



THE UNIVERSITY
of LIVERPOOL

Vassilis Ioakimidis
PhD student
Department of Sociology,
Social Policy and Social Work.

**Back to the future: exploring the political construction of social work in
Greece.**

May 2005

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Introduction

This article offers an overview of Greek social work's historical and sociopolitical development. Social work as a product of internal capitalistic contradictions should be examined in a dialectical way. Moreover social work wasn't delivered from pathogenesis, but emerged to accomplish a concrete social and political mission. In Greece this mission was notoriously political. Though, nowadays this interaction is veiled under theories of neutrality and conciliation, the political context of social work is a crucial issue. In addition even neutrality connotes political orientation.

Trying to explore the nature of social work, isolated from its real societal environment, leads either to a dead end or to false conclusions. How can we examine social work mentality without considering its sociopolitical roots? How can we comprehend social work practice without bearing in mind the oppression social workers confront themselves? How can we demand a change within social work if we are unable to realize its relation with the wider social policy context? How can we justify the increasing employment of social workers in NGOs in contrast to the public sector, without considering the structural changes in the welfare state?

This paper aims at outlining the development of Greek social work within the specific framework of Greek social policy. I am aware of the fact that the division of this process into separate periods (1949-1966, 1967-1990, and 1990 – nowadays) is artificial. However, such a periodisation assists this analysis by attempting to illustrate the continuity rather than separation of Greek social policy and social work.*

* *I would like to acknowledge Professor Chris Jones for his critical reading and inspirational comments on the paper.*

1. The historical appearance and development of Greek social work

The first recorded systematic activity of social workers in Greece coincides, not accidentally, with one of the most difficult periods in the country's contemporary history, the uprooting of the Turkey's Greek community. In 1922, more than 1.5 million Turkey resident Greeks were seeking settlement in the motherland as a result of the militaristic political choices of the Greek government. Deprivation, homelessness, unemployment, and absolute weakness to receive the refugees and help them integrate in the Greek society, constituted this chaotic situation. The fact that within a few days the population of the country increased by 1/4 illustrates the appalling condition in which the majority of the people were living (Castelan, 1991: 570, Svoronos, 1999: 124-127)). However, social workers at that time were included in the immediate humanitarian action, which was organized by international NGO's located especially from the United States. Ironically, foreign patterns of social work practice – mainly American- will remain dominant for the forthcoming decades, reminding us of the artificial and controversial development of the Greek social work. It is interesting to mention that during that period and until 1939 only two social workers practicing in Greece were locals, educated abroad and who accompanied the foreign charity missions (Stathopoulos, 1996: 157). Finally the initial attempt of the Greek state to educate professional welfare workers, following the American patterns, took place in 1937 but its ambitious plans were interrupted violently with the outbreak of the Second World War.

A. Post-war period, the emergence of domestic social work.

The roots of a perplexed welfare state

During wartime the only action, which had characteristics of “social protection”,ⁱ was the well-organized effort of EAMⁱⁱ to tackle starvation and deprivation within the areas of the country it could control (Collard, 1990:224, Zepos, 1945) Moreover, in 1941 the Regent founded the “National Organization of Christian Solidarity” aiming at the protection of the orphans (Stathopoulos, 1996: 164)). It is worth mentioning that the regent and pseudo-government were appointed by the Nazis conquerors.

After the withdrawal of the occupation forces Greece was literally in a state of devastation but the worse hadn't come yet. The return of the self-exiled, right wing government and the willingness of the western "allies" and especially U.K. and USA to uproot the communists from Greece steadily lead to a ferocious civil war (Tsoucalas 1969, Diamantopoulos 1997: 155-156). While the rest of Europe was being reborned from its ashes, in Greece an era of violence and partition had just begun. *"After the defeat in the late 1940s of the communists in the protracted civil war, the victorious coalition of nationalistic and pro-Western Greek forces established a regime of "guided democracy" in the country. It was "guided" in the sense that the throne and the victorious anti-communist army played the dominant political role – setting, in a clearly unconstitutional manner, strict limits to what was and what was not allowed to happen on the level of parliamentary politics."* (Mouzelis, 2002:3)

Social work emerged under these extreme sociopolitical conditions. The emergence of social work in Greece occurred in circumstances totally different than in the other Western countries and this fact defines its features. "Pierce College" in 1945 and HENⁱⁱⁱ in 1948 were the first schools in Greece whose graduates had officially the title of "social worker". These schools had a religious background and were funded from the Marshal plan under the "Truman doctrine". The Truman doctrine was significant not only for Greece but also for the whole world since the president of U.S.A. in 12/9/1947 declared the beginning of the cold war utilizing as an excuse the communist threat over Greece. This way USA succeeded U.K in the control of Greece over the possibility of revolution (Petropoulos, 2005:5). This control included significant economic and military help. The American generosity towards Greece-2 billions dollars were spent for this purpose-hadn't altruistic motivations but the AMAG (American Mission for Aid to Greece) involved literally the surrender of national sovereignty to USA (Giannouloupoulos, 1992: 270). Dwain Griswold, the leader of this mission, admitted *"I do believe that it was Congress's intention for this Mission to act instantly and dynamically in order to help the reconstruction of Greece and to control the communistic threat. Congress had also the intention –and the members emphasized on it- to apply strict control over the expenditure of American and Greek money. That means involvement in domestic issues and I cannot see the point of pretending that something else is happening..."* (Witner,1986: 93-94)

Moreover, the colonizer conditions of this agreement affected all the sociopolitical aspects including of course social welfare.

The American counsellors implemented the foundation of “Centers of Social Welfare” under the supervision of the Ministry of health and welfare. However, the construction of a welfare net similar to the American model and lacking consideration of the Greek society’s particularities and the mentality of the local people was condemned to fail. The social needs of the Greeks were totally different than those of the American people. Greece was a deprived undeveloped country and its population was struggling to survive. Therefore, the transplantation of welfare ideas from a developed capitalistic country couldn’t answer the particular needs of locals. Even the minister of health at that time, Andreas Psaras, admitted that the reconstruction of the social services was grounded on theories and practices unfamiliar to the Greek reality and potential. (Stathopoulos,1996: 164). Social welfare at that time was a part of the general political anomaly. Moreover it was reproducing features of inequality, oppression and exclusion. The perverse logic of institutionalized exclusion was epitomized by the use of “*certificate of national probity as a formal prerequisite for access to all kinds of public resources including public employment. To that should be added the systematically demeaning treatment of left-wing people by the authorities.*” (Mouzelis, 2002:7) Responsible authority for the provision of this certificate was the police. Moreover, the main conditions for this document to be provided were the defiance of communist ideas, faith in god and of course a “politically clear” record with the police. The absence of these “certificates” lead to the instant exclusion of all the state activities and especially employment and social security. Consequently, many communists and other progressive people were officially marginalized for decades.

Throughout 50s and 60s the main social problems were still rooted in the absolute disorganization caused by the extended war period of the past and current political instability. Because of the state’s financial condition Greece could be considered as an undeveloped country without significant industrial activity, relying mainly on agriculture. The first signs of limited economic development appeared during the sixties as a result of massive immigration. During that period more than one million Greeks were forced to migrate to several destinations in Europe, Australia and America. Though this wave

relieved the national economy from considerable weights, it had a serious effect on the collective national feeling. This was well reflected in contemporary art such as songs and poems. Significant Greek poets, composers and singers expressed the pain and melancholy caused by the immigration and became very popular among the Greek struggling people (e.g. Ritsos, Theodorakis, Kazantzidis, Bithikotsis,).

The major pillars of social policy in that period continued to comprise the basis of the national social protection system until the 90's. A universal social insurance system (IKA) at least ensured pensions and low cost medical treatment to the workforce and their families-despite its deficits. This system was influenced by Bismarck's model in Germany, aiming to tackle the increasing and "dangerous" workers demands. The Bismarckian corporatist model is designed much less to reduce inequality than to maintain status. It is characterized by a concerted action between employers and trade unions, and is financed by contributions made by them. Welfare policies by the state uphold this arrangement, which is organized through social insurance. The welfare of the state depended on the welfare of individuals and vice versa (Moreno, Palier, 2004: 5, Stasinopoulou, 1990: 47). It was developed initially in Germany at the end of the 19th century when under the Marxist influence the workers started to organize themselves, demanding social change. The ruling class, as a result of the workers' pressures and in order to avoid socialist revolution, made these concessions. It is worth mentioning that nowadays, after the change of universal power correlations (the collapse USSR) and the consequent recession of the labour movement, all these concessions are undermined in the name of free market. Eventually, apart from the core of this effort, reactionary change is promoted even in a semiotic way. This explains for example the priority of the re-elected Greek Conservative Party in 2004 to rename the "Minister of Welfare" "Minister of Social Solidarity"

At that time spine of the Greek welfare system was made up of three major social agencies, a situation that remained untouched for decades:

- PIKPA, 1914 (Patriotic foundation for social welfare and understanding) aiming at protecting and covering the needs of the children.
- Centre for infants "MITERA", 1953, implementing the state's policy for adoption and tackling the high rates of infant mortality.

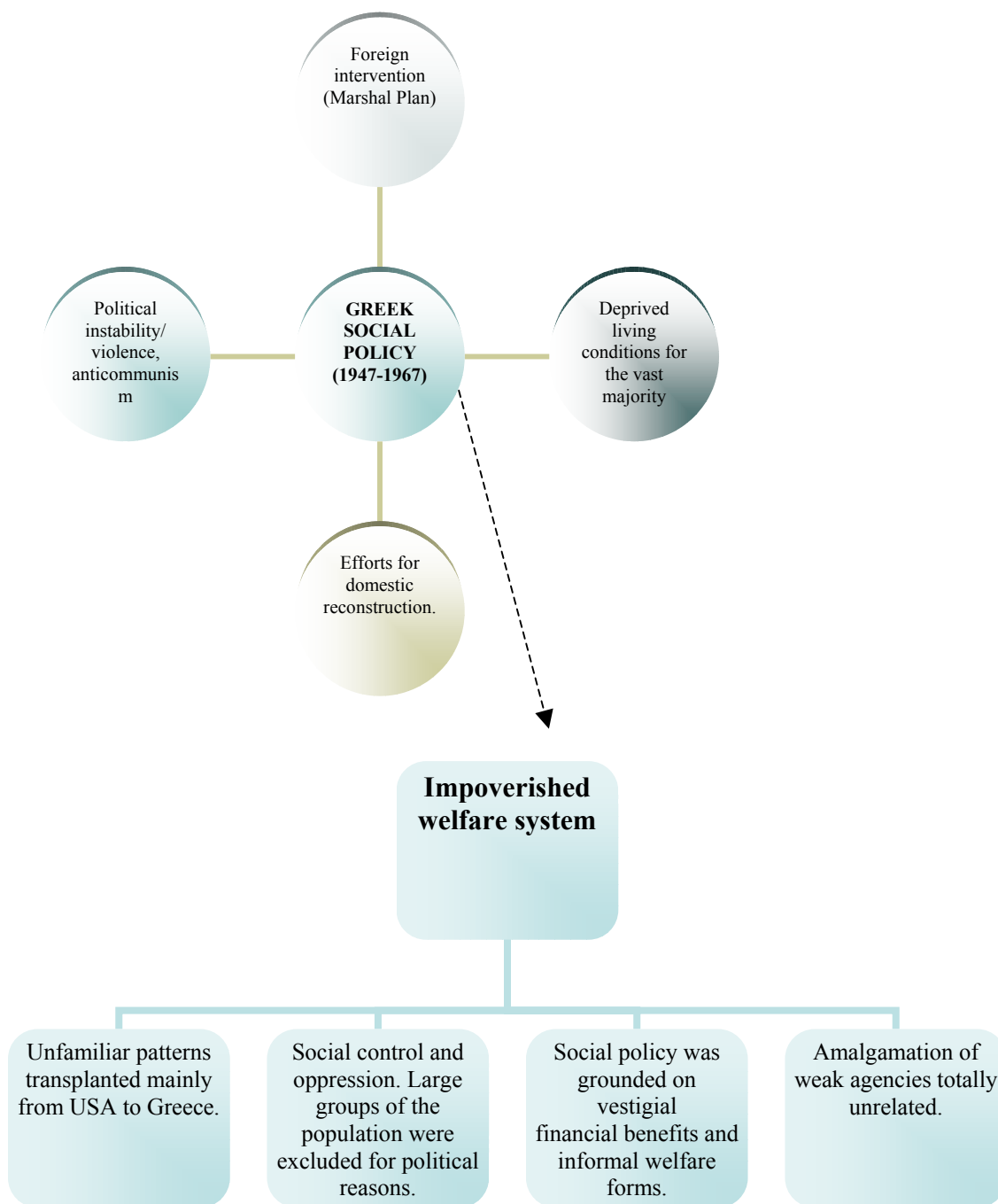
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- Royal Welfare, 1947 (later-1970- renamed EOP- National Welfare Organization). This organization developed several initiatives such as “centres for children”, “centres for family caring”, vocational courses and urban community centres. The National Royal Foundation, which instituted one of the major schools of social work, was also established by EOP. These two charity organizations, founded by the King and Queen, had strong interlinks with the state to a point where it was difficult not to consider them as state services. This was not by accident, since the state was more than generous with the leader of these organizations, the King himself. Almost two decades later, Royal Welfare and renames and embodied in the state’s social structure remaining the base of the Greek social services net. This organization was considered by the apologists as the most efficient welfare structure in Greece at that time. (Frideriki, 1971: 31). With a more penetrating insight into the term “efficient” we realize that its meaning was explicitly more political rather than scientific. *“Initial objective of this mechanism was to remove children from the war zones and protect them from the guerillas. Nevertheless, these children were practically walled in military like camps in order to maintain the political obedience of their families. This organization later developed more initiatives in other social aspects”* (ios, 2000: 2-5). The nature of these “centres” is being described in a crystal clear way in its propagandistic leaflet according to which the operation of the vocational programs focused on the “*education*” of the badly influenced “*youth guerillas*” and other antisocial juveniles (ios, 2000: 2-5). Additionally, part of the NRF’s systematic effort to “adjust” dysfunctioned youths was severe psychological and physical violence. Group rapes, tortures and even executions that took place in these “centres” were kept secret until recently (for a detailed illustration and analysis of NRF’s “child care polices” see Servos, 2001)

In addition, the activities of charity organizations were linked either to religious bodies or to major International NGOs such as the Red Cross. It is now proved that the latter organization knew of the inhuman and brutal treatment in the children camps we noted above, but tactfully avoided any reference to this situation. Both Greek Red Cross and the International Red Cross refuse to reveal or publish their records of these camps. (Servos,

2001: 562). The Greek also Church played an important role in this field, continuing its long term tradition of the past. Needless to say that these state and charity organizations had clear and often explicit political implications and purposes. Inextricably linked to the state apparatus, the welfare services contributed in the political propaganda against communism. The orientation of the Greek social policy was perfectly outlined by the Minister of Health and Welfare in 1960 “...*moreover the disastrous forces of violence and inhumanity, the forces of communistic totalitarianism, still exist. These forces, just few years ago, transformed the country into ruins and deteriorate the people’s poverty into deprivation. Now, they try stubbornly to subvert the effort of national development, they try to destroy the environment of faith and optimism, which is necessary in order to accomplish this national mission. In order to overcome these obstacles and also to succeed in the absolute co-operation of the Greek people we need methodic and intense effort.*”(Conference on Community Development, 1960: 123). These words were part of the conclusion to the “Conference on Community Development” held in Patras in 1960 and all the experts in Greek social policy participated. It is worth mentioning that this conference was organized by the National Royal Foundation which, as we noted above, later established one of the major social work schools.

The political role of charity organizations will be discussed in a separate chapter, but at this point it is vital to point out the link between the Greek Church (Zografou, 1997: 212) and the Greek state. Throughout contemporary Greek history, the Church tried systematically to develop the concept of the Greek-Orthodox culture, as if these two elements were inseparable. Not accidentally this principle was in line with the states’ theory of the national and political clarity (see Charisis, 2001). This theory was devoid of any mention of minorities in Greece and of course communists and socialists. The Greek Church and the state are still impossible to separate, in many aspects of political life. For example, until now the welfare map of the country is divided into parishes and many social departments still ask the priest of the local parish to conduct case reports, in order to provide services.

At this point in the analysis it is possible to develop some of the key issues in the following schema:



1. Relation between the basic sociopolitical factors which influenced social policy and the main problematic aspects of the welfare system.

The appearance of Greek social work

The previous description of the post war welfare system informs our attempt to reveal the political character of the Greek social work. Within this turbulent environment social work appeared not as a social necessity but was created from above almost as an experiment within the 1950s social laboratory. Its appearance does not coincide with a related popular demand. This period could be argued as being of great importance in the development of Greek social work because it was during those years that it was legally defined and theoretically formed. Consequently, when we are investigating the “hidden” reasons which explain contemporary norms of social work practice, we should always refer to this period.

In the meantime, the development of the new –American inspired- social agencies formed the need for professionally trained welfare practitioners. Initially 4,500 welfare workers without qualifications were appointed. Nepotism was the main criterion and therefore they were more than professionally weak and corrupted to implement the welfare plan. After the state of corruption and insufficiency related to the first employees of these agencies, the necessity of producing qualified and educated welfare workers started to be materialized (Mastrogiannis in Stathopoulos, 1996: 164). As mentioned above the first two social work schools were founded in 1945 and 1948 but it was not until 1959 that legislation was passed concerning the legal definition of social work. (Dedoussi et al: 2003). Nonetheless, the first graduate social workers were immediately employed in the agencies. Additional need for more social workers emerged after the severe damages caused by series of earthquakes between 1953-1959.(Kallinikaki ,1998: 48). As a result of the increasing number of social workers, the National Association of Social Workers was founded in Athens in 1954. This association still represents scientifically and professionally Greek social workers and publishes the only scientific journal in social work currently^{iv}. It is perhaps of no surprise given the character of social work development in Greece that NASW has never decided to go on strike or take any other forms of protest, though Greek social work was never devoid of problems and clashes. During an era of massive political struggles and fights the official syndicate of social workers never found a reason to protest, as if all the internal and general societal

problems were solved. However, this fact comprises another important piece of the sociopolitical puzzle.

During the period 1955-1966 several developments empowered the role of social work, in the arena of the antagonism between different professions, at least legally. Below we outline the basic facts:

- **1956.** The National Royal Foundation and HEN, in co-operation with the American “Unitary University Service committee” founded the Committee for Training in Social Work (SEKE). According to Kallinikaki, a dominant academic figure in contemporary Greek social work, this permanent committee made a significant contribution to the education of social workers (Kallinikaki, 1998). At this point we should remember the political and reactionary orientation of the NRF, we noted above. “The nationalistic education for teachers, police officers and social workers was one of the basic objectives of this organization” (ios, 2002: 2-5). These reports do not leave space for misunderstanding about the ideology of social work which had common roots with the ideology of the armed forces. Dimitris Servos in his recent, evidence based research on NRF reveals that apart from teachers and social workers, police officers (horofilakes) and soldiers were also involved in the “pedagogical” procedures of the Foundation (Servos, 2001:36).
- **1957, 1960.** Social Work School of Deaconesses and EPAA (Society for the Protection of Children) founded social work schools, highlighting the importance of charity and religious involvement in social work education^v. Given that these institutions were for many years responsible for the front line social workers’ education, it is vital to make a brief overview of their features and philosophy, focusing on the triangle *curriculum- teachers- students*. Their ideology was an amalgamation of nationalistic, conservative and American inspired elements. During that period the state defined the content and limits of the social work education clearly. According to the 319/1962 Royal Decree “*Among the necessary requirements for access to the educational institutions are: pass in examinations consisted of written and oral tests...The oral test (interview) aims at the discovering of the candidates ’ applicability to work as*

a social workers, considering their gifts and talents...Since it is proved following the first year of the studies, that it is impossible for the student to adjust to the profession of social work and after the related decision of the Board of Studies, the student will be expelled.” Needless to say that their attempt to create the “proper personality” of the social worker is not only pedagogically biased but strictly political. It was a permanent filter to avoid the entrance of “undesirable and profane” students. These “sterilized” institutions were also free of any kind of student unions or political activity. The fact that **only females** could have access to social work schools until the 70s defies equality and freedom by definition. At the same time it provides more evidence of the state’s expectation for social work practice. Given the already unequal role of the women in the Greek society, social work was condemned to be an underestimated and expendable profession (for a literature review concerning the social and political position of women in Greece at that time see (Teperoglou and Psara, 2002). On the other hand the curriculum was more than problematic, embodying American patterns totally irrelevant to the Greek reality. Papadimitriou, the former Director of Patras Social Work Department (TEI Patras), describes humorously this situation “*In the insignificant social work literature, I have seen many times, cases (this powerful pattern of teaching) referring to the pure Greek social problems of Puerto Ricans, Afro-Americans and Miss Brown, inhabitant of an American city!*” (Papadimitriou, 1983:2). Moreover the lack of university level programmes and research blocked the development of original and applied knowledge.

Apart from the unfamiliarity of the content in these courses we should mention their theoretical direction. It would not be an overstatement to say that an extreme individualism with references to the medical terminology characterized the courses. Expressions like “sociopathology”, “dysfunction”, “problematic case”, are common through the few available books and papers. Freudian influences combined with McCarthyian^{vi} notions and embellished at the same time, with the proper Greek Orthodox adaptations comprised the curriculum of the Greek social work for many years. For example, “*the problematic clients come from families with low*

economical status ... they are illiterate people, who have become poor socially and culturally...they balance between starvation and disappointment and feel away from the middle-class values, totally different from the rest of the society...social workers know these families but its difficult to handle them because the clients refuse to utilize the social sources. Hostility, between these two different environments exists” (Papadimitriou, 1983:2). These are some of the main guidelines for the future social workers. Needless to say that radical theory never appeared or even mentioned in these educational institutes. Even the teaching of community work had a very superficial approach “*in many occasions the roots of social problems can be found in the endemic, social informal stories (gossips) which some times can cause undesirable consequences*”^{vii} (EPAA,1971: 65). Finally we should mention the poor academic qualification of the teachers; to be more accurate there were, hardly, any teachers with even a first level university degree. Most of them have graduated from this educational anomaly and continued to reproduce it.

- **1959, 1961, 1962 and 1963**^{viii} *Legislative Decree concerning the institution of social workers, Royal decree concerning the social work practice, Royal decree concerning the education of social workers and a supplementary decree to the previous one.* This wave of legislative interventions declared the official recognition of the Greek social work by the state and defined its context in detail. In relation to the sectional interests these decrees were significant because social work was crystallized as an acknowledged profession for the first time. There were defined concrete qualifications needed for registration as a social worker; most important of which was the social work degree. The 1961 decree clarified in a more adequate way the process of registration, duties, obligations and ethical guidelines of the social work practice. Politically speaking these laws put social work in a plaster which wasn't removed until 1992 when the 1961 decree was replaced by a new more democratic legislation. For example the 1961 decree declared that “*social workers ought to abstain from events or ideologies aiming to change the current sociopolitical regime to*

act in away which can be interpreted as political propaganda” (RC 690/1961); this instruction wasn't removed until 1992.

- **1961** First National Conference of social workers. In this first conference social workers decided to defend their professional privileges. Hence, concerns which differ the official beliefs cannot be found in the records of this event
- **1965** social workers were recognized as first degree civil servants.

The developments illustrate in an analytical way the hidden relation between contemporary politics and social work. Despite the climax of the legislative interventions of that period, social workers were still few hundreds; a very weak female “league” unable to influence the welfare state more than simply serving it.

B. 1967-1974 *The crystallization of the disciplinary welfare state*

The generals' tyrannical prevail over the distorted democracy in 1967 was not a surprise. The increasing influence of progressive ideas within the popular strata, permanent imperialistic interventions from USA and the unstable financial conditions became mixed in an explosive cocktail. The junta, which was backed by both domestic reactionary forces and external factors, had as major objectives to “secure” –once again– the country from the communistic danger and also to smooth the way for financial deregulations to capital's benefit. This tactic is similar to the Chilean model and the disastrous economical experiment of the “Chicago boys” during Pinochet's odious regime.

The junta's financial policy can be characterized as neoliberal, accompanied by the destruction of every democratic element in society (Patronis and Liagovas, 2004:112). The absolute control of trade unions and the market liberation created a capitalistic heaven for multinationals and the Greek bourgeoisie. Moreover, the lack of any democratic accountability over the government's plans and agreements led to a massive

wave of corruption and also an unconditional surrender to major business figures. Motivations for competition, construction climax and acceleration of country's industrialization formed a fake sense of boom. This policy was just a continuation of previous administration's initiatives. Additionally, it is well known that the pseudo-government of 1967 utilized experienced technocrats from the previous administrations (Patronis and Liagovas, 2004:111).

With respect to social policy, the generals tried to face efficiently popular discomfort. The main welfare structure remained untouched, continuing its vestigial interventions. The Church's sociopolitical power was empowered and its reactionary orientation was now more obvious than ever. During the dictatorship the cream of the clerics had close relationships with the government. They even participated actively in the pre referendum campaign of the generals, calling them "people of God" (ios, 2002: 2-5). The idealistic charity of the church was upgraded since the pseudo-government believed that they could help in accomplishing the junta's piety mission. "*The line of our National Government is to materialize the Greek-Christian teaching*" and the military authorities were praising the church at every opportunity (Aggelopoulos , 1984).

The aim concern of the junta was to pretend social sensitivity through financial initiatives such as price freezing, creation of new jobs (related to the climax of civil construction initiatives), pensions increase and erasure of agricultural debts. On the other hand, ambitious plans for reforms in the fields of social insurance and the health system failed notoriously and lead to the resignation of their designers. "*Their social policy was paternalistic and eclectic, targeting the reproduction of the regime and the limitation of communistic influence. When they "left" in 1974 the welfare state was ruined, broken into pieces and unequal. The Welfare state they found was almost the same, but the main difference was that now the gap between rich and poor had been widened and the same happened between the big and small cities.*" (Patronis and Liagovas, 2004:112). It is worth mentioning that in 1973 a legislative initiative defined the context of institutional care and the protection of the elderly. This law comprises the basic framework of elderly care until now, showing the continuity of the Greek social policy and its political references.

The disclosed era of social work

After reviewing the social work literature in Greece, we reach the conclusion that this barbaric regime never existed or even if it had, it had nothing to do with social work! Surprisingly, only Stathopoulos (1996) and Papatheofilou (1977) refer to social work under the dictatorship, but in an epigrammatic and superficial perspective. “*The dictatorship created “stagnant water” because social work cannot grow up without freedom*” (Papatheofilou, 1977:123). First of all, this conclusion ignores that Greek social work was already under authoritarian limitations since its birth. Moreover it is not an overstatement to say that during this time social work had a privileged position on a professional level and its sectional status was empowered (see below). Of course this was not a consequence of Generals’ social sensitivity but evidence of social work’s totally alienated nature. Using the term “alienation” I refer to Marx’s concept rather than the mainstream psychological one (for more discussion on the relation between alienation and social work see Ferguson and Lavalette, 2004). Under these conditions, Greek social work could never appear as a threat to the tyrannical regime. In addition it could be seen as a useful and faithful ally.

Unfortunately, this period is considered as taboo among social work practitioners and academics. The close relation between their Association and the junta remains undisclosed. However even a glimpse at the NASW’s archives is enough for the researcher to ascertain a dangerous ideological alliance. During the second year of the totalitarian administration (1968), NASW’s representatives met the leadership of Welfare’s Ministry at least 5 times! It was the same year when the minister himself sent a letter titled “arrangement for social workers and professional utilization”: “*a. The Greek government during the general ongoing labour reform will look after all the remaining social work demands.(...) On the other hand, we really appreciate social workers’ contribution in the constructive implementation of our social programs.(...) The ministry of social services will take all the appropriate measures for the advantageous and coherent organization of social workers in commission.*” (SKLE, 1968^{ix})

NASW’s response was on the same wavelength, reminding General Papadopoulos, the head of pseudo-government, that “*all of the 660 social workers are able to face and*

resolve issues of social adjustment” (SKLE, 1968). Meaningless to state that the junta in order to promote its “social adjustment” was utilizing, apart from brainwash as methods, violence, exile, tortures and executions. During a turbulent period, official social work ignored any progressive connotation. At the same time all over the world revolutionary movements were in their heydays and within this euphoria, radical social work appeared as a vibrant alternative. Nevertheless, this debate never emerged in Greece and it is vital to mention that even nowadays we can hardly find references to this alternative approach.

Within one of the final letters in the same year, NASW declared to the government that social workers “*are better scientifically equipped than teachers in preventing the social tribulations [in schools]*” (SKLE, 1968). This argument was employed while social workers demanded to pretend they were the junta’s warders within the schools. As far as we know, this very demand never materialized but the generals rewarded social workers for their dedication. The Greek state cemented social workers posts within the ministries of justice and welfare (LD 1375/1973). Moreover, the number of social workers in the employment of the state reached its peak, while this process had begun from 1971 (Vouka et al 1981: 154). Finally, the last but not least dictatorial intervention was the shift of social work Education from the Ministry of Welfare to the Ministry of education under the form the Technical- Higher Education, schools of paramedical professions in Patras and Heraclion (LD 335/1973). This intervention by the junta was however ironical. For by seeking to raise the status of social work it also relocated it to an educational context which allowed for most academic freedom for the first time in social work’s history. Moreover, social work education was emancipated from the Church’s embrace and the “gate” opened for male access to the profession^x.

Finally, we come to the conclusion that during the Generals’ era, social work’s professional position was promoted, as a result of NASW co-operation with the state apparatus. Although this fact remains unrevealed it comprises a very important and definitive chapter in its development proving the close interplay between politics and social work in Greece. The acknowledgment of this dark era will help social work’s self-examination and re-definition.

B. 1974-1990 “modernizing” the welfare state

The first after-junta government can be characterized as a transition one. The gradual restoration of capitalistic democracy was based on structural changes concerning the legalization of the Greek Communist Party, the establishment of liberal-democratic constitution and the attempts of active re-involvement in western international organizations such as NATO and EEC. The Karamanlis government adopted right-wing policies trying to encourage the free market and despite the extended anti-american and anti EEC atmosphere within the Greek people, Greece joined the European Community and became its tenth member in 1981.

In October 1981 PASOK was the first Socialist-oriented party to be elected as a government in Greece. “Change” was PASOK’s slogan that inspired the vast majority of the voters. According to this radical slogan the party’s policy would focus on social change, democratization, and protection of the national sovereignty and independent. PASOK’s first administration led to gradual democratization of the state apparatus and the Greek society in general. Multiple legislative interventions were focused on the empowerment of civil rights, such as civil marriage, gender equality and religious tolerance (Stathopoulos, 1996: 178, Muzelis, 2002: 7-8). These reforms were the result of a growing demand of the Greek working class for real social change. PASOK’s policy was not a “gift” to the Greek people but a mature result of its struggles. From this perspective we can evaluate this development as a “step forward”, though weak and limited. Despite the ambitious intentions and declarations, soon enough political barriers and confines emerged, proving the limitation of Papandreou government, which transformed PASOK to a mainstream social-democrat Party. Bureaucracy, clientism, corruption and populism constituted the main features of the state apparatus under PASOK. (for further discussion see Venieris, 2003, Sotiropoulos, 2004 Muzelis, 2002)

Concerning social policy PASOK attempted to create the “first Greek welfare state”. This effort was based on cash benefits. Within 1981-85 salaries and pensions were significantly raised and the social expenditure as share of GPD increased from 14 percent to 20 percent (Sotiropoulos, 2004: 269). Once again the welfare policy was comprehended only in the narrow terms of cash provisions. On the other hand, the

existent welfare structures remained untouched prolonging their marginalized existence. However the cornerstone of PASOK's social and health policy was the development of the National Health System (ESY) in 1983. Theoretically it was the first time that all citizens had free access to good quality health care and pharmaceutical treatment. Alongside, health centres were created all over the country, which were supposed to assist hospitals' mission for the sufficient medical cover of the Greek population. PASOK's hesitation to promote unwavering social reforms combined with its horror-balance between progressive measures and free market policies lead to the failure of ESY. Free medical treatment was an illusion for the Greek citizens. The development of clientistic approaches promoted the black market and strengthened the private sector (Carpenter, 2003: 257-272, Petmetsidou, 1996:325, Sotiropoulos, 2004: 269).

During the second period of PASOK's administration (1985-1989) free market policies were more obvious. The financial deficit caused by the fragmented and disorganized expenditures lead to a stabilizing economical plan. In spite of the "euroscepticism" of 1981-85, the second administration was actively interested in the European integration. Nevertheless, this prospect was still very difficult to implement given the domestic resistance to hard neoliberal reforms. This effort will characterize the next decade resulting aggressive privatizations and structural changes.

Social work in transition.

Given that PASOK's social policy focused on cash benefits social work was largely untouched by the reforms. Social workers were still few and their work was bound on this economical nature. Stathopoulos estimates that during 1986, one social worker was responsible for 45,945 citizens and this situation was even worse in rural areas; for example concerning the central and western Macedonia this analogy was 1:70,655(Stathopoulos, 1996: 169).

In the post junta period, social workers started for the first time to express consciously progressive political approaches. Examples of this debate can be found in the records of the National Conferences in 1978 and 1985. Social change related to concrete political and ideological beliefs was at last at the centre of discussion. The time of this political self examination and collective euphoria about the future of social work as a mean of

social change lasted for less than fifteen years associated with the collapse of the Soviet Union and the emergence of triumphal capitalism and neo-liberalism.

The politicization of social work during these years reflected the overall current political mobilization, which led to the first ever “left-oriented” government in Greece. It is equally true that the democratization of trade unions as well as student unions strengthen this effort. In 1983 the education of social workers shifted to the national higher education system through Technological Educational Institutes (TEI). Although TEI were far more effective than the previous religious schools, the lack of university level education emerged as the main demand. TEI ensured the appropriate academic freedom and equality in access but as far as it concerns academic and educational research the quality was still very poor. Most of the academics had not adequate educational and professional qualifications (Zografou, 1995: 7-25).

Unfortunately this condition still remains problematic. According to research conducted by Zografou in 1995 in TEI Patras (one of three in Greece) only 6 teachers had at least university or TEI first degree, in a total 16. Hence the majority of the teachers had only degrees from the previous schools, which were acting outside the formal educational system under conditions I described above. The establishment of the first university level department of social work in 1996 was a result of social workers’ effort throughout 80s and 90s. The creation of this department did not result in halting of insufficient non-university education but the problematic situation became more complex since this step was not accompanied by either the abolishment or the upgrade of the existent social work departments in TEI. Moreover social workers still graduate from institutions with different educational levels. The “pseudo” upgrading of TEI in 2002 (Aspragathos, 2002:57) did not remove this differentiation, which is most obvious at a professional level. The title “social worker” is held by professionals who graduated from both TEI and universities. At a professional level they have different salaries and prospects in the agency’s hierarchy, although they have the same duties, they belong in the same trade union and also study equally for four years. Consequently, this contradiction has caused clashes amongst social work professionals. However this perverse logic was caused by the harmonization of the Greek educational system with the EU directives (see Bologna agreement),(Aspragathos 2002). “Divide and rule” is the philosophy, which is followed

from the Greek governments concerning policies in educational and labour issues. It would appear that the more divided the professionals are the more controllable.

Another aspect of this perplexity is the fact that the lack of domestic reproduction of academic social workers prolongs the class discrimination in the education of social workers. According to the university regulations new academics should hold formal educational qualifications (postgraduate studies), but given the absence of postgraduate programmes for social workers in Greece, only the privileged have the ability to study abroad and gain the requisite qualifications. Automatically, this condition excludes social workers from unprivileged social strata. It is unrealistic to the majority of these academics to adopt a shared perspective with the working class social workers when approaching the nature of social problems and their possible solutions. This situation empowers the neo-conservative turn, which characterizes social work in the 90s as a reflection of the general conservative condition in contemporary western societies.

Discussion

Examining the evolution of Greek social work in a dialectic perspective and focusing on its political contradictions, we come to the following conclusions:

- Despite the fact that we can hardly find references to the relationship between Greek social work and politics, this relationship exists and defines social work practice.
- Greek social work appeared under a highly authoritarian and oppressive environment and it was artificially established “from above”.
- In spite of its vestigial existence, social work was extremely and consciously involved in the oppressive nature and function of the authoritarian state.
- This period shaped Greek social work’s ideology.

Alongside the continuation of the disciplinary state in Greece, official social work prolongs the unspoken alliance with it. Nowadays more than ever, social workers in Greece appear to have internal political conflicts. They are victims themselves of neo-liberally inspired, labour deregulations related to the European Union’s free market

priorities. Promoting free competition and unrestricted capitalistic economy is one of the main values of the EU as they were crystallized after the Maastricht treaty (Maastricht treaty 1992:5). Economical integration is based on these principles and priorities. “*The union shall work for sustainable development based on balanced economic growth and price stability, a **highly competitive social market economy**... the **free movement of persons, services, goods and capital** and freedom of establishment will be guaranteed within and by the European Union*” (EU constitution 2004:15,16). These directives prompted a series of reforms in labour and welfare status in Greece such as labour deregulations, working flexibility, increase of productivity, “rationalization” of welfare, curtailments (for further discussion see Venieris, 2003:136-140). Consequently, as part of the popular strata, social workers, are affected dramatically. Job insecurity, underemployment, managerialism and low salaries comprise the working reality they confront. The first salary of a social worker working in NGOs is 622 Euros, slightly more than a non skill worker (FEK 1223 of 10/8/2004). At the same time more than 1,000 social workers (1/4 of the overall) are working under the fear of losing their job as a result of the short term and time limited EU’s welfare initiatives under which so many social workers are employed (social worker, 2004 :1). Managers and technocrats supervise social work practice, promoting the market ideology within the welfare (P.C 2646/98).

On the other hand, social workers appeared to promote these policies materializing specific related directives. For example social workers working in the Promoting Labour Agencies (OAED) “help” clients adjust to the new labour deregulations, utilizing all the EU underemployment initiatives (e.g. STAGE vocational programme, part time jobs etc). Since social workers are victims of these reforms as we mentioned above, it is likely to find unemployed social workers among the other unemployed people seeking help from the social worker of OAED. Given the high rate of unemployment and the “expiry date” of working agreements, it is more than possible for the social worker to become a “client”. I experienced, a year ago, this contradictory nature of social work by my self, waiting in the queue of OAED for the social worker on duty.

Moreover NASW is not a passive observer of the situation but an active apologist of these reforms. The President of NASW was a personal consultant to the Minister of

Welfare and also board members participated in decision making, scientific committees according to the legislation act 1306/2003 topic 3. Alongside, the trade union de facto accepts the E.U. directives concerning welfare reforms by implementing per se E.U. initiatives (NASW is a partner in materializing aspects of the EQUAL E.U. initiative) (social worker, 2004: 13-15).

Despite the neo-liberal policies “*the final years of the 20th century and the opening years of 21st have seen a commitment on a mass scale, a reawakening of the realization that human action can challenge and change the structures which condemn millions to lives of drudgery*” (Lavalette, 2002:187). In Greece the massive working class mobilization in spring 2001 postponed the reform of the Greek National Security System according to the E.U. directives. The following years hundreds of thousands Greeks illustrated their anti-war, anti imperialistic feelings, in massive demonstrations. Within this revival of working class mobilization, social work can play an important role bearing in mind its commitments for social justice and equality. Social work cannot lead to a social change by itself but its contribution to this effort can be vital “*The need for social work committed to social justice and challenging poverty and discrimination is greater than ever. In our view, this remains a view that is worth defending. More than any other welfare state profession, social work seeks to understand the links between “public issues and “private troubles” and seeks to address both.*” (Jones et al, 2003: 2) Since poverty remains the consequent outcome of the unequal distribution of wealth due to free-market policies, social work maintains “*its unique position within the panoply of state welfare services in being engaged with some of the most impoverished in society*” (Jones, 2002: 8). Having his engagement, social work can contribute significantly in the effort to develop an emancipatory perspective on social relationships which leads in the quest for concrete action for change.

For Greek social work, in order to explore ways of promoting social change and social justice, self-awareness is the first step. Demystification of the past and consciousness of the social work’s political character is the painful but necessary procedure for its real development according to popular demands. “*Part of the current political struggle in social work is...how to remember the past.*” (Fisher and Karger in Reisch and Andrews, 2002: 9).

References

ⁱ It is obvious that the purpose of this action wasn't to establish a welfare system but rather to empower and help the Greek people in order to continue the struggle for liberation and development of a socialist state.

ⁱⁱ National Liberation Front. It was a massive and popular resistance movement during the period of occupation. Apart from the military activities EAM established cultural, educational and solidarity committees initiating to combat deprivation, illiteracy and low morale.

ⁱⁱⁱ Christian Union for young females.

^{iv} From the 70s until the mid 90s a second journal appeared in this field. It was titled "EKLOGH" (choice) and produced by the association of university graduated social workers, sample of the sectional and elitist logic within Greek social work.

^v Alongside these vocational institutes, limited postgraduate seminars organized within the theological university and Panteion School of social sciences.

^{vi} "In the McCarthy era, there were 212 separate pieces of repressive legislation being considered in congress. Although some were aimed explicitly at Communists the majority sought to abrogate labour rights. In USA during that time, liberal anticommunists, including the most of the mainstream leadership of the social work profession, were particularly strident in their attacks on the left. They equated Communism, the police state and the slave labour camp, and Capitalism with democracy... The personal consequences of McCarthyism for many social workers were both painful and long lasting". (Reisch and Andrews, 2001:113)

^{vii} Course notes from the EPAA school of social work in community work, 1971

^{viii} For a brief overview of the overall legislative interventions concerning the social work profession see Dedussi and al. 2003

^{ix} Official correspondence of NASW. NASW records, First semester of 1968.

^x Practically, Greek social work was never totally devoid of religious and conservative ideas and also the male contribution remains so far insignificant.

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