

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Sir:

Recently a copy of Chary's review of my book, *The Social Education of Bulgarian School Children*, was brought to my attention. Normally, I make it a rule not to reply to a critical review of any of my publications, since replies of this nature usually are counterproductive: They serve no useful purpose and result more in forensic exercises than in scholarly studies. But then Chary's review is not the usual review, for it contains a number of errors both in facts and logic. In fairness, then, as much to your readers as to myself, I am taking the liberty to write the present rebuttal.

1. Chary feels that I am unfair in pointing out examples of dogma in Bulgarian education because "Some of Georgeoff's examples of dogmatic Bulgarian scholarship have their parallel in the West." Argeed! However I was *not* writing about education in the West, but in *Bulgaria*, as is clearly indicated in the title of my book. Indeed, comparisons between Eastern and Western practices are made; for instance, concerning the wide use of the lecture technique in Bulgaria, I specifically note: "... Extensive use of the lecture method is not of course, unique to Bulgaria — or even Eastern European schools — but it does nevertheless offer a convenient means by which carefully selected subject matter and prescribed ideological content can be presented to students." (Page 158).

In reality, it is the *degree* to which such dogmatism occurs that Chary has failed to consider in his criticism. To maintain that the dogmatism that exists in the education of Western democracies is anywhere nearly comparable to that of the Eastern communist states is unrealistic.

2. Chary also maintains that "The educated [Bulgarians] are usually quite aware of world affairs and the different sides of various current political questions" and that "... One can also plausibly argue that the blatant nature of socialist propaganda forces the Bulgarian to accept less readily what he reads in his newspapers or hears on his radio than an American..." All this is, of course, beside the point. Chary needs again to be reminded that my volume is not about the intellectual elite, but about Bulgaria's children; and with them even blatant propaganda can be, and is, effective.

3. In his review, Chary seems to be somewhat confused about the term *objectivity* as used in my study. He writes: "Objectivity ... cannot be found, as Georgeoff implies, in a specific technique of Western schol-

arship which contrasts with the subjective methodology of Marxist scholarship, but rather is only an ideal quantity which may be approached by comparing the variance of differing points of view." In this he is confusing process with product. It is this very act of comparison, of contrasting, and of seeking that is objectivity. It certainly is a technique — a technique for arriving in as unbiased and unprejudiced a manner as possible at as much pertinent information as possible on a given problem before deciding on a course of action. It is "inquiry thinking" the "discovery approach" to learning, or the Socratic method — one of very earliest deliberately developed pedagogic techniques and the foundations of democratic education the world over. Under no circumstances can objectivity, as Chary maintains, be considered to be "an ideal quantity." Indeed, some contemporary philosophies, notably pragmatism, discount completely the possibility that "an ideal quantity" can ever exist.

Chary also states that I have failed to come to grips with the problem of objectivity. On page after page of the book, I have consistently pointed out the absolutist, deterministic nature of communist education as contrasted directly or by implication with the freer, exploratory, Socratic approaches found in innovative schools of the West. This was the whole point of my comments on communist education.

4. Chary further raises some questions regarding certain factual information in the book. In particular, he argues that my statement "that during the war Sofia treated the Slavs of ... Macedonia alike and ... that this treatment was no different than that of Bulgarians elsewhere in the country ... cannot stand up to the facts of Bulgarian occupation in Macedonia." I do not know where Chary received his information, since he does not document it, but mine is based on literally hundreds of interviews with Slav-speaking Macedonians, both in Yugoslavia and in Bulgaria, including one of the former Bulgarian military governors of a part of Macedonia and several Macedonian political activists who were sent to Bulgaria for internment. In not *one* instance have I found a single person offering a different interpretation. My readings of original sources and archival materials also appear to support this interpretation *in toto*. The facts simply seem to be that Macedonia was considered a part of Greater Bulgaria and the Slav-speaking inhabitants were so treated.

Again, Chary writes that since the Agrarian Union is still a legal party in Bulgaria, it is incorrect to call the Communists the "single party." In the first place, I clearly indicate at the very beginning of my work

(page 7) that Bulgaria's "... political system has two major parties — the Communist and the National Agrarian Union, *which collaborates with the Communist Party*" [italics presently added]. The underlined phrase is the key. Bulgaria does not have an opposition Party, the necessary element for a real two party system as understood in the West. For all practical purposes the Communist Party is "the Party." One never sees banners heralding the National Agrarian Union, but only the Communist Party. Children in school are not told to glorify the National Agrarian Union, or to become junior members in some non-existent Agrarian youth groups, but only of the Communist Party and its auxiliary organizations. Whatever remains of the old Agrarian Union serves the Communist Party and its purposes. For anyone to attempt to maintain otherwise is to be either grossly naive, or to be deceiving one's self, or both.

Chary also notes that I have omitted the fact that there is a commercial rate for the lev which is much more favorable to the lev than the tourist rate is. I have not included this information in my volume because, whereas the tourist rate actually exists (levs are exchanged at this rate thousands of times each day and the exchange at any other rate constitutes a serious crime), the commercial rate for practical purposes is a fiction — as anyone even peripherally acquainted with Eastern European economics well knows. In international trade agreements where the barter of goods is not a factor, cost is frequently figured in terms of hard currency. Even in cases where the initial price quoted is in lev, the price for the foreign market is arbitrarily set to make the item competitive in terms of that market. Thus, the internal market price and the external market price for an item may, and usually do, differ widely from each other. The effects of a frozen, unrealistic commercial exchange rate in the cases where it is applied are in this way completely discounted. Further, no constant cost ratio for this difference exists. This ratio varies from item to item as well as sometimes even from sale to sale for a specific item. Much more can be said on this point, but space does not permit.

However, perhaps I should add that the reason the intricacies of East European economics are not included in detail in my volume is because *it is a book on Bulgarian education*, not Bulgarian trade. I have included information from other fields only for the purpose of forming a rough framework for my main concern.

This is the reason also why my "... historical, sociological, and economic survey of Bulgaria is ... brief." The volume as it stands is several hundred pages in length already. To have added detailed studies of each

of these subjects would have meant not only digressing seriously from the main purpose of the volume, but even if I had, the result would have still been very sketchy. Indeed, several tomes can easily be written on any one of these topics.

In short, in reviewing my book Chary has consistently ignored my objectives in writing it. He has moreover overlooked factual information which a more careful perusal on his part would clearly show to be included. Most important of all, in his criticisms of my supposed lack of objectivity, he himself appears to have forgotten to be objective.

Lafayette, Indiana

JOHN GEORGE OFF

Keith R. Legg, *Politics in Modern Greece*. Stanford, California: Stanford University, Press 1969. Pp. 367.

To write about Greek politics implies immediately the untangling of the labyrinthine evolution of the Greek political culture, the recounting of national traumatic experiences, and above all the need for explaining the current political events and the fateful state of Greek affairs since 1967. Greek politics and the vagaries of strong political strife are a focal and important part of any discussion of the country. But the preoccupation with politics and the Greek political culture is another characteristic example of fascination with symptoms and not with underlying causes. This is particularly true when one is also faced with the difficulty of describing at the same time a modernizing nation and a society described as "transitional," "contrapuntal," "bimodal," "contradictory," or "prismatic." These terms reflecting the essential polarity of Greek life imply not only the capacity of persons to act in contradictory ways but also suggest a potential for extreme behavior, and the vacillation between extremes, such as the presence of unbridled democracy and of shades of strong totalitarianism.

The book of Legg makes it possible to see Greek politics not as a sui generis scientific task, but as part of a larger effort toward an understanding of forces shaping modern Greece. His work is a most welcome addition to the few careful works which attempt to provide a dispassionate picture of political developments, trace the historical roots of Greek political parties, and explicate the ideological background of Greek poli-