



AMERICAN RESEARCH CENTER IN SOFIA

NEWSLETTER No. 5, MAY 2009

The American Research Center in Sofia (ARCS, www.einaudi.cornell.edu/arcs), established in 2004, is dedicated to research in the humanities and social sciences and represents a consortium of educational institutions registered in North America. ARCS is a Member of the Council of American Overseas Research Centers and an Educational Member of the American Chamber of Commerce in Bulgaria. Thanks to a generous donation by the Packard Humanities Institute, ARCS acquired in early 2008 its permanent home in Sofia, consisting of a four-level building on property of over 16,000 sq. ft.

NEWS IN BRIEF

The Council of American Overseas Research Centers (CAORC) welcomed ARCS as a full member at its annual board meeting on April 25, 2009. CAORC's member institutions exist throughout the world and greatly facilitate academic cooperation and research by North American scholars.

We are very pleased to report that the America for Bulgaria Foundation (ABF) awarded ARCS a grant totaling \$383,680 to support various activities related to the mission of ARCS. ARCS will collaborate with the ABF and the Field Museum in Chicago to promote archaeological research and preservation of cultural sites in Bulgaria.

We extend a warm welcome to our newest institutional members: John Cabot University, represented by Eric De Sena (Art History and Studio Art); Princeton University: Margaret Beissinger (Slavic Languages and Literatures); Santa Clara University: William Greenwalt (Classics); and the University of Texas, San Antonio: Boyka Stefanova (Political Science and Geography).

ARCS Board of Trustees has appointed three new members: Mr. Philip Dimitrov, former Prime Minister of Bulgaria and Ambassador of Bulgaria to the United States, Mr. James Pardew, former Ambassador of the United States to Bulgaria, and Dr. Nora Dimitrova, Director of the United States Office of ARCS.

Dr. Nikola Theodossiev, ARCS Associate Academic Director, continued his work on developing the Bulgarian sector on the international e-journal *Fasti Online* (<http://www.fastionline.org/>), published by *Associazione Internazionale di Archeologia Classica*

in Rome and supported by the Packard Humanities Institute. Currently, excavation reports on more than 200 archaeological sites from Bulgaria are available on *Fasti*.

December 1, 2008. Mr. Marshall Lee Miller, a Director of America for Bulgaria Foundation, met with Dr. Nikola Theodossiev and discussed opportunities for collaboration in the field of archaeology. Mr. Miller visited the ARCS headquarters and was introduced to the current Fellows.

December 9, 2008. Professor Kevin Clinton, Chair of ARCS Managing Committee and President of the Board of Trustees, met with the Directors of the America for Bulgaria Foundation (ABF) in New York City, in order to outline the plan for future cooperation between the ABF and ARCS.

December 18, 2008. Professor Kevin Clinton and Dr. Nora Dimitrova attended the opening of the exhibition "Bulgarian Archaeology in 2008" at the National Archaeological Institute with Museum (NAIM) and talked to Bulgarian and foreign scholars attending the event. They also had a fruitful discussion with Dr. Lyudmil Vagalinski, Assistant Director of NAIM.

December 19, 2008. The U.S. Ambassador in Bulgaria H.E. Nancy McEldowney had a cordial conversation with Professor Clinton and Dr. Dimitrova and welcomed the establishment of ARCS.

January 16, 2009. Professor Mitchell Orenstein from the Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies at Johns Hopkins University and his students, who were conducting a research trip to Bulgaria, visited the new building of ARCS and met with Dr. Nikola Theodossiev and ARCS Fellows and staff members.

January 27, 2007. At the General Assembly Meeting of the American Chamber of Commerce in Bulgaria Dr. Theodossiev described ARCS and its mission to interested participants.

February 12, 2009. Professor Julia Stefanova, Executive Director of the Bulgarian-American Commission for Educational Exchange (Bulgarian Fulbright Commission) and ARCS Trustee, toured the headquarters of ARCS and conversed with the Fellows and staff members.

February 16, 2009. Dr. Theodossiev gave a guest lecture at the American University in Bulgaria (AUBG) by invitation of Professor Evelina Kelbetcheva and had a cordial meeting with the AUBG academic community.

March 10, 2009. Dr. Theodossiev attended a meeting with a delegation from the Fox School of Business at Temple University. The event was organized by the American Chamber of Commerce in Bulgaria and took place in the American Corner at the Sofia City Library.

March 21–23, 2009. Dr. Theodossiev accompanied the Board of Directors of the America for Bulgaria Foundation on their trip to Veliko Tarnovo and the impressive Roman town Nicopolis ad Istrum, founded in the beginning of the 2nd century AD. The Board of Directors of America for Bulgaria Foundation visited afterwards the ARCS headquarters and met with Dr. Theodossiev and the staff.

March 25, 2009. Dr. William Parkinson from the Field Museum in Chicago, Mr. Marshall Lee Miller, a Director of America for Bulgaria Foundation, and Dr. Theodossiev discussed possibilities for cooperation with Dr. Lyudmil Vagalinski, Assistant Director of the National Archaeological Institute with Museum.

April 15, 2009. Ms. Svetla Kostadinova, Executive Director, and Mr. Peter Ganev from the Institute for Market Economy visited the ARCS headquarters and met with Dr. Theodossiev.

ACADEMIC PROGRAM: SPRING TERM

The annual Spring Term Program focuses on the history of religion in Bulgaria from antiquity to the 20th century, including ancient religion, Christianity (Orthodoxy, Catholicism, and other Christian faiths and movements), Judaism, and Islam. The Fellows enjoyed illuminating lectures and seminars on the following topics:

- Dr. Maya Vassileva, Center of Thracian Studies: "Mainstream Religious Ideas in Thrace"
- Professor Nicolay Sharankov, Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski: "Greek, Thracian, and Eastern Cults in the Greek Colonies on the Black Sea Coast"
- Dr. Elissaveta Moussakova, National Library St. Cyril and St. Methodius: "Visualizing the Text in Bulgarian Mediaeval Manuscripts"
- Professor Clemena Antonova, American University in Bulgaria: "Myth-making in the Arts: The Case of the Boyana Church"
- Professor Liliana Simeonova, Institute of Balkan Studies: "Papal Missions to Bulgaria: 866-870"
- Professor Serguey Ivanov, American University in Bulgaria: "Introduction to the Topology of the Orthodox Christian Temple"

- Orlin Yordanov, National High School of Ancient Languages and Cultures: "The Palamite Doctrine of the Term "Energy" in the Context of Original Sin"
- Dr. Krum Bacvarov, National Archaeological Institute with Museum: "The Prehistory of Jar Burial Tradition"
- Professor Evelina Kelbetcheva, American University in Bulgaria: "The Treatment of Islamic Minorities in Bulgaria under Communism"
- Professor Svetlana Ivanova, Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski: "Minority Groups in Modern Textbooks of Bulgarian National History"
- Professor Rositza Gradeva, American University in Bulgaria: "Islam in the Balkans/Bulgaria: Past and Present, Politics and Culture"

The trip (March 16-20), led by Dr. Nikola Theodossiev, started in Sofia and its vicinity. The participants visited the Orthodox Church St. Nedelya, the Catholic Church, the Synagogue, and the Banya Bashi Mosque. These major landmarks of the Sofia downtown are located within close proximity of each other, testifying to traditional religious diversity and tolerance in Bulgaria. The participants also toured monuments in the vicinity of Sofia: the Boyana Church, famous for its splendid Renaissance-like frescoes, the Dragalevtzi and the Gorna Banya Monasteries. The trip continued in North Bulgaria, with a visit to some monasteries from the Mediaeval and Ottoman periods, located along the Balkan Range: Sedemte Prestola Monastery, Cherepishki Monastery, Glozhene Monastery and Troyan Monastery. The Fellows also visited the Kilifarevo Monastery, Kapinovo Monastery and St. Pantaleimon Monastery in the Veliko Tarnovo region. During the last day of the trip, the participants examined two outstanding religious monuments in Veliko Tarnovo, the capital of the Second Bulgarian Kingdom: the St. Forty Martyrs Church and the St. Peter and St. Pavel Church, the latter displaying some beautifully preserved Mediaeval paintings. Dr. Pavlina Vladkova gave a fascinating tour of the Archaeological Museum of Veliko Tarnovo, founded in 1871. As always, we are grateful to our Manager Anton Kazakov for his competent and safe guidance. More information about the monasteries can be found on www.bulgarianmonastery.com, a very helpful and informative site.

SURVEYING SUBURBAN SEUTHOPOLIS 2009 REPORT

Shawn Ross, University of New South Wales
Adela Sobotkova, University of Michigan

Since we began archaeological fieldwork in Bulgaria in 2004 we have had our share of difficulties. This year, however, we are beginning to reap the rewards of our hard work. In late 2008 we were awarded a prestigious three-year grant

for interdisciplinary archaeological research in Bulgaria by the Australian Research Council (the Australian equivalent to the NEH and NSF), supplemented by a grant from the Institute for Aegean Prehistory (INSTAP). Even before these awards became available, we were able to begin our work in Bulgaria. Critical to this development was the nine-month fellowship awarded by the ARCS to Ms. Sobotkova which, in combination with Dr. Ross's sabbatical leave, allowed us to focus entirely on our research in Bulgaria.

Work in 2009 focuses on the Kazanlak region in collaboration with Dr. Georgi Nehrizov of the National Archaeological Institute and with the support of the Museum of History "Iskra" in Kazanlak. This collaborative project has been based on common interests and deep commitment to methodological principles. The choice of region was incidental and resulted from an invitation of the Kazanlak museum, which had expressed an interest in settlement archaeology in order to complement Dr. Georgi Kitov's well-known research on the Thracian burial mounds of the region. This serendipitous turn of events offered us an excellent trial for all stages of our research design. The Early Hellenistic Thracian capital of Seuthopolis and its hinterland provided an important case study for holistic and diachronic analysis of the settlement patterns in their environmental context.

To accomplish this goal, between March and May 2009 our project assessed some 100 sq km of high resolution multispectral satellite imagery generously provided free of charge by the Geo Eye Foundation. Next, a month dedicated to systematic surface survey allowed us to examine 10 sq km intensively and 20 sq km extensively. The most promising areas recovered through remote sensing and surface survey (mostly based on the presence of surface material concentrations) were further studied through magnetometry. The anomalies detected were immediately followed up with test excavations in April and early May. Excavations are currently underway to further investigate the promising sites. To date, the test excavations have yielded material indicative of ancient settlements both preceding and coeval with Seuthopolis.

The surface survey brought together over 20 students and scholars from Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Croatia, Britain and the United States. The team-members walked the landscapes of Seuthopolis in mixed groups recording in great detail the location and density of surface materials and features encountered. Different strategies were employed as necessary, varying between the agricultural plains north of the Koprinka reservoir, versus the forested hills of the Sredna Gora Mountain. The survey employed the most modern methodology feasible for the technology combining the digital recording in the field with GPSs and handheld computers, integrated with a GIS desktop. This combination allowed us to display data in real time and proceed quickly to analysis. These results have already contributed to the Archaeological Map of Bulgaria, administered

by Dr. Nehrizov. The project has captured the attention of local media, who were regularly reporting on the team's progress and organized a press conference at the closure of the campaign.

While the surface survey was being conducted, Dr. Simon Connor, an Australian paleobotanist, now based at the University of the Algarve in Portugal collected samples and likely sources of ancient pollen in the foothills and ridges of the Stara Planina Mountain. These samples will be analyzed to shed light on the environmental history of the Kazanlak Valley.

Out of the 16 settlements, 3 were selected for magnetometry, a geophysical method that detects small variations in the earth's magnetic field in order to provide information about underground manmade features; this was undertaken by Dr. Nikola Tonkov of the National Archaeological Institute. Magnetometry bolstered the survey results by revealing the presence of sub-surface anomalies at all three sites.

Work this year provides a model for a three year research programme. The Tundzha Regional Archaeological Project will combine the continuing research in Kazanlak region with a similar program in Yambol region. Dr. Nehrizov's earlier and continued work in Tundzha catchment of the Eastern Rhodope Mountain will also contribute to this regional archaeological and paleoenvironmental assessment.

The support of the American Research Center in Sofia has been invaluable during this project. Most critical was Ms. Sobotkova's fellowship; second the assistance in applying for external funding; and no less important provision of living and work space and administrative support.

THE STAGE OF THE AGES: HISTORICAL HERITAGE AND TOURISTIC ENCOUNTERS IN BULGARIA'S MEDIAEVAL CAPITAL

Aneliya Dimitrova, Indiana University

With few built monuments surviving a tumultuous history, archeological ruins offer a potent discourse through which Bulgarians (re)construct the past, tell themselves and others stories about themselves as well as symbolically position themselves on the historical and cultural map of Europe and the world. With its 12th century fortress crowning the hill of Tsarevets (or King's Hill), with its precipitous, amphitheatrically perched houses overlooking the snaking river below and its rich history, Veliko Tarnovo, Bulgaria's medieval capital, epitomizes this trend. Tourist sites like Tsarevets offer tangible and vivid, as well as symbolically meaningful, material that visitors can experientially appropriate in the personal constructions of self and other and of social realities. This makes investigation into their historical and cultural genealogies and their present-day implications all the more pertinent.

My dissertation research investigates Veliko Tarnovo's touristic landscape as a dynamic,

historically situated and socially constituted space, the contemporary meanings of which emerge in dialog with its nation-building and socialist-reconstruction genealogy, through the multiplicity of its current uses and representations. As historical anthropologist Richard Flores has pointed out, the social and historical moment when a site is elevated into symbol leaves its blueprint and becomes a powerful shaping influence on future social relations and identities.

The underlying premises of this ethnographic research within a historical context are that the palimpsest of Tsarevets (and surrounding Veliko Tarnovo) was transformed into a potent national symbol and familiar tourist destination during two formative periods. The first encompassed the late 19th – early 20th century liberation struggles, whose legacy was the construction of national heritage and identity in opposition to Ottoman history and the Muslim religion and in alignment with West European values. The second spanned three decades of large scale intense socialist reconstruction that culminated in two lavish national celebrations (1300 years Bulgarian statehood and 800 years since Asenevtsi's Uprising, or the birth of the Second Bulgarian Kingdom in Tarnovo) in the early 1980s. Newspapers of the time were trumpeting the partially reconstructed medieval fortress with its jagged walls, elegant Patriarchate and state-of-the-art Sound and Light Show and the completely restored ensemble of homey Revival period houses as one of the recent crowning achievements of totalitarian socialist Bulgaria and a pledge to Bulgarians' historic contributions to European and world civilization. Nowadays, having lost their aura of novelty and totalitarian socialist flavor, these sites inform the contemporary "timeless" touristic landscape of the town and, as markers of national identity, are still put to rigorous use, this time in the contemporary moment of European Union membership.

Two questions command my attention in exploring the contemporary uses and implications of the town's touristic landscape as they relate to its socialist reconstruction. Genealogically, how and why did Veliko Tarnovo attain in 1965 its special status decreed by the Council of Ministers, commanding vast resources and a special bureaucratic apparatus towards its "development as a historical, cultural and tourist town"? Or in other words, how effective was the symbolic-ideological control exerted by the totalitarian socialist state and its high functionaries on the intellectuals and professionals, the material and symbolic results, whose combined efforts still last? And currently, how and why do visitors engage with that landscape, targeted at their (socialist) patriotic education, under the transformed cultural circumstances of a post-socialist, European Union membership?

There are no previous studies, either on the contemporary implications or on the rationale, organization and goals of this mega-project, through which the totalitarian state tried to define itself as a spiritual and material successor of the

Medieval Bulgarian Kingdom and a powerful player in (South-Eastern) Europe while simultaneously shaping the national identities of its socialist subjects. Thus the fellowship, academic and logistic support provided by the American Research Center in Sofia have proved vital in pursuing this groundbreaking line of research. As a non-historian and non-archeologist doing a historical ethnography on the politics of cultural tourism at an archeological reserve, I have immensely benefited from the ARCS program. It has introduced me to key archeological concepts, approaches and questions and exposed me to a scholarly perspective on key aspects of Bulgarian history, challenging my high-school inculcations. Moreover, the two field trips have allowed me to place Tsarevets into perspective, comparing it with other cultural heritage sites across Bulgaria.

To address the historical aspects of my study, in the past months I engaged in newspaper and archival research, interviews with professionals involved in the reconstruction project and talks with Bulgarian scholars. The most time-consuming component entailed delving into the annual meeting proceedings of the All-People's Committee on the Development of Veliko Tarnovo, located in the Bulgarian National Archives. This 100-strong inter-institutional committee met in plenary session every 5 – 6 years, but its Executive Bureau devised and debated policies, and organized and supervised the town's reconstruction mega-project on a regular basis (the structural kinship with the central committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party and its Political Bureau is obvious). The head of both was Pencho Kubadinski, deputy chairman of the Ministerial Council, a high communist party functionary and close associate of the dictator Todor Zhivkov. He was clearly a person who could exert strong political and ideological control. The regular meetings brought together core members, ranging from ministers and local government officials to archeologists, conservation and heritage maintenance specialists. Their proceedings thus offer fruitful ground to study the negotiations of power among the various institutions on a national and local level, including Kubadinski with his political power and the professionals engaged in the project.

These documents, however, presented a rare case of unregistered archival units and posed an additional problem: the first (or groundbreaking) years of the proceedings were found missing. This meant that the galaxy of repeating names with rarely listed institutional affiliations (clearly indexing members' long-term acquaintance with each other) could thwart my attempts at recreating the subtle power and ideological dynamics within this state-controlled committee. I salvaged the project by tracking individual affiliations and references to symbolic goals over hundreds of pages of proceedings through the years (1969-1985) and consulting eyewitnesses to the events.

So how and why did Veliko Tarnovo attain its special status decreed by the Council of Ministers and how effective was the symbolic-ideological

control? The archives contain a 1955 proposal by the Veliko Tarnovo District Council (10 years before the state decree), which propounds the historical and touristic development of the town. In a personal interview, Boyan Kuzupov, the general designer of Tsarevets, indexed Ivan Vazov, one of Bulgaria's most prominent authors, who in the early 20th century lamented the hill's ruins, weeds and neglect after the ravages of conquerors and time.

Professor Vasil Gyuzelev, a leading Bulgarian Medievalist and consultant in the 1970s for the project, similarly noted its literary roots – this time not as an inspiration, but an active shaping force in the person of Emiliyan Stanev, another masterful Bulgarian writer, a born and raised Tarnovian. An avid hunter, Emiliyan Stanev joined Todor Zhivkov's hunting posse, one of whom was Pencho Kubadinski, the future chairman of the All People's Committee. In a posthumously published interview, Kubadinski fondly recollected his 20-year-long close friendship (until Stanev's death in 1979) with this writer, co-hunter and neighbor. This clearly placed the author of *Tarnovo's Queen* within a strong position to lobby for the special status of the town in a case of what Gerald Creed calls "domesticating the revolution".

Such genealogy could also explain why, despite the aim at the ideological education of socialist citizens, Marxist-Leninist ideas hardly ever entered the newspaper coverage or the Committee discussions. The Communist head of state, Todor Zhivkov, lauded the town as "our national pride, our national capital," and this becomes the uniting concern of historians, archeologists, conservation workers, writers, local and national politicians, as the proceedings reveal. In 1973, however, after the discovery of King Kaloyan's (supposedly) golden finger-ring stirred spirits and spurred a general Committee meeting, Zhivkov gently reproved the tendency to overlook the class character of the Second Bulgarian Kingdom, a suggestion that remained neglected and never materialized within a specific restoration (e.g., a civilian's house in contrast to the palaces as Kubadinski pushed later the same year). As Katherine Verdery claims, contrary to widespread assumptions, totalitarian socialist states were weak and tried to garner public support and exercise "symbolic-ideological control" through appeals to patriotism and national values (in place of ineffective Marxist-Leninist norms). Thus, despite scholarly objections that reconstruction falsified historic truth, as documentary sources were almost completely missing, this was undertaken with typical flourish. And its scale led to an embarrassing discrepancy in scope that tested designers' skills to incorporate the obviously smaller, 1930s restored Baldwin's Tower into the more imposing 1970s erected walls.

As visitors snap photos and walk along the pavements of the reconstructed fortress they merge their personal histories with their

understandings of its significance. How and why do they engage with that landscape will be the focus of the forthcoming ethnographic part of my dissertation.

EXPLORING BULGARIA

Matt Thompson, University of Washington

As an American, it is easy to find adventure in Bulgaria. When I was a Peace Corps Volunteer in northeast Bulgaria a few years ago, every weekend seemed to provide me with opportunities for something new – a trip to a sleepy village; a midnight party on a Black Sea beach; an encounter with a curious pensioner in a café. All of those experiences made me appreciate Bulgaria's unique culture and people.

I returned to Bulgaria in September, 2008 to study at the American Research Center in Sofia as a Boren Fellow. My fellowship from the National Security Education Program allowed me to study advanced Bulgarian for four months while conducting research for my thesis, which looks at the role of nationalism in Bulgarian history textbooks since 1989 when the communist dictatorship collapsed.

I spent most of my days studying Bulgarian grammar and irregular verbs at the Sofia Language Institute and searching for textbooks at the Sofia University History Faculty Library. But by January I was in need of an adventure. The crux of my paper dealt with the controversy surrounding the Batak Massacre of 1876. In 2007, two scholars planned to present their book, *The Image of the Islamic Enemy – the Past and Present of Anti-Islamic Stereotypes in Bulgaria as Exemplified by the Myth of the Batak Massacre*, only to be met by public outrage and even death threats. Though the scholars had been misunderstood, the word "myth" had stirred Bulgarians' passion for their national history.

This scandal led me to inquire about the nationalist leanings in Bulgarian textbooks. After reading many high school textbooks and talking to teachers, university professors, scholars from the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences and experts on the subject, I found that changes are taking place. The nationalistic and emotive language of the communist era and the early 1990s toward "outsiders" was disappearing slowly. Textbook authors were approaching important national events such as the April Uprising of 1876 more critically.

But I still had not been to Batak. People told me it would be a moving experience. One Bulgarian friend said he got Goosebumps when he entered the Sveta Nedelya Church where 5,000 Bulgarian perished during the April Uprising. Batak has become such a sacred symbol of martyrdom that it has entered the modern Bulgarian lexicon as describing something difficult or tragic.



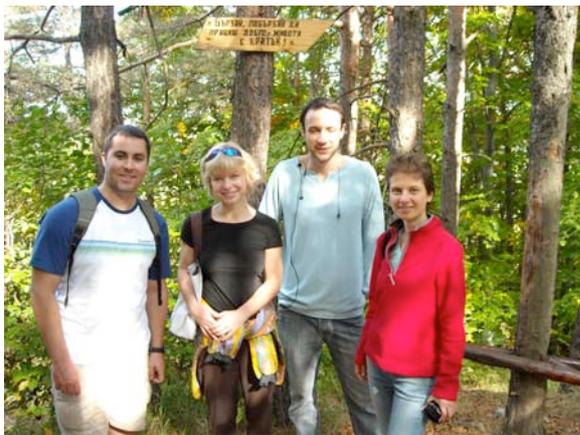
The Palatial Complex of Tsarevets in Veliko Tarnovo, capital of the Second Bulgarian Kingdom. Topic of ARCS Fellow Aneliya Dimitrova's research



Seminar at ARCS during our Spring Term



The Fellows visit the village of Oreshak near the Troyan Monastery in the Balkan Mountain



ARCS Fellows enjoying a walk in the woods on Vitosha Mountain near Sofia. The inscription above them reads: "Hurry to do good for life is short."



Archaeologist Adela Sobotkova and her colleagues working at a site near Kazanlak



The archaeological team of Shawn Ross and Adela Sobotkova



The famous Troyan Monastery, nestled in the Balkan Mountain. Unexpected March snow surprised our fellows.



The Dragalevtzi Monastery near Sofia, founded in 1345 during the Second Bulgarian Kingdom



The Kapinovo Monastery near Veliko Tarnovo, famous for its frescoes



The XVth century Lyulin Monastery (also known as Gorna Banya Monastery) near Sofia is one of the capital's best kept secrets. Unseasonably cold weather made the spring trip even more exciting.



St. Forty Martyrs Church at the foot of the Tsarevets Hill in Veliko Tarnovo

So in mid-January 2009 I set off for Batak. My little one-day adventure reminded me of the beauty, complexity, and mystery Bulgaria and its people have to offer. Here is what happened:

The sun is peeking out from under the dark clouds and reflecting brilliant orange rays against the windows of the block apartment building. It's 7:31 a.m. on a Saturday in Sofia, Bulgaria. I zip up my jacket and head to the bus stop. I step onto the No. 85 bus and proceed to the front to buy a ticket. Even though the sign says I can buy tickets from the driver when the bus is stopped, the driver indicates to me by nodding his head up and down (they show "yes" and "no" the opposite way in Bulgaria) that he is not selling them today. Fine, I shall ride for free.

The sky is clear and the Rila Mountains to the south rise above the hills in the early morning light as I head east toward Plovdiv. We fly by quiet villages tucked away in the distance. Small billows of smoke rise from the chimneys. A Bulgarian-dubbed version of *Beverly Hills Ninja* starring Chris Farley is showing on the bus's two TV monitors. One woman throws a coat over her head to block the morning rays. Or maybe she is trying to ignore the loud yelling from the film. The south bus station in Plovdiv is busy. People sit in the outdoor café sipping strong coffee in small, plastic cups, while smoking cheap cigarettes. My bus doesn't show up. It doesn't run on Saturday, says the woman at the desk. There is no bus schedule on the wall or any information readily available for the average traveler. You just have to know.

So I jump on a bus to Peshtera. The driver says my destination, Batak, is about 20 kilometers from there. The Peshtera bus station is under construction. (But what *isn't* in Bulgaria?) The woman at the desk informs me that there isn't a bus to Batak until 2:30 p.m. I have got about three hours to kill. As I approach the main square in Peshtera I am met with a distinct, pungent odor. It is worse the closer I get. I am downwind from the famous rakiya (liquor) and wine factory. Gallons of alcohol are within reach, but all I want to do right now is run away. The Saturday market is crowded. Children are running around while elderly couples cross the square and up through the meandering streets. I make my way through the labyrinth of cheap shoes, shirts, socks, underwear, batteries, knives, CDs, rugs, T-shirts, electronic toys, fresh vegetables, fruit, camouflage jackets, boots. A gypsy woman sells small bundles of kindling. This looks like any normal weekend market in Bulgaria, but something is different. Everyone is speaking Turkish. Women cover their heads in multi-colored headscarves. Turkish music can be heard in the distance. This is Bulgaria, but definitely a different Bulgaria than Sofia. I buy some popcorn. Soon two Roma teens come sit near me. They are friendly and we chat a bit. "You're an American?" one of them asks in disbelief. The other one admits he has never seen or met an American in real life. "You speak perfect English? And you know Bulgarian? Do you know Spanish? I lived in Spain last summer." Two more friends arrive. They are in 8th grade, except for one. He is

17 years old, but dropped out of a school a few years ago in order to work. They invite me for a coffee. They seem harmless, so we proceed to a café nearby in the center. I ask them questions about their family. They all like Levski, the Sofia-based soccer team, named after Vasil Levski, a great Bulgarian hero during the struggle for Independence. On Saturdays they usually meet up in the center for coffee, eat a big lunch in the late afternoon, then head to the diskoteka for girls and drinking at night. "It's a good life," one of them says. The time goes fast and they escort me back to the bus station. One of them insists on giving me his headphones as a present. We exchange phone numbers and they tell me to call them if I have any problems getting back from Batak. You're welcome to stay with our family, one of them says.

The bus leaves on time and we climb up into the mountains through a narrow ravine. After a half hour we reach the mountain town of Batak, the site of Bulgaria's most famous massacre. I climb the white stairs that lead to three statues of the socialist-realism style. These were built in 1976 to commemorate the 100-year anniversary of the April Uprising. On one stone, the father of Bulgarian communism and the first dictator in the period when Bulgaria became part of the Soviet Block, Georgi Dimitrov, is quoted, "Batak is the fortress of Bulgarian patriotism." Down below in the center is the museum. It is closed for remodeling. It has been closed for three months, but there are no signs up. A woman says that for two leva (c. 1,25 US dollar) I can look inside the church where the massacre happened. The church is simple. Signs point out bullet holes in the wall. A copy of Januarius MacGahan's story is displayed in Bulgarian and English. MacGahan was an American journalist who let the world know what happened in Batak. The sun is fading in the sky and it is quite cold, so I go into a café near the museum. It looks more like a dance club. Pictures of Finlandia Vodka and Jack Daniels Whiskey are all over the wall. The stereo is blaring the song, "We Are the World". A couple sits in the corner, but besides that it is just me. I order hot milk with cocoa. There really isn't a bus station in Batak, only a place off the side of the main road that goes through town. Inside a window I see a timetable, but the times don't match up with what people told me earlier. There is a group of people inside. After about five minutes, I get up the courage to ask when the next bus is coming. "Tell me what's up, boy," the man asks. I need to get to Sofia. What is the best way? I ask. He explains in great detail where I need to go and when. He is very helpful and tells me to sit down. The whole room seems amused by my presence. They smile as the one man asks me questions. "You're a true American? Your mom and dad are not from here?" he asks. "What are you doing in Batak?" I explain that I used to be a Peace Corps Volunteer, but now I am a student in Sofia. I came to Batak to see the museum and the church. "Do you know what happened here?" he asks, but he doesn't wait for answer. He proceeds to give me a detailed account as though reading from a history book. I know all of this, but I let him tell me. Every once in awhile the grandmother, who is wearing a black

sweater and headscarf, chimes in to add to the history lesson. "After the Americans turned us down to come and help, the Russians volunteered to help fight the Turks," he continues, referring to the 1878 Russo-Turkish War. "We are Slavic brothers -- we have a connection. They came and fought the Turks and liberated us. America is a good, rich country, but what has it done for Bulgaria? We owe great appreciation to Russia." [After decades of incessant communist propaganda, many Bulgarians are unaware of the help that the US has provided to Bulgaria on numerous occasions throughout the past two centuries, including alerting the international press about the events in Batak. Recent DNA studies clearly demonstrate that modern Bulgarians are not predominantly of Slavic origin.] Trying to change the subject, I ask if any Turks lived in Batak today. "None," he said. "Just in the villages nearby. The Muslims are trying to take over the world," he says. Two buses arrive and the people tell me which one to take. They wish me the best and smile warmly as I step out into the cold air.

The minibus rumbles down the hill toward Pazardzhik. Forty five minutes later, I awake cold and hungry when we arrive at the train station. Only a handful of people wait on the platform as the last rays of light fade behind the hills. The stars are bright. It is gorgeous right now, but I am so cold my teeth are chattering. The train comes right on time – 6:04 p.m. I am relieved to find that the train is brand new. I huddle up against the heaters on the floor as we make our way through 20 villages and small towns. Septemvri, Belovo, Kostenets. We keep stopping, but hardly anyone gets on. I suddenly feel far away from everyone and everything. A near-empty train slowly chugging through village after village on a Saturday night in the Balkans.

I arrive in Sofia. Ice is everywhere. I wait for the No. 7 tram to take me to Vitosha Blvd. near where my friend lives. After a nice dinner I call for a taxi. The driver doesn't seem thrilled to be driving me to such a close location (about 2 miles). He drops me off in Hadzhi Dimitar quarter, the place where I started my day. Before entering the gate, I look up at the sky. I can see the stars in between the bare branches of the trees and the block apartment buildings. This urban neighborhood seems a world away from Batak.

There still is so much to see in Bulgaria, I think. So much to see.

RESEARCHING ONE'S OWN CULTURE—MORE FROM THE FIELD

Yuliyana Gencheva, Indiana University

It is intriguing to observe the change of seasons in Sofia. May steps in and brings along a spring whirl of events and movement in human affairs. For me, May also means I need to gear up efforts in order to finalize my searching for data and get a clearer picture of what actually happens in my field. Not an easy task with so many new resources

springing up and new acquaintances who offer valuable information on the subject that interests me. During all that time from the fall of 2008, the nine-month fellowship at the American Research Center in Sofia has given me invaluable opportunities and new resources. Importantly, this experience currently helps me join and thus shape a critical dialogue about Bulgaria's totalitarian socialist past, a dialogue which has been in labor for over a decade now.

I persist in my search for data and perspectives on the International Children's Assembly "Banner of Peace" held between 1979–1988. So far I have discovered important details regarding the Assembly's idea, performance and significance for organizers and participants. My archival research yielded information concerning the intended role of the international children's meetings, based on Lyudmila Zhivkova's perspective. For instance, in the documents kept at the Central State Archive in Sofia I found protocols of the Committee for Culture (Fund 405 of the Ministry of Culture) demonstrating that the "Banner of Peace" assemblies were meant to become the location and laboratory for observing gifted children and selecting them for further development of their talents. This information is also supported by the findings of Professor Ivan Elenkov whose recent *The Cultural Front* (2008) tells of Zhivkova's intention to create a laboratory center for interdisciplinary work on aesthetic education as early as 1977. It appears then that the assemblies aimed at more than sending a message for peace through children's voices – they had to establish a system that identifies and cultivates human talent (or evolution). The emphasis here fell on human creativity and growth, not simply on the child, because in the long run (according to L. Zhivkova) those children will be the adults whose developed potential would contribute to a harmonious world.

The Archive files also disclose information regarding the realization of the Assemblies (especially the first one in 1979) – they contain day-to-day schedules for every activity and refer to specific scenarios for each of those. Along with finishing archival search, I have started interviewing people who were involved in the Assembly. I have been successful in finding several former participants in the 1979 Assembly as well as organizers and in addressing them with questions. Currently, their comments are helping me immensely in reconstructing the lived experience of the "Banner of Peace". There are questions I still pursue and new ones have come up in the process: How can we evaluate the Assembly given the fact that such a grand state initiative, like many others in late 1970s and early 1980s totalitarian Bulgaria, revolved around the uniquely empowered presence of Lyudmila Zhivkova? Who and how decided to build the Bell Monument in a matter of a single month before its official opening on 24 August 1979? On the ethnographic side I often have to deal with how I approach my data in order to discern actual facts from personal evaluations, especially those formed in one's childhood or youth that bear nostalgia for the past.

In all my research paths I have benefitted from the logistical, financial and moral support of the ARCS. The nine-month academic program at the Center has helped me particularly in finding resources connected to my research. This includes the library books (such as Donna Buchanan's *Performing Democracy*, Richard Crampton's *History of Bulgaria*, and a detailed bibliography of Bulgarian publications abroad, among others) that helped guide my search for data. I also found very useful the meetings with our lecturers who, in conversation, suggested further contacts and resources useful for my project. Importantly, the ARCS has given me financial support that alleviated greatly my stay in Sofia and helped me cover living and research expenses for library and archive access, copying of documents, purchasing of books relevant to my project.

What I liked most about the program were the smoothly organized events, lectures, and trips. The Center's growing library offers access to useful materials and a quiet place to study. The entire building has superb facilities for work and accommodation. Not least, I always treasure the warm attitude and help of ARCS staff. My experience at the Center would not be as pleasant and productive without their kind and continuing help.

The nine-month fellowship has assisted me in multiple ways. I hope that the project that will grow out of this experience would be among the first analytical threads in weaving the post-socialist discourse about the Bulgarian reality. In this sense, the ARCS does a superb job of creating opportunities and encouraging junior scholars in their effort to enter the conversation about 20th century Bulgaria.

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