessed agricultural products
         21.9% highly processed farm products
         75.3% industrial products
              (non-agricultural)
   1939 33% unprocessed farm products
         66% primary processed farm products
         1% other items
4. Due to the small size of the country, most people live within a few hours' drive from their relatives.
5. The exact amount of this aid would probably be very difficult to measure for various reasons, including the fact that individuals sometimes give "a little extra" to a sibling or parent in need without mentioning these sums to their spouses.
6. Kyuranov does refer to one aspect of relationships beyond the nuclear family – each spouse's relationships with parents-in-law, either within or outside the household. But other relationships with kin are not touched upon.
7. Of course, it is not the purpose of *time budget* studies to analyse patterns of social relationships – and this is one of their limitations as instruments of research. In socialist society, they attempt to assess the degree of success to date in developing the well-rounded socialist *individual.* To do this, they measure the distribu-

tion of the *individual's* time during some given period. They don't examine *with whom* or *for whom* the individual carries on the activities listed, but instead view the individual in isolation. Data from them can therefore be used in only very limited ways if our objective is to understand *social processes.* For understanding social processes and socio-cultural change, research along the lines advocated by the Bulgarian sociologist, Lyuben Nikolov, will be very fruitful. In his 1982 article, "The Theory of the Mode of Life", he outlines a concept very closely related to the concept "culture" in North American cultural anthropology. It leads to questions of how socially interacting human beings manage their lives in context of particular natural/material and social/cultural environments, and how they *re-create* (transform) these environments in the course of social life.

8. The new Bulgarian family legislation of 1985 appears to assign it such a role – for example in allowing relatives other than parents to take leaves from work for the purpose of infant care.
9. Possibly not *all* of them will disappear! There may be plenty of apartments in future, and a better-organized method of connecting individuals with suitable jobs. But society will probably *never* need as many cosmonauts or film stars as there are young people who aspire to these jobs!
10. And, no doubt, individuals in other networks, which may or may not overlap: former schoolmates, people from one's home community or region, neighbours, fellow members of interest clubs, etc.
11. This description applies to other socialist countries as well, for instance to Hungary (Spirulisz, p. 276).
12. This is shown in societies in which urban life has a long history, such as Britain, as well as in those in which intense urbanization is new, such as Greece.

Appendix

1.) Iordanka and Russi are a Sofia couple in their 30's with two young children. She works in a government office; he is a skilled industrial worker. Iordanka has two aunts in Sofia, who helped the couple with housework and child care until the children entered kindergarten. Iordanka and Russi often leave the children with one of the aunts for hours or days while they are on some errand or excursion. When one of the parents is called out of town for a work assignment, an aunt comes to stay in the household to help out. Iordanka is in telephone contact with her aunts several times on most days to discuss family matters.

On Russi's Name Day, he drives the 70 km to the

town of Borovets to pick up his widowed mother, so that she can come to stay for the weekend and enjoy celebrating with the relatives and friends who come for the occasion. He will drive her home afterwards. Between Borovets and Sofia, Russi and his mother stop at her native village to visit with and eat something with several of her cousins there. From the village, they bring some food items to Sofia with them. They also bring news of the relatives, and a request that Russi come to the village to help his relatives with some house repairs.

2.) Ivanka and Plamen are a couple living in Stara Zagora, a medium size industrial city. They are about 40 years old and have two teen-age children. He is an oil-storage tank repairman; she is a paramedic in a factory clinic.

Plamen returns home from Ivanka's native village, a twenty minute drive by car, where he has been on a day off from work, building rabbit hutches for his father-in-law. He brings fruit and nuts, eggs, meat, and herb tea from the village, as well as an inquiry as to who will be coming to the village to visit for the weekend – just the children or Ivanka and Plamen as well?

When the children were small, they stayed in the village the year round, cared for by Ivanka's parents, so that they could run free in the fresh air while their parents were at work in the city. Ivanka and Plamen often came for the weekends, as they still do. While there, they work in the family's large vegetable gardens. Ivanka and Plamen are in daily telephone contact with her parents in the village.

The same is true of Ivanka's brother and his wife, who also live in Stara Zagora. He works in railway transport at an industrial site; she is a shop assistant. Their children also stayed in the village with the grandparents when they were small. They started school in the village. Later, they stayed in Stara Zagora with their parents, but continued to spend summers and many school holidays and weekends in the village.

Next year, Ivanka and Plamen plan to go abroad to work for two years. One of their children will be finished with school by then. The other will continue in school in Stara Zagora, living there with Plamen's parents.

3.) Russka is a retired clerk living in the town of Yambol. Her daughter, Bistra, a Sofia research worker, comes for several days (having taken them as leave from work) to help her prepare jars of seasonal fruits. The two go to Russka's native village, where she has a garden and fruit trees, and prepare the food at the home of Russka's cousin there. Returning to Yambol, Bistra helps her mother do a thorough house cleaning. Bistra's husband, Kiril, an engineer, joins them for the weekend. The couple rest, visit with relatives, and then return to Sofia on the train, carrying bags filled with jars of fruit. Such a visit

occurs annually at this season, in addition to other visits in both directions.

Sometimes both of Bistra's parents come to stay with her in Sofia for a month or two in winter, to enjoy the company and the central heating. They also came for two months to help out when Kiril's and Bistra's child was born. At the time, Kiril's mother, a retired librarian with whom the couple lives, was away in another city, helping to care for her daughter's children. Kiril's mother took over care of Kiril's and Bistra's baby when Bistra returned to work after maternity leave, and will care for him until they decide to put him into a day kindergarten at age two or three.

4.) Todor and Rossitsa are students in Sofia with one small child. They are sitting and visiting around their kitchen table with Todor's mother, Zlatka, Todor's father's sister, Radka, and her husband, Dimiter. Radka is tearfully explaining an urgent difficulty that confronts her household. Their old family house has been torn down to make room for construction of apartments. The family has been moved into a transitional rental apartment, where they were to await the availability of an apartment to rent or buy. Renting is unlikely, as priority in rental apartments is being given to younger families.

The state has now offered Radka and Dimiter an apartment to purchase, but they cannot raise enough money. They have a relatively low income, as neither is a skilled worker. He works as a labourer in a mechanical parts distribution depot; she is a shop assistant. They have two children. The combination of compensation for their house and a loan from the state is insufficient for the down payment, and they haven't enough in savings. But if they don't buy the offered apartment, they don't know how long they will have to wait for another. Having been offered an apartment, they are also under some considerable pressure to move out of the transitional apartment to make room for others, so they feel they must solve their problem quickly.

This particular combination of circumstances is highly unusual, including the dogged pressure on the family to move when they have nowhere to go. The group around the table discusses all conceivable solutions. They also complain bitterly about the uneven pricing of apartments, about the existence of heartless bureaucrats in the world, and about inflexible regulations. They consider possible routes, through kinship ties, to finding contacts who might help find a solution. They assure each other that they hate such use of ties, and would never consider it if some other possible solution could be found.

5.) Boryana, a young woman in her twenties, is living in Sofia with her husband, a government employee. Boryana is an experienced industrial technician. During her first few months in Sofia, she is unable to locate a job that she feels is

suitable to her skills and tastes, although there has been employment offered to her. She feels frustrated and unhappy, and complains to her father, a cooperative farmer. Her father drives to Sofia from their native village, and makes contact with some distant relatives in the city who came originally from his region. One of the relatives puts Boryana in touch with a person who knows of a more suitable job for her.

Boryana and her husband have a two year old child, who is staying in the village with Boryana's parents. Boryana says that the air is better there, and there is more room for a child to play as their Sofia apartment is small. They plan to bring the child to Sofia when he begins school.

6.) Stefan and Milena are a Sofia couple in their thirties with a teen-age son, Ognyan. Stefan is a white collar worker in the cooperative trading system. Milena is a technician in industry.

Milena has telephone contact on most days with her parents, who are pensioners. They discuss all everyday matters. They also see each other very often. If Milena has some errand she can't easily find time for – something to purchase, theatre tickets to find – her mother takes care of it for her.

Every Saturday, Ognyan goes to visit one or the other pair of his grandparents. He chats with them, helps them with chores, reads or watches television at their home, and then stays the night. Milena explains that he does this because he otherwise "hardly sees them".

When Ognyan was born, his father's mother had cared for him for two and a half years until he entered kindergarten. His parents would have preferred to place him in a public infant day nursery, but the grandmother was opposed to putting a baby in a nursery and insisted that she had a right to care for him; the grandmother won.

Stefan's brother is working abroad. The brother and his wife have one child, whom they send every summer to live with Stefan and Milena for part of the season and with Stefan's parents for the rest. Stefan and Milena consider it very natural to be asked to care for this child each summer, and find it a treat, not a burden. They say the child is sent to spend the summer "because the weather is warmer and nicer here".

Stefan and Milena are building themselves a summer cottage in a village a considerable drive from Sofia (about two hours). They chose the place because one of Stefan's brothers is building there, as are his parents. Stefan and Milena want to spend their leisure time near these relatives.

In Sofia, Stefan spends free time several times a week helping his brother, his cousin, or his parents with various chores – building something in one of their apartments, repairing a car, errands. Some of these tasks are quite time consuming –

for instance, driving his parents to a distant village (more than two hours drive) where they inherited land from one of their parents, picking cherries all evening, sleeping there, and driving back the next morning in time for work. Stefan returned from this particular excursion heavily laden with cherries, "the best variety in the country".

7.) Marika is a 65 year old retired nurse in Sofia. Since she took her pension, she has very much enjoyed having extra time to help her niece and niece's husband to care for their children. Even when she was working, she spent considerable time helping them, travelling to their home by tram and bus (about 40 minutes each way). Her niece's son is leaving for a school excursion, so Marika hurries to her niece's home to prepare the boy's clothing for the trip. When Marika took a vacation trip to Czechoslovakia and the German Democratic Republic, she took the boy with her.

In summer, Marika often assists her cousin in the latter's allotment garden near Sofia. In return, the cousin gives Marika a substantial share of fresh produce as well as jars of fruits and vegetables for the winter.

Marika is single and owns a comfortable apartment in the center of the city, where she has lived for many years. She has shared this apartment with a succession of young relatives, who have come to Sofia to study. Just now, she has a young niece from her home town living with her, and the niece's husband. The young couple return from a visit with relatives near the town of Gabrovo. They bring Marika some wine made by her kin – a favorite local variety, and some garden produce, and mushrooms they have gathered for her in the forest.

Note to the reader:
Names and a few personal details in these descriptions have been changed to protect privacy.

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