Nationalized Cosmopolitanism with Communist Characteristics: The Esperanto Movement's Survival Strategy in Post-WWII Bulgaria

Social movements can survive under authoritarianism by establishing legitimate activist cultures acceptable to authoritarian regimes while pursuing their intrinsic goals. This argument builds on the case of the Esperanto movement, the most institutionalized transnational social movement under Eastern European state socialism. I focus on the survival strategy of Bulgarian Esperantists, as Bulgaria was a difficult case of movement survival. In the early years following World War II, their national periodical Bulgara Esperantisto *was a key organizing tool for the movement reporting on its activities, reaching out to potential recruits, and legitimizing the movement. Examining the periodical's discourse over a two-year period, I find that the movement managed to carve a space for itself in the new political context by advancing a form of nationalized cosmopolitanism in its practices and in its rhetoric. In its practices, the movement prioritized its own concerns coordinating Esperanto activities locally, nationally, and internationally. Rhetorically, the movement successfully leveraged available national and global discursive resources to legitimate itself in front of different audiences, especially the state and the local population. Prioritizing partnerships while avoiding conflict, Bulgarian Esperantists were able to thrive under the new communist regime, recruit new members, and reconnect with the global Esperanto movement. I conclude that a legitimate activist culture may involve goals, tactics, and/or identity adapted to a regime's ideology and institutional environment without necessarily being coopted. In the context of the nation-state system, invoking the nation can be an especially effective legitimation strategy, even for movements with cosmopolitan orientations.*

How do social movements survive under authoritarianism? Writing about the U.S. context, Verta Taylor alerted us to the importance of social movement survival as "promoting the survival of *activist networks*, sustaining a repertoire of *goals and tactics*, and promoting a *collective identity* that offers participants a sense of mission and moral purpose" (Taylor 1989: 762). We know surprisingly little about social movement survival under authoritarian regimes (but see Spires 2011). With the exception of occasional dissidents, such regimes appear largely unchallenged until uprisings surprise everyone (1989, the Arab Spring, etc.). Where do the public spiritedness, willingness and ability to achieve desired ends, and identification with collective entities necessary to effect social change come from under authoritarian regimes where opposition is generally repressed?

I argue that social movements can survive under authoritarianism by establishing legitimate activist cultures acceptable to authoritarian regimes but offering "free spaces" (Polletta 1999) for semi-autonomous action. This process mirrors the process in democracies where insider status and legitimacy also facilitate movement survival (Edwards and Marullo 1995; Minkoff 1999). A legitimate activist culture may involve goals, tactics, and/or identity adapted to a regime's ideology and institutional environment without necessarily being coopted (e.g. Spires 2011; Straughn 2005). In the context of the nation-state system, invoking the nation can be an especially effective legitimation strategy, even for movements with cosmopolitan orientations (e.g. Ray and Outhwaite 2016).

My argument builds on the case of the Esperanto movement's survival under Eastern European state socialism. Noting that authoritarian states are inhospitable to social movements is a tautology. It is all the more surprising that Esperanto would not only survive but thrive in state-socialist Eastern Europe. Esperanto became the most institutionalized transnational social

movement in the region in the second half of the twentieth century. The Esperanto movement had the highest number of transnational organizations with Eastern European members (Figure 1). Esperanto institutions (artistic, economic, educational, interest-based groups, etc.) flourished in several Eastern European countries (Blanke 2007).

[Figure 1 about here]

Product of the globalization period of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, Esperanto is a quintessential cosmopolitan project and a foundation of global identity (Garvia 2015; Kim 1999). Esperanto is a constructed language created by Ludwik Zamenhof[1] in the 1880s as a lingua franca for international communication (Garvia 2015). "[B]rotherhood and justice among all peoples" constitute the "internal idea" of Esperanto (Lins 1988: 40). Esperanto outlived its competitors among constructed languages because of the movement's organization and ideology (Garvia 2015). The movement's hybrid organization enables coordination at multiple scales (global, national, and local) and facilitates grassroots participation and commitment (Garvia 2015; van Dijk 2008). Ideologically, the Esperanto movement advocates peace, justice, and mutual respect among different peoples and offers the international language Esperanto as an aid mitigating international inequality (Garvia 2015; Lins 1988).

Both democratic and authoritarian states opposed Esperanto perceiving it as a threat to the nation-state system (Garvia 2015; Lins 1988). Esperantists experienced the worst persecutions under Hitler and Stalin, who decimated the movement in their countries (Lins 1988). The survival of the Esperanto movement under several state-socialist regimes—Esperanto

[1] Zamenhof was a Jewish subject of the Russian empire born in the multi-ethnic city of Białystok, located in northeastern Poland.

being most successful in Bulgaria, Hungary, and Poland (Blanke 2007)—thus presents a puzzle. I focus on the Bulgarian case because Bulgaria, as the closest Soviet ally of the three, is a difficult case for movement survival.

Under state socialism, the Bulgarian Esperanto Association became one of the strongest members of the Universal Esperanto Association (UEA), with over 5,000 members and about 200 local organizations (Lapenna 1974). Bulgarian Esperantists had the opportunity to travel to Esperanto World Congresses and to host two World Congresses, in 1963 and in 1978 (Aleksiev 1992; Blanke 2007; Lapenna 1974), while freedom of transnational movement for most Bulgarians was limited. Esperanto achievements included stable organizations, professional offices, cultural houses, a cooperative, state support, strong publishing activity, language instruction in schools and universities, organized interest groups, cooperation with organizations within and outside Esperanto, tourism, rich cultural life (choirs, theaters), radio programs, and articles about Esperanto published outside the movement (Blanke 2007).

The Bulgarian Esperanto movement gained momentum in the second half of the 1940s, a period during which Soviet Esperantists disappeared from the international scene following Stalin's purges of the late 1930s and the 1940s (Lapenna 1974; Lins 1988; Sarafov 1971). Because of their international contacts, Soviet Esperantists were suspected of transmitting critical information about the Soviet Union abroad and acting as bourgeois elements at home (Lins 1988). Despite the impeccable communist credentials of many Bulgarian Esperantists (Lins 1988; Oljanov 1988), their movement could never shake off the bourgeois label completely either. The Bulgarian movement also nearly stopped functioning during the Stalinist crackdown in the country, between 1950 and 1954, only to continue flourishing after Stalin's death extolling state socialism's achievements (Aleksiev 1992; Lapenna 1974; Sarafov 1971). Yet, in a self-

study conducted in the 1980s, Bulgarian Esperantists critically admitted their members being overly educated (a quarter having university degrees), overly drawn from the white-collar class, and insufficiently representing workers and peasants (Ignev 1988). These contradictions raise the question: How did Bulgarian Esperantists legitimize their movement under state socialism?

A key to Esperanto's success in Bulgaria is the Bulgarian Esperanto movement's legitimation strategy undertaken immediately following World War II. The mid-to-late 1940s was a crucial period during which the new regime sought to legitimize itself and set the foundations of state socialism in the country. It was during this period that Bulgarian Esperantists, acting independently from their Soviet counterparts in a local context of relative pluralism (Gallagher 2001; Lins 1988), positioned their movement as a useful contributor to the new state building project. I examine the discursive foundations of this legitimation strategy as presented in *Bulgara Esperantisto* (Bulgarian Esperantist), their domestically-oriented periodical, during its first two post-war years of publication, 1946-1947.

I find that the Bulgarian Esperanto movement managed to carve a space for itself in the new political context by advancing a form of *nationalized cosmopolitanism with communist characteristics* in its practices and in its rhetoric. In its practices, the Bulgarian Esperanto movement focused primarily on its own concerns coordinating Esperanto activities locally, nationally, and internationally. Rhetorically, the movement successfully leveraged available national and global discursive resources to legitimize itself in front of different audiences, especially the state and the local population. Prioritizing pragmatic partnerships while avoiding conflict, Bulgarian Esperantists were able to thrive under the new communist regime, recruit new members, and partake in the global Esperanto movement. In what follows, I examine how the Bulgarian Esperanto movement developed a legitimate activist culture in the country by

nationalizing cosmopolitanism and by endowing it with communist characteristics. This activist culture facilitated the survival of the Esperanto movement under state socialism aligning the movement with the official state ideology and thus making it legitimate albeit not coterminous with the regime but pursuing its own priorities.

How Social Movements Survive under Repressive Regimes

Social movements may adopt a variety of strategies to survive under unhospitable conditions. Some become coopted (Chirot 1980; Johnston and Snow 1998; Ost 1989) or even facilitate the establishment of repressive regimes (Berman 1997; Riley 2005). Others may retrench into “abeyance structures” tightening their ranks and sharpening their militancy until more favorable conditions emerge (Taylor 1989). Occasionally, oppositional mobilization would develop (Johnston and Snow 1998). Recognizing the constraints of limited political opportunities without abandoning their struggles, many movements under repressive regimes adopt pragmatic nonconfrontational approaches. They may become skilled at “consentful contention” appealing to states’ ideologies (Straughn 2005). They may leverage government connections and limited information flows allowing officials to take credit for their successes (Spires 2011). They may gradually push the boundaries of cultural and legal norms (Chua 2012).

Social movement pragmatism makes sense given that even in democracies insiders are more likely to survive than radical organizations are (Edwards and Marullo 1995). Under repressive regimes, radical militancy may be too costly. By contrast, organizations with more legitimate, institutionally acceptable profiles can adapt to changing environments (Minkoff 1999). Having a formal organizational status—also associated with legitimacy, especially in authoritarian contexts—is another factor facilitating movement survival (Edwards and Marullo

1995). In order to achieve legitimacy, social movements must meet the demands of two audiences, the suspicious state and the public they serve and/or among which they recruit new members.

Legitimacy relates to yet another factor crucial for social movement survival, social capital. For a movement, social capital translates into resources, patronage, and community ties (Edwards and Marullo 1995; Edwards and McCarthy 2004). In fact, personal networks are among the most important contexts for mobilization under repressive regimes (Opp and Gern 1993). The institutional environment of authoritarian regimes may be especially conducive to reliance on personal networks as a typical problem-solving tactic, as in the Chinese *guanxi* (Chang 2011; Spires 2011). Movement survival in such contexts may be facilitated by nurturing broad connections among both ordinary people and state echelons.

Survival for social movements with cosmopolitan orientations—transnational connections and openness,—such as Esperanto, may be especially difficult under authoritarianism. In the Soviet Union, an anti-cosmopolitan sentiment, manifested in anti-foreignness, in anti-Jewishness, and in suspicion of intellectuals, had a persistent presence (Grüner 2010). The Stalinist purges of perceived foreign agents of the late 1930s and the 1940s, including of Esperantists, were its worst manifestations (Lins 1988). Legitimizing cosmopolitanism in the region, thus, must have involved considerable effort and a deep understanding of the relationship between cosmopolitanism and communism.

Communist Cosmopolitanism

The "national question," referring to the reality of national divisions superimposed on class distinctions, is considered a major contradiction within Marxism (Kolakowski 1978). While

some communists, such as Luxemburg, opposed national self-determination (Kolakowski 1978), most Eastern European communists faced the reality of nation-states pragmatically. Eastern European internationalism—the form of cosmopolitanism favored by communists—accommodated nationalism.

Eastern European internationalism is not a uniform phenomenon. It has multiple currents. As a political movement, communist internationalism started as an anti-war effort breaking off from other internationalists who supported their governments in World War I (Nation 1989). Lenin, however, associated the proletarian class struggle with anti-imperialist national movements (Nation 1989). The Communist International (the Comintern), the organizational arm of this political movement until 1943, included parties representing nation-based communist movements (Nation 1989). In 1935, the Comintern adopted the popular front strategy of forming broad national coalitions against fascism. The "national line" politics was one implication of the Comintern's popular front strategy (Sygkelos 2011). Political internationalism was thus anti-war, anti-fascist, and patriotic.

Intellectuals, who played an important role in promoting internationalism, ushered in "a cultural turn" in the 1920s and the 1930s (Clark 2011: 10). Cultural internationalism involved boundary work that was "both confrontational (against the 'West', 'capitalism', 'imperialism' etc.) and integrative (towards 'progressive forces', 'the wretched of the Earth', 'friends of the Soviet Union' etc.)" (Rupprecht 2015: 285). Intellectuals were "enticed by the possibility of a transnational cultural space, an intellectual fraternity or a transnational confederation of leftists" (Clark 2011: 31). Soviet writers and translators developed a world cultural canon placing Soviet culture at its center (Clark 2011; Gould 2012). Literature and translation, however, played multiple and contradictory roles, from constructing a transnational cultural sphere to bolstering

Russian and Soviet identity, and providing avenues for critical thinking and subversion (Ray and Outhwaite 2016). Consequently, the Soviet regime was suspicious of cultural internationalism but also depended on it, as it enjoyed broad popularity, among intellectuals and among ordinary people, and helped legitimize the Soviet project (Ray and Outhwaite 2016; Rupprecht 2015).

Supporting the Soviet state, patriotic intellectuals helped institute a Soviet development project as an alternative to the so-called Western civilization. Challenging Western discourses of Russian and Eastern European barbarism (Todorova 1997; Wolff 1994), this civilization-building initiative moved from a sense of inferiority to the West to a "Stalinist superiority complex" (David-Fox 2011). Soviet nationalism touted the Soviet Union as the homeland of socialism (Brandenberger 2002; Todorova 1992) elevating Moscow and Russian culture as the center of a "fourth Rome" (Clark 2011). International contacts "confirmed the ostensible superiority of the Soviet system—morally over the West, economically, technologically and culturally over the rest of the world" to both the Soviet and the international public (Rupprecht 2015: 286). "[C]ultural diplomacy," "the systematic inclusion of a cultural dimension to foreign relations, or the formal allocation of attention and resources to culture" became an essential aspect of Soviet foreign policy as it was for other major powers during the twentieth century (David-Fox 2011: 14). Its purpose was to promote the Soviet model as an alternative modernization and development strategy.

The successful legitimation of other forms of cosmopolitanism in state-socialist Eastern Europe likely depended on the discursive mobilization of one or more aspects of communist cosmopolitanism. Patriotism combined with world peace and international cooperation would be legitimate. The world would be imagined as a shared space of progressive cultural exchange. Development aligned with the Soviet model would be counterposed to Western civilizational

hegemony (cf. Molnár 2005). Esperanto was well suited to meet the challenge of mobilizing communist cosmopolitanism.

Esperanto and Survival

The success of Esperanto compared to other constructed languages is attributed in part to the movement's ideal of creating a future of peace, justice, and mutual respect among different peoples (Garvia 2015). Esperanto attracted many followers of universalist ideologies, notably pacifists, socialists, and anarchists who saw it as a means to pursue their political goals (Lins 1988). In addition to its language advocacy, the Universal Esperanto Association (UEA), formed, in 1908, advocated practical internationalism, involving solidarity and cooperation, such as facilitating correspondence among civilians from opposing sides and delivering food, clothing, and medicine through its delegate systems during World War I (Lins 1988). What made Esperanto attractive to cosmopolitans made it suspicious to nationalists. Esperanto was perceived as a threat to the nation-state system and vigorously opposed by nation-states, particularly those striving for global power (Garvia 2015; Lins 1988).

To survive persecutions, early Esperantists distanced themselves from politics establishing "neutrality" as a principle of the Esperanto movement (Lins 1988). Political neutrality made Esperanto compatible with different political movements, on the left and on the right, including Nazis (Lins 1988). Only the left, however, established a long-lasting branch, the labor-Esperanto movement, despite suffering from divisions affecting the broader labor movement (Blanke 2007; Lins 1988). As a political tool of the left, Esperanto was used for correspondence and voluntary journalism, especially after the Comintern's 1924 decision to promote exchanges between Soviet workers and workers from around the world (Blanke 2007;

Lins 1988). The adoption of the neutrality principle took the political edge off of the Esperanto movement while allowing members to still pursue political goals. The resulting political ambiguity diluted the political force of the Esperanto movement but likely facilitated its survival.

Nation-specific activism was another survival strategy against state backlash. Some Esperantists believed activists familiar with their national contexts were best suited to directing the movement in any given country (Lins 1988). Following a thirty-year conflict over the structure and role of the Universal Esperanto Association (UEA), the global umbrella organization for the neutral Esperanto movement, and the role of national associations, the national associations prevailed (van Dijk 2008). In 1934, it was decided UEA would only be responsible for external relations, international information, support for the Esperanto Academy, and organization of World Congresses (van Dijk 2008). In 1947, UEA officially became a federated organization of largely independent national associations (van Dijk 2008). National Esperanto associations were autonomous to face the conditions in their countries as best as they saw fit, which while diminishing the global power of the movement may have aided its survival.

Grassroots involvement was as essential to the relative success of Esperanto as was the national and global organization of the movement (Garvia 2015; van Dijk 2008). The three-level organizational structure of UEA agreed upon in the 1920s recognizes the local scale as equally important as the national and the international scales (van Dijk 2008). Local circles and local delegates ensuring participation and commitment were the lifeblood of the movement (Garvia 2015). Local circles recruit members, offer continuous language instruction, organize local movement activity, host visitors, and designate contact persons for maintaining connections with the broader movement. Local self-sufficiency and national autonomy enabled survival by allowing Esperantists to adapt their movement efforts to local and national contexts.

Esperanto has strong roots in Bulgaria. Bulgarians were among the first Esperanto enthusiasts in the late 1880s establishing local and national organizations affiliated with both the neutral and the labor-Esperanto movements (Aleksiev 1992; Lapenna 1974; Sarafov 1971). Bulgarian Miloslav Bogdanov published the second oldest albeit short-lived Esperanto newspaper in the world *La Mondlingvisto* (The world linguist) (Aleksiev 1992; Lapenna 1974). The Bulgarian movement held its first national Esperanto congress[2] and formed a national association in 1907 (Lapenna 1974). The state officially supported Esperanto instruction as an elective in Bulgarian schools[3] starting in 1912 (Blanke 2007; Lapenna 1974).

The success of Esperanto in Bulgaria during state socialism can in part be attributed to labor-Esperantists' activist history and leadership continuity (Aleksiev 1992; Blanke 2007). A Bulgarian labor-Esperanto association only existed between 1930 and 1934 due to persecutions of communists in the country (Lins 1988; Oljanov 1988). In 1938, communist Esperantists returned to neutral national associations where they exercised considerable influence (Lins 1988). After adopting the strategy of armed struggle against fascism, many Bulgarian communists were arrested and exposed to Esperanto in prison (Lins 1988; Oljanov 1988). Two hundred twenty-seven Bulgarian Esperantists reportedly died as partisans, in prison, or fighting in the Spanish Civil War (Lins 1988). Labor-Esperantists who survived played key roles in the

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[2] No national congresses occurred in the periods 1912-1918, 1941-1944, and 1949-1955 (Sarafov 1971).

[3] Esperanto was proscribed in schools between 1928 and 1931 for its association with forbidden internationalist, Bolshevik, and anarchist ideas (Lapenna 1974; Lins 1988) and during Stalinism (Aleksiev 1992).

movement after the war (Blanke 2007). The labor activist credentials of some of its members endowed the Bulgarian Esperanto movement with some legitimacy under state socialism.

Pragmatism was another reason for Esperanto's success in Bulgaria under state socialism (Aleksiev 1992). When the Bulgarian Communist Party (BCP) recommended the dissolution of the Esperanto association as unnecessary during the Stalinist period, Esperantists used the strategy of delaying and avoiding the question to keep the organization officially active (Lins 1988). The Esperanto cooperative established in 1945 continued functioning quietly importing materials and distributing them among Esperantists (Aleksiev 1992). After it weathered Stalinism, the movement had to acknowledge the superiority of BCP; its periodicals published the Party's political reports; its congresses had to receive the blessing of BCP; its budget had to be prepared "in consultation" with the international section of the Party (Aleksiev 1992). The promotion of Bulgarian cultural and tourist attractions contributed to softening of state controls (Aleksiev 1992). Non-confrontational pragmatic relations with the state appear as necessary for Esperanto's survival under state socialism as they were for movements elsewhere (cf. Spires 2011; Straughn 2005).

Bulgarian Esperantists also relied on their personal ties to facilitate the work of the movement (Aleksiev 1992). Esperanto "friends" among the party and state leadership advocated for the movement (Aleksiev 1992). Esperanto activist Asen Grigorov was secretary to Georgi Dimitrov, the country's famous communist leader (Blanke 1988; Lins 1988). Dimitrov reportedly told Grigorov that Esperanto should be a neutral channel of information about the "new democratic" Bulgaria (Lins 1988: 461). The Bulgarian Esperanto movement would continue to emphasize its connections with Dimitrov throughout the state-socialist period (Aleksiev 1986). Mobilizing "friendship" networks emerges as an as important survival strategy

for the Esperanto movement in Bulgaria as leveraging *guanxi* is for Chinese movements (cf. Spires 2011).

In what follows, I show how Bulgarian Esperantists mobilized available discursive resources to legitimize their movement in the country at the beginning of state socialism to make the pursuit of their intrinsic cosmopolitan goals possible. With their history of labor-Esperanto activism, non-confrontational pragmatism, and connections with the new regime, Bulgarian Esperantists were well positioned to bridge Esperanto cosmopolitanism and communism. Given their roots in the country, they knew what it took to mobilize local participation. Their national association had the authority to direct Esperanto development as it saw fit in the Bulgarian context. As rooted cosmopolitans (Tarrow 2005), Bulgarian Esperantists tried to make themselves useful deploying their cosmopolitan cultural capital in service of their country's new state building project. The resulting nationalized cosmopolitanism with communist characteristics allowed them to survive and thrive under state socialism while remaining committed to their Esperanto activism.

Context, Data, and Analytical Strategy

The Esperanto movement is a theoretically and methodologically important case because it was the most institutionalized transnational movement in Eastern Europe in the second half of the twentieth century. The movement had the highest number of transnational organizations with members in the region (Figure 1). Bulgarian Esperantists were members of four transnational Esperanto organizations in 1953 and of forty-three in 1988 (Smith and Wiest 2012). They established numerous national cultural, economic, educational, interest-based, and professional Esperanto institutions too (Aleksiev 1992; Blanke 2007; Lapenna 1974; Sarafov 1971). The

continuous existence of such institutions indicates the movement was able to survive state socialism in the region. As the most regionally institutionalized transnational movement, Esperanto offers a window into social movements' survival strategies under Eastern European state socialism.

While Esperanto was the most tolerated transnational movement in state-socialist Eastern Europe overall, its fortunes varied by country and by period. Its earliest successes after World War II occurred in Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, and Yugoslavia whereas in Albania, East Germany, Romania, and the Soviet Union Esperantists had a difficult time[4] (Blanke 2007; Lins 1988). Among the countries where Esperanto flourished, Bulgaria experienced the least significant opposition to state socialism (Stamatov 2000). The Bulgarian regime was one of the Soviet Union's closest allies maintaining a close grip on society. As a difficult case for movement survival, Bulgaria is especially informative.

I focus on the period of the mid-to-late 1940s because it represents a critical juncture in the institution of state socialism in Eastern Europe. Toward the end of WWII, in an Allied Powers' agreement, Bulgaria was allocated to the Soviet sphere of influence (Resis 1978). With the Soviet army at the border, a popular front coalition led by Bulgarian communists staged a coup on September 9, 1944 and established a new regime. The several years that followed provide crucial insights into how Bulgarian society grappled with making sense of the new

[4] The resurrection of the Soviet and the GDR Esperanto movements is attributed in part to Esperantists' efforts in other state-socialist countries (Blanke 2007). In Albania and Romania, Esperanto activity was limited throughout state socialism (Blanke 2007).

reality and engaged in new institutional building. Institutional and meaning-making innovations created during this period would influence future developments in a path-dependent process.

In the second half of the 1940s, the Bulgarian Esperanto movement was in a position to create its own survival strategy. It was not subject to Soviet influence because cross-national contacts with Soviet Esperantists were severed as their movement was decimated by the Stalinist purges (Lins 1988). Meanwhile, Bulgaria still enjoyed relative albeit decreasing pluralism (Gallagher 2001). Given the existence of two Esperanto factions in the country before the war, neutral and labor-Esperantists (Aleksiev 1992; Lapenna 1974; Sarafov 1971), the Bulgarian Esperanto movement could have adopted a number of different strategies in relation to the new regime. Because Esperanto is similar to messianic movements where the message and the strategy converge (Garvia 2015), this early period of its development under Bulgarian state socialism is crucial for understanding the later fortunes of the Esperanto movement in the country.

I focus my analysis on one of the periodicals published by Bulgarian Esperantists during the period, *Bulgara Esperantisto* (Bulgarian Esperantist). *Bulgara Esperantisto*, the main organ of the national Esperanto association, was first published in 1919 and has appeared regularly since, with occasional interruptions (during World War II: 1942-1945 and during the Stalinist period in the country: 1949-1956) (Aleksiev 1992; Hernández Yzal, Máthé, and Molera 2010; Lins 1988). The publication of *Bulgara Esperantisto* in 1946-1947[5] was one element in a

[5] Between 1948 and 1950, financial difficulties led to Bulgarian Esperantists only publishing *Internacia Kulturo* (International Culture), a collaboration of Balkan Esperantists. *Bulgara Esperantisto* occasionally appeared as an insert to *Internacia Kulturo* during these years.

postwar revival of Esperanto in Bulgaria (and elsewhere) that included congresses, local clubs, radio broadcasts[6], a cooperative, and publication of books, dictionaries, and other periodicals. *Bulgara Esperantisto* not only reported on these developments but was also an organizing tool facilitating Esperanto revival in the country. Written uncharacteristically mostly in Bulgarian[7] during this period, the periodical targeted a domestic audience not necessarily familiar with the Esperanto language. The 1946-1947 issues of *Bulgara Esperantisto* represent the Bulgarian Esperanto movement's most significant effort to connect with the local population and recruit new members needed to ensure the movement's survival after World War II. Through the periodical, Bulgarian Esperantists also engaged with the early construction of state socialism and reestablished their international Esperanto contacts.

The 1946-1947 issues of *Bulgara Esperantisto* exemplify the formative discourse of the Esperanto movement in the country under state socialism[8]. The sixteen issues comprising a total

[6] Radio Sofia began broadcasting daily programs in Esperanto in 1945.

[7] Until 1942 and starting again in 1957, *Bulgara Esperantisto* appeared in Esperanto. All translations from Bulgarian and from Esperanto are mine.

[8] Editorial and leadership continuity suggests relative continuity of Esperanto discourses and practices. Editorial continuity was evident in the person of Ivan Sarafov, editor-in-chief between 1946 and 1947 and between 1964 and 1968 (Hernández Yzal, Máthé, and Molera 2010). Sarafov wrote a history of the Bulgarian Esperanto movement (1971). Asen Grigorov, another key Esperanto figure, served as editor of *Internacia Kulturo* (International Culture) between 1945 and 1950 and of *Nuntempa Bulgario* (Contemporary Bulgaria), another important Esperanto publication, between 1957 and 1971 (Hernández Yzal, Máthé, and Molera 2010).

of 128 pages of *Bulgara Esperantisto* published between 1946 and 1947 represent sufficient space and time to formulate a strategy for the movement in the new state-socialist country. The data I analyze thus consists of all sections of the periodical, a total of 178, appearing during this two-year period. I accessed *Bulgara Esperantisto*, as well as most other Esperanto sources cited here, through the Esperanto Museum of the Austrian National Library, one of the largest and insufficiently explored depositories of Esperanto materials in the world.

Data analyses proceeded in two stages. First, I read all sections and inductively created codes for all themes I could discern in the 1946-1947 issues of *Bulgara Esperantisto*. I organized the codes with the help of the qualitative analysis software Atlas.ti. I did several iterations of coding with the goal of being as exhaustive as possible. In the second, deductive, stage of the analysis, I examined existing theories in light of the observed empirical data coded in the first stage. This was an iterative process too. I present the findings in two sections, one dedicated to the practices of the movement as reported by *Bulgara Esperantisto* and another one dedicated to the rhetorical strategy of the Bulgarian Esperanto movement at the beginning of state socialism in the country.

Practicing Cosmopolitanism in Post-WWII Bulgaria

The practices of the Bulgarian Esperanto movement after World War II reflect its cosmopolitan orientation. The movement coordinated Esperanto activism at multiple scales, connecting with the global movement, planning national actions, building local circles, and strengthening its organization and membership. Its most salient goals were its intrinsic cosmopolitan goals focusing on building an international community through the Esperanto language and through equal international communication. No matter how Bulgarian Esperantists

legitimized their movement (see next section), their actions reflected their movement's own priorities.

Coordinating Activity at Multiple Scales

When they relaunched *Bulgara Esperantisto* in 1946, Bulgarian Esperantists took the three-scale work of the movement for granted. The magazine would connect transnational, national, and local Esperanto activity. Despite the transnational orientation of the movement, the magazine regularly focused on events of national importance. In fact, most sections dedicated to plans and to calls to action published in *Bulgara Esperantisto* in 1946-1947 had a national scope reflecting the institutional importance of the nation-state as the primary location of Bulgarian Esperantists' activism. The second page of the inaugural post-war issue, for example, was dedicated to the forthcoming twenty-ninth national congress of Bulgarian Esperantists, which was to take place in the southern Bulgarian town of Asenovgrad (*Bulgara Esperantisto* 1946(1): 2). Consistent planning of national activities, together with the regularity of appearance of national Esperanto periodicals, suggests the national scale was essential for the activism of Bulgarian Esperantists.

As participants in a transnational movement, Bulgarian Esperantists often discussed issues and events at the global scale on the pages of *Bulgara Esperantisto*. In 1946, the largest number of reports (46%) had an international scope indicating the desire of Bulgarian Esperantists to stay abreast of developments concerning the Esperanto movement globally. The first post-World War II issue of *Bulgara Esperantisto*, for example, included a report on the fortieth anniversary congress of the Swedish Esperanto Federation attended by participants from nine countries. The issue also advertised the relaunch of *Heroldo de Esperanto* (Esperanto

Herald), a monthly publication of the global Esperanto movement. By reporting on a vibrant international movement activity, Bulgarian Esperantists imagined themselves as part of a global community.

The international focus of the Bulgarian Esperanto movement was broad (albeit mostly Euro-centric) suggesting an interest in more horizontal international relations than the Western-centric or the Soviet-centric cosmopolitan approaches would suggest. Foreign countries mentioned in five or more sections in 1946 include France (in eight sections), England and the Netherlands (in seven sections), Austria and Poland (in six sections), and Czechoslovakia, Romania, and the USSR (in five sections). In 1947, Hungary, Yugoslavia, and Sweden, in addition to an expressed interest in regional Balkan cooperation appeared in five or more sections as well. Mirroring the Dimitrov-Tito discussion of a Balkan federation (Gallagher 2001), Esperantists would forge their own Balkan cooperation. The 1946 inaugural issue of *Bulgara Esperantisto* informed readers about an international conference to take place in conjunction with the national congress bringing together Esperantists from two other Balkan nations, Slovenia and Romania. The writers believed inter-organizational collaboration, a common publication, and exchange of materials, literature, newspapers, and magazines would build international solidarity (*Bulgara Esperantisto* 1946(1): 2). The most notable outcome of this Balkan collaboration was the publication of the magazine *Internacia Kulturo* (International Culture).

Dependent on membership dues from participant from around the country, the Bulgarian Esperanto movement sought to strengthen and increase the number of its local branches. *Bulgara Esperantisto* was honest about the financial concerns motivating in part local activism and encouraged local clubs to report the collected membership dues to the association (*Bulgara*

Esperantisto 1946(1): 2). The same article praised the local hosts of the national congress and the Balkan conference from the Asenovgrad club for their successful recruitment efforts. The club had increased its membership from thirty to fifty-four members in a year. From 1946 to 1947, the number of reports on local activism published in *Bulgara Esperantisto* more than tripled, from fourteen to fifty-one, amounting to 43% of all reports published in the later year. Local reports would often be accompanied by praise or by disapproval guiding the direction of local activism. Bulgarian Esperantists were busy building the movement at the local level and *Bulgara Esperantisto* was eager to direct and report on this activity.

The Bulgarian Esperanto movement worked hard to create a stable organizational structure, recruit members, and ensure the financial stability of its local and national organizations. This movement-building effort was visible on the pages of *Bulgara Esperantisto*. Overall, fifty-eight (33%) and eighty-one (38%) of sections were dedicated to the movement's organization in 1946 and in 1947 respectively; twenty-eight (16%) and seventeen (8%) of the sections in the two years discussed membership; and twenty-one (12%) in 1946 and thirty-two (15%) in 1947 considered finances. The movement struggled with finances. For example, the first 1946 issue indicated wartime “paper shortages” had not allowed its earlier relaunch. Members were asked regularly to subscribe to periodicals and to pay their dues. As stated in its inaugural post-war issue, *Bulgara Esperantisto* was a central organizing tool for the Bulgarian Esperanto movement. The periodical coordinated Bulgarian Esperantists’ activism locally, nationally, and internationally.

Pursuing Cosmopolitan Goals

The top priority of Bulgarian Esperantists, based on the appearance of themes during the first two post-World-War-II years of publication of *Bulgara Esperantisto*, was the pursuit of the movement's intrinsic cosmopolitan goals. In these formative years when the movement was reestablishing itself in the new political context, Bulgarian Esperantists cared mostly about building a global community spreading the Esperanto language, connecting with other Esperantists directly at meetings or indirectly through publications or correspondence, and organizing themselves and recruiting new members. The cosmopolitan activism of the Bulgarian Esperanto movement revolved around equal global communication and exchange.

Esperanto is synonymous with an idealist pursuit of a global community in which persons and cultures are equal. Esperantists have a term denoting this ideal community, namely *Esperantujo* (the Esperanto community/country). *Esperantujo* also refers to places and times when Esperantists practice the international language Esperanto. For Esperantists, meetings are important because they represent *Esperantujo*. The Bulgarian national periodical was a key tool for promoting such spaces. A significant portion of sections in *Bulgara Esperantisto* were dedicated to meetings, forty-one (23%) in 1946 and fifty-two (25%) in 1947. In 1946, almost half of meeting-related sections discussed international meetings, followed by 42% dedicated to national meetings, and 29% mentioning local meetings. By the following year, local Esperanto activism was on the rise with 42% of meeting-related sections discussing local gatherings, 35% focusing on national meetings, and 27% promoting international meetings. Bulgarian Esperantists were building a global community through local, national, and international efforts.

As the existence of the global Esperanto community relies on the practice of the Esperanto language, spreading the language was of primary concern to Bulgarian Esperantists. Accordingly, language instruction received special attention on the pages of *Bulgara*

Esperantisto. Thirty-eight sections (21%) were dedicated to it in 1946 and fifty-nine (28%) in 1947. In the summer of 1946, the Bulgarian Esperanto Union organized a ten-day training for teachers and translators considered essential for the growth of the movement in the country, the publication noted. *Bulgara Esperantisto* featured a regular section dedicated to beginners including a brief Esperanto text followed by its Bulgarian translation, by reading questions, and by linguistic remarks. *Bulgara Esperantisto* also promoted Esperanto learning materials, such as a multi-purpose Esperanto reader for advanced language courses and for self-directed learners containing historical and literary materials. The promotion of the Esperanto language was clearly at the center of Bulgarian Esperantists' activism.

By far, the most popular theme discussed in *Bulgara Esperantisto* concerned Esperanto publications. Seventy-seven of the 178 sections I coded (about 43%) in 1946 dealt to some extent with publications. Seventeen of the sections discussed books and seven mentioned dictionaries; the majority were related to international Esperanto periodicals. Local clubs were encouraged to organize collective subscriptions to have copies of each of the periodicals available to club members. Readers of the Bulgarian periodicals were encouraged to send individual issues as gifts to their international pen pals. Similarly to the role *Bulgara Esperantisto* itself played, other publications promoted by the periodical created symbolic linkages among local Esperantists and the international community. They supplied informational and educational materials, engaged with the socialist project, publicized Bulgarian cultural achievements, and promoted material items that symbolized identification with the Esperanto community.

The most political aspect of Bulgarian Esperanto activism in the 1946-1947 period was the grassroots diplomacy strategy realized through correspondence. At the 1945 congress of Bulgarian Esperantists, the association made a decision to begin a coordinated campaign of

international mass correspondence (*Bulgara Esperantisto* 1946(3): 3). Correspondence occupied significant space on the pages of *Bulgara Esperantisto*. Twenty-six (15%) sections in 1946 and fifty-eight (27%) in 1947 mentioned correspondence. Bulgarian Esperantists' post-WWII correspondence strategy echoed the 1924 Comintern decision to promote inter-worker exchanges and labor-Esperantists' use of correspondence throughout the 1920s and 1930s. (Blanke 2007; Lins 1988) Grassroots diplomacy through correspondence was the key contribution Bulgarian Esperantists believed they could make to their country and as such was the primary justification for the movement's activity in Bulgaria after World War II.

Legitimizing Esperanto in Post-WWII Bulgaria

To make themselves indispensable or at least tolerated in the new political context, despite their cosmopolitan practices, Bulgarian Esperantists adopted a number of rhetorical strategies that leveraged available discursive resources. Demonstrating patriotism, they linked their cosmopolitanism to Bulgaria's national interest and to the state-building project of the new regime. Discursive strategies involved emphasizing Esperanto's role in improving Bulgaria's international standing, in working for just peace, and in promoting comprehensive development along communist ideals. The movement created symbolic ties between itself and the new regime through advocating movement-state partnership, through highlighting its history of labor activism, and through employing a labor-friendly rhetoric. Emphasis on an ethics of fellowship made Esperanto accessible to the local population.

Improving Bulgaria's International Standing

At the beginning of 1946, as Bulgarian Esperantists began to reestablish their activity, they found their country and themselves in a context of international hostility and isolation. The country's historical association with Germany (*Bulgara Esperantisto* 1946(2): 1), combined with its allocation to the Soviet sphere of influence (Resis 1978), had brought Bulgaria's international standing to a low point. Bulgarian Esperantists were keenly attentive to the country's international reputation:

> "In many countries: England, America [sic], France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Denmark and others, significant portions of the people's masses are not aware of the true situation in our country. This is due to the enemy propaganda in these countries." (*Bulgara Esperantisto* 1946(2): 1)

The periodical identified wartime British Prime Minister Winston Churchill as the representative figure of such enemy "intrigues" and associated them with warmongering (*Bulgara Esperantisto* 1946(2): 1). Once misinformation was identified as the culprit for Bulgaria's threatened international standing, the Esperanto movement decided to raise international awareness of the country's domestic achievements. The periodical encouraged Bulgarian Esperantists to be in service of their "democratic" society through developing broad international connections (*Bulgara Esperantisto* 1946(2): 1).

In pursuing Bulgaria's national interests, Bulgarian Esperantists were able to align their concerns and strengths with the government rhetoric of popular participation. With their international ties and international language competences, Bulgarian Esperantists were well-positioned to play key roles in grassroots diplomatic efforts. Correspondence as a form of grassroots diplomacy was a type of activism to which labor-Esperantists were accustomed and

which could raise international awareness and contribute to the national cause. The following paragraph summarizes the thinking of the time:

> "We had to present to the world the truth about our free, democratic, and loyal motherland. We had to show to the world the genuine efforts of our people to strengthen our democratic achievements, to eliminate the remnants of fascism, to overcome the economic difficulties, and to achieve a fast, well-deserved, just, and dignified peace... We did this not by using the traditional official ways of international and diplomatic relations. The new approach that we adopted was the approach of direct communication and connections of the broad segments of our people with the peoples in other countries, through individual and collective correspondence connecting factories, mines, enterprises, train stations, professional organizations, mass organizations, cooperatives, women and youth groups, community centers, schools, etc. with businesses, organizations, and collectives abroad with similar professional, cultural, and economic interests." (*Bulgara Esperantisto* 1946(2): 1)

Working for Just Peace

The pursuit of peace linked Bulgarian Esperantists' national and international aspirations. Peace was so important to them in the wake of World War II that *Bulgara Esperantisto* dedicated its 1947 New Year issue to it. With World War II looming dangerously from the recent past, Bulgarians were apprehensive of the potential negative consequences of a low international standing. From being a reluctant German ally to moving under the Soviet sphere of influence, Bulgaria did not make many friends during the war (Gallagher 2001). To Bulgarian Esperantists, the post-World War II peace appeared fragile and endangered by "imperialist" and "reactionary

warmongering," so they saw their role to be to actively engage in the struggle for peace (1947(6): 2). A resolution adopted by the 1946 congress of Bulgarian Esperantists identified just peace as the primary concern of Bulgarians at the time:

> "All the best national efforts are put into the struggle for attaining a just and dignified democratic peace and for guaranteeing the continued right to development of the country in assuring for its people the opportunity to benefit from the goods they create." (*Bulgara Esperantisto* 1946(3): 3)

The signing of a peace treaty between Bulgaria and the Allied powers after World War II was a foundation for world peace and thus not only of national but also of international importance (*Bulgara Esperantisto* 1947(2): 2). Leading to their 1947 congress, Bulgarian Esperantists reaffirmed their commitment to peace:

> "At this congress, with all due solemnity, we will manifest our power and will to engage in even more energetic work and struggle to build our people's republic, in defense of peace and democracy in the Balkans and in the entire world and against the warmongering organizers of a new bloody world war." (*Bulgara Esperantisto* 1947(8): 1)

The assumption was that Esperanto was especially well suited for peace building. For example, the publication informed its readers of the decision of the newly founded Japanese Institute for Perpetual Peace to use Esperanto together with English as an official language for its reports (*Bulgara Esperantisto* 1947(2): 7).

Promoting Comprehensive Development

The simultaneously cosmopolitan and nationalist orientation of Bulgarian Esperantists is also represented in their vision of comprehensive development. Peace was seen as both the

source and the outcome of and therefore inseparable from comprehensive development. The nation-state was assumed to be the natural unit of development for humankind but only in the context of cooperative international relations. The following excerpt from the 1947 New Year's issue brought peace and comprehensive development together most clearly:

> "The blessed beams of peace will shine on the last countries still disconnected from the all-human family. Permanent peaceful neighborly relations will form again. Humanity will dedicate itself to quiet and peaceful creative work. A life of peaceful development will bustle again bringing back to life boons that had faded. Letters, magazines, books, and mutual visits will be exchanged. Libraries will be full of readers and creators. Noble competition between nations will take place. The victory will belong to that nation which harbors limitless possibilities for creativity in the fields of science, culture, and civilization. In this, we, Esperantists, will demonstrate our most elevated role of connecting peoples from the entire world, with the help of Zamenhof's wondrous creation, the international language Esperanto." (*Bulgara Esperantisto* 1947(1): 1)

In the comprehensive development project the Bulgarian Esperanto movement promoted, not only the international and the domestic but also the cultural, the economic, and the political spheres were intertwined. The themes *Bulgara Esperantisto* encouraged subscribers to discuss with their foreign correspondents for example included the cultural, economic, and political achievements of the country (*Bulgara Esperantisto* 1947(2): 2). Recommended topics included women's issues, the two-year national economic plan, Bulgaria's peace treaty, fight against fascism, and democratic policies. Mobilizing patriotism, the following excerpt equates Esperanto activism with the comprehensive development work of the cherished Bulgarian institution of *chitalishta* (culture houses/community centers):

> "*Chitalishta*,… homegrown products of the great period of our Enlightenment,... [helped Bulgaria] catch up with the developed peoples... Following September 9, 1944, an era of new flourishing and comprehensive development began for *chitalishta*... Esperanto and *chitalishta* have a similar character and do a similar kind of work." (*Bulgara Esperantisto* 1947(5): 1)

Working with the State

Working with as opposed to against the state became part of the usual strategy of the Esperanto movement under state socialism. The movement-state partnership was justified in the name of the national interest and of global security. Through an interview with an Austrian Esperantist and minister for food, Dr. Hans Frenzel, Bulgarian Esperantists argued that small countries needed to be leaders in adopting Esperanto because big powers already considered their languages to be international languages (*Bulgara Esperantisto* 1946(1): 4). Dr. Frenzel reportedly believed Esperanto could help avoid conflicts through improved understanding among nations. Esperanto, the interview continued, could also facilitate international trade. The conclusion was Esperanto should be introduced as a mandatory subject in schools and the state should support the effort. Pursuing a symbiotic relationship between the Esperanto movement and the state was believed to be beneficial for the country and for world peace.

Bulgarian Esperantists modeled what a collaborative relationship with the state could look like. The first post-World War II issue of *Bulgara Esperantisto* reported on a labor-Esperanto meeting in Nancy, France, where local state leaders pledged their commitment to introducing Esperanto in schools. On numerous occasions, the periodical gave the example of the

Austrian state's support for Esperanto with the apparent intention to encourage a similar role for the Bulgarian state. For example:

> "Important announcement: The Austrian ministry of Education allowed the instruction of Esperanto in schools. The official announcement includes teaching plans for Esperanto. The first national examinations for teachers of Esperanto will take place in the fall. Only specialists who have passed their teacher examinations have the right to teach at all levels of education." (*Bulgara Esperantisto* 1946(1): 8)

The movement was eager to point out advancements in the state-movement partnership. The post-war government, the publication argued, unlike the pre-war regime, created beneficial conditions for the development of the Esperanto movement (*Bulgara Esperantisto* 1946(3): 3).

The relation between the Esperanto movement and the Bulgarian state involved instrumentality. While proclaiming allegiance to the state, the movement pursued its own goals. The following example illustrates the point, to a comic effect. A 1947 *Bulgara Esperantisto* article entitled "September 9[9], the Great Day of Freedom, Is Celebrated by Bulgarian Esperantists" started with: "The thirtieth anniversary congress of Bulgarian Esperantists coincides with the bright date marking the third anniversary of the people's antifascist rebellion." The article continued with a lengthy inventory of key words associated with the communist regime including among others the "labor competition" in pursuit of the national "economic plan," elimination of "fascist" elements and "reactionary agents," the communist leader Georgi Dimitrov, the USSR, etc. In an odd twist of logic, the article exclaimed in conclusion: "Let all members of the association be counted! Let all subscribers of *Internacia Kulturo* and *Bulgara*

[9] The date of communist take-over in Bulgaria.

Esperantisto pay their subscription dues!" (*Bulgara Esperantisto* 1947(8): 6). Evidently, the author of the article was preoccupied as much with the state as with procuring members and financial stability for the movement.

In other instances, however, the closeness of the relationship between the movement and the communist state appears passionately sincere. Bulgarian Esperantists and the state are presented as allies striving for the same national comprehensive development goals:

> "The Esperanto youth of the town of Lom will demonstrate in action their *affection for the people's power*[10] when they facilitate the achievement of the two-year plan not only in terms of cultural and educational goals but also in terms of economic goals." (*Bulgara Esperantisto* 1947(8): 5, *italics* mine)

Writing History

The first task of the first issue of *Bulgara Esperantisto* after WWII, outlined in its leading article, was to claim its history as a "progressive" publication aligned with the struggle against fascism. The presence of thirteen sections dedicated to history in 1946 suggests an effort to situate the movement on the right side of history, namely as part of the international class struggle. The important page three of the inaugural post-war issue was dedicated to the organization's national history represented by one of its labor-Esperantist heroes, Angel Petkov (Anĵelo), on the fifth anniversary of his passing. A eulogy from Kostadin Bujukliev remembered Anĵelo for his love for his people and for his hatred of their oppressors. Anĵelo had worked on developing "international democratic solidarity" for a dozen of years. Among his

[10] "People's power" is a euphemism for the communist-led government.

accomplishments were mass recruitment, language instruction, editorial work, organizational leadership, and fearlessness when facing difficulties and repression. He had enjoyed receiving letters from factories and mass organizations from the Soviet Union, France, England, Czechoslovakia, and other countries. In conclusion, the eulogy exhorted Bulgarian Esperantists to follow Anĵelo's example and develop mass international connections, engage in popular education around the world informing people of the achievements of the country, and work for a just peace and a future without exploitation, war, and misery (*Bulgara Esperantisto* 1946(1): 3). Linking the history of Esperanto in Bulgaria with the history of the labor movement in the country was an effort by the movement to position itself on the side of the new regime.

Relating with Labor

The Bulgarian Esperanto movement also recognized the need to continue connecting with labor. One strategy was to create a popular movement by building coalitions with "mass" organizations. Tactical advice links the correspondence strategy with the coalition building strategy: "For help with writing letters, contact the cultural and educational sections in those mass organizations of which you are members: unions, cooperatives, *chitalishta* [culture houses], etc." (*Bulgara Esperantisto* 1947(2): 2). Involving the "masses" also meant establishing local Esperanto groups:

> "In the village of Glavatsi, in the region of Vratsa, the Esperanto group organized an evening of literature and music, which enjoyed mass participation. The comrade Venko Georgiev opened the gathering with a relevant speech, followed by reading of poems by Zamenhof and by Bulgarian writers, of stories from the Esperanto life in our country, of

> letters from abroad, etc. At the end, many expressed desire to join the open Esperanto course and the local Esperanto circle." (*Bulgara Esperantisto* 1947(3): 6)

The movement's traditional cultural work, however, was not sufficient, according to some. As constructive criticism addressed at the movement, an anonymous "elderly fellow thinker[11]" expressed his opinion on the "future perspectives" of the movement as follows:

> "The Esperanto movement will not succeed unless it begins economic and practical work in addition to its cultural and educational work... [The needed] element, according to us, is to undertake any common collective work... The Esperanto literature should highlight practical knowledge applicable in life, such as professional guides... in the area of the various industries, trades, and arts... Esperanto must indeed be the language of labor democracy." (*Bulgara Esperantisto* 1947(5): 2)

The Bulgarian Esperanto movement followed the advice of this "fellow thinker" and promoted volunteer brigades engaged in collective economic activity. The establishment of an Esperanto cooperative, in addition to serving the movement's financial needs, exemplified the preferred economic organizational model of the time. Despite such efforts, Esperanto never became a working class movement in the country (Ignev 1988). Reading books, newspapers, and magazines and communicating with others, especially from abroad, remained the primary reasons people were interested in Esperanto (Ignev 1988).

Facilitating International Fellowship

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[11] "Fellow thinker" is an Esperanto term for fellow Esperantists.

As Bulgarian Esperantists worked to establish local circles and recruit new members, they needed messages that resonated with the predominantly peasant Bulgarian population steeped in an egalitarian culture (Gallagher 2001). Advocating an ethics of fellowship proved successful. *Drugar*, the Bulgarian term for the common communist greeting “comrade,” also means “fellow/friend/mate” further strengthening the association among the new regime, Esperanto, and the local population. In 1946, seven *Bulgara Esperantisto* sections were dedicated to solidarity and six sections to friendship. In 1947, seventeen sections were dedicated to friendship, nine to hospitality, and seven to brotherhood. International fellowship was a common motivation for participation in the Esperanto movement. The following excerpt from an article titled “Fellowship through Esperanto” illustrates Bulgarians' fellowship expectations:

> “In *Laborista Esperantisto* (Labor Esperantist) from the Netherlands, we read the following: 'My wife, who has been suffering from a chest disease for a few years, is pregnant. There exists a vaccine to protect the child from this disease... [but it was] unavailable. Three weeks before the birth, I wrote to a correspondent in Denmark... Six days later a response arrived from his wife... 'Send me the address of your doctor. I will do everything that is possible to help you... Ten days later, I received the vaccine...” (*Bulgara Esperantisto* 1947(5): 4)

Fellowship-related terms referred not only to relations between persons but were also extended to abstract categories, including the state. For example, at their 1947 conference, Bulgarian Esperantists committed to establishing brotherly international relations. The following example illustrates the seamless transition between the use of fellowship terms at the person and at the group levels:

> "A beginner Esperanto course was organized in the small village of Vrattsa drawing in some twenty participants, primarily among the youth. Radoy Faldjiyski, a dentistry student, leads the course. He opened the course with the talk: 'Esperanto: Origins, development, present, and future' underlining the importance of the language as a means of mutual familiarization and brotherly cooperation among nations. There is great enthusiasm." (*Bulgara Esperantisto* 1947(2): 8)

Conclusions

The survival of the Esperanto movement in state-socialist Bulgaria indicates that social movements can survive in authoritarian contexts by developing legitimate activist cultures. Even in the case of cosmopolitan movements such as Esperanto, these cultures may incorporate concerns about the nation. In the context of the nation-state system, nationalist discourses can be an important aspect of movements' legitimation strategies. Activist cultures may also integrate goals, tactics, and identities demonstrating affinities with regimes' ideologies. As authoritarian regimes elevate such ideologies as part of their countries' nation-state building projects, ideological allegiance may be indispensable for legitimation in movements' survival strategies. Despite needing to demonstrate national and ideological allegiances, social movements may still find "free spaces" (Polletta 1999) for maneuvering in pursuit of their intrinsic goals.

The Bulgarian Esperanto movement under state socialism and similar civil society formations under authoritarianism in general can be thought of as a type of movement abeyance structures allowing actors interested in social change to weather unhospitable conditions (cf. Taylor 1989). While in democratic contexts movement abeyance may facilitate radicalization (Taylor 1989), under authoritarian regimes, abeyance structures may display affinities with

dominant ideologies and may avoid risky contention and protest (e.g. Straughn 2005; Spires 2011). Legitimacy is an important factor in social movement survival (Minkoff 1999). As challengers of the status quo, social movements may find it difficult to maintain legitimacy, especially under authoritarian regimes. Under authoritarianism, social movements must meet both the state's and societal legitimacy criteria. Movements can take advantage of contextually available practice and discourse repertoires to legitimize their activities and survive. As a result, the activist cultures institutionalized movements under authoritarianism such as the Esperanto movement in state-socialist Bulgaria develop may differ from activist cultures in democracies.

Movement abeyance structures and the activist cultures they develop are important "promoting the survival of *activist networks*, sustaining a repertoire of *goals and tactics*, and promoting a *collective identity* that offers participants a sense of mission and moral purpose" (Taylor 1989: 762). Activist networks keep public spiritedness and the possibility of social change alive. Activist goals set a standard of what is worth pursuing. Under authoritarianism, activist goals may align with regimes' expressed goals, such as achieving comprehensive development according to state-socialist ideals. Activist tactics represent movements' assessment of what the best approaches of pursuing their goals are. Under authoritarianism, activists may adopt tactics that accommodate their high-risk environment, for example deploying nonconfrontational pragmatism, seeking partnerships, including with the state, and/or relying on personal connections (e.g. Opp and Gern 1993; Spires 2011). Activist identities relate to the collective entities having a stake in the change envisioned. As activists navigate loyalties in the context of the nation-state system, national identities may be important aspects of activist identities even for activists with cosmopolitan orientations such as Esperantists. Maintaining

activist networks and instituting activist cultures consisting of legitimate repertoires of goals, tactics, and/or identity can have long-term consequences.

The survival of the Esperanto movement during the half century of state socialism in Bulgaria indicates that public spiritedness under authoritarianism is not impossible. Persons could find outlets for public engagement outside the official structures of the party-state. The Esperanto movement succeeded in serving as such an outlet in several state-socialist countries. An important legacy of Esperanto and of similar civil society formations was the existence of persons experienced in public engagement and connected to others with similar experiences. The distinct repertoires of goals, tactics, and identities activists adopted were likely transposable; activists could later deploy these repertoires in different spheres.

The Esperanto case suggests that aligning activist goals with the goals of authoritarian regimes is one legitimation strategy movements can undertake. Bulgarian Esperantists believed they could contribute to the civilizational model involving comprehensive development valorizing all social spheres that state socialism purported to advance. While owing to the Soviet model (Clark 2011; David-Fox 2011; Ray and Outhwaite 2016; Rupprecht 2015), the Bulgarian state-socialist civilizational model as understood by Esperantists was distinct from it. Bulgarian Esperantists looked up to the Soviet Union but they had other role models too (cf. Molnár 2005). They strove for horizontal cooperative relations internationally. Bulgaria's own history and institutions provided examples to follow as well (cf. Molnár 2005). Standing behind a comprehensive national development project in which culture was valued as much as the economy and as politics made sense to cultural producers, such as Bulgarian Esperantists. Eventually, in an ironic twist, the intelligentsia became a driving force behind the 1989 transformations as state socialism began to fall short of reaching its civilizational goals.

Until 1989, however, overt opposition to state socialism was not a legitimate activist tactic. Instead, activists privileged nonconfrontational pragmatism, sought partnerships, including with the state, and relied on personal connections (e.g. Opp and Gern 1993; Straughn 2005; Spires 2011). Such tactics were presumably more legitimate and more efficient in accomplishing activist goals in an authoritarian context than confrontation was. Future research should explore the implications of having such tactical repertoires. For example, these may explain why Eastern Europeans continue to value the role of the state in persons' lives (Inglehart et al. 2014). In 1989, Bulgaria and several other Eastern European countries where civil society worked with the state experienced negotiated democratic transitions. These peaceful transitions contrasted with the violent transition in Romania, for instance, where civil society had been repressed severely. Did civil society's nonconfrontational tactics foster social peace, including during the transition to democracy? A tactical repertoire including reliance on friendships and on personal connections to accomplish goals must be consequential too. Blurring the line between the private and the public spheres calls for examining possible parallels between the Bulgarian *vrazki* (connections/friendships) and the Chinese *guanxi* (Chang 2011; Spires 2011). The general implication is that authoritarian political contexts produce distinct tactical repertoires, with long-term consequences.

Movement survival under authoritarianism also involved complex identity work of negotiating affiliations with ideologies dominant in the national context. Rallying behind a shared identity allows finding common ground amidst differences. Invoking national identity can have a unifying force at the national scale, especially for actors seeking legitimacy, such as the newly established state-socialist regimes or the Esperanto movement. Movements and regimes share an investment in the institution of the nation-state to which they belong. Unsurprisingly,

nationalism is part of the communist legacy in Eastern Europe despite communism's cosmopolitanism (Ray and Outhwaite 2016; Todorova 1992). Even Esperanto, the quintessential cosmopolitan movement, became nationalized in state-socialist Bulgaria.

Nationalizing cosmopolitanism does not erase it but complicates it. Cosmopolitanism becomes "rooted" (Tarrow 2005) in overlapping domestic and international politics. For Esperantists, nationalized or rooted cosmopolitanism involved thinking, acting, and creating symbolic connections at multiple scales (locally, nationally, and internationally) simultaneously. Under state socialism, cosmopolitanism was intertwined with communism (Ray and Outhwaite 2016). Tapping into Bulgaria's egalitarian culture, Bulgarian Esperantists advocated a native variant of cosmopolitanism emphasizing universal fellowship. Legitimatizing Esperantists' cosmopolitanism in state-socialist Bulgaria involved combining it with discourses associated with patriotism, with communism, and with an ethics of fellowship (cf. Molnár 2005; Ray and Outhwaite 2016). Despite the specter of nationalism, cosmopolitanism continues to matter in Eastern Europe today. Maintaining peaceful international relations and engaging in a variety of international collaborations (with the EU, NATO, Russia, etc.), for example, have been driving principles of Bulgarian foreign policy following the fall of state socialism. For actors feeling vulnerable nationally and internationally, building peace and collaborations may be both moral and rational.

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Figure 1. Transnational social movement organizations with Eastern European members, 1953-1993, based on Smith and Wiest's (2012) data.