

Efi Avdela

When Juvenile Delinquency Became an International Post-War Concern

The United Nations, the Council of Europe
and the Place of Greece

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Preface

This essay is based on a contribution to the Gunnar Hering Lectures, presented at the Department of Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies, University of Vienna, on 25 April 2017. I am grateful to Professor Maria Stassinopoulou for inviting me and to Professor Oliver Rathkolb for agreeing to comment on my lecture. It is a great honor to give this prestigious lecture named after an important historian. I did not have the privilege of knowing or meeting Gunnar Hering and our research paths only crossed occasionally. But because of its rigor and depth, and especially its wide scope, his work remains exemplary.

Introduction

Delinquency is not the name of an illness, nor is there one simple specific psychological category for all delinquents and for them alone. Yet still today, doctors, magistrates, and teachers seem to be dominated, though often almost unconsciously, by a belief in a specific psycho-biological delinquent type.¹

This is how Dr. Lucien Bovet, the author of a study composed in 1950 on behalf of the World Health Organization as a contribution to the United Nations programme for the prevention of crime and the treatment of offenders, summarized the predicament of this

¹ L. Bovet, *Psychiatric Aspects of Juvenile Delinquency*, World Health Organization, Palais des Nations, Geneva, 1951, p. 8.

new post-war public concern. Indeed, juvenile delinquency generated strong anxieties in the years following the end of the Second World War on both sides of an increasingly divided Europe and in many other parts of the world. As it gained public attention, the question of dealing with the purportedly widespread “antisocial” behavior of young people also gave rise to developing struggles over expertise. A forensic psychiatrist, head of the medical educational office of the Department of Justice and State Police of Vaud, at Lausanne, Dr. Bovet repeatedly claimed in his report that psychiatrists were better placed to explain and confront juvenile delinquency than physicians, jurists, or educators.

This essay examines how the intensive activity around the issue of juvenile delinquency of the new international bodies which emerged after the end of the Second World War, such as the World Health Organization, the various services of the United Nations and the Council of Europe, internationalized the anxieties generated in the fifties and sixties by its purported increase in Europe and beyond. It argues that in the post-war conditions, juvenile delinquency and its prevention became an opportune social issue of wide concern, apt to foster international collaboration while consolidating political and professional hierarchies in a troubled world order. Greece, a regular member-state of all these organizations from their start, participated systematically in the conferences organized on the subject of juvenile delinquency and contributed data to the reports, surveys and recommendations that were produced. However, it will argue that in order to ensure international legitimacy, Greek authorities presented abroad an embellished picture of the initiatives and measures undertaken for the pre-

vention and containment of juvenile delinquency. At the same time, at home, strong moralism and juridical formalism dominated both official and unofficial approaches to the issue.

The essay first outlines briefly the terms under which juvenile delinquency became an international public issue during the first decades after the war, and the ambiguities surrounding its understanding and treatment. The second part focuses on the reports from the main international conferences on juvenile delinquency organized by the United Nations, the World Health Organization, UNESCO, and the Council of Europe during the 1950s and 1960s, and their successive conclusions and guidelines. This material, compiled according to data provided by state members, transnationalized the issue and—in spite of the repeatedly formulated reservations—fostered comparisons and the crystallization of differences and commonalities, among other issues concerning appropriate expertise. At the same time, insisting on the need for scientific approaches to the issue, the international activity around it homogenized and depoliticized it according to the priorities of the dominant—usually Western European—countries.

The third part sketches how the issue of juvenile delinquency was dealt with in Greece during the post-war period, both at the level of discourse and at the level of public policies, and underlines the prevailing moralism. The final part examines the place of Greece in the above international organizations. While its representatives systematically attended conferences and contributed to surveys, everything indicates that their presence was rather perfunctory. Greek authorities constantly provided information that created an embellished image of the

existing preventive measures while they insisted that the culturally dominant model of strong family ties made this country more immune than others to the excesses of juvenile delinquency. Motivated by a nationalist urge to improve the country's image abroad at a time of acute social and political divisions at home, the relevant discourse sidestepped the strong moralism and the juridical formalism that dominated the field concerning juvenile delinquency at the national level.

Transnational anxieties over juvenile delinquency: a post-war issue

That juvenile delinquency became a matter of public concern in the post-war period is well documented.²

² To give but a few examples: for the USA: J. Gilbert, *A Cycle of Outrage. America's Reaction to the Juvenile Delinquent in the 1950s*, Oxford, 1986; L. Passerini, "La jeunesse comme métaphore du changement social. Deux débats sur les jeunes: L'Italie fasciste, l'Amérique des années 1950", in G. Levi and J.-C. Schmitt (eds), *Histoire des jeunes en Occident*, vol. 2: *L'époque contemporaine*, Paris, 1996, pp. 339–408. For Britain: L. Jackson (with A. Bartie), *Policing Youth: Britain 1945–70*, Manchester, 2014; M. Jarvis, *Conservative Governments, Morality and Social Change in Affluent Britain, 1957–64*, Manchester, 2005; A. Wills, "Delinquency, Masculinity and Citizenship in England 1950–1970", *Past & Present* 187, 2005, pp. 157–185. For Sweden: R. Nilsson, "Creating the Swedish Juvenile Delinquent: Criminal Policy, Science and Institutionalization c. 1930–1970", *Scandinavian Journal of History* 34/4, 2009, pp. 354–375. For Holland: M. Komen, "Dangerous Children: Juvenile Delinquency and Judicial Intervention in the Netherlands, 1960–1995", *Crime, Law & Social Change* 37, 2002, pp. 379–401. For Italy: S. Piccone Stella, "'Rebels without a Cause': Male Youth in Italy around 1960", *History Workshop Journal* 38, 1994, pp. 157–178. For the Soviet Union: M. Edele, "Strange Young Men in Stalin's Moscow: The Birth and Life of the Stiliagi, 1945–1953", *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 50/1, 2002, pp. 37–61 and J. Fürst, *Stalin's Last Generation. Soviet Post-War Youth and the Emergence of Mature Socialism*, Oxford, 2010. For Hun-

Historical research has shown that in many countries—in Europe and beyond—youth became a source of growing anxiety. Journalists, opinion makers, and politicians shared the widespread belief that youth demonstrated—to an extent unknown before—one form or other of antisocial or unlawful behavior and that the numbers of juvenile offenders were constantly increasing. Adolescent males were considered the main source of concern. They were accused not only of committing different kinds of illicit acts, such as theft and aggression, but also of entertaining unconventional cultural practices—such as loud music, sartorial preferences, or love of speed. Specialists did not always agree in their interpretations of this disquieting development, but they all related it to a wide range of factors, the special weight of which they appreciated differently: disrupted family relations and unacceptable permissiveness of parents, but also physical and psychological consequences of poverty and poor living conditions in urban areas, inadequate state care and education, and the new forms of youth entertainment.

The public concerns about juvenile delinquency were of course not new in the years after the end of the

gary: S. Horváth, “Patchwork Identities and Folk Devils: Youth Subcultures and Gangs in Socialist Hungary”, *Social History* 34/2, 2009, pp. 163–183. For Greece: E. Avdela, “‘Corrupting and Uncontrollable Activities’: Moral Panic about Youth in Post-Civil-War Greece”, *Journal of Contemporary History* 43/1, 2008, pp. 25–44. For Israel: M. Ajzenstadt, “Reactions to Juvenile Delinquency in Israel, 1950–1970: A Social Narrative”, *The Journal of Policy History* 17/4, 2005, pp. 404–425. For a more comparative approach: H. Ellis (ed.), *Juvenile Delinquency and the Limits of Western Influence, 1850–2000*, London, 2014. The next few paragraphs draw from my “Youth ‘in Moral Danger’: (Re)conceptualizing Delinquency in Post-Civil-War Greece”, *Social History* 42/1, 2017, pp. 73–74. I thank the editors for their permission.

Second World War. In fact the issue constitutes a notable early example of transnational diffusion of ideas and expertise. Since the late nineteenth century the successive international penal congresses dedicated to the “criminal child” had contributed to the elaboration of the concept of “delinquency” and to the formation of a wide network of transnational European experts, characterized recently as an “epistemic community in the making.”³ With the end of the First World War the anxieties about its impact on orphaned or impoverished children and youth contributed to the collaboration between the League of Nations with the International Penal and Penitentiary Commission and the Save the Children International Union in a series of conferences aiming at outlining the problem of juvenile delinquency and at formulating future policies.⁴

In the post Second World War period, however, the public anxieties over juvenile delinquency became more widespread than they had ever been before. As the existing historiography indicates, they mobilized everywhere a multitude of national and international public and private agents—administrators, governments, the Church, wel-

³ S. Kott, “Une ‘communauté épistémique’ du social ? Experts de l’OIT et internationalisation des politiques sociales dans l’entre-deux-guerres”, *Genèses* 71/2, 2008, pp. 26–46. For the concept of “epistemic community” see P. Haas, “Introduction: Epistemic Communities and International Policy”, *International Organization* 46/1, 1992, pp. 1–35.

⁴ J. Droux, “L’internationalisation de la protection de l’enfance : acteurs, concurrences et projets transnationaux (1900–1925)”, *Critique internationale* 52/3, 2011, pp. 17–33; M.-S. Dupont-Bouchat, “Du tourisme pénitentiaire à ‘l’Internationale des philanthropes’. La création d’un réseau pour la protection de l’enfance à travers les congrès internationaux (1840–1914)”, *Paedagogica Historica: International Journal of the History of Education* 38/2-3, 2002, pp. 533–563.

fare institutions, the press—as well as different experts—psychologists, psychiatrists, educators, social workers, physicians, and jurists. While the power relations between groups of experts differed in each country according to the academic traditions and the leverage each discipline had on state authorities, the general trend was the move from penal to “psy” approaches. The same anxieties also galvanized the new international bodies established after the end of the Second World War, such as the World Health Organization, the various services of the United Nations, and the Council of Europe. Their intensive activity around the issue of juvenile delinquency generated repeated reports, conferences, surveys, and recommendations, some of which are analysed below.

The “transnational discourse” on juvenile delinquency,⁵ that is, the mass of national and international writing and the transnational diffusion of ideas about this public concern and the policies for its prevention and containment, wavered during this period between two distinctive features: claims of scientific status and strong moralism. A third feature was the discrepancy, ever more frequently admitted, between the intensity of public anxieties and the diffuse phenomenon that generated them. Because it was so difficult to delineate with some precision the extent of the “phenomenon,” and given the insistence of public anxieties, preventive measures became the focus of national and international debates and interventions. With the legacies of the traumatic past still vivid, in the midst of a process of reconstruction that

⁵ H. Ellis, “Editor’s Introduction: Juvenile Delinquency, Modernity, and the State”, *Social Justice* 38/4, 2011, p. 4; K. Bertrams and S. Kott, “Actions sociales transnationales”, *Genèses* 71/2, 2008, pp. 2–3.

triggered unpredictable changes in all realms of private and public life, in the acute political polarization of the Cold War context, dealing with juvenile delinquency became a metonym for taming the unknown and restoring authority in the public and the private domains.

The very term “juvenile delinquency” was full of ambiguities. The need to distinguish between “criminality” and “delinquency” with respect to the unruly behavior of minors became ever more accepted among jurists from the end of the nineteenth century.⁶ In the following period, the development of the concept of adolescence, the constitution of criminology and psychology as academic disciplines, and the establishment of social work as a profession, reinforced this idea. It was crystallized by the subsequent establishment of juvenile justice mechanisms and their corresponding institutions and agencies, public and private. By the post-war period the term “juvenile delinquency” predominated in the field and in most countries prevention took precedence over repression;⁷ however not everywhere nor to the same degree.

For instance, in the Greek case the term “juvenile delinquency” was never used during the period in question. Official texts, scholarly publications and the press saw

⁶ C. Leonards, “Border Crossings: Care and the ‘Criminal Child’ in Nineteenth Century European Penal Congresses”, in P. Cox and H. Shore (eds), *Becoming Delinquent: European Youth, 1650–1950*, Aldershot, 2002, pp. 105–121.

⁷ The historiography on these issues is immense. For general overviews: A. Binder, A. Geis, D.D. Bruce, *Juvenile Delinquency. Historical, Cultural, Legal Perspectives*, Cincinnati, 1997; J. Muncie, *Youth and Crime. A Critical Introduction*, London, 1999. See also in Greek my “Νέοι εν κινδύνω”. *Επιτήρηση, αναμόρφωση και δικαιοσύνη ανηλίκων μετά τον πόλεμο* [*Youth in Danger: Surveillance, Reformation and Juvenile Justice after the War*], Athens, 2013.

young offenders, unruly youth, and minors in “moral danger” as parts of the same social phenomenon—“child and youth criminality” [*paidiki kai neaniki egklimatikotita—παιδική και νεανική εγκληματικότητα*]. In the post-Civil-War context the issue of “child and youth criminality” found socially and ideologically fertile ground, and was at the centre of public debates.⁸ The need to protect minors from the “moral dangers” of both the negative legacies of the bloody 1940s and the rapid transformations of the present haunted the public, the political parties, the Church, state officials, and the press as well as jurists and social scientists, and it developed into a moral panic about youth—in the sense that Stanley Cohen has given to the term.⁹ While it lasted, diverse and contingent acts were treated as part and parcel of a single social phenomenon, consistently identified as “underage criminality.”¹⁰ This homogenization was reinforced by the limited development of new expertise in related issues. Psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers, and juvenile probation officers were nascent experts, with as yet negligible public leverage. The limited development of the social sciences, the restricted influence of the “psy” sciences, and the recent (in 1940) establishment of the juvenile justice mechanism meant that the project of reforming unruly youth and the technologies of power that were employed remained for decades the prerogative of tradi-

⁸ For the Greek Civil War (1946–1949) see: D. H. Close, *The Origins of the Greek Civil War*, London, 1993 and T. D. Sfikas and P. Carabott (eds), *The Greek Civil War. Essays on a Conflict of Exceptionalism and Silences*, Aldershot, 2004.

⁹ S. Cohen, *Folk Devils and Moral Panics: The Creation of the Mods and Rockers*, London, 1972.

¹⁰ Avdela, “‘Corrupting and Uncontrollable Activities’”, and Avdela, “Youth in ‘Moral Danger’.”

tional forces: jurists, the Church, journalists, and politicians. Amidst the political configuration of the post-Civil-War years, as a consequence, moralism prevailed in lay and scholarly discourse and in the various interventions and policies.

Debating juvenile delinquency in the international fora: experts and others

Public concerns about the purported increase in juvenile delinquency found listening ears in the new “transnational network of specialists,” as Akira Iriye has termed the institutions and committees created after the war in response to the foundation of the United Nations and other supra-national bodies.¹¹ In the middle of growing international divisions fed either by the Cold War or decolonization, these bodies aimed at widening the scope of international relations far beyond diplomacy. Therefore they showed immediate interest in issues referring to the various social ills with which member-states were confronted. It was believed that concerted efforts around such issues could promote international cooperation amidst increasing polarization, both political and economic. Crime and its prevention, an issue of both public and social order, were given central place.

¹¹ A. Iriye, “The Making of a Transnational World”, in A. Iriye (ed.), *Global Interdependence. The World after 1945*, Cambridge, Mass., London, 2014, pp. 722–723. From the vast literature on the history of the United Nations, see, indicatively, R. Jolly, L. Emmerij, T.G. Weiss, *UN Ideas that Changed the World*, Bloomington & Indianapolis, 2009; M. Mazower, *No Enchanted Palace. The End of Empire and the Ideological Origins of the United Nations*, Princeton, 2009.

It is in this context that in 1948 the secretary general of the United Nations convened a committee of experts to study and propose an international programme for the prevention of crime and related necessary actions. The Commission considered that juvenile delinquency was a matter of particular importance and should be given priority. Accepting that the issue concerned medical and psychiatric problems, its study was assigned to the World Health Organization—newly founded as a UN specialized agency.¹² The mission was given to Dr. Lucien Bovet, whose report was based on research in several European countries and the USA. Published in 1951, *Psychiatric Aspects of Juvenile Delinquency* soon became a classic reference.¹³

Bovet's dispassionate discourse on an issue that had already generated high passions was an eloquent defence of the need for new scientific approaches. First of all, he repeatedly emphasized the difficulties in circumscribing "juvenile delinquency": not only did its legal definition vary from country to country, but also—as the quote cited at the beginning shows—deeply rooted convictions often dominated in the treatment of juvenile offenders. Since it was impossible to demonstrate objectively the validity of these convictions, Bovet asserted that "[i]t must be rare for decisions with serious coercive consequences to be taken with so little supporting evidence as in the case of juvenile delinquency."¹⁴ Therefore, anxie-

¹² A. Iriye, *Global Community. The Role of International Organizations in the Making of the Contemporary World*, Los Angeles, London, 2002, pp. 42–43.

¹³ Bovet, *Psychiatric Aspects of Juvenile Delinquency*. See also Leonards, "Border Crossings."

¹⁴ Bovet, *Psychiatric Aspects of Juvenile Delinquency*, p. 10.

ties were exaggerated and much more research was urgently needed.

Even more, Bovet strongly objected to the term “juvenile delinquency.” He considered it “legal and social in origin” and not scientific. He preferred the terms “social dis-adaptation or maladjustment,” which did not necessarily equate to delinquency. At any rate, however understood, juvenile delinquency was for Bovet a “bio-psychosocial phenomenon,” and its three constitutive dimensions should always be taken into equal account.¹⁵ While he underlined the necessity of concerted efforts between a variety of experts for the study and treatment of juvenile delinquency, he repeatedly presented psychiatry not only as more clear-headed and effective in dealing with most aspects of the phenomenon under study but also more appropriate for overcoming the half-century long opposition between constitutive and sociological aetiologies. In his words:

The psychiatrist, whose training is both biological and psychological, with his interest in social problems, and with the knowledge he should have of inter-human relationships, could play a useful part in co-ordinating the efforts of the different specialists in juvenile delinquency and in helping them to work together with mutual understanding.¹⁶

That competing bodies of knowledge came into conflict over claims to expertise in the field of juvenile delinquency during the post-war decades is well attested in recent studies. These conflicts concerned the control of this field, all the more politicized as it became a matter of

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 12, 41.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 79, 81–82.

public concerns and policies. As Bradley, Logan and Shaw have already noted for Britain, concepts such as “childhood,” but also “adolescence” and “juvenile delinquency,” “became [s]ource[s] over which many formal agencies (such as social workers and psychiatrists) would battle for control throughout the 1950s and 1960s.”¹⁷

Soon after Bovet’s study, the United Nations institutionalized the committee of experts on the prevention of crime, by absorbing as consultant experts the previously autonomous inter-governmental International Penal and Penitentiary Committee, founded at the end of the nineteenth century.¹⁸ In subsequent years, the UN Economic

¹⁷ K. Bradley, A. Logan, S. Shaw, “Editorial: Youth and Crime: Centennial Reflections on the Children Act 1908”, *Crimes and Misdemeanours* 3/2, 2009, p. 11 and J. Muncie and G. Hughes, “Modes of Youth Governance. Political Rationalities, Criminalization and Resistance”, in J. Muncie, G. Hughes, E. McLaughlin (eds), *Youth Justice. Critical Readings*, London–New Delhi, 2002, pp. 1–18. For the point of view of the post-war police force, Commission internationale de police criminelle, *La Délinquance juvénile actuelle, ses formes et ses causes, ainsi que les mesures propres à sa prévention dans le cadre de la lutte internationale contre la criminalité. XVIe session, Paris, 9–12 June 1947. N° 15, Rapport du Dr M. Sebor*, Paris, 1947 (henceforth *Police criminelle 1947*); and of juvenile probation officers, Organisation des Nations Unies, *La Probation (Régime de la mise à l’épreuve) et les mesures analogue*, Melen, 1953.

¹⁸ United Nations Archives and Records Management Section. Fonds International Penal and Penitentiary Commission (1872–1955) – AG-010, S-0915-0002-0003-00001-UC, IPCC Délégation de la Grèce, 1946–1950. According to A. L. Sayward, *The United Nations in International History*, London, Oxford, 2017, 76, 246; the International Penal Commission was founded in 1872, “following the First International Congress on the Prevention and Repression of Crime (London 1872), with the mandate to collect penitentiary statistics, encourage penal reform, and host future international conferences.” Renamed as the International Penal and Penitentiary Commission (IPPC) in 1929, it hosted joint conferences with the League of Nations in 1925 (in Berlin), 1930 (London), and 1935 (Paris). During the Second World War it was dormant. After the war it was transferred to the United Nations in 1950, integrated into the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)

and Social Council, hosting the international Congresses on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders every five years, collaborated closely with other international bodies in common actions around juvenile delinquency, organizing conferences, publishing studies, and conducting surveys.¹⁹ The discourse that they generated spoke volumes about both the above-mentioned conflicts over expertise and the consequent ambiguities surrounding the field, but also about the divergent public policies for its containment. First of all, the commonly accepted need to plan and implement effective prevention raised the thorny question of how to identify not so much juvenile offenders as those minors who were at risk of becoming offenders; in other words, how to prevent delinquency. Consequently, the distinction between the different categories of youth that generated public concern became increasingly blurred. While this was not something new, it was now recognized by those involved. For example, the 1960 report of the Council of Europe underlined the growing trend in many countries to assimilate “delinquent,” “maladjusted” and “strayed” minors, or to focus on “pre-delinquent” children and on

in 1955 and undertook from 1955 the quinquennial UN Congresses on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders.

¹⁹ The First Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice was held in Geneva in 1955, the Second in London in 1960, the Third in Stockholm in 1965, and the Fourth in Tokyo in 1970. See United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *United Nations Congresses on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice 1955–2010. 55 years of achievement*, United Nations Information Service, Austria, 2010. Also, M. Lopez-Rey, “The First U. N. Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders”, *Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology* 47/5, 1957, pp. 526–538.

minors in “moral danger.”²⁰ The fact that the boundaries between these categories became porous, fluid, and easily crossed was of great concern to both experts and authorities, since in essence it meant that all minors were considered as potentially in “moral danger” of becoming delinquent.

Some common themes come out of the relevant material, confirming the early remarks of Dr. Bovet. First, there was no consensus among member states about what constituted “juvenile delinquency”; second, nowhere were there adequate data documenting the exact size of the problem; third, systematic research on its causes was urgently needed; and fourth, not only had all preventive measures proved ineffective, but also it was impossible to access their results.²¹ All the forms of discourse on juvenile delinquency produced in the decade following Bovet’s report in the context of the various international bodies centred on these issues.

In 1959, a new study was recommended by the United Nations to reassess the situation of juvenile delinquency. It was again assigned to a forensic psychiatrist, Dr. T. S. Gibbens, Senior Lecturer at the Institute of Psychiatry of the University of London and consultant at the World Health Organization. Based on his own medical experience, recent literature and information obtained through visits in many countries, his report was submitted to the Second United Nations Congress on the Prevention of

²⁰ European Committee on Crime Problems, *Juvenile Delinquency in Post-War Europe*, Strasburg, 1960 (henceforth ECCP 1960), pp. 37–38.

²¹ Cf. *Police criminelle* 1947; ECCP 1960, pp. 19, 60; European Committee on Crime Problems, *The Effectiveness of Current Programmes for the Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency*, Strasburg, 1963 (henceforth ECCP 1963), p. 89.

Crime and the Treatment of Offenders, held in London in June 1960.²²

Gibbens followed closely the footsteps of his predecessor, Lucien Bovet. He noted the difficulties in defining juvenile delinquency, the growing rejection by the public of youthful behaviors that until recently were not considered delinquent, but also the new disturbing attitudes adopted by a growing number of young people. While he claimed again the “solid scientific base” of psychiatry and psychology compared to other expertise, he also underlined the increasing collaboration of experts in the study of juvenile delinquency. He maintained that the past conflicts between psychiatrists, criminologists, sociologists, and other experts had been replaced by a more peaceful co-existence and cooperation. In his view, social psychology constituted the new connecting tissue in the various approaches to juvenile delinquency, offering a more balanced consideration of the social, biological and

²² It was published enriched with material from other reports presented at the same congress, namely the one of the Council of Europe. T. C. N. Gibbens, *New Forms of Juvenile Delinquency*, World Health Organization, Geneva, 1961, p. 7; also United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, *Second United Nations Congress for the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Delinquents*, London, August 1960, Special Police Departments for the Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency, Submitted by the International Criminal Police Organization—INTERPOL, General Secretariat, Paris, 1960 (henceforth UN, *Juvenile Delinquency*, 1960); United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, *Second United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime, UN Reports, New Forms of Juvenile Delinquency: Their Origin, Prevention and Treatment*, Paris 1960. Compare with the typed version of the report: World Health Organization, *New Forms of Juvenile Delinquency; Their Origin, Prevention and Treatment*, Report from the World Health Organization to the Second United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders, London, 1960, LSE Library.

psychological dimensions of the phenomenon under study.²³

Gibbens insisted that the existing statistical data did not confirm the strong anxieties expressed in many countries about the increase in juvenile delinquency. In his words: “One may perhaps ask whether the most significant change in the present situation is not the behavior of youths, but the fact that adults view it with more alarm than they used to.”²⁴ In the same vein, Gibbens systematically undermined the most common arguments supporting this purported increase, such as that “antisocial” behavior derived from the growing economic autonomy of predominantly male working-class youths, from the spread of television, radio, cinema, and the press or from the trends for equality between the sexes. Adopting a pioneering perspective, Gibbens considered the new forms of offences committed by minors, such as car borrowing, shoplifting, or hooliganism, as indications of youth sub-cultures; therefore the related adult anxieties were exaggerated. In the same vein, he was critical of the practice in many countries of branding young people with specific names according to their dress-codes (“Teddy-boys, Halbstarke, blouson noirs, nozems, styliarski, etc.”²⁵) and holding them responsible for much of juvenile crime, including the most serious. He maintained that minor phenomena such as car borrowing, loud behavior in public or performance riots after rock’n’roll films or concerts should not be considered as forms of juvenile delinquency; they constituted “ritual-

²³ Gibbens, *New Forms of Juvenile Delinquency*, pp. 10–20.

²⁴ *Ibid.*; p.21 for both quotes.

²⁵ Respectively, British, German, French, Dutch, and Soviet designations.

ized opportunities for free emotional expression.” Real delinquency—he insisted—“arose, according to clinical experience, in much the same way today as yesterday, from serious deprivation and major disorders of family life.”²⁶

While Gibbens underlined the persistent lack of a scientifically valid way to evaluate preventive programmes, he insisted that the family, its cohesion, the affection and supervision provided by the parents were factors of paramount importance in preventing juvenile delinquency and that state intervention was necessary whenever these were lacking. He embraced therefore the model of the family as an “apolitical sanctuary”—to use the words of Tara Zahra—that had been promoted since the end of the war through international aid and especially through the influence of American experts.²⁷

Bovet’s and Gibbens’ studies were written according to the academic standards of their time. They were based on primary data and secondary literature, they discussed the different positions on each aspect of the problem, and they offered balanced suggestions. At the same time, they were positioned, in the sense that they implicitly promoted the superior capacity of their own discipline in producing “objective” assessments of the subject under study. While the very circumstances under which their reports were commissioned testified to the political character that the issue of juvenile delinquency had acquired in the post-war period, Bovet and Gibbens contributed to “depoliticizing” it, in suggesting that public

²⁶ Gibbens, *New Forms of Juvenile Delinquency*, pp. 30, 33, 34.

²⁷ T. Zahra, *The Lost Children. Reconstructing Europe’s Families after World War II*, Harvard, 2015.

concerns around it should be appeased. Writing in mitigated terms, they denied that juvenile delinquency was on the increase, they refused to relate it to youthful cultural practices, and they stressed the need to grant more autonomy to adolescents of both sexes. Thus they separated the public anxieties of the moment from what they considered “real” juvenile delinquency—the “socially maladjusted behavior” that derived from “serious” social disadvantage and “major” disturbed family relations, from inequality, poverty, and repression.²⁸ Approaching juvenile delinquency as a physical, psychological, and social “disorder,” they were primarily interested in “scientifically” understanding what was at stake with the alarm over “antisocial” youth, a condition of any prevention. Their reasoning could not be further from the legal and juridical approaches that predominated in several countries, notably in Greece.

The material from the successive conferences organized during the 1960s by the World Health Organization, UNESCO, and the Council of Europe, usually in cooperation, was more diversified and contradictory than the studies of the two psychiatrists: proceedings, reports, and surveys recorded the positions of each member-state on a variety of issues and at the same time delineated the power relations between international instances, countries, and forms of expertise.²⁹ What is relevant here are

²⁸ For an analysis of how the turn to ‘psy’ perspectives of juvenile delinquency and the problem family in the post-war period contributed in promoting ‘governable subjects’, see N. Rose, *Governing the Soul. The Shaping of the Private Self*, London–New York, 1999.

²⁹ For the most relevant among many publications, see Bovet, *Psychiatric Aspects of Juvenile Delinquency*; ECCP 1960; UN, *Juvenile Delinquency*, 1960; Gibbens, *New Forms of Juvenile Delinquency*; ECCP 1963; W. C. Kvaraceus, *La Délinquance juvénile, problème du monde modern*, UNESCO,

the quinquennial international congresses of the United Nations on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders or the surveys of the European Committee on Crime Problems (CDPC), set up by the exclusively Western Council of Europe in 1958 in order to oversee and coordinate activities in the field of crime prevention and crime control.³⁰

Let us pause for a while on these last surveys, which were organized twice, in 1958 and again in 1962. Aiming at gathering information about the extent of juvenile delinquency and the existing preventive programmes, they collected responses to a common questionnaire from a limited number of member-states (all belonging to the Western bloc), twelve and thirteen respectively. International administrators and government representatives collaborated in composing the two reports. Because they conveyed widespread convictions in many member-states and were not scientific texts, these reports contained certain remarks that would have been unthinkable in the Bovet and Gibbens studies. For example, the 1957 survey put forward the correlation between juvenile delinquency and the birth-rate of “less intelligent, less adaptable, less adequate and also less educated members of the population”; it also referred to studies maintaining “that considerable psychological damage can be done” by the increasing “habit of many young mothers of

Paris, 1964; United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, *Third United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders*, Stockholm, 9–18 August 1965, New York, 1967 (henceforth UN, *Prevention*, 1967).

³⁰ The Council of Europe was created in 1949 and remained a Western club until the fall of the Berlin Wall. See B. Wassenberg, *History of the Council of Europe*, Strasburg, 2013.

working while leaving their children to be looked after” by others.³¹ These remarks, and others in similar vein, suggested that Bovet’s concerns about the “rooted convictions” that still predominated in respect to juvenile delinquency remained valid many years later.

However, both reports underlined how impossible it was to verify the widespread belief in “an increase in the number of abnormal or specially difficult youngsters,” as the material provided was inadequate and “extremely heterogeneous in character.”³² This is why only the 1958 survey—published in 1960—ventured a comparison; the 1962 one—published a year later, in 1963—only presented the individual responses of each member-state. In fact, even the 1958 survey could only record tendencies. Nine countries (Austria, France, the Federal Republic of Germany, Greece, Italy, Norway, Sweden, Turkey, and the United Kingdom) registered an increase in juvenile delinquency in the 1950s. Only in Belgium and Denmark did there appear to be a “reasonably persistent decrease,” whereas the situation in the Netherlands was not clear. No convincing explanations could be provided for these trends, while comparisons were highly controversial since “the unit for measuring the incidence of delinquency” was not the same in each country.³³ The 1958 survey also showed that in many countries public concerns categorized as “anti-social” juvenile behavior related to consumption and the new forms of entertainment and sociality among the young, and it was admitted that often the press tended to homogenize and exaggerate the phe-

³¹ ECCP 1960, pp. 11, 13.

³² *Ibid*, pp. 10, 11.

³³ *Ibid*, pp. 10, 21, 24–25.