The Dissertation Committee for Emily Anne Hillhouse Certifies that this is the approved version of the following dissertation:

Picturing the Peasant: Nation and Modernity in 20th century Bulgaria

Committee:

Mary Neuburger, Supervisor

Joan Neuberger

Charters Wynn

David Crew

Faegheh Shirazi

Picturing the Peasant: Nation and Modernity in 20th Century Bulgaria

by

Emily Anne Hillhouse, B.A., M.A.

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Dedication

To Mama and Daddy: for your love and support all of these years. I just might be the luckiest daughter in the whole world. I love you.

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This dissertation would not have been possible without the guidance and support of the many wonderful people in my life. All mistakes are mine alone, but the best parts of my work emerged from the inspiration and encouragement of my professors, colleagues, family and friends. In particular, I would like to express my gratitude to my advisor Mary Neuburger, who unfailingly gave me thoughtful and constructive feedback on my work and provided an amazing sounding board for my ideas. Furthermore, I would probably still be standing defeated outside the graphics room of the National Library in Sofia if not for her guidance! I would also like to thank my committee members, Joan Neuberger, Charters Wynn, David Crew and Faegheh Shirazi, each of whom played an important role in shaping my graduate career and opened my eyes to new ways of studying history. This dissertation might never have been completed if not for the assistance of Christelle LeFaucheur. Not only did she read every draft and outline and stray piece of writing, but she was unfailingly supportive and provided me with the structure and encouragement I needed. She has my eternal gratitude. I am grateful to Brooke Iglehart, Yael Sherman and Mariana Ivanova, each of whom supported me at crucial moments in this process. I would also like to thank the Fulbright Committee, whose belief in my project made it possible for me to complete my research in Bulgaria. While there, I received assistance from so many people, but I would particularly like to thank Mariana Stamova, Mila Maeva, Kostadin Grozev, Ted Effremov and Claudia Dinep. Finally, I would like to thank my beloved family: my mother who came to Bulgaria for three months to watch my daughter, my father who let her (even if it wasn't for Roman history!), my husband who has sacrificed so much and has been my tireless

support, and finally my daughter, who is the joy of my life. I love you all.

Picturing the Peasant: Nation and Modernity in 20th Century Bulgaria

Emily Anne Hillhouse, Ph.D.

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Supervisor: Mary Neuburger

This dissertation examines representations of the Bulgarian peasant in order to explore how nationalist, agrarian and ultimately communist governments attempted to negotiate the meaning of "modernity" in predominantly rural Bulgaria. This work is not intended as a survey of displays of folk culture in the 20th century, but instead focuses each chapter on an important person, movement or organization which best seems to articulate Bulgaria's evolving sense of itself and its place on the edge of Europe. Beginning with a background chapter on the 1878-1917 period, I trace the foundation and development of ethnographic display, representations of peasants in the interwar educational press, campaigns to improve village hygiene and culture, alpine tourism, and the ever-changing image of peasants in propaganda from the years of agrarian rule in the 1920s through the early decades of communism.

My dissertation explores the contested meanings of peasant images in Bulgaria's changing political and social milieu. Bulgaria's acceptance into first Europe and later the Soviet sphere of influence was for many nation-builders predicated upon her ability to attain European and later Soviet-style modernity. However, these modernities were based upon ideas of industrialization and urbanization. In the middle of the 20th century,

however, Bulgaria's economy was still overwhelmingly agricultural. This represented a problem for Bulgaria's nation builders. Confronted with these seeming contradictions, different regimes attempted to incorporate the rural population into their visions of a modern Bulgaria. The changing nature of this imagined Bulgaria can be best elucidated through images of the Bulgarian peasantry. At one moment incorporated and at another excluded, modern and backward, embraced and reviled, the imagined peasantry reveals the anxieties and aspirations of Bulgarian state builders in the 20th century.

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Introduction

A photograph is not only an image… an interpretation of the real; it is also a trace, something directly stenciled off the real, like a footprint or a death mask.

-Susan Sontag[1]

The peasant in 20th century Bulgaria was rather like Susan Sontag's photograph. She was an interpretation, an image. But she also bore the unmistakable imprint of reality. For, of course, there were *real* peasants, both men and women. Throughout much of the twentieth century, Bulgaria's rural population vastly outnumbered its urban one. The peasant population was an immutable fact which confounded generations of modernizers and nation-builders. In fact, one afternoon under the harsh fluorescent lights which illuminate the corridors of the University of Sofia, a young professor exclaimed to me with some exasperation, "You want to study representations of the peasantry? Why, but that's everything!"

A study of *everything* did indeed seem like a daunting task, and yet to turn back from an idea so central to Bulgarian national identity seemed similarly impossible. So I began to consider the relationship between the footprint and the foot, the corpse and the mask, to try to untangle the interpretation from the reality in the images of the Bulgarian peasantry. My journey began, appropriately enough, with a photograph.

[1] Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1977), 153.

Figure 0.1: *The International Agricultural and Trade Exhibition, Plovdiv, 1892* (From LostBulgaria.com)

This photograph depicted a sea of faces on a cloudy day in 1892. The location of this crowd was the lavish international exhibition in Plovdiv. [2] The exhibition was to mark newly autonomous Bulgaria's "coming out" on to the world stage.[3] Foreign and domestic visitors marveled at displays of western technology alongside Bulgaria's

[2] All descriptions of Plovdiv Exhibition come from: Mary Neuburger, 'Fair Encounters: Bulgaria and the "West" at International Exhibitions from Plovdiv to St. Louis', *Slavic Review,* 69/3 (2010), 547-70.
[3] In 1878, with the Treaty of Berlin, Bulgaria became an autonomous principality. The state would not gain full formal independence until 22 September/5 October, 1908. R.J. Crampton, *A Short History of Bulgaria* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 53.

agricultural bounty and her charming folk culture. There was even a French hot air balloon. On this particular afternoon, a regional Bulgarian delegation posed before the great central fountain surrounded by the fair's carefully constructed and manicured grounds. In the foreground, a phalanx of young women in elaborate folk costumes stood beside a group of women in "modern" western clothing.[4] The message was clear, but enticingly contradictory. Bulgaria was a nation of peasants with deep folk traditions. Bulgaria was a modern European nation. But how could a nation be both modern and peasant?

The organizers of the exhibition declared, "The exhibition will decide the question of "what is the Bulgarian nation?" [5] And they, like many Bulgarian nation-builders after them, turned to Bulgaria's rich peasant culture to find an answer. During the course of the exhibition, peasants from across the "Bulgarian" lands—including adjacent Ottoman territories—were encouraged to attend, dress in national costumes and sell folk art. This tapestry of regional folk traditions legitimated Bulgaria's recent unification with Eastern Rumelia and emphasized her expansionist intentions towards Ottoman Macedonia and Thrace. But, if peasant culture could be employed to express messages of national unity, the organizers found it was much more difficult to use these same images to express Bulgaria's burgeoning sense of "modernity." One response was

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[4] 'Plovdiv, deputatsiia ot Trŭnski okrŭg na Plovdkivskoto izlozhenie prez 1892 g.,' <http://www.lostbulgaria.com/?p=698>, accessed 5/1/2013.
[5] *Nasheto Pŭrvo Izlozhenie,* 1 and 2 (1891), 4.

to highlight Bulgaria's modern sensibilities in the bustled skirts, corseted waists and floral hats of the non-peasant women. But ultimately, it was an incomplete solution.

My interest piqued, I began to consider the myriad of peasant images I had seen even in my short time in Bulgaria. These images were at times seductive or threatening, powerful or pathetic. It seemed that, indeed, the Sofia University professor had been correct, for looked at in one way; there was almost too much material to discuss. However, this dissertation is not intended as a comprehensive survey of displays of folk culture in the 20th century, but instead attempts to reveal the contested ways that Bulgarians imagined and visually rendered the peasantry. In a way, this is an exercise in the study of visual culture, a field which Michael L. Wilson described as, "an expansion of the purview of traditional art history, to include popular and commercial forms of pictorial representation, such as advertising, caricature and cartoons, postcards, snapshots, and mass spectacles."[6] Certainly these sources form the basis of much of the inquiry. However, although these pictorial representations and ethnographic displays do contribute to my sources, they are not the sole object of my study. Propaganda posters and postage stamps offer a lens through which to understand how different regimes imagined the peasantry, which in turn supplies a lens through which to understand the ways that nationalist, agrarian and ultimately communist governments attempted to negotiate the meaning of "modernity" in predominantly rural Bulgaria.

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[6] Michael L. Wilson, 'Visual Culture: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis?', in *The Nineteenth-Century Visual Culture Reader* ed. Vanessa R. Schwartz, Jeannene M. Przyblyski, (New York: Routledge, 2004), 27.

The distinction I am making here is perhaps most clear in my chapter about the urbanization of the Bulgarian village. The sources for that chapter are not peasant images at all. Instead, the chapter attempts to explore what urban planning within the village can reveal about the state's image of the peasantry. I consider how paved roads and separate bedrooms could speak of the state's aspirations and anxieties about its rural population. For, over the course of the 20th century, the peasantry would be imagined as both modern and backward, as a harbinger of progress and the embarrassing sign of an obsolete culture. In a sense, what I am tracing is an idea: the tantalizing, powerful, impossible and contradictory idea of the *modern peasant*. And by tracing the story of that idea, I am able to tease out an understanding of Bulgaria's evolving sense of itself and its place on the edge of Europe.

My dissertation is divided into chronological chapters, spanning a period from the end of the First World War to the early 1970s. Within each chapter, I focus on an important person, movement or organization which best seems to articulate Bulgaria's struggle with these imported ideas of "nation" and "modernity,"[7] concepts which had to be reconciled with the realities of the Bulgarian peasantry. Undoubtedly, there was an element of serendipity in the selection of each topic. As anyone familiar with archival work knows, research is often shaped by the availability of sources, rather than the will of the researcher. And so it was for me. I found myself discovering stories which I had not

[7] I should note here, that, like Mary Neuburger, I too, "do not want to imply that Bulgarian nationalism was a mere facsimile or distortion… of West European nationalisms… "late comer nationalisms" are not just following a "script already written" but are inherently creative projects of individual imaginations." Mary Neuburger, *The Orient Within: Muslim Minorities and the Negotiation of Nationhood in Modern Bulgaria* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2004), 7.

even thought to look for when I first set out. And yet there was intentionality as well. In fact, my first chapter traces the foundation and development of ethnographic display in the first decades of the 20th century despite a relative paucity of sources. For it seemed to me that this chapter was absolutely necessary if I wanted to understand official representations of the peasantry, and particularly how these representations were shaped by West European cultural norms.

Chapter 2 looks at representations of peasants in the interwar educational press, not only because I was able to gain access to the complete run of the interwar newspapers *Nasheto Selo* and *Nashe Selo*, but also because these newspapers allowed me to consider how the peasantry was presented to itself at a time when they constituted one of the most feared and courted political constituencies. My third chapter focuses on the Red Army Monument in Sofia both because the archives preserved such detailed documents on the construction of the monument, and because the monument itself was and continues to be such an important part of the capital city's landscape. It seemed to me that such a central monument could reveal both Bulgaria's postwar image of itself and its new relationship with the peasantry. From there it seemed only natural to consider how this relationship played out in the countryside, to consider the details of the new peasantry that postwar modernizers were creating.

For this I looked at the abundant hygiene and modernization literature of the 1950s and 1960s. This seemed particularly appropriate as it was during this period that the Bulgarian countryside underwent massive restructuring with the collectivization of

agriculture and the industrialization of rural areas. This focus upon the education and modernization of the peasantry also allowed me to return to certain themes which had been raised in my second chapter on the interwar educational press. In fact, just as the second and fourth chapters are reflections of each other, so too are my first and my final chapters. In their discussion of ethnographic display, they become bookends for the dissertation, exploring similar themes and ways of representing the peasantry in very different political contexts. The subject of my final chapter, the foundation of the ethnographic park, Etŭra, not only reflects the then emerging policy of "living socialism," but it exemplifies the new historicizing narrative which had enveloped the display of folk culture by the early 1960s. Thus the structure and content of my dissertation were not merely the product of scholarly chance, but also of my own intentionality.

The narrative, which holds this dissertation together, traces the contested meanings of peasant images in Bulgaria's changing political and social milieu. The images are given meaning by their historical context. The history of Bulgaria in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, though not widely familiar to scholars outside the field of Eastern Europe, provides an ideal backdrop for considering ideas of modernity and nationalism. In 1878, Bulgaria emerged from the Ottoman Empire as an autonomous principality. At that time, Bulgaria began in earnest the process of "nation building" which had had already overtaken much of Western Europe. This process was on the one hand, a territorial one. Over the following decades, state builders would work to enlarge the diminished boundaries of the nation and to carve a "greater Bulgaria" out of the

surrounding territories. This intention would lead Bulgaria to become disastrously involved in the Balkan wars of 1912-1913 and in both World Wars. However, and perhaps more interestingly for our purposes, this process was also a profoundly cultural one.

Nation builders sought to culturally differentiate Bulgaria from the Ottomans who had dominated the region for the previous five hundred years. Disentangling Bulgarian culture from Ottoman culture was fraught with difficulties and a certain amount of mental gymnastics. However, the peasantry provided one seemingly irrefutable source of Bulgarian culture. During the Ottoman period, most Bulgarian speakers lived in small rural enclaves, leading to the perception that "true Bulgaria" was to be found in the village. Unsurprisingly, the peasantry became the heart of Bulgaria's national identity.

Of course, the peasantry was not the only source of nationalist inspiration. Almost as important as disentangling current Bulgarian culture from Ottoman culture, was the unearthing of a historical narrative which connected present Bulgaria with the glories of their medieval past. That is, nationalists sought moments and ideas that proved that a distinct Bulgaria had existed during the Ottoman period. This found expression in the veneration of Bulgaria's monastic tradition, in particular the massive monastery at Rila and its founder St. Ivan Rilski. It also emerged through the reverence for Bulgaria's revolutionary heroes such as Vasil Levski and Khristo Botev. However, these symbols did not present the problem that the peasantry did. For the peasantry could not be

relegated to the past, and its continued existence was problematic for state-builders who were looking to Europe for support.

Many felt that the small nation's continued existence was predicated upon external help. Before the Second World War, state-builders looked to Europe, and after the war, they would look to the Soviet Union. Interestingly, entry into the European and the Soviet spheres was connected in the minds of many with the successful attainment of modernity. That is, only a *modern* Bulgaria could be considered European or could be a fitting satellite of the Soviet Union. Yet, modernity with its focus upon industrialization and urbanization did not sit well with Bulgaria's identity as a peasant nation. It was this fascinating historical contradiction, as it developed over the course of the 20th century which provided me with the questions which would drive my dissertation.

As rapid industrialization and urbanization made folk culture a relic of the past, I consider how a diversity of local and regional peasant images were coded as "national" and appropriated by various regimes. As many of these regimes were hostile to peasant interests- what kind of Bulgarian nation did these images promise? Which aspects of peasant life were highlighted? What groups of peasant images were included and excluded? What do these changing categories of inclusion and exclusion reveal about successive regimes' negotiations with introduced concepts of modernity and nation? How was this peasant image shaped by these realities and how in turn did it shape them?

TERMINOLOGY: FROM *SELIANIN* TO PEASANT

I use the term "peasant" here consciously. Not only because this is the most common translation of the Bulgarian word *selianin*, but also for the word's generality. Of course, another possible translation might be "villager." After all, *selianin* can literally be taken as "a person who lives in the *selo* [village]." But not every *selianin* lived in a picturesque village. Many lived in isolated settlements or homesteads deep in Bulgaria's mountain ranges. If we only consider occupation, we could also use the term "farmer." But farming was far from the only possible rural occupation, and such a word would exclude shepherds and craftsmen.

Ultimately, it seemed to me that the word "peasant" was the best option. For one, it is more general, and it suggests an entire class of people, engaged in a variety of occupations. Their defining characteristic is that they do not live in the city.[8] The class connotation of the word peasant is important here as well, because it implies something important about how Bulgaria's rural population was imagined. That is, across time and the political spectrum, peasants were always imagined as a cohesive community. Regional, cultural, occupational and even religious differences would melt away in the face of this one powerful commonality. The peasantry was the peasantry, and that was that.

Additionally, in English, the word "peasant" has a vaguely pejorative connotation. There is, in this term, a suggestion of backwardness and brutishness. And although this

[8] Even this definition is imprecise as the exact distinction between a small city and a village was often quite malleable. (See for example the discussion of Koprivshtitsa in Chapter 5.)

often directly opposed the aspirations of the various governments and cultural elites, it corresponds well with their anxieties. So, I use the term not to imply that the peasantry *was* backwards and brutish, but more to imply that they were feared to be so. I want to suggest that behind every scientifically displayed folk costume or romantically depicted peasant girl, there was at least the kernel of a doubt, a worry, a consciousness of the implied contradiction between ideas of European modernity and the peasantry.

MODERNITY, THE NATION AND THE PEASANT

Modernity is, of course, a very loaded term, much overused and criticized.[9] It is most commonly associated with a euro-centric teleology leading towards specific economic, political and social forms.[10] Modernity conveys ideas of urbanization and industrialization, of rationality and science, as well as struggles over popular sovereignty and government interference in everyday life.[11] Nineteenth century proponents saw it as evidence of Europe's superiority which justified Western imperial domination across the globe. But it was also associated with anxieties over the loss of authenticity and traditional life ways, as well as being associated with poverty, pollution, noise and

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[9] For some of the debates on the usefulness of the term "modernity" see: Frederick Cooper, *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 113-52. Anthony Giddens, 'The Nature of Modernity', in *The Giddens Reader*, ed. Phillip Cassel, Anthony Giddens (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1993), 284-316.

[10] Recent debates have suggested that modernity should be disentangled from Europe. According to S. N. Eisenstadt: "one of the most important implications of the term 'multiple modernities' is that modernity and Westernization are not identical: Western patterns of modernity are not the only, 'authentic' modernities', though they enjoy historical precedence." S. N. Eisenstadt, 'Multiple Modernities', *Daedalus,* 129/1 (2000), 2-3.

[11] Robin W. Winks and Joan Neuberger *Europe and the Making of Modernity, 1815-1914* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 1-2.

revolution.[12] In 20th century Bulgaria, the yearning for modernity was entangled first with European and later Soviet culture.[13]

My purpose here is not to participate in recent debates about the existence of a singular modernity or of multiple modernities. But rather to suggest that, even as the problems and contradictions of modernity became increasingly clear in Western Europe, the *idea* of modernity continued to have immense appeal to Bulgarian state-builders, both before and after the Second World War.[14] As Bulgaria attempted to disengage itself from the Ottoman Empire and to construct its own unique national identity, European modernity offered one tantalizing model.

That is not to say that European modernity was the only option, or that it was universally embraced. Bulgaria's desire to be considered part of Europe was always ambiguous, at times rejecting and at times accepting European standards of "civilization". Within this Europeanizing discourse there were, simultaneously, negative images of the West as exploitative and foreign and anxieties that the West perceived Bulgaria as "less civilized."[15] Furthermore, after the war, the model of modernity that the

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[12] Ibid, 3.

[13] There is actually a very interesting ongoing debate about whether Soviet modernity should be called modernity. See: Michael David-Fox, 'Multiple Modernities vs. Neo-Traditionalism: On Recent Debates in Russian and Soviet History', *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas,* 54/4 (2006), 535-55.

[14] For an enlightening discussion on the relationship between European Modernity and Soviet Russia see: David L. Hoffmann, *Russian Modernity : Politics, Knowledge, Practices* (New York : St. Martin's Press, 2000). And David L. Hoffmann, *Stalinist Values: The Cultural Norms of Soviet Modernity (1917-1941)* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003).

[15] Neuburger, *The Orient Within,* 3.

state pursued was undoubtedly Soviet, and some aspects of Bulgarian cultural life that were considered too "Western" were now rejected.[16]

Throughout the century, modernity was inextricably entangled with Bulgaria's project of nation building. Of course, "nationalism," like "modernity", is fraught with challenges for historical inquiry. For one must wonder, how is national identity created? Is it consciously constructed by the state? Does it emerge organically from the people? Is it a product of the past or a reflection of the present? Where should it be studied? How can it be studied? Can it even be applied to the socialist context? Perhaps the most seminal work on this subject is Benedict Anderson's book, *Imagined Communities*.

Anderson argues that a nation is 'an imagined political community—and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign.'[17] In other words, a nation is defined by a comradeship which cuts across class lines. It is finite, that is, defined against other nations. And it is *imagined*, it is a human not a geographical product.[18] He argues that nationalism is a *modern* construction which rose to replace religion in the 18th century. This development was not a foregone conclusion, but rather the result of the confluence of several other factors, in specific printing and capitalism.[19] That is, through participation in a mutual mass culture, populations could conceive of themselves as communities made up of a multitude of unknown but simultaneous lives. So, how does

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[16] As we shall see in Chapter 3, this was particularly true of so-called "European aesthetics," but also seemed to effect other cultural institutions like the Ethnographic Museum.
[17] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983), 15.
[18] Ibid, 16.
[19] Ibid, 19. Ernst Gellner actually goes further and connects nationalism to the egalitarianism that comes with industrialization. Ernst Gellner, *Nationalism* (New York: New York University Press, 1997).

this formulation of nationalism apply to a country, like Bulgaria, which seems to defy the preconditions for the development of national consciousness?

My dissertation is by no means the first attempt to consider the construction of national identity in Bulgaria.[20] However, my work offers a unique opportunity to reconsider the tensions inherent in the simultaneous importation of the concepts of "nation" and "modernity" into a largely rural, agrarian context. If urbanization, industrialization, and hence modernity form the basic preconditions for the rise and spread of nationalism, how can one explain nationalism in the Bulgarian context? While an imagined "shared" agrarian past often provided a basis for a common national identity - an urban present with a healthy public sphere was necessary for the formation and dissemination of this identity.

In most European contexts this created the potential for a disconnection between imagined rural authenticity and urban modernity.[21] But few have considered how acute such a disconnection was on the European margins in places like Bulgaria, which in the mid-1940s was still 75% peasant.[22] For Bulgarians "modernity" was extremely

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[20] For example, Roumen Daskalov, *The Making of a Nation in the Balkans* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2004). Theodora Dragostinova, *Between Two Motherlands : Nationality and Emigration among the Greeks of Bulgaria, 1900-1949* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2011). Neuburger, *The Orient Within*.

[21] See for example, Peter Gay, *Schnitzler's Century: The Making of Middle-Class Culture, 1815-1914* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2002), 193-195. Gay looks at how the urban middle class ignored the actual peasants in their lives, but were instead active in creating elaborate fantasies about peasant life. Or in the Nazi case where a drive toward urbanization and industrialization coexisted with a romantic view of peasant folk culture, certain aspects of which were held up as ideals for urban development (for example, rural self-sufficiency). See: Jill Stephenson, *Hitler's Home Front: Wurttemberg under the Nazis* (New York: Hambledon Continuum, 2006), 14-16.

[22] Gerald Creed, *Domesticating Revolution: From Socialist Reform to Ambivalent Transition in a Bulgarian Village* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998), 125.

problematic, both a necessity for pursuing a European national identity, and yet also potentially destructive to all that was essentially Bulgarian. By exploring how state-builders attempted to re-imagine the peasantry itself as both the repository of "authenticity" and essentially modern, my dissertation illuminates how European notions of modernity and nationhood were negotiated on its Balkan periphery.[23]

Though important work has been done on the formation of 19th century national identity in Eastern Europe, less attention has been given to the arguably more vigorous projects of nation-building under communism.[24] Existing works, such as Katherine Verdery's *National Ideology Under Socialism,* provide valuable contributions to the field, but their high culture focus suggests that work remains to be done in the realm of popular culture, and in particular, in relation to the critically important "peasant question."[25]

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[23] Outside the Bulgarian historiography, a lot of important work has been done on the relationship between the peasantry and modernity, including, but not limited to: Peter D. Bell, *Peasants in Socialist Transition : Life in a Collectivized Hungarian Village* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), Yanni Kotsonis, *Making Peasants Backward : Agricultural Cooperatives and the Agrarian Question in Russia, 1861-1914* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999), Martha Lampland, *The Object of Labor : Commodification in Socialist Hungary* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), Eugen Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen : The Modernization of Rural France, 1870-1914* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1976).

[24] Some examples of studies of 19th century East and Central European nationalisms include: Pieter M. Judson, *Guardians of the Nation : Activists on the Language Frontiers of Imperial Austria* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), Keely Stauter-Halsted, *The Nation in the Village : The Genesis of Peasant National Identity in Austrian Poland, 1848-1914* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2001). Jeremy King, 'The Nationalization of East Central Europe: Ethnicism, Ethnicity, and Beyond', in *Staging the Past : The Politics of Commemoration in Habsburg Central Europe, 1848 to the Present,* ed. Maria Bucur-Deckard (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 2001).

[25] Katherine Verdery, *National Ideology under Socialism: Identity and Cultural Politics in Ceausescu's Romania* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1991). For additional discussion of the project of nation building under a communist regime, see Neuburger, *The Orient Within*. Or in Macedonia, Keith Brown, *The Past in Question: Modern Macedonia and the Uncertanties of Nation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003).

IMAGINING THE PEASANTRY

In some ways, the peasantry is curiously absent from my story. My narrative is not about how Bulgaria's rural population experienced the dramatic changes of the 20th century. That story has been told elsewhere, though, as in all fields of Bulgarian history, much yet remains to be done.[26] Instead, mine is a story in which peasants are seen, but only occasionally seeing, where peasants are imagined, but not imagining. It is at its core a story of an image, which, in its many incarnations, came to represent Bulgaria in the 20th century.

History, as a field, is profoundly uncomfortable with using images to interpret the past. This is because images are seemingly open to a wider variety of interpretations than textual sources. How can a historian know how a given image was seen by its creators much less by the more varied public? I admit that I am not immune to this skepticism, and consequently, my analysis of the images in question is heavily text-based. Additionally, in those moments when I have, by necessity, provided a purely visual analysis, I attempt to do so by uncovering the "signs" by which images were made meaningful to their contemporaries.

Here I am referring to the idea forwarded by Alex Potts, who suggests, "a work of art operates like a sign. It points to or evokes a significance quite other than what it

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[26] See for example, Creed, *Domesticating Revolution*. John D. Bell, *Peasants in Power: Alexander Stamboliski and the Bulgarian National Union, 1899-1923* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1977), Veska Kozhuharova-Zhivkova, *Selo i industrializatsiia-Bŭlgarskiiat pŭt (Sotsiologicheski problemi na Bŭlgarskoto selo sled vtorata svetovna voĭna)* (Sofia: Izdatlestvo "ALIA", 1998). Deema Kaneff, *Who Owns the Past? : The Politics of Time in a "Model" Bulgarian Village* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2004). Mary Neuburger, *Balkan Smoke: Tobacco and the Making of Modern Bulgaria* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013). Veska Zhivkova, *Bŭlgarskoto selo, 1878-1944 : Sotsiologicheski Analiz* (Sofia: V. Zhivkova, 1993).

literally is as an object through conventions of which we may or may not be consciously aware."[27] This is clearly as true for all kinds of produced images. Potts suggests that 'a theory of the sign… gives a distinctive cast to the analysis of a work of art by focusing on its function as a vehicle to convey meaning.'[28] In his work, he suggests that the project of the art historian, and I would contend the historian as well, must be to uncover past codes to enable the modern viewer access to the image's message.

But furthermore, I would like to suggest that the attributes which make images seemingly unfit for historical analysis, are the same attributes which make their analysis so essential. In his discussion of the challenges of visual culture, W.J.T. Mitchell writes, "To what extent is vision *unlike* language, working […] like a message without a code? In what ways does it *transcend* specific or local forms of social construction to function like a universal language that is relatively free of textual or interpretive elements?"[29] This malleability of interpretation is what makes visual culture so enticing to me.

Consider for a moment, Michel de Certeau's famous description of Charlie Chaplin's cane: "Charlie Chaplin multiplies the possibilities of his cane: he does other things with the same thing and he goes beyond the limits that the determinants of the object set on its utilization."[30] This, to me, encapsulates the alluring power of the image for the historian. For within the image there exists the possibility of multiple,

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[27] Alex Potts, 'Signs', in *Critical Terms for Art History,* ed. Robert S. Nelson and Richard Shiff (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 20.
[28] Ibid, 21.
[29] W.J.T. Mitchell, 'Showing Seeing: A Critique of Visual Culture', *Journal of Visual Culture,* 1/2 (Aug 2002).
[30] Michel De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 98.

contradictory uses. Not only can an image be interpreted differently by different audiences, but like Charlie Chaplin with his cane, the producer of the image can embrace multiple messages in its production. It is this ambiguity, this possibility of contradiction, which I attempt to explore in this dissertation.

The nature of my sources means that certain voices are seldom heard. Nearly all of the sources for my dissertation are speaking to or on behalf of the state. It is impossible to know from these sources how the peasantry imagined itself. It is difficult even to know how these messages of nation and modernity were received. Where possible, I have tried to explore this tricky problem of reception, but more work undoubtedly remains to be done in this area.

Regarding the "corporate" production of many of these images, I struggle against the idea of a unitary state. I do not want to imply that the state is in itself some kind of autonomous actor. Instead, I try to highlight how the each of these cultural products is the work of individuals, who under the umbrella of the state had competing and often contradictory ideas. State policy undoubtedly shaped these ideas, but policy itself is the product of a group of individuals, and is therefore in its turn shaped by their conflicting ideas. In fact, one of the advantages of images—with their inherent malleability—is that we are able, even in the postwar socialist context, to uncover the variety of ideas that coexisted within the official discourse.

In order to get at these contradictions, each of my chapters considers a different kind of visual source, tracing the outlines of the imaged Bulgarian peasant. In the first

chapter, I consider how museum workers used the ethnographic display of folk culture to grapple with Bulgaria's identity as a modern European nation. The museum itself provided evidence of Bulgaria's modern European culture. The "scientific" display of objects representing Bulgaria's rural population attempted to reconcile peasant culture with European modernity. These artifacts were also used to illustrate and mold the shifting understanding of the boundaries of the Buglarian nation and its imagined national identity. My second chapter looks at textual and photographic representations of the peasant in the weekly illustrated newspaper *Nashe Selo* [Our Village], to uncover how shifting images of the peasantry reflected changing notions of Bulgaria as a peasant nation. I look to Roger Brubaker's concept of "group making" to suggest that the "group" constructed around the peasantry shifted in the mid-1930s to be a national group, rather than a group based upon peasant interests. However, what the newspaper reveals is that, as the peasantry was co-opted symbolically into the national group, becoming in many ways the "face" of Bulgaria, it was emphatically not correspondingly politically empowered.

My third chapter focuses upon the postwar construction the Red Army Monument in Sofia to unpack Bulgaria's relationship with the Soviet Union. I suggest that, despite initial appearances, the monument is not a direct importation of the Socialist Realist aesthetic coming from Moscow, but was instead a "domestication" of the Soviet model. Through looking at the debates surrounding the design of the monument, it becomes clear that the local architects negotiated with half-understood directives in order to forward

their own message. Through the image of the peasant, they convey a sense of a Bulgaria who was at once "modern" and yet still Bulgarian, a friend and a partner to the Soviet Union, not a liberated dependent. My fourth chapter looks at urban planning in Bulgarian villages in order to investigate the young state's ambiguous relationship with its rural population. During the 1950s, official discourse re-imagined the village as an urban environment, and the peasants were to become an urban proletariat. However, as reality increasingly diverged from rhetoric, the image of the peasant also split. Drawing on interwar images of the positive female and negative male peasant images, modernizers were not only able to express their anxieties about the state of the Bulgarian village, but also were able to adjust Soviet modernization templates to speak to Bulgarian sensibilities. Finally, my fifth chapter considers how reimagining folk culture as a relic of the distant past allowed Bulgarian communists in the 1960s to once again draw upon these powerful nationalist symbols. At the heart of this chapter is the seeming contradiction between the suddenly renewed veneration of peasant folk culture at a time when the village was being reorganized and re-imagined on an urban template. By looking at the construction of the Etŭra Ethnographic complex, I suggest that the exaltation of peasant culture is possible if it is portrayed as part of Bulgaria's proto-urban culture and therefore as an important pre-curser to Bulgaria's glorious socialist present. In this way, Bulgaria's peasant past becomes an urban past, allowing Bulgaria to fit more comfortably into an urbanizing socialist teleology. Each of these sources presented its

own unique challenges, and I attempt in each chapter to elucidate the methodology I used to counter them.

David Freedberg once wrote, regarding the power of images that he proceeded with his study "in the belief that however much we intellectualize, even if that motion is spontaneous, there still remains a basic level of reaction that cuts across historical, social, and other contextual boundaries."[31] And perhaps, in part, this explains why I could not turn away from this project despite its daunting size. From the imposing approach to Sofia's Red Army monument, to the grainy photographs of peasant girls with their overflowing bounty, the emotive power of the peasant image fascinated and held me. With a spontaneous motion I was drawn into this reflection of Bulgaria.

[31] David Freedberg, *The Power of Images: Studies in the History and Theory of Response* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1989), 22.

Chapter One: Exhibiting the Peasant: Modern Bulgaria in the National Ethnographic Museum

In the wet spring of 1932, Gladys Schütz travelled to Bulgaria with her husband. On one particularly fine afternoon, not long after her arrival, this vigorous middle-aged British woman made her way to the National Ethnographic Museum in downtown Sofia.[32] At that time, the museum was housed in a rented building on the *Ploshtad Narodno Subranie* [National Congress Square] across the square from the National Congress, itself, and mere steps away from the famous neo-Byzantine domes of Alexander Nevski Cathedral. Schütz was unperturbed by the din and dirt of Interwar Sofia. An independent kind of woman, Schütz had been in her youth a militant suffragette and had later made a name for herself with her "suffragette novels" and her travel literature. Writing under the pseudonym Henrietta Leslie, she had also worked as a journalist for the *Weekly Herald* in London for more than a decade.[33] Schütz had been to Bulgaria once before, but on this occasion, she planned on recording all of her impressions in a "jolly sort of book."[34]

Although perhaps not quite what one would consider a VIP, she was greeted upon her arrival by one of the two curators of the museum at that time, a Ms. Evdokiia Peteva-

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[32] It should be noted that almost all information on the Ethnographic Museum before the Second World War comes from the archival collections of the Ministry of Education, under whose direction the museum operated. The museum's own archives were almost entirely lost when the museum was hit by an Allied bomb in 1944.

[33] Elizabeth Crawford, *The Women's Suffrage Movement : A Reference Guide, 1866-1928* (London: UCL Press, 1999), 879.

[34] Henrietta Leslie, *Where East is West; Life in Bulgaria* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1933), 19.

Filova, who personally guided her through the exhibits.[35] Indeed, although Schütz was rather delighted at the warmth of her reception, this was the established practice for whenever a foreigner happened to find their way to the museum. A report from 1920 explains, "Without exception, prominent foreigners who came to the capital during the year also visited the museum. They were always guided by the director or by the curator St. L. Kostov. They were favorably impressed with the running of the museum"[36]

Filova duly shepherded Schütz from room to room, explaining local traditions, guiding her through an overwhelming array of costumes which included samples from all corners of the kingdom and even embraced the Christian Turks and Muslim Pomaks, though apparently not other minority populations such as the Muslim Turks, Armenians, Jews and Gypsies.[37] Filova uncovered a display case of intricately embroidered shirts and aprons for Schütz to examine, and another, upstairs which was filled with painted Easter eggs. One room contained cases of heavy buckles, amulets and coin-covered necklaces and yet another housed a collection of musical instruments. In a small, dark chamber on the ground floor of the building, Schütz gazed upon the famous "Cherry Cannon" that had been constructed during the struggle for independence in the 19th century, when the

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35 The other curator was Khristo Vakarelski who would go on to become the director of the museum after the war. TsDA (F-177, O-2, E-888, L- 25)

36 TsDA (F-177, O-1, E-671, L-68)

37 Though apparently these inclusions were not without judgment as the Turks were described to Schütz as "the ugliest and dirtiest people in the world" and the Pomaks, who are Muslim Bulgarians were portrayed as the Turks' "antithesis". Filova remarks, "They are a fine race, with a much better physique than the ordinary Turk." Leslie, *Where East is West,* 53.

rebels had no other artillery.[38] In the same room, wreathed in golden laurel leaves, lay the chains that had held the famous revolutionary, Vasil Levski, in the last days before his execution.[39] Afterwards, Schütz would write that "The Museum is a treasure-house of objects vitally important to students of Bulgarian development and culture […] as one passes from room to room, from case to case, it is as though there were unfolded before one the whole history of the nation, with its multiplicity of strange customs and superstitions…"[40]

During the interwar period, prominent foreigners like Schütz, who could report back to their homelands about Bulgaria's distinct culture, were the primary audience of the museum's ethnographic displays. Not only were they given special treatment in the museum itself, but in the lean years after the punitive Treaty of Neuilly (1919),[41] the impoverished museum focused its expenditure upon sending travelling exhibitions of Bulgarian folk art abroad. Peasant girls in folk costume attended international conferences and exhibitions. By the late 1930s, many Bulgarian consulates and embassies in Western Europe featured a small ethnographic museum. Museum publications were routinely translated into German, English and French. During these years, through the work of the Ethnographic museum, peasant folk costumes became the calling card of

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[38] Literally: a cannon carved from the wood of a cherry tree. Unfortunately, when the rebels tested one of these cannons, it broke to pieces and was only able to hurl the "cannonball" (a miscellaneous collection of nails and metal scraps) a few yards. The cannon was more representative of the rebels' desperation and creativity than of their success at fashioning effective home-made artillery.
[39] Leslie, *Where East is West,* 54-55.
[40] Ibid, 51.
[41] The Treaty of Neuilly forced Bulgaria to cede the territories of Thrace, Macedonia and Dobrudja, reduce its army and pay 100 million pounds in war reparations.

Bulgaria abroad. So the question was, what were they trying to tell this international audience?

Cultural theorist Peter Aronsson argues that "national museums are institutions where knowledge is transformed, negotiated, materialized, visualized and communicated with national identity politics. This answers what the nation was, is and ought to be."[42] On its surface, an ethnographic museum filled with the implements and clothing of the peasantry's daily life would suggest, as it clearly did to Gladys Schütz, that Bulgaria is a nation of deep peasant traditions. But the impetus behind the creation of a museum was not to showcase the peculiarities of rural life, but to sanitize and control it. If modernity is generally associated with science, progress, hygiene and urbanization, the continued existence of a large peasant community represented the strongest argument against Bulgaria's European modernity. Through surgically removing the peasantry from the village, by removing the smells, the dirt, the terrible breathing *backwardness* from these objects and placing them in "scientific" categories, ethnographers attempted to refashion the Bulgarian peasantry into evidence of the young nation's modern European culture. In the display cases of the Ethnographic Museum, peasant culture could be reconciled with modernity and Bulgaria could transcend its peasant populations. It could become a modern European nation.

In general, the authority of a museum seems to rest on its perceived objectivity. Simon Knell argues, however, that the museum actually "exists in the civilized world

[42]Peter Aronsson, 'Explaining National Museums: Exploring Comparative Approaches to the Study of National Museums', in *National Museums: New Studies from around the World,* ed. Simon J. Knell, et. al. (London: Routledge, 2011).

because of its claim to moral authority derived from its fostering of education, knowledge, cultivation, professionalization, and so on. It manifests and materializes the central ideologies of civilization."[43] Within this powerful poetic and political space, the ethnographic objects themselves become signs of civilization and symbols of the collectors' authority and modernity. Consequently, the ethnographers in the Sofia museum were very concerned not only that they followed "scientific methods" in the gathering and display of their materials, but also that their work was perceived as scientific by the international community. They strongly believed that in their museum work, they were taking part in broader European cultural trends.

And so they were, for, by the late 19th century, these kinds of displays, both national and ethnographic, had developed into something of a rage all across Europe. A process which Aronsson describes as follows:

> [The museums of] both London and Paris were subsequently imitated by small and large nations, nations formerly occupied and those that wished to be counted amongst the great imperialists. The material basis for these institutions came from polite society, royal collections, systematic mapping, and enquiry, and looting and territorial expansion. Through their incorporation into these prestigious new institutions, they permitted the building of new identities which made reference to ancient civilizations, monarchical continuity and civilizing splendor. [44]

Beyond the national museums, new developments in ethnographic display were emerging, particularly in Scandinavia, where the first independent ethnographic museum was founded in Denmark.[45]

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[43] Simon J. Knell, 'National Museums in the National Imagination', in ibid, 5.
[44] Peter Aronsson, 'Explaining National Museums', 31-32.
[45] The Danish Ethnographic Museum was founded in 1841. Ibid, 39.

These Skandanavian museums, unlike their imperial counterparts were lass of an embrace of "rational modernity" than a reaction to it. For example, Skansen, the famous ethnographic complex founded in Stockholm in 1891, "blended romantic nostalgia with dismay at the emergence of capitalist social relations… [Skansen] commemorated, and in some degree fabricated, […] the life of "the folk", visualized as a harmonious population of peasants and craft workers."[46] Yet , although Dimitŭr Marinov would refer to Skansen in his initial proposal for an independent museum in 1903, the National Ethnographic Museum would differ significantly from the Swedish model. [47] The Bulgarian museum would lack Skansen's overwhelming nostalgia. In Sofia, the emphasis was upon a living peasantry.

Nevertheless, with the creation of the Ethnographic Department in the National museum in 1892 and later the independent museum in 1906, Bulgarian ethnographers were quite consciously taking part in this emerging form of cultural production and nation building. In 1920, Museum Director A. P. Stoĭlov would exclaim that with the opening of the National Museum (which would later divide into the Archaeological and Ethnographic Museums), "We were able to welcome foreigners and to show them without shame that Bulgaria has the right to participate in European Culture."[48] The museum would allow Bulgaria to step on to the international stage as equals.

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[46] Robert Lumley, *The Museum Time Machin*e : *Putting Cultures on Display*, (Hoboken: Taylor and Francis, 2012), 70.
[47] Nadezhda Teneva, 'Pogramata na D. Marinov ot 1903 g. za zadachite na Etnografskiia Muzeĭ', *Istoricheski Pregled,* 11-12 (1993).
[48] TsDA (F-177, O-1, E-665, L-119-120)

This concept was particularly powerful in the interwar years. After the devastating losses of the Balkan wars (1912-1913) and the First World War (1915-1918), Bulgaria was left weak and friendless. These years were marked by turbulent and often violent political upheavals in the Bulgarian capital. And in the midst of these struggles, the National Ethnographic Museum became an important staging ground for national display. When writing the initial plan for the museum in 1903, ethnographer Dimitŭr Marinov wrote, "To collect and preserve everything which is recovered from old times until now, and which represents our national boundaries and the characteristics of our national way of life: that is the fundamental duty of ethnography."[49] During the interwar years, as political power changed, so too did the imagined nation on display. This array of peasant costumes, rituals and even rudimentary farming implements were to reveal and shape Bulgaria's imagined national identity and the shifting understanding of the boundaries of the Bulgarian nation. Their "scientific" display, both in the museum itself, and in travelling exhibits and publications abroad sought to suggest that Bulgaria was unique and authentic, but it was also a modern, European nation.

THE EARLY ETHNOGRAPHIC MUSEUM

Ethnographic display in Bulgaria long predated Gladys Schütz's visit in 1932, and from the founding moments of the museum, it was clear that the collection was deeply entangled with national identity politics.[50] The first official collection was established as part of the National Library in Sofia, in 1878, only a few months after the Treaty of

[49] Teneva, 'Pogramata na D. Marinov ot 1903 g. za zadachite na Etnografskiia Muzeĭ', 178.
[50] Aronsson, 'Explaining National Museums'.

Berlin reduced the territory of the newly autonomous principality of Bulgaria. However, in 1892, this space was deemed woefully insufficient and the collection was moved to the newly established National Museum, where it remained for the following decade. [51] Even in those early years, an enormous amount of effort was put into exporting folk culture to international venues. In particular, the ethnographic museum took part in nationalist exhibits at various fairs and exhibitions in Europe and the United States.

Since the opening of the Crystal Palace in London in 1851, Europe had been seized by a mania for world's fairs, and Bulgaria was keen to catch up. Naturally, ethnographic exhibits were part of Bulgaria's own fair in Plovdiv in 1892, but the government also sent folk exhibits to the Chicago World's Fair in 1893, the *Exposition Universelle* in Paris in 1900, the World's Fair in St. Louis in 1904, and a year later to the *Exposition Universelle et Internationalle* in Liège, Belgium.[52] And it was perhaps in part due to the seeming success of these endeavors that Dimitŭr Marinov proposed the establishment of an independent ethnographic museum in 1903.[53]

In his original proposal for the museum, Marinov acknowledged that creating a satisfactory display of Bulgaria's rich culture would be a long and expensive process.[54] Though the museum was established in 1906, it was four years before the museum even

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[51] The history of the museum comes from a 1920 memo written to the Minister of Education, TsDA (F-177, O-1, E-665, L-119).
[52] Rachko Popov, 'Istoriia na Etnografski Institut s Muzeĭ', <http://eim-bas.com/about_us.php?p=history&l=en>, accessed 2/19/2013, 4:00 pm.
[53] As we shall see, however, "official" success did not always correlate to international (or even domestic) recognition of Bulgaria's place as a powerful European nation. See, Mary Neuburger, 'To Chicago and Back: Aleko Konstantinov, Rose Oil, and the Smell of Modernity', *Slavic Review,* 65/3 (2006), 427-45.
[54] Teneva, 'Pogramata na D. Marinov ot 1903 g. za zadachite na Etnografskiia Muzeĭ', 180.

found a building in which to establish some kind of permanent display. This was ultimately discovered at the residence of a Ms. Maria A. Nacheva at No. 4, Ploshtad Narodno Subranie.[55] From the outset, this placement was intended to be a temporary affair, and the continued use of this space was an endless source of frustration to the museum staff.

In fact, it was this building whose threshold Gladys Schütz would cross in 1932, some twenty-two years after the museum had "temporarily" taken up residence. The building, which dated to 1865, was already considered quite advanced in age when the museum first rented the location. Built on three floors, with 35 small rooms, the space was considered inconvenient for "scientific display" and completely impossible for proper storage of the museum's quickly growing collection.[56] Land had been set aside for the construction of a new museum building, but with the outbreak of First Balkan War in 1912, the plan was abandoned.[57]

The government, however, was still very interested in supporting the work of the Ethnographic Museum. During the three wars that engulfed Bulgaria between 1912 and 1918, ethnographers were sent out with the army into newly "liberated" territories in Macedonia, Dobrudja and Thrace.[58] Bulgarian ethnographers attached to the army were

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[55] TsDA (F-177, O-2, E-889, L-162).
[56] TsDA (F-177, O-2, E-185, L-23).
[57] TsDA (F-177, O-2, E-889, L-162).
[58] The 1910s were a turbulent decade for Bulgaria. From 1912-1913, Bulgaria allied with her neighbors to "liberate" Balkan territories from the Ottoman Empire. After that was resolved with the Treaty of London, war broke out between the erstwhile allies over the distribution of the Macedonian territories. When World War I broke out the next year, Bulgaria ultimately joined on the side of the Germans with the promise of

given the right "to move freely around the region of the army toward that which seems important and, when possible, to enter first with the army into newly occupied cities and spaces."[59] Local authorities were obliged to help the ethnographers with their task of collecting materials, which were then to be sent back to the museum in Sofia.[60] At times these efforts seem to have been met with at least a degree of acquiescence. According to one memo, dated to April 28, 1917, the grateful Macedonian population put together its own collection of ethnographic materials, which they very much hoped would become the basis of a "Macedonian Ethnographic Exhibition" in the museum in Sofia.[61] The national importance of these materials was not lost upon Bulgarians.

In fact, one student organization at the University of Sofia heard of a tentative plan to send some of these materials to museums abroad, and was duly outraged. In a vociferous letter to the Minister of Education, the students wrote:

> On the 9th of March 1917, the general student assembly was called together to consider the question of the future destiny of the objects displayed in the exhibit of Macedonian national embroidery and clothing. Deeply concerned after hearing recent rumors about the purchase of these valuable monuments by foreigners, the Bulgarian university students vigorously discussed the question, stirring up the souls of Bulgarian culture.
>
> Having considered the vast meaning of this embroidery as more than the off-spring of slavery, but as a manifestation of the foundation of our national art […]

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regaining the territories lost in the Treaty of Bucharest (1913) and Treaty of Berlin (1878). See, R.J. Crampton, *A Concise History of Bulgaria* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 141-142.

[59] TsDA (F-177, O-1, E-475, L-17). Although this memo dates from 1917, the accounts of ethnographer Stephan Kostov suggest that the collection of materials occurred throughout the three conflicts. TsDA (F-177, O-1, E-671, L -88). This is corroborated in current ethnographer, Radostina Sharenkova's, history of the early Ethnographic museum. Radostina Sharenkova, 'After the Fall of the Berlin Wall: Nationalism and Multiculturalism at the Bulgarian National Ethnographic Museum', in *National Museums: New Studies from around the World* , ed. Simon J. Knell, et. al. (London: Routledge, 2011), 419.

[60] TsDA (F-177, O-1, E-475, L-23).

[61] TsDA (F-177, O-1, E-475, L-124).

> representing monuments of Bulgaria's cultural history and a treasure house of the origin of national art, it was decided to raise an outcry against any such measure and to collect the signatures here in order to lay before you, the high president of Bulgarian education, the protest of the entire student body against such an act, and our heated request: save Bulgarian things for Bulgaria.[62]

There are several interesting issues raised in this letter. First of all, the students clearly attached nationalist importance to this collection of Macedonian peasant clothing, as if the possession of the clothing was symbolic of Bulgaria's possession of Macedonia. Tracing Bulgaria's national boundaries through the contents of the museum's collection remained an important symbolic act in the interwar years, and the display of Macedonian embroidery in the Bulgarian museum visually demonstrated that Macedonians were Bulgarian. Additionally there is the question of the provenance of the national culture. Is Macedonia's and Bulgaria's shared culture uniquely Bulgarian or is it actually Ottoman, and an "off-spring of slavery?" Finally, there is also the tricky question of audience. Who ought to be the audience for these Macedonian objects? Should it be Bulgarians? Or should it be the foreign powers who potentially had the authority to make Bulgaria's annexation of Macedonia permanent? In the interwar years, different regimes answered these questions differently.

AUDIENCE AND INTERWAR MUSEUM

In 1917 an earthquake shook the museum causing the ceiling to collapse on the third floor. The museum obviously had to be closed for some time as the building's owner organized repairs. But, even after repairs were finished, the third floor displays

[62] TsDA (F-177, O-1, E-475, L-137).

were not re-opened for some years.[63] Almost a decade later, in 1929, the museum board was actually given the opportunity to purchase the premises, which they vehemently declined. The director of the museum explained:

> The building is quite inconvenient for a museum. First of all, it is too small to be able to show all of the collected materials. The rooms, which are also too small and tight, are dark, without light and awkward for the exhibition of any kind of collection. There is no convenient location for storage or for sculptural and photographic workshops and offices. There is also not a sufficient courtyard for cleaning the materials and for exhibiting the larger objects outside, [objects] from our material economic culture, like tools for field work, transport etc… because there is not a large warehouse, everything which is not on exhibit, is piled in small rooms, floor to ceiling. Naturally, in this condition, instead of being preserved, the materials will be damaged. The building is old and even damaged from the earthquake [of 1917] – its back wing is sagging by 10 cm, and in the opinion of the state architect, in peak hours, it is possible that the visitors will cause the ceiling to collapse.[64]

The museum curators dreamed of a more suitable premises being built or found. But the sad reality was that the museum would remain in its temporary location until after the Second World War. And perhaps it necessitated something as drastic as the destruction of the museum building in the 1944 Allied bombing of Sofia to inspire interest in re-housing the museum.[65] The domestic display of folk culture was clearly just not the main priority after the First World War. This suggests something fundamental about the perceived audience during this time period.

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[63] TsDA (F-177, O-1, E-550, L-5).
[64] TsDA (F-177, O-2, E-185, L-23).
[65] And even then, the museum was not given a new, purpose built, location, but rather, in 1953, after almost a decade in limbo, the museum moved into the old imperial palace. As we shall see in Chapter 5, this move was completely in keeping with the general shift towards recasting peasant folk culture as a relic of Bulgaria's national past.

In general, when scholars discuss national and ethnographic museums, the presumed audience is a domestic one for the simple reason that locals are far more likely to step into the museum. The nationalist meaning of the museum is tied up in its transformative power upon the audience- that is, the power to create self-regulating citizens. Tony Bennett writes, "ideally [museums] sought also to allow the people to know and thence to regulate themselves; to become, in seeing themselves from the side of power, both the subjects and objects of knowledge, knowing power and what power knows, and knowing themselves as (ideally) known by power, interiorizing its gaze as a principle of self-surveillance and, hence self-regulation."[66] This must have been especially true in the ethnographic museum in Sofia where many of the urbanites visiting the museum would have been former peasants looking at sanitized versions of themselves. This creation of self-regulating citizens can be seen as an aspect of a larger trend, keenly felt during the interwar years, which emphasized the importance of modernizing Bulgaria's citizenry.[67]

Certainly, local Bulgarians visited the museum in increasing numbers over these decades, particularly as folk culture was increasingly romanticized in the nationalist environment of the late 1930s. Even as early as 1920, the museum recorded over 45,000 domestic visitors to the museum.[68] There was clearly interest in making the museum available to this population as well. The museum was open Thursday through Monday all

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[66] Tony Bennett, 'The Exhibitionary Complex', in *The Nineteenth-Century Visual Culture Reader* , ed. Vanessa R. Schwartz and Jeannene M. Przybliski (New York: Routledge, 2004), 119.
[67] This will be discussed further in Chapters 2 and 5.
[68] TsDA (F-177, O-1, E-671, L-68).

year round, for a small entrance fee of 2 lev a person. But on Sunday afternoons, entrance was free. Interestingly, of the 45,442 people who visited the museum in 1920, only 4237 people paid the entrance fee, suggesting that Sundays must have been very busy indeed. In fact, this goes some way to explaining the concern that the museum would collapse under the weight of the visitors!

The museum collection was undoubtedly intended to educate Bulgarians about their own culture, to provide irrefutable material evidence that the nation exists. As Simon Knell puts it, "We might imagine national museums as providing the scenography and stage for the performance of myths of nationhood. As in the theatre we might *imagine* and believe, but in the museum our imagining can be so much more believable because we are led to think that all around us has arrived objectively and all is as it seems to be; these things are not merely props."[69] Because of the perceived truth in scientific display, it provided a powerful tool for national performance. And even after the disasters of the war years, or perhaps even especially after these disasters, the task of national myth making continued in the museum. One can certainly not discount the importance of this task. However, what is fascinating here is that it was not this domestic audience which consumed the thoughts and finances of the museum directors and curators, but rather, the foreign audience.

Already, we have discussed the special treatment that European visitors would receive upon their arrival at the museum, and the particular attention paid to their

[69] Knell, 'National Museums in the National Imagination', 4.

reactions. And although in the official report, foreigners reacted positively to the museum collection, there seemed to be a real anxiety that the museum would be found wanting. In every plea to the Ministry of National Education for better training, better funding, better premises, the motivation was the foreign gaze, not the domestic one. For example, one petition from 1920 exclaims, "We must bring attention to our national traditions and ideals and show foreign visitors our organized attitude and national spiritual culture."[70] And when dreaming of improvements upon the museum, an eye was always kept upon the latest trends in Europe.[71] Additionally, recognition and approval abroad was sought through the growth of publications made available to a foreign audience.

Take, for example, the contentious Macedonian costumes collected by ethnographers during the war. Ultimately the collection was not sold abroad, but remained in the museum where it actually became the basis for a published album entitled *Bulgarian National Embroideries*. Plans for this publication actually dated to the war years when most of the materials were gathered. The ethnographer in charge was Stefan Kostov, an adventurous young man who Tsar Boris would personally appoint as curator of the Ethnographic department in 1923.[72] During the war Kostov was among the ethnographers sent out to collect materials on the war front. He was first attached to the headquarters of the 3rd Army in Dobrudja and Romania. Later he would be moved to the 1st Army,

[70] TsDA (F-177, O-1, E-671, L-72).
[71] TsDA (F-177, O-2, E-889, L-162).
[72] TsDA (F-177, O-1, E-814, L-51).

working in Southwest Bulgaria and Macedonia.[73] The album was in two parts, the first focused upon the Northwest regions of the Bulgaria, and the second focused upon the Southwest and Macedonia.

The album, which graphically "proved" that the populations of Dobrudja and Macedonia were Bulgarian, was finally published in 1919. It was printed and bound in Prague and Leipzig.[74] The tables and figures were accompanied by inscriptions in Bulgarian, French and German.[75] Copies of this album were sent to foreign consulates and international exhibitions.[76] When prominent foreigners visited the museum in 1919, they all got a copy of the album, a practice which continued throughout the decade. [77] A 1929 memo explains, "Of the 2000 copies of the album- the director would like to give away 20% for free to museums, libraries and professors at home and abroad. The rest (1400) will be for sale."[78] But the album was just one example of the kinds of publications that were sent abroad or adjusted to meet the needs of foreign visitors.

The museum itself saw an increasing number of guests from abroad, as many as 1364 between 1923 and 1925.[79] By the 1930s, this number had increased enough that the

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[73] TsDA (F-177, O-1, E-671, L-88).
[74] Specifically, the photographs were printed in Prague and the book was put together with the text in Leipzig. TsDA (F-177, O-1, E-671, L-83).
[75] TsDA (F-177, O-1, E-671, L-83).
[76] For example the 1921 exhibition in London, TsDA (F-177, O-1, E-811, L-3).
[77] The memo actually lists all of the visitors by name: "General Henry Commendente l'armée française d'Orient, M. et Madame Chretiène, Baron de la Chapela, Col. Morel, Col. De Winchevts, Francisco Gozzi [etc…]" and then notes at the end, that after being given a personal tour of the facilities, they were each, "given a copy of the album of Bulgarian embroidery." TsDA (F-177, O-1, E-665, L-149).
[78] TsDA (F-177, O-2, E-185, L-68).
[79] 'Otchet na Narodniia Ethnograficheski Muzeĭ za 1923-1925', *Izvestiia na Narodniia Etnograficheski Muzeĭ v Sofiia,* 5 (1925), 3.

museum decided to publish a guide in German and French.[80] But for foreigners who could not make it to the Bulgarian museum, the museum made a practice of sending photographs and lantern slides abroad for use in foreign museums and publications. As one update on the running of the museum explains, "The museum sent copies of photographs as instructed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Religion, straight to magazines, newspapers, professors, press correspondents, etc., abroad."[81]

But the museum did not rely on foreign publications to speak to their international audience. In addition to specialty publications the museum began the regular publication of the *Izvestiia na Etnograficheski Muzeĭ v Sofiia* [Journal of the Ethnographic Museum in Sofia].[82] The journal covered topics ranging from interior news about the museum, to scholarly articles on historical ethnography and the presence of animal motifs in current national embroideries. With every issue, the Table of Contents and a summary of each article was published in Bulgarian and French. Additionally, each issue included summaries of articles about Bulgarian ethnography from foreign language journals. Interacting with the international scholarly and diplomatic community was clearly very important, if we consider that copies of these publications were being given away for free at a time when the museum itself was deemed structurally unsound.

So, with these audiences in mind, both foreign and domestic, the question becomes, what was being displayed? What kind of nation was being constructed?

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[80] TsDA (F-177, O-2, E-984, L-299).
[81] 'Otchet na Narodniia Ethnograficheski Muzeĭ za 1923-1925', 3.
[82] A single issue was actually published in 1907, but it was not until 1921, that the journal was actually published as a regular periodical. Popov, 'Istoriia na Etnographski Institut s Muzeĭ'.

DISPLAY IN THE INTERWAR MUSEUM

One of the curious aspects of the interwar Ethnographic Museum is how it was organized. For it was not organized by region but rather by material type. This was true even as early as Dimitŭr Marinov's original 1903 proposal. In that document, Marinov proposed to divide the museum's collection as follows: costumes and ornaments, tools for women's handy work, agricultural implements, hunting, beliefs and superstitions, traditions and legends, music, games and dances, toys, school, medicine, warfare, food and finally, history.[83] In his section on costumes, the most detailed within his proposal, he suggests that the costumes be divided first by time period, that is, historical costumes separated from current costumes, and then by occupation. So, the costumes of urban tradesmen would be separated from the costumes of the clergy and those of the peasants. But even then, it was not organized regionally at all. Many aspects of Marinov's proposed museum never came to pass, but this thematic division of materials was largely realized.

Gladys Schütz's description of the museum in 1932 makes it clear that each room of the museum was based around a specific theme. The result of this kind of organization was meant to convey a feeling of unity. As present day researcher at the Bulgarian Ethnographic Museum, Radostina Sharenkova notes:

> The museum was organized into departments (repositories) on the basis of types of material it possessed and not on the provenance of those objects. In effect, then, the museum's collecting activities involved the appropriation of cultures which were then written into the story of a single people. It is important to note that this imagined nation was not distinguished on the basis of ethnic groups; it

[83] Teneva, 'Pogramata na D. Marinov ot 1903 g. za zadachite Na Etnografskiia Muzeĭ', 178.

> was understood that this nation possessed-as a result of history and geography- a diversity of interrelated populations.[84]

In other words, the many regional cultures on display within the museum were woven into the unifying narrative of the Bulgarian nation. This, of course, referred to territories outside the boundaries of the interwar Bulgarian state as well, particularly the objects gathered during Bulgaria's brief war-time expansion.

Even after the war, the museum's collection grew every year, particularly during the 1930s, as machine-made "urban" clothing began replacing traditional peasant clothing. Costumes were either purchased or donated and then compiled into annual lists which were then submitted to the Minister of National Education for perusal. In these lists, as in the museum itself, the provenance of the objects was given as the village and the closest large city, but larger regional designations are never mentioned, which resulted in diminishing the importance of these old divisions.[85]

In addition to separations according to type, the artifacts were also divided temporally, along the lines originally suggested by Marinov, with a division between past and present. The original museum itself was broken into two departments: the ethnographic and the historical. By the 1930s, the historical department would become largely defunct, but the division between historical and contemporary remained.[86] This differentiation is very curious if we consider, for example, Artur Hazelius' ethnographic complex in Skansen.

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[84] Sharenkova, 'After the Fall of the Berlin Wall', 419.

[85] For example: TsDA (F-177, O-2, E-889, L-162).

[86] In a memo from 1939, it was actually noted that the historical department had been closed for some years. TsDA (F-177, O-2, E-984, L-295).

In that museum, representations of folk culture were meant to be nostalgic, looking at an idyllic past from a quickly industrializing present. The museum offered a slice of "backward looking romanticism" to visitors who got to watch strolling musicians and folk dancers, and to explore old farm houses with guides in folk costume.[87] Although many aspects of the museum were "alive" in a way that they could not be in the Bulgarian museum, there was also the fundamental understanding that the viewers were participating in a reenactment, that Skansen was preserving a piece of history and that Sweden had moved beyond it, to a new "modern" age. There was no anxiety, as there would be in postwar Bulgaria, that this way of life was embarrassingly still hanging on. Instead, the museum was characterized by a kind of longing for a vanishing world. As Hazelius put it, "All of our gold cannot restore the valuable things which have been lost."[88]

The narrative was different in the Bulgarian museum, for not every object, nor even most objects, were historical. Most of the objects were from contemporary Bulgaria. This meant that, unlike in Skansen, the narrative of the museum did not relegate the peasantry to a distant past. Certainly there were historical objects, Shütz mentioned the Cherry Cannon, and there were also costumes, textiles and religious relics. The historical objects that were included, unfailingly dated to the period of Bulgaria's National Revival, that is- the period from the late 18th through mid-19th centuries, a period associated with Bulgaria's national awakening and a blossoming of Bulgarian literature and crafts. And if

[87] Lumley, *The Museum Time Machine*, 69.
[88] Teneva, 'Pogramata na D. Marinov ot 1903 g. za zadachite na Etnografskiia Muzeĭ', 178.

they were not associated with the Revival, they were associated, like the Cherry Cannon, with the revolutionary struggle to liberate Bulgaria from the Ottomans.[89]

The Bulgarian National Ethnographic Museum was not a historical museum, but it did set up a national narrative. Within that narrative, these objects argued for the continuous existence of *Bulgarian* peasant culture over time. By connecting folk culture to moments of national revival and revolution, the display visually conflated peasant culture with Bulgarian national culture. The effect of this was an important one for nationalists. It laid out the argument that a unique Bulgarian culture had existed under Ottoman rule, untainted by the culture of the occupier. In this, it did not differ that greatly from other nationalist causes in Europe, which traced their nation back to a common folk ancestry. Where the Bulgarian museum did differ, however, was in the representation of the present day.

It should be noted, that while Marinov's original proposal called for a sizeable part of the museum to be devoted to urban costumes, by the interwar years ethnographic display seems to have become synonymous with rural peasant culture. This can, in part, be explained by the fact that, historically, the Bulgarian cities were perceived as culturally foreign. If the goal of the ethnographic museum was to represent Bulgarian national culture, the village was more obviously Bulgarian than the city. Historically, most Ottoman period cities in the territory that would become Bulgaria were dominated by Greeks, Turks, Vlachs, Armenians, Jews and other "foreign" or non-Bulgarian

[89] This focus on the revival period was present in Marinov's original proposal, Ibid. But it can also be seen in lists of materials collected and donated, for example: TsDA (F-177, O-1, E-550, L-86).

populations. After 1878, there were efforts to reclaim these cities as Bulgarian, but the effort was complicated in a way that coding village culture as Bulgarian was not.[90] By the early 20th century, though no longer Ottoman, the city was criticized by many for bowing to European influence. Because of its perceived Euro-centrism, the modern city was seen by many as not truly Bulgarian. So in order to represent current Bulgarian culture, the museum looked to the village.[91]

Additionally, in the interwar years, the population of Bulgaria was actually still overwhelmingly rural. In 1919, the peasant Agrarian party, known as the Bulgarian Agrarian People's Union [BANU], came to power. This so-called "peasant republic," (or as some referred to it a "peasant dictatorship") was led by Alexander Stamboliski, who was himself of peasant origin. The party's platform was consciously pro-village and anti-urban, embracing but also calling for an active modernization of the peasantry through, "clean, modernized villages with paved streets, clean water, proper sanitation, good schools, adequate libraries and cinemas."[92] Interestingly, after the government was over-turned in the violent coup of 1923, and more conservative (and theoretically urban) political interests came into power, many of the initiatives that Stamboliski had begun were not only not abandoned, but actually expanded. Although the peasants no longer held political power, they also could not be entirely ignored.

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[90] For an interesting discussion of this process of claiming Bulgaria's urban revival architecture see: Mary Neuburger, 'Housing the Nation: Facades and Furnishings in the Bulgaro-Ottoman Revival House', *Centropa,* 8/2 (May 2008).
[91] This is rather ironic, as the museum, itself, was attempting to participate in European urban culture through representing Bulgarian rural culture.
[92] Crampton, *A Concise History of Bulgaria,* 151.

Furthermore, in some ways, urban-rural divisions were not as deep as Stamboliski's famous rhetoric would make it seem.[93] A strong delineation between city and countryside had only begun to characterize the Bulgarian urban landscape in the 20th century. There was actually little differentiation between peasants and city-dwellers in mid-19th century Bulgarian cities. [94] Fifty years later, in the interwar years, most of Bulgaria's urban inhabitants were probably only a generation or two away from the village, if not fresh migrants themselves.

The result of this was two-fold. On the one hand, as we have seen, there was undoubtedly worry that Bulgaria was neither urban nor modern enough to be a part of the European landscape. This anxiety contributed to the construction of urban institutions like the Ethnographic museum which spoke to current trends in European culture. On the other hand, neither the museum nor any of the interwar governments could deny that Bulgaria was indeed a peasant nation. So, while the Swedish ethnographic museum at Skansen could represent peasant culture as a thing of the past, the Bulgarian museum represented folk culture as part of the nation's present. This was quite a tricky proposition, if we consider that one of the goals of the museum was to argue for Bulgaria's European modernity. The museum had to walk a fine line. It had to present peasant culture in such a way that neither denied its existence nor provided proof of

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[93] In an oft quoted speech, Stamboliski likened Sofia to Sodom and Gomorra. Bell, *Peasants in Power,* 155.

[94] Raina Gavrilova, *Bulgarian Urban Culture in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries* (Selinsgrove: Susquehanna University Press, 1999.), 82.

Bulgaria's cultural 'backwardness'. The latter of these two intentions was realized through the museum's scientific display of the peasant objects.

As one present-day ethnographer puts it, "The artfulness of the ethnographic object is an art of excision, of detachment, an art of excerpt. Where does the object begin, and where does it end? This I see as an essentially surgical issue. Shall we exhibit the cup with the saucer, the tea, the cream and sugar, the spoon, the napkin and placemat, the table and the chair, the rug? Where do we make the cut?"[95] In the inter-war National Ethnographic Museum in Sofia, this surgical line was almost around the object itself. Unlike ethnographic museums which locate the objects *in situ,* or in a replica of the objects' original location, (for example, a room from a cottage constructed in the museum to give the illusion that one has stepped into the village), the Bulgarian museum largely arranged the materials in glass cases with accompanying labels, and quite often an accompanying photograph to show how the object was used. As one sculptor at the museum complained, "these display cases with dolls soon destroy the interest of the public, because they contain one unique variety of clothing and nothing else. They are not able to hold attention."[96]

As a result of this surgical procedure, folk artifacts were in a sense "civilized." As scholars have argued:

> artifacts were required to conform to the sensory order of the new home. This meant being reduced to the visual, or- from a Western perspective-being civilized

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[95] Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, *Destination Culture: Tourism, Museums, and Heritage* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1998), 18.
[96] TsDA (F-177, O-1, E-671, L-72).

> into the visual. As the artifacts in the museum represented cultures, the peoples providing them also symbolically had their senses and sensory presences disciplined. Through their representative artifacts they were rendered touchless, speechless, and smell-less.[97]

Thus in the museum, the seemingly backward peasantry was disciplined, becoming its most ideal self through conformity with Western scientific standards. However, at the same time, though the display was in one sense rendered lifeless, there was a simultaneous attempt to portray the peasant lifestyle as current.

One way this was attempted was through the mannequins that displayed the costumes. The museum included a sculptural studio, which was tasked with the creation of life-like mannequins. A 1921 letter from a sculptor at the museum reveals that far from being generic human forms, the dolls were modeled on actual living peasants. The sculptor explains:

> The trip which was approved by the ministry extended from the 18th of September to the 5th of October of this year, during which time I visited 5 villages from the Lovchansko region, where I took 43 photographs of peasant, men, women and children. The dolls' heads will be modeled based upon these photographs. […] The museum is in possession of clothing from these villages, which is currently dressed on dolls and exhibited in display cases but the heads of the dolls are not typical [of peasants from this region].[98]

Unfortunately, the sculptor does not go on to describe just how the original dolls were unsatisfactory, but he does explain that the goal of this project was "in this manner, to represent, after a time, the characteristics of every corner of our fatherland."[99] This letter

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[97] Constance Classen and David Howes, 'The Museum as Sensescape: Western Sensibilities and Indigenous Artifacts', in *Sensible Objects: Colonialism, Museums and Material Culture,* ed. Elizabeth Edwards, et.al. (Oxford: Berg, 2006), 210-211.
[98] TsDA (F-177, O-1, E-667, L-35).
[99] TsDA (F-177, O-1, E-667, L-35).

suggests the museum's interest in creating an "authentic" representation of the real people that were being displayed within the museum (if in a highly sanitized form). This interest was also manifested through the photography produced and displayed by the museum.

In her description of the museum, Gladys Schütz was most fascinated by the parts of the museum devoted to local traditions and superstitions. She mentions, almost in passing, that photographs illustrating the rituals accompanied the objects on display. In her book, she actually included a reproduction of one of these photos: that of the girl in the "butterfly ritual". This photo, of a girl caught in a moment of action, represents one of the varieties of photos on display in the museum. From the archives, we also know that in addition to photos of rituals, the museum displayed photographs of peasants at work in the fields and in the home.[100] These photos, like Schütz's butterfly girl, captured moments of "real life."

Although the museum produced many different kinds of photos, like photos of costumes, buildings and agricultural products, photos of the Bulgarian *byt* [way of life] seem to have been those most commonly included into the museum's display.[101] [Figure 1.1]

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[100] For example, TsDA (F-177, O-1, E-822, L-24, 39) and TsDA (F-177, O-1, E-811, L- 3).
[101] However, these other kinds of photos did invariably accompany the *byt* photos to the international exhibitions.

Figure 1.1: *Ethnographic "byt photo", 1920-1930* (Courtesy of the Ethnographic archive of Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Studies with Ethnographic Museum, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Sofia)

Through these photos, the museum display was able to represent the current peasant lifestyle, thereby linking the present to the displays. Photos of the Bulgarian *byt* were characterized by a certain candidness. The subjects were usually outdoors, in the midst of an action. If we compare these to photos of costumes, which also featured live models, costume photos were usually awkwardly staged in a studio environment: the purpose of the photo being to display the clothing not the action. [Figure 1.2]

Figure 1.2: *Ethnographic "costume photo" from 1920-1930*, (Courtesy of the Ethnographic archive of Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Studies with Ethnographic Museum, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Sofia)

Taken together, these two types of photos represent the two often conflicting goals of the museum: the accurate presentation and simultaneous sanitation of the peasantry. In truth, had the museum unlimited resources, the display, while still highly sanitized, would have resembled something much closer to Hazelius' Skansen.

As early as 1920, museum workers complained about the dullness of the exhibits. There was a perception that the displays did not do enough to make a connection to the living Bulgarian peasant. One sculptor wrote:

> I think a way must be found to express […] our spirit. [Something must be found] which interests the current and future museum-going generations. Therefore,

> along with scientific meaning, which the museum must have, I think that there must be also a pantheon which preserves the most […] of our history and spirit. […] If images from nature, the most typical for one region or place, are taken straight from our life [*byt*] and arranged in scenes and groups, expressing characteristic activities of these regions or presenting some kind of traditional scenes, this without doubt will be very strong attraction and arrest the attention and interest of the spectators.[102]

Interestingly, by the end of the 1930s, it seems that something approaching this vision was realized, even in the inconvenient rooms of the much reviled museum building.

Khristo Vakarelski, one of two museum curators during the 1930s, includes a snap shot of the Bulgarian museum in 1937 in his autobiography. In some ways, his description is quite familiar. Like others before him, he describes the museum's unwelcoming façade, and foyer and its dark narrow rooms. His narrative leads the reader up a set of stone stairs to the museum's second floor. The walls of the staircase are enlivened with large photos of the Bulgarian *byt,* leading to a series of salons which contained row upon row of men's, women's and children's costumes, some collected as early as the 1892 Plovdiv exposition, others more recently acquired, all labeled and displayed on mannequins inside glass cases. At one end of the building, the collection of Macedonian costumes had weathered the political turmoil of the interwar years and still held its place in the Bulgarian museum.[103] Thus far, his description mirrors the one given by Schütz. Where his account differs, however, is on the third floor.

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[102] TsDA (F-177, O-1, E-671, L-72). (Unfortunately, this letter is very poorly preserved and parts of it are illegible).

[103] Khristo Vakarelski, *Moiat pŭt kŭm i prez etnografiiata* (Sofia: Universitetsko Izdatelstvo "Sv. Kliment Okhridski", 2002), 91.

Schütz described the third floor as containing cases of painted Easter eggs and other ritual objects. Her description is brief and dismissive.[104] Vakarelski, on the other hand, guides his audience up the final flight of stairs, wooden and treacherous this time, to a salon which had been at least partially renovated during the previous decade. In preparation for a grand exhibition of Bulgarian culture at the Ethnographic Museum in Prague, which would take place the following year, the museum had acquired the interior paneling of a cottage in the village of Zheravna.[105] When it proved untenable to ship that building to the Czechoslovak museum, they had decided to relocate the interior to the third floor of the museum. The display included a man and a woman seemingly interacting with their environment. And yet, as Vakarelski clarifies, the necessary scientific distance was maintained. He writes, "The entirety of this display was separated from everything by window glass."[106] Although minor, this adjustment in the display suggests not only the museum's desire to represent the Bulgarian *byt,* but also to keep up with trends in museum science, which increasingly favored *in situ* display.

In fact, that same year, sculptors at the museum filed a petition outlining their hopes for the future premises of the museum—a museum that would be quite different, more along the lines of other ethnographic museums in Europe:

> In this difficult financial situation, the museum committee has long considered the idea of building an ethnographic museum here, in the hope that, in the style of similar museums abroad, the museum will not be a monumental building, as had been imagined before the war, but light and healthy, in the pavilion style, with a

[104] Leslie, *Where East is West,* 52.
[105] This information is corroborated in the archival sources as well. TsDA (F-177, O-2, E-889, L-342).
[106] Vakarelski, *Moiat pŭt kŭm i prez etnografiiata,* 92.

> central building sufficient space for exhibitions, offices, library, workshop, lecture hall etc… [107]

The financial reality of the Depression years meant that this vision was never realized. And as we shall see in Chapter 5, after the Second World War, the display of folk culture fell out of favor with the government. It would not be until the 1960s that anything approaching Skansen's open-air museum would be constructed in Bulgaria. Still, during the interwar years this longing existed: a longing both to keep up with European museum science, and to represent their peasantry in a more animated way that expressed the *living* culture of the Bulgarian people.

These messages were exported as well, not only through foreign visitors like Gladys Schütz, or the journals and photographs sent to international museums, but specifically through the museum's involvement with the state's diplomatic efforts. And it is perhaps in these more ephemeral displays of folk culture that we can see the most variation over time, as the museum set up displays that tried to embody particular diplomatic messages.

ETHNOGRAPHIC DIPLOMACY

The museum participated in many international exhibitions between the world wars, including ones in London, New York, Warsaw, Prague, The Hague, Rome and Helsinki.[108] Additionally, inspired by the success of the 1922 exhibition in London,

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[107] TsDA (F-177, O-2, E-889, L-162).
[108] Popov, 'Istoriia na Etnographski Institut s Muzeĭ'

ethnographic exhibits were arranged in many of Bulgaria's consulates and embassies across Europe. In fact in April of 1923, the following decree was made:

> Approval is given for the opening of museums in the embassies and consulates in London, Paris, Rome, Brussels, Berlin, Warsaw and Prague. Their arrangement is the responsibility of the legation members, with their opening and protection to be the responsibility of the ambassadorial accountant, but the initial supply of the following materials will be paid for by the budget of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Religion:
>
> 1. One man's and one woman's national costume, national embroidery, fabrics and woven carpets.
> 2. Samples of agricultural products, tobacco in leaves, cigars and cut into bits.
> 3. Samples of mineral wealth, rocks of coal and ore.
> 4. Diagrams of production in Bulgaria for assessing the education and occupation of the population
> 5. Geographic map of Bulgaria and various books and albums in foreign languages about Bulgaria.
> 6. Photographs of clothing, old buildings, churches, monuments, peasants at work etc…

The contents of these small satellites of the Ethnographic Museum placed folk culture materials alongside agricultural products and demographic charts. Here we can see expressed messages similar to those of the main museum. Scientific maps and charts intermingled with photographs of contemporary Bulgaria and carefully arranged folk costumes reproduced in the consulates the museum's messages concerning Bulgaria's modernity and her living folk culture.

However, the historical perspective that was present in the museum was not present in these tiny exhibits. Perhaps this was due to the fact that the original design of the museum in Sofia had been settled before Tsar Ferdinand was able to declare full independence in 1908. At that time, the excision of Bulgarian folk culture from Ottoman

culture would have been more urgent. But, perhaps this difference was also due to the fact that the audience in the Bulgarian museum would have been both domestic and foreign, whereas the audience in the consulates would have been predominantly foreign. As the proposal for the exhibit in the consulate in Paris explained, "many important French people, our friends, have for a long time truly wanted to organize something like this."[109] However, the set up of these international exhibits, was not only the desire of friendly foreigners, but also had distinct diplomatic and nationalist importance as well.

In 1923, the curator of the Ethnographic Museum addressed a letter to the Ministry Council regarding the improvement of the exhibit at the *Palais Mondial* in Brussels. The goal of this exhibition, one of several organized by the League of Nations, was to foster cultural interrelation among the member states. Bulgaria's exhibit, according to the letter, was woefully inadequate. This was problematic because of the audience that would be viewing this exhibition. The letter explains:

> [This exhibition] attracts attention of a great number of visitors from all countries. Outside of that, in the museum every year a public lecture is organized on various branches of science, read before a great number of people from Belgium and other countries, and which attract readers from various corners of the cultural world.
> All of our neighbors are already doing a good job building their sections, but the Bulgarian section, according to the following information, is represented only by one hand-drawn geographic map and one piece of paper containing some untrue statistics.
>
> The Bulgarian sections in the *Palais Mondial* and generally in the small museums in our embassies abroad are of huge diplomatic importance.[110]

[109] TsDA (F-177, O-1, E-822, L-38).
[110] TsDA (F-177, O-1, E-822, L-39).

The possible diplomatic importance of these exhibits can, perhaps, best be revealed by comparing two of these international exhibitions. The first, the 1922 exhibition in St. Albans, England, spoke of Bulgaria's chastened position after the war. The second, an exhibition in Helsinki in 1937, displayed Bulgaria's growing nationalist ambitions on the eve of the Second World War.

The League of Nations Exhibition- St. Albans, England, 1922

When BANU [The Bulgarian Agrarian People's Union] came to power in 1919, their leader, Alexander Stamboliski, broke with the traditional foreign policy of the past. Conscious that his plans for the transformation of the Bulgarian countryside would only be possible if all attention and resources were not poured into territorial expansion, he renounced all pretensions to the lands lost in the Treaty of Berlin (1878). Historian John D. Bell explains Stamboliski's decision as follows:

> By renouncing the traditional aspirations of Bulgarian nationalism and by accepting the postwar territorial settlement, he aimed at establishing amicable relations with the surrounding states, thus lifting the curse of militarism and liberating Bulgaria from dependence on a foreign power. Ultimately, he hoped that the common sense of peasants in Eastern Europe combined with their growing political importance would lead to regional cooperation that would bring true economic and political independence to them all.[111]

It was Stamboliski, himself, who signed the much reviled Treaty of Neuilly in 1919, which accepted Bulgaria's territorial losses and agreed to pay hefty war reparations. But on his return, he declared his certainty that the treaty would not be enforced for more than three years. If Bulgaria could demonstrate that she was dedicated to peace with her

[111] Bell, *Peasants in Power,* 184-185.

neighbors, the onerous burden of the treaty would be lifted, and Bulgaria would be allowed to walk onto the international stage as an equal.[112] By 1921, it appeared that his faith was well-placed. That year, Bulgaria was the first of the defeated states to be inducted into the League of Nations.[113] It was in this context that Bulgaria participated in the international exhibition in St. Albans.

The previous year, there had been a charity bazaar in Geneva, which was such a success that the League of Nations decided to reproduce some aspects at a convention in the ancient city of St. Albans, England, just outside of London. According to a report released at the time, "the goal of this exhibition was to present the members of the League of Nations, grouped under one roof, with their most characteristic artifacts in the areas of national art and production […] in order to disseminate the idea of a union of nations coming together."[114] Bulgaria's inclusion in this event was in itself, quite significant.

In typical bureaucratic style, the funds for participating in the exhibition were not released until a week before the final date for the arrival of the objects in London.[115] The curators at the ethnographic museum were in a panic to gather all of the materials in time, but they finally managed to organize everything into seven large crates weighing a total of 425 kg. Train transport was deemed impossible, so the objects were sent by sea. They arrived a week late.

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[112] Ibid, 188.
[113] Ibid, 192.
[114] TsDA (F-177, O1, E-811, L-2).
[115] All information regarding the St. Albans exhibition comes from a report on that occasion to be found in TsDA (F-177, O-1, E-811, L-1-14).

The importance that the Bulgarian government attached to this event is evident, not only in the huge amount of money they must have laid out to get the ethnographic objects to London, but also in the sheer size of the exhibit they proposed to display. In fact, when the objects finally did arrive, they found that there was not enough room in their allotted space to display all that they had brought. Much aggrieved, the Bulgarian delegation approached the organizational committee to ask for more space.

In general, the space within the glass-domed exhibition hall was divided into 40 pavilions, one for each of the member countries. The pavilions were organized alphabetically, which originally placed Bulgaria at space number ten, in one of the smaller pavilions. After the delegation approached the committee, however, Bulgaria was moved into the main exhibition hall, as they had sent far more materials than almost any other country. There was definitely a hint of competition in the air, as other member countries grumbled about the new arrangement. But apparently, when they saw the volume of materials that Bulgaria had imported, all complaints were silenced. The Bulgarian delegation, on the other hand, was well pleased with the result. The author of the report on the exhibition notes: "I would also like to point out at least once the large, one might even say, the largest success that we have had in this exhibition in comparison not only with our neighbors but with other larger nations."[116]

Happily for us, the report describes the Bulgarian exhibit in some detail. On the back wall of the pavilion, hung a portrait of Tsar Boris under the national coat of arms.

[116] TsDA (F-177, O-1, E-811, L-14).

Surrounding his portrait, and on the other two walls of the exhibit, hung an array of rugs and beautifully embroidered objects as well as various musical instruments, the Bulgarian flag and some ornate belts. In a small glass case in front of the Tsar's portrait, crystal vials of rose oil were on display. Along one wall there was a table displaying broad and narrow tobacco leaves grown in the region. Across the front of the pavilion long oblong tables were draped in embroidered table cloths. On these tables, the delegation had arranged photographs of old buildings, folk costumes and life in the Bulgarian countryside. There were also boxes of cigars and a porcelain tea service decorated with traditional folk motifs. In the inside corners, two male folk costumes from the villages of Poarovo and Kuzul-Agach adorned life-like mannequins. Additionally, every day of the exhibition, two living girls strolled about in folk costumes from the villages of Trun and Karbonat.

Despite the report's eager gloating about the relative success of the Bulgarian exhibit, this display should not be read as competitively nationalist in the traditional sense. Instead, what the exhibition attempted to express was Bulgaria's material culture and economic potential. Through the luxurious presentation of Bulgaria's largest exports, rose oil and tobacco, the display tried to portray the value of these agricultural products and thereby to suggest Bulgaria's value as a member state, despite its predominantly agricultural economy. The simultaneous arrangement of folk items not only suggested Bulgaria's unique national culture, but also specifically referred to the Agrarian government's acceptance of Bulgaria's diminished territories. For the villages of

Karbonat and Paorovo are in central east and west Bulgaria respectively, and the village of Trun is on Bulgaria's northwestern border and Kuzul-Agach is on Bulgaria's southeastern border. All of these villages, however, fell within the established boundaries of Bulgaria.

Interestingly, it was not long after this exhibition that Stamboliski signed the Treaty of Niš, which can be said to have affirmed his stance on Macedonia. In specific, the treaty declared Stamboliski's resolution to crack down on the border terrorism which was plaguing Southwestern Bulgaria. The group most directly affected by this resolution, the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization [IMRO], took immediate action. Within in just a few months, Stamboliski had been ousted from power. He fled to the mountains where, despite the attempts of peasants to protect him, he was cornered by IMRO operatives in cooperation with the Bulgarian military. Ultimately he was decapitated and stabbed sixty times. The hand which had signed the Treaty of Niš was cut off.[117] His death marked the end of Bulgaria's more chastened foreign diplomacy, a shift which was very evident fifteen years later at the exhibition in Helsinki in 1937.

The Finnish Exhibition- Helsinki, 1937

Between 1923 and 1937, the political field in Bulgaria became increasingly right-wing and nationalist. Immediately after the 1923 coup, a coalition government came to power, but it was plagued by violence on all sides, particularly from the communists. That government was ultimately overthrown in its turn by a military coup in 1934. The

[117] Neuburger, *Balkan Smoke,* 119.

following year in a counter-coup, Tsar Boris III, who had been reigning nominally since his father had abdicated in 1918, took control of the government. As in much of Europe, the late 1930s in Bulgaria were characterized by a growing nationalism, which manifested itself internally in initiatives to "reclaim" the Pomak [Bulgarian-speaking Muslim] populations, and externally in renewed claims towards Bulgaria's "lost territories."

The exhibition in Helsinki was just one of many such events to which the Ethnographic museum sent materials during the 1930s. With increasing nationalist sentiment across the continent, folk exhibitions seem to have become quite popular. In 1937 alone, Helsinki had hosted exhibitions from Hungary, Romania, Yugoslavia and Estonia.[118] The Bulgarian exhibition had been arranged through the intervention of Dr. Vilia Ioan Maniska, who was at that time a professor of Slavic history and ethnography at the University of Helsinki. His interest had led him to write a work on religion in Bulgarian as well as a tourist brochure.[119]

On the Bulgarian side, the exhibition was organized by the previously mentioned curator of the National Ethnographic Museum, Khristo Vakarelski. In his report on the occasion, Vakarelski would write:

> The organization of this exhibition has its foundation a goal of cultural propaganda to acquaint universally the Finnish nation with Bulgarian national art. Together with this, [the exhibition] displays illustrative, cartographic and statistical materials which underline the geographic, economic, and climatic

[118] TsDA (F-177, O-2, E-888, L-181).
[119] TsDA (F-177, O-2, E-888, L-181).

> character [of Bulgaria] as well as the tourism, resorts and curative mineral waters of our nation.[120]

The audience for this propaganda was ostensibly the ordinary people of Finland, but early on the exhibition was getting attention from high personages, including the wife of the president.[121] Reports on other, similar exhibitions suggest that they generally were attended by all the local dignitaries, including ambassadors from other consulates.[122] So it should be considered, that the "propaganda goal" of this exhibition, as Vakarelski puts it, was received by a wider international audience.

The contents of this exhibition were quite similar to those of the London exhibition of 1922. Sadly, we don't have the comprehensive information about the Helsinki exhibition that we do about the 1922 display, but we do know certain details. For example, we know that the display comprised over 500 objects, including costumes, embroidered fabrics, metal ornaments, wood carvings, kukeri masks[123] and musical instruments. Additionally, the exhibit included informational materials regarding Bulgaria's physical, economic, industrial and ethnographic character.[124] Thus far, we see little variation in the contents of this exhibit. The difference becomes clear, however, when we consider the selection of costumes on display.

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[120] TsDA (F-177 O-2, E-888, L-197).
[121] TsDA, (F-177, O-2, E-888, L-185).
[122] TsDA (F-177, O-2, E-889, L-344).
[123] Kukeri masks are large animal masks made of animal skins and horns, which are part of a festival which meant to scare away evil spirits and inaugurate the beginning of Spring. The inclusion of the Kukeri is rather interesting as they are pagan and quite "primitive looking." However, as with other aspects of village life, their inclusion into the "scientific" display of the museum and the travelling exhibitions allowed them to be integrated into the civilized state.
[124] TsDA (F-177, O-2, E-888, L-189).

In total, there were twelve costumes that accompanied the exhibit: ten women's costumes, and two men's costumes. Immediately, here we see a difference in the sheer number of costumes accompanying what was relatively speaking, a small exhibition. But additionally, in this exhibition, women's costumes are far more heavily represented. These changes are reflections of a general shift that was occurring in the representation of the peasantry. As we explore further in Chapter 2, during the late 1930s the government began to emphasize a more romantic and more feminine image of the rural population. This shift was not limited to domestic representations in newspapers and propaganda, but as we see here, was part of a more general trend. Ultimately, a woman in folk costume would become the image most frequently used to represent the Bulgarian nation.

What is particularly interesting here however, is not just this gender imbalance, but the boundaries of the imagined Bulgaria represented by these 'Bulgarian' folk costumes. The costumes hailed from the villages of Trŭnsko, Karnobat, Gagalia, Omarcheve, Khilentsi, Komareve, Enikioĭ [in the region of Uz. Kiunriĭsko], Enikioĭ [in the region of Dedeagachko] , Kufalovo, Mandŭr, Smilevo and Diviatsi.[125] Of these villages, fully *half* of them fall outside of Bulgaria's official boundaries, in the contested territories of Macedonia and Thrace.

In an article covering the exhibition, the popular daily newspaper *Zora* explained that the goal of the occasion was "to give a clear representation of the cultural, economic and ethnographic *byt* of the nation. […] with examples of the nation's character taken

[125] TsDA (F-177, O-2, E-888, L-202).

from the entirety of Bulgaria's ethnographic boundaries, including Macedonia, Dobrudzha, and Thrace- without, of course making any kind of political agitation."[126] Despite claims of political neutrality, such a display would have been unthinkable in 1922. Additionally, with the advantage of hindsight, we know that only a few years later, the reincorporation of these territories partially inspired Bulgaria's entrance into the war as an ally of Nazi Germany. Consequently, what the display suggests, despite the protestations of the newspaper, is the changing boundaries of the imagined Bulgarian nation on the eve of the Second World War.

CONCLUSION

During the interwar years, a period during which the museum in Sofia is literally falling down, government funds were consistently funneled into efforts to export Bulgaria's folk culture abroad. The expenditure of resources on international exhibitions suggests the perceived potency of folk culture as a symbol of the Bulgarian nation. The carefully laundered and arranged embroideries could speak at one moment of Bulgaria's chastened position, accepting its defeat and the reduced national borders imposed by the Treaty of Neuilly, and at another of growing nationalist ambitions. But unlike similar efforts in other parts of Europe, these exhibitions did not present folk culture as a relic of the past, but rather as a living aspect of Bulgarian culture. A path to modernity which embraced rural culture was definitely part of the Agrarians platform, but this vision was

[126] As quoted in Vakarelski, *Moiat pŭt kŭm i prez Etnografiiata,* 108.

not abandoned when that party fell from power.[127] These ethnographic exhibitions, both in Bulgaria and abroad, represented an attempt to imagine a Bulgaria that could participate in European culture as an equal, without rejecting or denying their native peasant culture.

Of course, whether the message received was that which was intended is an entirely different question. Gladys Schütz, for one, was not entirely impressed with the running of the museum. As she wrote: "Unfortunately, the exhibits are rather badly shewn [sic]."[128] Her impression of the museum seems to have been almost exactly the opposite of that desired by the museum's staff of curators, artists, ethnographers and academics. In her account, not only is the museum poorly run, but the display of exotic objects speak of a backwards, romantic, and barbaric people. Such stuff is fine fodder for a travelogue. And Schütz is, of course, delighted. Her guide, Evdokiia Peteva-Filova would have been less so.

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[127] This continuity will be explored further in Chapter 2. It should also be noted that the Agrarians were not the only political group which tried to envision a modernity reconciled with rural culture. The German Fascists for example, held certain aspects of rural culture up for veneration. However, unlike in the Bulgarian context, their vision of the peasantry as in the Scandanavian museums, was quite nostalgic. Stephenson, *Hitler's Home Front,* 17.
[128] Leslie, *Where East is West,* 51.

Chapter Two: *Nashe Selo*: Co-opting the Peasantry into the National "Group" in the 1930s Press

Figure 2.1: *Nashe Selo, 1941* (Nashe Selo, January 12, 1941)

In January 1941, the weekly illustrated newspaper *Nashe Selo* [Our Village], decided to print their final page in a glorious golden yellow.[129] In general, it was not a color newspaper and indeed, that page was the only one that was not in the traditional black and white throughout the course of the newspaper's twelve year run.[130] According to the statement at the bottom of the golden sheet "*Nashe Selo* arrives every Sunday. It is intended for the village home, for all members of the village family, and it works to address the comprehensive needs and interests of the village."[131] Ultimately, it was an educational newspaper, bent upon modernizing Bulgaria's peasantry.

The image accompanying this worthy text, however, was quite romantic. To be more specific, it was an image, not of a gnarled old villager or of mechanized farm equipment, but of a beautiful young woman. She was clad in a fitted and embroidered bodice with the snowy white sleeves of her blouse fluttering over her elbows. Her dark hair was drawn back by a light-colored kerchief. On her shoulder she balanced a small crate of apples labeled, quite legibly, "Bulgaria." With her shy smile, she was very different from the mannequins in the stiff, formal displays of folk costume found in interwar museums and embassies. She was also very different from the awkward studio photos of girls displaying folk costume or the stark images of peasant working in the fields found in ethnographic displays in the 1920s and 1930s.[132] Instead, she was cheerful, healthy and clean, and improbably wearing her holiday best while harvesting

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[129] 'Nashe Selo, 1941,' *Nashe Selo*, January 12, 1941, 8.
[130] *Nashe Selo* was published between 1932-1944.
[131] 'Nashe Selo, 1941,' *Nashe Selo*, January 12, 1941, 8.
[132] See Chapter 1

apples. If anything, she seemed to be most similar to early 20th century American fruit advertisements, such as the red-bonneted Sun-Maid raisin girl with her basket of grapes.[133]

The golden image of the apple girl makes up the most prominent part of an artistic composite image created from several previously published photos.[134] Young women caring for sheep and harvesting grain stand at her feet. One young woman is smiling and holding a bunch of grapes near her face. The women are all dressed in traditional dress with varying degrees of formality. There are also two male figures in the image, one driving a cart, the other bending over his flock of sheep. These images of peasant men are significantly smaller than those of their fairer counterparts, so that the overall effect of the spread is one of feminine bounty. Unlike the Sun-Maid girl, the apple girl was not advertising her produce, but rather she and the other young ladies were advertising an idyllic vision of rural Bulgaria, a vision that could be brought to reality through reading the weekly illustrated newspaper, *Nashe Selo*. As it turns out, there were many such images in the pages of the newspaper in the late 1930s and early 1940s, images of beautiful young women, frequently in folk costume, surrounded by the bounty of the Bulgarian earth. In fact, this idealistic image of the peasantry was more common than any

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[133] The Sun-Maid Girl dated to 1915. 'The Sun-Maid Girl', <http://www.sunmaid.com/the-sun-maid-girl.html>, accessed 1/17/2013. But it is clear that such images were familiar to the people working on the newspaper, as a similar image was appeared in an issue from July 1932 of a California beauty queen posing with an armful of grapes. 'Iz shirokiia tsvietŭ,' *Nasheto Selo,* July 15, 1932, 4.

[134] The apple girl, herself, first appeared on the back page of an issue from 1939 with no accompanying text. *Nashe Selo*, December 30, 1939, 8.

other during this time period. So the question becomes, why this romantic, feminine image of the peasantry? Why at this time?

As we saw in the previous chapter, the peasantry continued to provide a powerful political symbol even in the aftermath of the collapse of the Stamboliski's Agrarian government in 1923, particularly for the reactionary right.[135] By the early 1930s, the government was beset on all sides by continuous political turmoil, from bombings and assassinations at the hands of both IMRO [Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization] and the communists, to a wave of strikes that paralyzed the tobacco industry from 1930-1931.[136] In comparison, the peasantry must have seemed a comparatively harmless political constituency. The rewards of "modernizing" the peasantry must also have been self-evident. In the periodical press, there was a perception that the peasantry had the potential to bring economic prosperity, national unity, and though not always overtly mentioned, the peasantry also offered a road to political legitimacy in a time of great instability. As we have already seen, ethnographic study and display provided one way that the peasant image was controlled and deployed. The "scientific" study and categorization of their regional populations allowed both educational and political institutions to make claims about Bulgaria's identity as a modern European nation. However, even as these "scientific" images of the peasantry

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[135] Neuburger, *Balkan Smoke,* 128. As discussed in Chapter 1 of this dissertation, the Bulgarian Agrarian People's Union was a political party devoted to the interests of the Bulgarian Peasant. It was also the only peasant party in Europe to come to power. As leader of the party, Stamboliski served as Prime Minister from 1919-1923, when he was brutally assassinated by IMRO supporters who disapproved of his handling of the Macedonia question.

[136] Crampton, *A Short History of Bulgaria,* 102. And Neuburger, *Balkan Smoke,* 124.

proved Bulgaria's modernity, the wretched conditions in which much of the population continued to exist was a cause for anxiety. All sides of the political spectrum seem to have been haunted by the idea that, despite claims to the contrary, Bulgaria was in truth culturally and economically backwards compared to the West, and that it was the very fictionalized and idealized peasantry on display in these "scientific" exhibitions that made them so. Newspapers like *Nashe Selo* emerged in response to this very anxiety.

It seems quite appropriate to look to the press to explore Bulgaria's identity as a modern nation. After all, when Benedict Anderson postulated in his well-known text, *Imagined Communities,* that nationalism was the result of the confluence of several factors, he particularly emphasized the importance of printing and capitalism.[137] Indeed, this focus on print capitalism informs Anderson's entire study, as he explores how novels and the newspapers shaped and were shaped by concepts of national community. In particular, he focuses on the development of a national print language.[138] While, as in the case of Portuguese in Brazil, a national language need not be indigenous, it did need to be shared. As he writes:

> What the eye is to the lover… language—whatever language history has made his or her mother-tongue—is to the patriot. Through that language, encountered at mother's knee and parted with only at the grave, pasts are restored, fellowships are imagined, and futures dreamed.[139]

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[137] Anderson, *Imagined Communities,* 19.
[138] For a good example of how a national print culture developed and was shaped over time, see Roumen Daskalov, *The Making of a Nation in the Balkans: Historiography of the Bulgarian Revival* (Budapest: Central European Press, 2004).
[139] Anderson, *Imagined Communities,* 140.

The rise of this new print culture and language allowed groups of people to conceive of themselves as communities made up of a multitude of unknown but simultaneous lives.[140] In the Bulgarian context, Bulgarian became the language of the nationalist press and one of the determining factors for imagining the borders of Bulgarian nation. After all, the territories outlined at the end of the Russo-Turkish war in the Treaty of San Stephano, and later lost in the Treaty of Berlin, were seen as tied to Bulgaria through their shared language. But one of the issues with Anderson's work is its necessary focus upon the educated urban elite, an elite that, in Bulgaria, was increasingly at odds with the rural majority. What newspapers like *Nashe Selo* (or *Nasheto Selo,* as it was called until 1934) suggest is how the center attempted to incorporate the peasantry into the national body, to imagine a Bulgaria which was both modern and peasant.[141]

Perhaps the best way to think of this process is with Roger Brubaker's concept of "groupness," which is the idea that categories like "the nation" are in continual flux, without firm boundaries. And within these constantly shifting categories of ethnicity or nationality, there are moments of amazing cohesion.[142] During these "events" (like for example the Balkan Wars) the groups temporarily become the conscious, cohesive,

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[140] Ibid, 30.

[141] The Bulgarian "center" was no more homogenous than was the Bulgarian countryside. To say that the press represents the position of the center in regards to the periphery is not to say that the center spoke with one voice. After all, the political fragmentation of the center is well documented. However, a paternalistic attitude towards the peasantry seems to have been common across the political spectrum. So, in some ways there was a great deal of continuity between the different voices attempting to modernize the peasantry. The press however did not represent a single interest group, often even within one publication. After all, as we shall see, while *Nasheto Selo* was a private enterprise, its later incarnation, *Nashe Selo,* was a mouthpiece for Tsar Boris III's government.

[142] Rogers Brubaker, 'Ethnicity without Groups', *Ethnicity without Groups* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 8.

communicating collectivities postulated by Anderson. At times when there is no event, the groups are merely categories which have the potential for events of "groupness." And here, Brubaker interestingly emphasizes that pre-existing conditions like common language are only part of the equation- that active group making is also an essential component of the successful emergence of "group events." He argues that, by differentiating between categories and groups, we can "attend to the dynamics of *group making* as a social, cultural, and political project, aimed at transforming categories into groups or increasing levels of groupness."[143] In this sense, *Nashe Selo* performed the function of "group making". However, the group that was delineated and defined in the pages of the paper, that had the potential to come together in those moments of amazing cohesion, was not always a national one. In fact, before 1934, the group under construction was the peasantry itself.

Nashe Selo was published not in a village but in Sofia. Its goal was not to portray reality but to provide guidelines for the creation of a modern, rational and unified peasantry. At the outset, the paper was intended to be consumed by the peasants themselves. As one advertisement from 1932 explains, "*Nasheto Selo* is a school for self-education. *Nasheto selo* is necessary for all village schools, regional office workers, credit cooperatives, cattle-breeding companies, and other various establishments. […] Peasants! Read and widely distribute the newspaper *Nasheto Selo!"*[144] To this end, the newspaper constructed two images of the peasantry: the peasantry that was, and the

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[143] Ibid, 13.
[144] 'Aboniraĭte se za v. 'Nashe Selo',' *Nasheto Selo,* August 30, 1932, 4.

peasantry that was to be. The content of these images, however, was deeply affected by the political climate of the 1930s.

In 1934, Colonel Damyan Velchev and Colonel Kimon Georgiev staged a coup with the support of the military, effectively wiping out all political opposition and setting up a short-lived totalitarian regime. During this time, the government took complete control of the public press and closed down all official avenues of popular expression, a state of affairs which was to continue after 1935 when Tsar Boris III regained power.[145] Unlike many more overtly political publications, *Nasheto Selo* survived this state intervention, seemingly with only a minor change: that is, the dropping of the definite article from the paper's name to become the more general, *Nashe Selo.* What might seem a minor linguistic change, however, reveals a complete ideological shift in the management of the newspaper.

Bulgarian definite articles are not used exactly as we do in English. So, in general, the possessive includes the possessive word with a definite article attached. In English this might look something like "Our-the village". After 1934, the "the" is removed, so that the connotation of the name is more general. The effect to a Bulgarian speaker is decidedly nationalistic. That is, whereas *Nasheto Selo* suggests a specific village, *Nashe Selo* sounds like it has a national agenda and is speaking about the general Bulgarian

[145] Crampton, *A Short History of Bulgaria,* 116.

village.[146] In light of this change, it becomes clear that after 1934, who the peasant was and who the peasant was to be were shifting.

These shifts can be traced through the pages of *Nashe Selo.* Over the course of the decade, the newspaper's representation of most aspects of peasant life underwent some fundamental alterations. Looking to Roger Brubaker's concept of "group making," I want to suggest that these shifts illustrate a fundamental change in the group being constructed around the peasantry. In the early years of the newspaper, the group under construction was the peasantry itself. After the coup, however, the focus changes to a project which would incorporate the peasantry into the larger national body.

This shifting agenda becomes strikingly apparent when one examines not only how the newspaper portrays the peasant community, but also the content of the newspaper's educational messages and even the way that peasants were graphically depicted. The smiling apple girl of the 1941 newspaper, and her many sisters throughout the publication in the late 1930s and early 1940s, represent the emergence of an increasingly feminized image of the peasantry. Not that male peasants were absent from the newspaper, but their depiction was much rarer, and less positive. Whereas beautiful peasant women became associated with bounty, fertility, motherhood, the nation and folk culture, peasant men became associated with barren fields, poverty, alcoholism and foolishness. In conjunction with the written text, it becomes clear that first the military coalition of *Zveno* and later the authoritarian government of Tsar Boris III imagined a

[146] Special thank you to Dr. Mariana Ivanova at the University of Miami, Ohio, for her insight here.

modernized peasantry which was integrated into the nation but not politically empowered.

IMAGINING A MODERN BULGARIA IN THE PERIODICAL PRESS (1864-1932)

Nasheto Selo published its first issue on a wintry Saturday morning in February 1932, and in doing so it became part of a long tradition of educational publication in the Bulgarian periodical press. The first ever Bulgarian language newspaper, *Zornitsa* [Morning Star], had a strong educational component. Published in 1864 by an American, Albert Long, who was then living in Constantinople, the paper sought to, "elevate the moral education of the Bulgarian people."[147] If we consider Benedict Anderson's emphasis on the importance of the development of a periodical press for the creation of national identity, it is perhaps not surprising that the blossoming of the Bulgarian language press should happen amidst the years of revolutionary upheaval before the formation of an autonomous Bulgarian state in 1878.

However, though common language was undoubtedly important, the educational component of these newspapers should not be overlooked. At any given time, overtly educational newspapers and magazines were only a small portion of the periodical press. However, there was often an educational element alongside a newspaper's general content of daily news or politics. And here is where Roger Brubaker's idea of "groupness" is particularly useful. The active construction of groups played a huge part in

[147] K. S. Charndan, *La Press Bulgare: De Son Origine à Nos Jours* (Paris: Publications Contempraines "Le Danubien", 1933), 21.

Bulgaria's periodical press from the beginning. Often the group under construction was a national one.

In the late Ottoman period, this kind of didactic print was particularly associated with the idea of "National Revival" and became intertwined with the rabble rousing émigré press which sought to incite rebellion and foster nationalist sentiment among the Bulgarian people.[148] For example, the 1867 a journal entitled, provocatively, *Svoboda* [Liberty] sought to "defend the interests of Bulgarians and to set the Bulgarian people on a route to arrive more easily at perfect moral and political independence."[149] Mingled with a stream of bellicose texts, these journals sought to educate and elevate Bulgaria's primarily rural population. The goals of fostering national consciousness and of raising the educational level of the Bulgarian people were indivisible.[150] Not only was the education of the peasant masses essential to their ability to actually read nationalist texts and participate in their 'imagined community', but it was also essential to the creation of a "Modern" Bulgarian culture distinct from its Ottoman past.[151] However, the national group was not the only one under construction.

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[148] The exact dates of Bulgaria's National Revival, that is the period during which the idea of Bulgaria as a nation took root, are disputed, with some tracing the era back as far as the late 18th century, and others situating its beginnings to the era of Ottoman reforms in the 1820s. The time period most commonly associated with the Revival (often called the "Late Revival Period) is from 1862-1878. The Revival is associated with an economic boom and a corresponding boom in arts, crafts, literature and architecture.
[149] Charndan, *La Presse Bulgare,* 22.
[150] It should be noted here, as well, that most of the elites involved in this process were themselves former peasants.
[151] A large part of this project of separation and "modernization" occurred outside the printed type set of the periodical press. As we have seen, part of this project was undoubtedly reclaiming folk culture and coding it as Bulgarian in the inconvenient salons of the National Ethnographic Museum. Urban planning and hygiene campaigns provided another route towards the "modernization" of Bulgarian village culture. Here we must clarify that "nationalism" and "modernization" are concepts which, though frequently

The last decade of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century not only saw a rise in educational opportunities in the countryside, but also a rise in political engagement of the rural population. This opened up the possibility of a different kind of group-making, one based on class rather than national interests. A flurry of Agrarian party-affiliated publications addressing the political interests of the Bulgarian peasantry emerged including, *Selski Vestnik* [Village Newspaper] (1893-1908), *Oralo* [Plough] (1894-1898), and *Seach* [Sower] (1896-1900).[152] A few years later saw the release of inaugural issues of the Agrarian party newspapers, *Selska Probuda* [Village Awakening], and *Zemedelsko Zname* [Agrarian Banner], beginning what would be Bulgaria's turbulent history of peasant political activism, culminating in peasant uprisings at the close of the First World War that led to Stamboliski's "peasant republic."[153] But, although this period saw the height of peasant political power, the Agrarian political voice was but one among many during this period, which saw an explosion of publications catering to particular political interests.[154] Among these newspapers, the interests of the village remained an important topic, not just in the field of political publications, but also in the many special

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intertwined in Bulgaria, were not synonymous. Take, for example, the "modernization' of village culture through hygiene campaigns. In a recent conference paper, Mary Neuburger described how, in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, American missionaries went door to door to instill moral values and hygiene among the village populations. These women felt that "the 'pagan hearth' was their explicit target—washing bodies, clothes, and floors was as important—and indeed integral to washing away the sins of the world." Mary Neuburger, 'Sanitizing Faith: Protestant Missionaries and the Making of Modern Bulgarians', *ASEEES* (New Orleans: *unpublished*, 2012). Yet, very similar work done at that time by government workers, took on a distinctly nationalist valence. (see Chapter 4)

[152] Roumen Daskalov, *Bŭlgarskoto Obshestvo 1878-1939, Tom 2: Naselenie. Obshtestvo. Kultura* (Sofia: Ik "Gutenberg", 2005), 478.

[153] Charndan, *La Presse Bulgare,* 42.

[154] Ibid, 45.

interest papers published during this period. [155] Interestingly, although the peasants no longer held power after the brutal assassination of Stamboliski and the collapse of the Agrarian government in 1923, this pandering to peasant interests in the periodical press remained fairly constant.

Undoubtedly, the central role of peasants in the economy meant that their interests could not be entirely marginalized.[156] In order to garner support, the new reactionary government led by Alexandur Tsankov would not only continue, but would expand the redistribution of land begun by Stamboliski's government and would continue to support the peasant cooperatives and initiatives for agricultural improvement.[157] Although the peasants were pretty much crippled as a political force, they remained an important symbol and cause for groups across the political spectrum. Despite the many issues, which fragmented the political spectrum in the 1920s and 30s, there were some commonalities as well. From the radical Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization [IMRO] to Tsankov's reactionary government and the more moderate Andreĭ Liapchev,[158] these groups all took a decidedly paternalistic view of the peasant grower.[159] The peasantry needed to be cared for and educated, rather like a child. This

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[155] Daskalov, *Bŭlgarskoto obshtestvo 1878-1939,* 482.
[156] Neuburger, *Balkan Smoke,* 119.
[157] Crampton, *A Short History of Bulgaria*, Crampton, *A Concise History of Bulgaria,* 100.
[158] Andrei Liapchev took over in 1926, when continued violent political turmoil (including two dramatic assassination attempts on Tsar Boris III) caused the Tsar to encourage Tsankov to resign in Liapchev's favor.
[159] Neuburger, *Balkan Smoke,* 123, 128-129.

position demanded the continuation of educational newspapers, and, before 1934, left room for "group making" along class lines.

In 1926, in the midst of this political turmoil, at a time when the peasantry was emphatically not in power, an Agrarian educational newspaper *Selo* [Village] wrote:

> The Bulgarian village today is not the same as it was before liberation. […]All is changed and we ourselves change. […] but when we compare the condition of our villages with those in advanced countries, we see there [in the advanced countries] prosperity, but here, [we see] poverty; there, [we see] a humane, rational way of living, and here [we see] a painful and wretched way of living. What does this show us? This shows that we still must work more to improve all aspects of our villages, so that they begin to resemble the villages of advanced countries. […]
> We live in a beautiful and fruitful earth. It could become a paradise. […] Our hardworking nation deserves better fate than our current lot. The newspaper *Selo* is working to create Bulgaria's bright future[…][160]

In other words, although Western-style modernity was generally associated with urbanization and rapid industrialization, it was the field and not the factory which held the key to Bulgaria's position among more "advanced" countries. [161] In the years between the collapse of the Agrarian government and the military coup of 1934, this "alternative modernity" found its voice in the peasant press and provided a basis for the construction of a peasant-based community.

The actual content of these peasant interest newspapers, including both the newspaper *Selo* and the early years of *Nasheto Selo*, was not limited to technical

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[160] 'Zadachitie za nashiia vestnikŭ,' *Selo,* August 3, 1925, 1.

[161] Now, Bulgaria's admiration for the "advanced" West was often more ambiguous than was expressed in this newspaper. Simultaneous with positive images of the West as a model of success to be emulated, there were competing images of the West as exploitative and corrupt, a concept which must have been exacerbated by the stringent terms of the Treaty of Neuilly at the end of World War I. Neuburger, *The Orient Within,* 3.

agricultural advice, but also included what might be termed "group making" articles. That is, every week, several articles emphasized the community of peasants, their relationship to each other, the nation and the outside world.[162] There were actually two groups, which emerged from the short-lived newspaper *Selo.* One was the peasant community; the other was the nation. In *Selo,* modern peasants were the active foundation and builders of the modern Bulgarian nation. As we shall see however, after 1934, this concept of an independent and empowered peasant community is replaced by a national community where the peasantry is symbolically powerful, but politically marginalized.

NASHETO SELO TO NASHE SELO

Between 1932 and 1936, the two offices of the weekly illustrated newspaper, *Nasheto Selo,* were located on Ulitsa Tsar-Kaloian, just down the street from the royal palace and on Ulitsa Karnegi, near what would become fifty years later, the National Palace of Culture (NDK). And it was to these offices, in Sofia's small downtown district, that G. Bŭchvarov came in late 1933. His name had appeared previously as the editor of an issue in September 1932, but it was not until late 1933, that he became a fixture at the newspaper. Not much is known about Bŭchvarov aside from the fact that he took over the reins of the newspaper, serving as the paper's editor-in-chief until the paper closed down

[162] For example, "Let's work for our villages!" from the newspaper *Selo* discusses the importance of a strong unified community of villages in order to have a strong government. 'Da rabotimŭ za nasheto selo!,' *Selo,* October 1, 1925, 1.

in 1944.[163] But his tenure marked a new, more overtly nationalist vision for the newspaper, a change that was only intensified by the political upheaval of May 1934.

The first issue of *Nasheto Selo* was published a year after the election which ousted Andreĭ Liapchev from government. Between 1926 and 1931, Liapchev, a political moderate, had led a coalition government which eventually included elements of the discredited Agrarian party. However, the tenuous union of differing political interests could not withstand the pressures of the world-wide economic depression. By 1931, Liapchev had been voted out of office, and the coalition had begun to disintegrate.[164] It was in this increasingly chaotic political environment, on May 19th 1934, that Damyan Velchev and Kimon Georgiev staged their coup. As part of their bid to consolidate power, the newly formed government banned all other political parties, including the Agrarians, and closed or seized control of the press.[165] The Georgiev-Velchev government was short-lived, however. In January 1935, the tsar, with the support of loyal sections of the military, forced Georgiev to resign, to be replaced by a quick succession of prime ministers starting with Georgiev's fellow member of the military organization *Zveno*, Andreĭ Zlatev. In reality, however, the prime minister had little power and Tsar Boris' personal rule had begun.

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[163] This G. Bŭchvarov is not to be confused with the well-known editor of the Bulgarian Communist Party newspaper, *Otechestven Front*, Gencho Bŭchvarov. Born in 1928, Gencho Bŭchvarov would have been a small child in 1934. In fact, the history of G. Bŭchvarov, editor of *Nashe Selo,* is difficult to track down, as the "G." before his name could quite possibly be the Bulgarian equivalent of "Mr." [Gospodin], and sources on this time period are scant.
[164] Crampton, *A Short History of Bulgaria,* 107.
[165] Ibid, 112.

In the offices of *Nasheto Selo*, the political upheavals of 1934-1935 marked a sea-change in the management of the newspaper. For the transformations which began with the arrival of Bŭchvarov in 1933 were massively accelerated and shaped by the political developments of this turbulent year. As mentioned before, the most immediate change was in the name of the paper, which became *Nashe Selo* in the summer of 1934. But the shifting nature of the paper became even more evident beginning in February 1935, when for some months the paper was careful to print the following informative message on the front page of each issue:

> Printed with permission from the Office of Renewal- State newspaper number 69 from 27 June 1934, approved and recommended by the Ministry of War with decree no. 14 from 16th of August 1932, from the Ministry of National Education with decree No. 1270 from 23 November 1934, and from the Ministry of Interior Work and National Health with Decree No. 419 from January 11, 1935.[166]

Under the surveillance of so many government bodies, *Nashe Selo* began to strongly reflect the increasingly nationalist vision of Tsar Boris' government. Even the primary objective of the newspaper, that is the modernization of agriculture, came to be expressed in distinctly nationalist terms.

Modernizing Agriculture

The education of the peasantry in modern farming techniques was pursued continuously throughout *Nasheto Selo's* twelve year run. The bulk of any given issue of the paper was taken up with articles advising the reader about how to do such things as run a successful beehive, organize a garden, breed stronger cattle, protect the fruit crop

[166] *Nashe Selo,* February 22, 1935, 1.

against frost, or develop a better fertilizer. For example, the second page of the paper from July 15, 1932 included the following articles, "Controlling the milk yield of the Bulgarian grey cow- as the surest means for improving of stockbreeding in our country", "Changing the honeycomb in the beehives", "Concerning hooves", "Selling cocoons" and "The Market for Tobacco."[167] In an issue from February 10, 1940, the second page was filled with articles informing readers about, "What kind of eggs must be impregnated?", "How to produce early cucumbers?", "Seasonal work in the vegetable garden" and "How to propagate lentils."[168] The idea of creating a peasantry which was more productive seems, unsurprisingly, to have been consistently pursued throughout the period.

After all, when listing the objectives of the paper in an advertisement from 1932, the editors claimed that "*Nasheto Selo* primarily provides articles and advice of practical importance for the village, written in quite light and easily understood language."[169] The audience for this advice was the village itself.[170] As the advertisement continues, "*Nasheto selo* answers all economic, health, legal and other questions, given by subscribers, which interest the village. […] Today the most popular newspaper for the

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[167] *Nasheto Selo,* July 15, 1932, 2.
[168] *Nashe Selo,* February 10, 1940, 2.
[169] 'Aboniraĭte se za v. 'Nashe Selo,'' *Nasheto Selo,* August 30, 1932, 4.
[170] Literacy data for Bulgaria in the 1930s is a bit difficult to come by but, according to Sharon L. Wolchik, between 43-56% of women were illiterate in the early to mid-1930s. Sharon L. Wolchik, "The Precommunist Legacy" in *Economic Development, Social Transformation and Women's Roles in Eastern Europe* (Durham, NC, Duke University Press:1985), 33. Additionally, according to the data published on the Blog "Grafut", over 40% of the general population was illiterate in 1934, with almost all of that number living in rural communities. "Bŭlgariia prez pŭrvata polovina na 20 v. statistcheski danni," *Grafŭt: edin diado na neta,* 5/1/2009, https://vascont.wordpress.com/2009/05/01/bulgarie/ accessed 4/23/2013 1:19 pm. However, the vision of the journal was not that each individual peasant would be reading his own copy of the newspaper, but rather that someone (perhaps a village elder) would read the paper to everyone. This is graphically illustrated in a photo from 1939. ''Nashe Selo' vestnikŭ na selskoto semeĭstvo,' *Nashe Selo*, December 30, 1939, 8.

village is *Nasheto Selo."*[171] Over time, this educational sentiment remained, and yet, the motivation for this education became distinctly nationalistic.

On the occasion of the publication of their 100th issue, the editors released the following statement,

> The program of *Nashe Selo* is well-known. Both then and now, it is an unquestioned fact for us that agricultural production is the knot that ties together the economic life of our country. The village and its unbounded fields, its branching valleys and hillocks are an inexhaustible source of material wealth. There, in that village, is the beginning of our nation and race, and there, in the village's spirit and material life, resides the repository of the most cherished vales of our nation, [that sees us through] difficult times of need and slavery. […] The ambition of *Nashe Selo* is to be the primary co-worker of the Bulgarian village.[172]

In other words, the village needed to be modernized because it was the heart of the nation. Whereas early issues focused on the village almost in isolation, after 1934, the focus is on integrating the village into the larger national body, in specific, bridging the rift between the city and the village.

One way to think about this is to return to Brubaker's idea of group making. Before 1934, the group under construction in *Nasheto Selo* was a rural one, tied together by common interests of economy and lifestyle. This is the kind of group making which could come together in the cohesive moments that produced Stamboliski's Agrarian government. After 1934, the borders of that group shifted so that the interests of the peasantry were no longer considered in isolation from the city, but as inextricably tied

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[171] 'Aboniraĭte se za v. 'Nashe Selo,'' *Nasheto Selo,* August 30, 1932, 4.
[172] '100 Broia' *Nashe Selo*, February 14, 1936, 1.

together, and after 1935, this community was further entwined through their mutual veneration of the Tsar.[173]

A Community of Peasants

If peasant households had been economically and culturally isolated before the Depression, they became even more so during the early years of the 1930s. In reaction to the crumbling economy and with no sure return for raising crops intended for city markets, many peasants elected to return to subsistence farming in order to better weather the economic difficulties.[174] Perhaps in response to the increasing isolation of Bulgaria's villages, *Nasheto Selo*, like many educational periodicals before, focused on building a community of peasants. [175] In the beginning, this was not an overtly nationalist project, but rather a project of imagining and affirming that a community of peasants existed, that they were more than a group of isolated and even competing communities.

One way this was achieved was through the weekly publishing of a column called "Our Villages." Each week, this column would select one or two different villages and describe their economy, history and surroundings. So, for example, on June 15, 1932, the column described the village of Oriakhovitsa in the Plevensko region. The article explains, "The village has a population of 4310 people, living in about 670 houses. It is found on the right bank of the river Iskur. A highway passes through the middle of the

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[173] Veneration of the Tsar was not new to the late 1930s. Recall, for example, the central place of a portrait of the Tsar in the St. Albans exhibition in 1922. However, after 1935, this veneration undoubtedly increases in zeal.
[174] Crampton, *A Short History of Bulgaria,* 108.
[175] For example, the newspaper *Selo* published a weekly column called "From Our Villages" which similar to *Nasheto Selo's* column "Our Villages", gave snapshots of villages from around the country.

village, coming from the City of Pleven…" It goes on to describe the ethnic make-up of the village before Liberation[176] (predominantly Turkish), the occupations of the current inhabitants (exclusively agriculture) and other nearby communities.[177] These weekly descriptions moved geographically around the country, outlining the perimeters of the group and filling in its contours.

Another interesting weekly column offered by the paper, entitled "From the Village for the Village" was a kind of "Dear Abby" column in which readers would write in asking for advice about various practical issues such as preparing wood for building, or distilling grapes for making wine. The readers could also submit questions about health concerns to a column entitled "Health Education." Yet another weekly advice column on housekeeping gave guidance on how to make such practical items as home-made shampoo,[178] oven-baked zucchini,[179] and insect poison.[180] These columns emphasized the shared concerns and cultures of the villages across the country, and spoke to chiefly rural interests, or at least to what the newspaper imagined to be the interests of the countryside.[181]

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[176] The city of Pleven, after which the region is named, is located in north central Bulgaria, and would have been part of the autonomous Principality of Bulgaria which was carved out of the Ottoman Empire in 1878, following the Russo-Turkish War.
[177] 'Nashite Sela,' *Nasheto Selo*, June 15, 1932, 2.
[178] 'Domakinstvo,' *Nasheto Selo,* February 5, 1932, 2.
[179] 'Domakinstvo,' *Nasheto Selo,* July 15, 1932, 2.
[180] 'Domakinstvo,' *Nasheto Selo,* June 15, 1933, 2.
[181] As will be discussed further in chapter 4, in the advice they gave, the columnists at *Nasheto Selo* were certainly trying to create a very specific cultural norm which should not be considered in some way "natural" but emerged out of a very specific historical moment.

After 1934, however, the group envisioned by the newspaper shifted to be a more national community with an understandable emphasis on unity. Soon after the coup, in an issue from October 1934, the newspaper exclaimed, "Let the intelligentsia and all those in the villages who have awakened begin to work among the masses bringing an understanding of the renewal of the Fatherland. Let them be sincere bearers of this new era, and let them know that this work of renewal is vital to Bulgaria."[182] The audience for this call to arms was broader than it had been in 1932. When *Nashe Selo,* released its 100th issue in 1936, the editors expressed surprise that the paper had been so successful. They wrote, "When the first issue of *Nashe Selo* came out, we were told from various quarters that it was useless work: the peasantry doesn't like education and the city isn't interested in the village.[…but] *Nashe Selo* has been met with great joy and found a wide reception among all intellectual and national levels [of society]."[183] All levels of society meant not just different rural occupations, but a shared community between the city and the village.

This ideal community is eloquently demonstrated in an article from November 1935 entitled, "When the peasant is well, everything is well":

> Between the city which consumes and the village which produces, there cannot be a chasm. The opposite [must be true]- they are not able to exist- one without the other. The question today is how to break with this [divided] past and to go down a new road, which holds as its most fundamental principle- the unity of the nation. […] Bulgaria is rural and the concerns of the village are the concerns of the prosperity and the greatness the entire Bulgarian nation.[184]

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[182] 'Obshtestena obnova,' *Nashe Selo,* October 7, 1934, 1.
[183] '100 Broia,' *Nashe Selo,* February 14, 1936, 1.
[184] 'Kogato selianŭtŭ e dobre, vsichko e dobre,' *Nashe Selo,* November 16, 1935, 1.

The columnist makes it very clear that the village is of central importance to the Bulgarian economy and that there exists an overlap of interests between the village and the city. However, he is not arguing for peasant political empowerment:

> In the recent past, the inhabitants of the village represented the largest, most demanding, and most cajoled voting clientele for the variegated parties, with the peasantry playing the demagogue. And this is the only way that we can explain, why after half a century of our existence as a free country, the village has remained almost in the same level as before the Liberation.[185]

In other words, when the peasants had power, they ruined themselves economically, and only through unity with the city, could the village move forward.

One way this concept of unity between the village and the city was further emphasized was through literally bringing the villagers to the city. For example, on March 21, 1936, an article with accompanying photographs detailed a series of school trips taken by children from villages in the Rhodope Mountains to visit the capital.[186] The occasion not only provided an educational opportunity to children from Bulgaria's remote regions, but also brought the culture of those regions to the city. In the photographs of the visit to the city, the children are all dressed in full folk costume.[Figure 2.2]

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[185] Ibid.

[186] 'Chrez ekskurzitie, detsata shte izuchatŭ svoiata strana,' *Nashe Selo,* March 21, 1936, 1.

Figure 2.2: *Children of the Rhodope Mountains on Excursion in the Capital* (Nashe Selo, March 21, 1936)

Another photo spread shows peasants bringing their wares to the city market with the caption, "Everyone sells something in the city and buys something for the village," emphasizing the symbiotic relationship between the center and the periphery.[187] Furthermore, the city and the country were very graphically brought together through their mutual esteem for the Tsar, documented exhaustively by the newspaper.

By the late 1930s, the image of Tsar Boris III appeared frequently on the front page of the paper, and news about his family was often incorporated with the other content. For example, the birth of his son in 1938 led to several pages of photographs of

[187] 'Tova stava vseki petŭkŭ na pazaria…' *Nashe Selo,* April 10, 1938, 1.

the citizens of Bulgaria, both urban and rural, coming together in celebration. The jocular peasant carrying a sheep as a gift for the young prince, citizens in festive dress marching along the streets of Sofia, and dance troops making music, all joined together in the same graphic space.[188] Another spread, called, "The Kind Heart of the Tsar", details the monarch's good deeds accompanied by pictures of him interacting with rural and urban inhabitants, here shaking the hand of an aging grandmother, there going over the rubble of a collapsing building.[189] It was as if the Tsar was the benevolent father of the nation, caring for all and providing extra cement to hold this national community together.

In the pages of *Nashe Selo,* the imagined peasant community became first incorporated into the larger national community- a community in which the city and the countryside were to coexist in harmony, and finally part of a national community which was united under the power of the Tsar. And even as the community of peasants described by the newspaper was drastically affected by the political changes of 1934, so to were other aspects of the newspapers' representation of the peasantry. In particular, the cultural education that the "modern" peasant was to receive took on a distinctly nationalist flavor.

Peasant Culture

In the advertisement from 30th September 1932, the newspaper promised more than just technical education. It promised education in "everything that could contribute

[188] *Nashe Selo,* June 26, 1937, 1, 4.
[189] 'Dobroto sŭrtse na Tsaria,' *Nashe Selo,* June 19,1938, 8.

to raising the spiritual culture of the village."[190] In addition to columns offering practical advice about hygiene, agriculture and the household, several columns were designed to provide "cultural education." Culture is, of course, a rather broad term, and the columns warning readers about the ills of alcoholism, spousal abuse, and a filthy home undoubtedly were cultural products. But there were other levels of cultural awareness that the newspaper sought to shape as well. One was an emphasis upon a shared village culture mentioned above, which was not only outlined through the column "Our villages" but also through fictionalized accounts of village life, both through short stories, as in "Morning in the Village" from an issue from February 1933,[191] and through an occasional humor column called "A Little Laughter."[192]

This village culture was not synonymous with "national culture." In fact, few connections were made between the experience of village life and the larger national community. Instead, the newspaper sought to relate the village to the larger world. Except for a lone article about poet and revolutionary Khristo Botev on June 3 1932, the newspaper did not include national narratives or Bulgarian history.[193] On the other hand, about 1/8 of the paper was devoted to "international culture." Every week, there was a

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190 'Aboniraĭte se za v. 'Nashe Selo,'' *Nasheto Selo,* August 30, 1932, 4.
191 'Utro vŭ seloto,' *Nasheto Selo,* May 14, 1932, 4. Other examples include: 'Death of the watermill' [Smŭrtŭta na vodenitsata] from *Nasheto Selo,* September 14, 1933, 4. and 'Life in the Village' [Zhivota na selo] from *Nasheto Selo*, February 5, 1933, 4.
192 For example, 'Malko smiekhŭ,' *Nasheto Selo,* April 2, 1932, 4.
193 'Khristo Botĭovŭ,' *Nasheto Selo,* June 3, 1932, 1. In Bulgaria today, every year on June 2nd at noon, sirens sound across Bulgaria and everyone observes two or three minutes of silence in memory of Khristo Botev.

large column entitled "From the Wide World" which occupied most of the fourth page of this four page publication.

As its name suggests, this column brought bits of interesting cultural facts to the attention of the villagers. There was another column, on page three of each issue, entitled "From Abroad" which gave international political and economic news. "From the Wide World," however, was a column which seems almost entirely frivolous in comparison with the other content of the newspaper. For example, in issue from July 15, 1932, the column is made up of a series of photographs of interesting people including, Stalin, Mussolini, a beautiful Chinese woman, a Turkish Elder, a girl from California who won a beauty contest at a grape festival, an Abyssinian girl, an Indian Shaman, and a Kurdish Tribal Chieftain, each with a short identifying text but no further explanation.[194] Most weeks were more text based, however, reporting on subjects like "the culture of coffee,"[195] "lucky horseshoes,"[196] and "the wonder of nature."[197] The purpose of this column is not immediately apparent.

It might merely have been meant as entertainment, but in an educational newspaper, it must be considered that perhaps there was something almost empowering in this column. Indeed, it is quite reminiscent of the internationalist stance of the Agrarian party. Stamboliski, in particular, forwarded the idea of an international community of peasants, which he called "Green International." Based upon mutual interests, this

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[194] 'Izŭ shirokiia svietŭ,' *Nasheto Selo,* July 15, 1932, 4.
[195] 'Izŭ shirokiia svietŭ,' *Nasheto Selo,* April 2, 1932, 4.
[196] 'Izŭ shirokiia svietŭ,' *Nasheto Selo,* August 30, 1932, 4.
[197] 'Izŭ shirokiia svietŭ,' *Nasheto Selo,* June 15, 1933, 4.

organization would "promote international economic cooperation and international peace."[198] After 1934, when the Agarians were yet again tossed off of the political playing field, this type of education, placing the village within a global cultural context, disappeared. After the coup, the only cultural education that was offered by the newspaper was distinctly nationalist in character.

In fact, the idea of a peasantry which was aware of foreign cultures vanished entirely after 1934. Not that foreign countries were never mentioned, this would hardly be possible with the war looming increasingly on the horizon, but the idea that the peasantry would be educated in foreign histories and customs disappeared, leaving only economic interest. When G. Bŭchvarov took over in late 1933, the column, "From the Wide World" completely changed in content, only containing information about farming techniques from abroad. For example, the issue from October 14, 1933, included such topics as "What Do We Get from Cotton?", "The Effect of Soil Temperature on Insects", "The Origin of Domesticated Donkeys," and "The Origin of Some Fruit Trees."[199] A few months later, by February 1934, the column had disappeared entirely, never to return.

After the upheavals of 1934-1935, a new kind of knowledge was expected of the peasantry. That is, specifically, the paper began to put emphasis upon educating the peasants in Bulgarian folk culture and nationalist narratives. For example, an image from February 22, 1936 depicts folk dancers at a village assembly in the Lomsko region in

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[198] John D. Bell, *Peasants in Power*, 67.
[199] 'Izŭ shirokiia svietŭ,' *Nasheto Selo,* October 14, 1933, 4.

Northeast Bulgaria.[200] Another image from May of that same year shows "rose pickers [who are], according to the old tradition, scattering blossoms on one of their friends to celebrate the end of harvest."[201] Additionally, occasional articles explored such cultural topics as the celebration of Christmas in the Sofia region,[202] weddings in Southern Bulgaria,[203] or recounted well-known folk tales like "the Snow Maiden."[204] Such articles imagined Bulgaria as a unified patchwork of cultures and traditions. More overtly nationalist topics were explored as well, such as the article from 1936 which recounted the life of Bulgaria's patron saint, Ivan Rilski.[205]

The readership was not merely taught about the nation. The newspaper embraced its role as a teacher and organized the newspaper like a well-run classroom in which received knowledge was frequently assessed through a low stakes quiz. [Figure 2.3] Between 1937 and 1938, the paper featured a weekly trivia question on topics such as "What region is this folk costume from?"[206], "Who is this hero of our national Revival?"[207] and "What is the name of Bulgaria's second largest monastery, after Rila Monastery?"[208] Answers were provided every tenth issue.

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200 'Krŭshno khoro na selskiia sborŭ—Lomsko,' *Nashe Selo,* February 22, 1936, 3.
201 'Vŭ dolinata na rozitie,' *Nashe Selo,* May 9, 1936, 1.
202 'Koleda na selo,' *Nashe Selo,* November 14, 1936, 6.
203 'Turskitie svatbi vŭ Kŭrdzhaliĭsko,' *Nashe Selo,* June 3, 1937, 4.
204 'Sniezhnoto momiche,' *Nashe Selo,* December 20, 1937, 6.
205 'Rilskiiatŭ chudotvoretsŭ Sv. Ioanŭ,' *Nashe Selo*, October 26, 1936, 4. This article refers to him as Ioan, but he is generally referred to by the name Ivan in Bulgarian or John in English. Ivan of Rila was a famous hermit, whose isolated cave provided a site for the foundation of the powerful Rila Monastery in the 15th century. Ivan was born between 876 and 880 CE and died in 947 CE. Crampton, *A Concise History of Bulgaria* 19, 40.
206 'Uchastvuvaĭte vŭ konkursa na vestnikŭ 'Nashe Selo,'' *Nashe Selo,* November 1, 1937, 1.
207 'Uchastvuvaĭte vŭ konkursa na vestnikŭ 'Nashe Selo,'' *Nashe Selo,* March 5, 1938, 1.
208 'Uchastvuvaĭte vŭ konkursa na vestnikŭ 'Nashe Selo,'' *Nashe Selo,* February 16, 1938, 1.

Figure 2.3: *What Bulgarian region does this clothing come from?* (Nashe Selo, November 1, 1937)

It was during this period, as well, that the newspaper began to publish ethnographic photos of folk costume. These photos were very reminiscent of the kind of "scientific photography" gathered by the Ethnographic Museum at this time, and may even have come from that source.[209] In these photos, the subject stands unsmiling, in a stiff posture, with a blank or very simple background. The focus of these photos is upon the clothing that the subject is wearing. The captions usually detailed the region the clothing came from, or perhaps the occasion for which it was used. For example, on

[209] Indeed, we know that the museum made a practice of sharing their photos with local newspapers. (See Chapter 1)

March 8, 1935, the paper published a pair of photos on the front page accompanied by the caption "Bulgarian National Clothing."[210] [Figure 2. 4]

Figure. 2.4: *Bulgarian National Clothing* (Nashe Selo, March 8, 1935)

On the left, a woman from the Aitosko region leans against a plain white wall dressed in an intricately decorated apron and embroidered blouse. To her right, in a studio portrait, sits a woman from the Slivensko region in a dark *sukman* [overdress] with her hair tied back by a scarf and a flower tucked behind her left ear.[211] These were clearly different than the typical photos which showed peasants at work in their everyday clothing, and even from the romanticized vision of the peasantry which was also emerging at the same time.

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[210] 'Bŭlgarska natsionalna nosiia,' *Nashe Selo*, March 8, 1935, 1.

[211] Both Aitos and Sliven are located in South East Bulgaria. The closest large city is Burgas on the Black Sea.

The inclusion of this kind of image in the newspaper coincided the on-going export of ethnographic exhibitions to foreign embassies. These collections of folk culture represented part of an effort to positively represent the Bulgarian nation abroad.[212] The purpose of these pictures was very similar to the purpose of the ethnographic museum's foreign and domestic displays in which the different forms of folk costume became symbolic for the colorful tapestry of the Bulgarian nation and as such often reflected the nationalist discourse of the day. For example, photos of Pomak girls in folk costume coincided with attempts of ethnographers to prove the "Bulgarianness" of Bulgarian Muslims.[213] As an article from 1938 explains, "One of the most easily perceived manifestations of national culture is clothing."[214] Over the years ethnographic photos became more and more common until by 1939-1940 it had become a semi-regular feature of the newspaper.

These photographs, articles and quizzes all suggest a distinct change in the cultural education of the peasantry. The need for this nationalist education in the village is expressed in an article from 1934: "Each of us remembers those years spent on the school bench, when we were given the history of our Fatherland. […] But see! Look now! In every corner of our beautiful country we are divided, we are split, fighting each

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[212] See Chapter One

[213] For example, 'Khubavitsa—pomakinia otŭ Devinsko,' *Nashe Selo* November 16, 1935, 1. For more information on policies towards Bulgaria's Pomak and Turkish Muslim communities in this period, see Neuburger, *The Orient Within,* 45-48.

[214] 'Narodnitie ni nosii,' *Nashe Selo,* February 16, 1938, 4.

other, repudiating ourselves, until we have all forgotten our Fatherland."[215] In *Nashe Selo,* representations of folk peasant culture became the heart of its national education for the village, because after all, "in the village's spirit and material life, resides the repository of the most cherished values of our nation."[216] So, where before 1934, the cultural education had tended towards the construction of a "group" founded on class interests which crossed national boundaries, after the coup, the cultural education attempted to incorporate the peasantry into the national "group." It is perhaps not particularly surprising that representations of the peasantry became a source of nationalist inspiration in a largely rural nation. However, what is curious is that after 1934-35 these representations became increasingly feminine.

The Feminization of the Peasantry

The changing image of the peasantry was clearly associated with the shifting political landscape. In the early 1930s, the coalition government worked to protect the peasantry from the worst effects of the Depression by creating agencies to guarantee agricultural markets and encouraging the diversification of crops, and these measures are reported in the pages of *Nasheto Selo.*[217] Perhaps in part because of these stresses, issues of *Nasheto Selo* from the early 1932-33*,* emphasize the difficult lot of the peasantry. This is most graphically evident of course, in the weekly photograph or drawing on the front

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[215] 'Istoriia se povtaria,' *Nasheto Selo*, March 15, 1934, 1. Although this was before the coup, this issue occurs after Bŭchvarov took over as editor of the newspaper, when the paper first started showing a distinctively nationalist orientation.

[216] '100 Broia,' *Nashe Selo*, February 14, 1936, 1.

[217] For example, "Rose culture under the cover of the state" and "Sowing beetroot and cotton". 'Rozovata kultura podŭ zakrila na dŭrzhavata,' *Nasheto Selo,* June 3, 1932, 1, 'Zasievane svekloto i pamuka,' *Nasheto Selo,* May 14, 1932, 1.

page of the paper. Though *Nasheto Selo* called itself an illustrated newspaper, in the first few years it usually only featured one or two photographs or paintings (though there were often additional schematic diagrams accompanying the agricultural advice).

These images almost uniformly occupied the top right hand corner of the front page, and present a grim, if sympathetic, vision of rural life. For example, on July 29th, 1932, this position was taken up with a reproduction of a painting of a distressed peasant family, collapsed in front of a haystack. The father is crouched, his craggy visage creased with exhaustion as he stares at his hands resting loosely on his knees. The mother and young child are huddled together in sleep. The woman's hand is still clutching a sickle; the other is wrapped around the forlorn boy. Below the image the caption reads, "Working Life."[218] [Figure 2.5]

Figure 2.5: *Working Life* (Nasheto Selo, July 29, 1932)

[218] 'Trudenŭ zhivotŭ,' *Nasheto Selo,* July 29, 1932, 1.

Though more dramatic than usual, this image is typical of the stark representations of peasant life that dominated the paper during this time period. Usually the major illustrations in the paper emphasized the intense and exhausting labor associated with the peasant economy. Additionally, this image, as do several others from this period, presents a picture of shared labor with men and women striving together, whereas in later years they would be seen mostly in isolation from each other.[219] The paintings reproduced by the newspaper for the reader particularly emphasized this intimate view of rural hardship. Photographs, on the other hand, were usually taken at a distance, showing the peasants in the midst of labor.

One such photograph, from June 3, 1932, shows men and women scything wheat, their bent figures mere blotches on the grey horizon.[220] In another from May 14, 1932, the lone figure of a shepherd stands in an immense pasture tending his flock.[221] [Figure 2.6]

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[219] For example, 'Na nivata,' *Nasheto Selo,* July 15, 1932, 1.
[220] 'Zhŭtva,' *Nasheto Selo,* June 3, 1932, 1.
[221] 'Ovcharŭ otŭ Sofiĭsko,' *Nasheto Selo,* May 14, 1932, 1.

Figure 2.6: *Shepherd from the Sofia Region* (Nasheto Selo, May 14, 1932)

The framing of this photo is not at all romantic. The pasturage seems quite barren, and though we cannot make out the shepherd's facial expression, his stance, looking over his shoulder at the camera, seems to be more one of annoyance than anything else. In both of these images, the photographic lens is so distant from its subject that all individuality is lost. Instead, the focus is not upon the peasant, but upon the peasant's toil. Furthermore, the moment that is documented is not the moment of completion, but a moment in the midst of backbreaking, exhausting labor. Not all photos were so grim in outlook, of course. One from July 1932, with the caption "Nice work when it is rewarded," shows a young woman in traditional dress holding a bunch of wheat over her shoulder. Her attitude, however, is reminiscent of the shepherd's and is decidedly not coy or enticing. [Figure 2.6]

Figure 2.7: *Nice work when it is rewarded* (Nasheto Selo, July 29, 1932)

Rather, she is dwarfed by her enormous bundle and her face seems to be asking how long she will have to stand there.[222] The accompanying text reflects this dour representation of the plight of the peasantry.

For example, in addition to articles reporting government initiatives to ameliorate the condition of the countryside, *Nasheto Selo* featured every week several descriptive articles which described the dire situation in the countryside. Articles such as "The difficulties of the Bulgarian Peasantry"[223] and "In search of food" [224] and "How long will

[222] 'Priatenŭ Trudŭ,' *Nasheto Selo,* July 29, 1932, 1.
[223] 'Zatrudeniiata na bŭlg. zemledielski stopaninŭ,' *Nasheto Selo,* May 14, 1932.
[224] 'Tŭrsene na khrani,' *Nasheto Selo* May 7, 1932, 1.

things be like this?"[225] frequented the front page of the paper. Even the "do it yourself" columns, like "Housekeeping," which gave practical advice on how to "make do", emphasized scarcity in the village.[226] However, after 1933, these articles all but disappear. It is not that the situation in the countryside was drastically improved, but rather that instead of reporting on the problem, the newspaper exclusively focused upon how the government was resolving the issues. In this vein the second page of the paper was regularly devoted to "The National Economy" through 1937, which in part sought to detail the government's economic initiatives and how they affected the countryside.[227]

Even the column "Housekeeping" changed from giving advice about how to make shampoo and bug poison to exclusively giving advice about how to cook various "everyday" recipes. This shift is not as insignificant as it might first appear. After all, what is considered "everyday" food varies significantly from culture to culture and class to class. So in this sense, these articles can be seen as a kind of "group building" which served to create a sense of shared culture. The recipes are full of cultural references like, "The preparation of pickled cabbage usually happens between Dimitrovden and Arkhangelovden," which appeared as part of a sauerkraut recipe in 1936. [228] But furthermore, as Wendy Bracewell points out regarding cookbooks in socialist

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[225] 'Do kogato shte vŭrvi vse taka,' *Nasheto Selo*, May 29, 1933, 1.
[226] Consider the need to make rather than buy soap and shampoo. However, it should be considered that this "need" is reflective not only of scarcity but also of the hygienic norms which the newspaper was trying to introduce to the village. Though perhaps today soap seems like a basic necessity, at the time it would not have been so, and probably purchasing soap would have seemed a needless luxury- especially when it could be made from household ingredients.
[227] For example, 'Narodno Stopanstvo,' *Nashe Selo,* October 7, 1934, 2.
[228] 'Domakinstvo,' *Nashe Selo,* November 16, 1936, 2.

Yugoslavia, "cookbooks helped legitimate the system that put all this bounty on the table."[229] By explaining how to cook sauerkraut or pork or cakes, there was a presupposition that the readers were not on the verge of starvation, that there was a steady improvement in village life, if only on the pages of the newspaper. This sunnier vision of the village life is dramatically present in the newly romantic photos that characterized the vast majority of the images throughout the rest of the newspaper's run. At times these images took second place to images of the Tsar, but their presence was relatively constant.

Starting in late 1933, when Bŭchvarov took over as editor-in-chief, the pictorial representation of the peasantry became decidedly less grim, even though the economy continued to suffer. At first, this romantic image was not exclusively feminine. Take for example the image from March 1934 of an "Idyll in the Native Balkan Mountains."[230] [Figure 2.8]

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[229] Wendy Bracewell, 'Eating up Yugoslavia: Cookbooks and Consumption in Socialist Yugoslavia', in *Communism Unwrapped: Consumption in Cold War Eastern Europe,* ed. Paulina Bren and Mary Neuburger (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 170.
[230] 'Idiliia vŭ rodnitie balkani,' *Nasheto Selo*, March 15, 1934, 1.

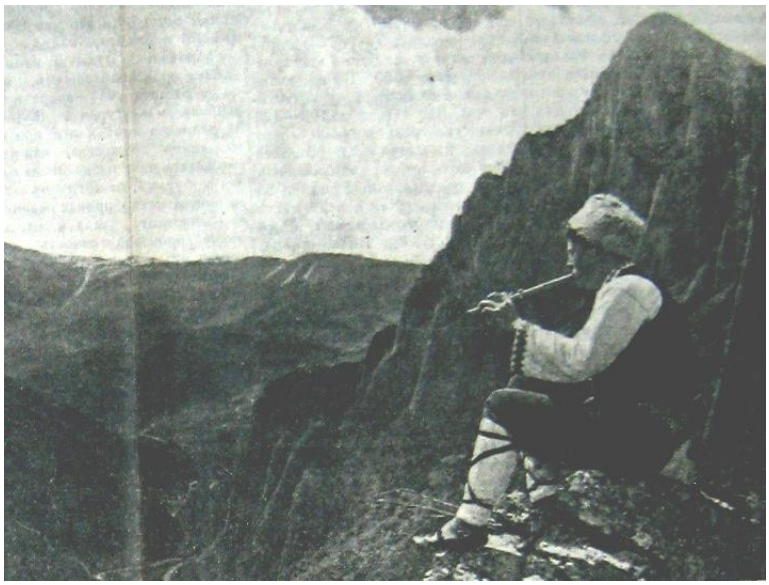

Figure 2.8: *Idyll in the Native Balkan Mountains* (Nasheto Selo, March 15, 1934)

In this striking photo, a young man is perched on a rocky outcropping, playing the pipes. Behind him, dramatic cliffs plunge into a river valley, with rolling mountains stretching out into the distance. His white embroidered blouse and light fur hat shine in the midday sun. The man's clothing codes him as a peasant and his position within the frame is a powerful one. He is literally above everything. This image could not be more different from the image of the lone and slightly hostile shepherd of 1932. The image connects the peasant man to Bulgaria's natural beauty, to its folkloric traditions and stirring history. After 1934, however, only peasant women would be presented in such a romantic manner. Though increasingly rare, images of men did not entirely disappear from the pages of the newspaper, but after 1934, images of the peasantry became gender differentiated. In these photos and illustrations women became increasingly associated with bounty and tradition, and men came to embody the problems and hardships of the

peasantry. In some ways, there is a lot of continuity between how peasant men are represented after the 1934 coup with how they were represented in the stark images of 1932-33.

This continuity is particularly evident in the paper's occasional comic strips. The male peasant was unsurprisingly a mainstay of village humor. Typically, he was represented as a foolish, violent, small minded fellow with a taste for alcohol. Take for example a comic from May 1933, "A meeting between small communities." [Figure 2.9]

Figure 2.9: *A Meeting of Small Communities* (Nasheto Selo, March 29, 1933)

In the first window of the comic, two men meet each other in friendship, jovially shaking hands. This is labeled "The first phase." The second window shows us that things have gone quickly south and they are now beating each other with sticks. This is labeled "The second phase."[231] Some years later, in 1940 another comic was published called "Revenge Medicine." [Figure 2.10]

[231] 'Slivanie na malkitie obshtini,' *Nasheto Selo,* March 29, 1933, 1.

Figure 2.10: *Revenge Medicine* (Nashe Selo*,* October 6, 1940)

The action of this cartoon follows a mustachioed peasant as he gets staggeringly drunk. He stumbles home with his still lit pipe tucked into his wide cloth belt and his fur hat balanced precariously on his head. When he arrives at home he collapses, only to be rescued by his angry wife who jumps up and down on his belly to get all of the liquor out.[232] Neither comic paints a particularly positive picture of the male peasant, and both are undoubtedly drawing from a long tradition of humor at the expense of the peasantry. But what is interesting is that, aside from these negative, if humorous, images, the male peasant is rarely portrayed after 1934, certainly in comparison to the female peasant. And when he is, it is a very specific image of the male peasantry which emerges, which is neither intimate nor romantic.

Like the image of the shepherd from 1932, photos of male peasants after the coup emphasize the man's occupation rather than the man himself. For example, on June 3 1937, we see an image of a man processing his crop. The photo is quite pragmatic in

[232] 'Otmůstitelno lŭkarstvo,' *Nashe Selo,* October 6, 1940, 3.

composition. The man is intent on his work, which is the focal point of the photograph. The accompanying text reads, "Primitive machine for hemp [processing] in the Pazardzhishko region."[233] [Figure 2.11]

Figure 2.11: *Primitive Machine for Hemp* (Nashe Selo*,* June 3, 1937)

Another small image from October 26, 1936 shows a man and a child leading a team of oxen through a barren field with the caption, "Autumn Plowing."[234] [Figure 2.12] The

[233] 'Primitivno obrabotvane na konopa vŭ Pazardzhiskho,' *Nashe Selo,* June 3, 1937, 1.

photo is taken from a distance so no details of face or clothing are visible. Certainly similar images of male peasants existed before the coup, alongside both the romantic images of late 1933 and the intimate paintings of the previous year. But after the coup the images of the peasant male evoked neither romance nor pity.

Figure 2.12: *Autumn Plowing* (Nashe Selo*,* October 26, 1937)

This representation of the male peasantry is not exactly denigrating, but it is not glorifying either, and it is certainly not empowering. According to these images, the

[234] 'Esenna oranŭ,' *Nashe Selo,* October 26, 1936, 4.

peasant man is his labor. This depiction of the peasant male was very different from the graphic treatment of the peasant woman.

Compare, for example, this pragmatic representation of peasant men with a pair of images from October 18, 1935 entitled, "The blessed fruit of two mothers- Mother Earth and the peasant woman."[235] [Figure 2.13]

Figure 2.13: *The Blessed Fruit of Two Mothers* (Nashe Selo*,* October 18, 1935)

These images feature a pair of young women in folk dress, each with the bounty of the harvest resting on her shoulder near her face. Unlike the men, the girls smile directly at the camera, their lovely faces and traditional clothing easily visible. Photos of a beautiful peasant maid or as the newspaper called her, a *khubavitsa* [a beauty] became by far the

[235] 'Blagosloveniiatŭ plodŭ na dvetie maĭki- zemiata maĭka i zhenata selianka,' *Nashe Selo,* October 18, 1935, 1.

most common image of the peasantry after the coup.[236] The composition of all of these photos was astonishingly similar. As in the photo of the apple girl from 1941, they all feature a lovely young woman smiling at the camera. Usually she is holding some crop near her face, be it roses, wheat, or grapes. The framing of the photo is always quite close and the emphasis is upon the young woman's beauty and the bounty of the land.

There was some variation of course. At times the girls were actually photographed supposedly in the midst of harvest. A photo spread ostensibly about grapes from October 7, 1934, exclusively features girls picking and processing grapes. But unlike the photos of peasant men at work, the girls in these photos are beautifully attired, uniformly young and comely, and mostly looking at the camera.[237] [Figure 2.14]

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[236] The paper actually uses this term several times, for example 'Khubavitsa—pomakinia otŭ Devinsko,' *Nashe Selo,* November 16, 1935, 1.
[237] 'Silata na grozeto,' *Nashe Selo,* October 7, 1934, 4.

Стр. 6. НАШЕ СЕЛО Брой 57

Ямте грозде, пийте гроздовъ сокъ. Гроздето е здраве, сокътъ — кръвь

СИЛАТА НА ГРОЗДЕТО

Въ древни времена е гледано на гроздето като „Плодъ на живота"... И действително, до днесъ не е открытъ другъ плодъ по съставъ, вкусъ, ароматъ, питателность и хранителность равенъ на него. Гроздето, въ нашия организъмъ и се влива въ кръвната система, като жизненъ елексиръ, като естественъ серумъ.

Днесъ новороденото дете храним съ гроздовъ сокъ, на родилката запълваме изгубената кръвь съ гроздовъ серумъ, на рековалицентни отъ най-остри страдания съ гроздовъ сокъ надаваме нови възстановителни сили; на изтощения и отпадналия чрезъ „плода на живота" даваме жизнерадостенъ видъ.

Ето защо, гроздето минава като първостепененъ продуктъ за изхранване. Днесъ, когато цѣлъ свѣтъ се гърчи и друса отъ свѣтовната криза и се отразява върху най-сжществената физиологическа нужда — храната; днесъ, когато се констатира, че поради кризата човѣчеството се храни по-малко и е поставено подъ моралевъ и физически гнетъ; днесъ, когато гроздето е най-евтиния продуктъ за изхранване на населението, и и е тъй чистъ съ кръвта си четиристотинъ милиона килограма грозде, а българското дете гладува, гризе сухъ комать подсладенъ съ лукъ или чесънъ. А какво ще стане съ милионитѣ килограма грозде? — Тѣ ще бѫдатъ обърнати на лопъ горивенъ материалъ, който ще създава само нищета, злочестие и израждане.

Бащи и майки, ний сме констатирали въ училището, че вашитѣ деца гладуватъ — тѣ не вематъ подходяща храна. Днесъ гроздето е първостепения хранителенъ продуктъ и е най-евтинъ.

Единъ работникъ за 24 часа има нужда срѣдно отъ 3,500 единици топлина (калорий). Три килограма грозде даватъ 2,400 калорий и 500 гр. хлѣбъ—1350 калорий.

Осигурете съ гроздето изхранването на вашитѣ семейства за шесть месеца. Ние сме страна на плодоветѣ. Ни единъ плодъ не трѣбва да гние на земята. Сушени или прѣсни ябълки, круши, сливи, като се варятъ съ ширата, се получава най-добритѣ мармалади — петмези. Храната осигурява хармоничното физическо и душевно развитие на човѣка. Преди всичко осигурете изхранването на челядьта си, за да имате дееспособно семейство.

Д-ръ К-овъ

1 кгр. грозде съдържа около 750 грама кристални води, 200 грама гроздова захаръ. 10 грама бѣлтъчни вещества, 5 грами соли, ароматни вещества и др.

Гроздъ, който тежи 50 кгр.

Историята на лозата

Винената лоза е едно отъ най-старитѣ културни растения. Нейното прѣотечество се намира на далечния Изтокъ въ земитѣ между Кавказъ и Хиндукушъ, въ Азия. И днесъ расте още винена лоза по южнитѣ склонове на Кавказъ въ голѣмо количество и въ огромно развити стебла, които очудватъ човѣка. Въ тамошнитѣ гори се срѣщатъ стари лозови чукени отъ по нѣколко стотинъ години, чиито размѣри сж повече отъ метръ, и едва могатъ да ги обгръватъ трима човѣци.

Споредъ Библията Ной пръвъ е засадилъ винената лоза на планината Арарать и тамошнитѣ арменски калугери твърдятъ и днесъ че тѣхнитѣ градини винени лози произхождатъ още отъ онова време.

Финикийцитѣ, като носители на културата на стария свѣтъ сж пренесли винената лоза въ своитѣ колонии които сж били пръснати по брѣговетѣ на Средиземно море, отгдето е пренесена въ Гърция, в по-нѣсно отъ Гърция въ Ивлия. Тамъ се е развила много добре винената лоза и се е отглеждала като обивно растение по стеблата да дърветата.

Когато римлянитѣ навлѣзли на Балканския полуостровъ и го превзели окончателно къмъ 196 год. слѣдъ Христа, тѣ намѣрили въ Тракия развито лозарство, а въ Дакия негде изкоренено. Тѣ като видѣли, че населението било запознато съ културата на лозата, започнали наново да засаждатъ лози, като довеждали и своитѣ роби да ги обработватъ.

Въ 282 г. сл. Хр. императоръ Продъ засилилъ културата на лозата и е покрилъ хълмоветѣ на Мизия съ лози. Отъ това време лозарството се развило все повече, въ какво състояние сж го заварили и българитѣ, когато сж дошли въ сегашна България.

За голѣмото развитие на лозарството тогава ни говори закона на Царь Крумъ, съ който запрѣщалъ да се изкоренятъ лозята. Легендата говори, че слѣдъ Крумовия законъ лозарството повече се развило.

Молбата на гроздето

Азъ съмъ чуденъ плодъ. Природата е насипала въ мене толкова щедрости! Въ малкия ми плодъ има и ароматъ и вкусъ и сладость и цѣлебность. Какво чудно съчетание, какъв разумна комбинация!

Въ усилиятa ми, намръщения погледъ се стоплова, разгѣленитѣ се укротява, ожалтиранитѣ утихва, умореннитѣ се освежава, болнитѣ се приподвигнатъ.

Азъ нося палмата на първенството между плодоветѣ: природата е съчетала у мене баграта съ аромата, сладъкъ е вкуса съ вкуса, чародейкята на лѣкъ, съ елексира на живота.

Царственъ и царствующъ си остава моя плодъ.

Колко апетити и колко ряще се протягатъ при моя видъ!

Колко сладость, колко доволство пълнятъ погледа когато ме ядятъ!

И все пакъ, моя плодъ не достигъ до всичкиѣ: едни не ме ядятъ защото нѣмятъ, други — защото не могатъ да купятъ, трети — защото не знаятъ, че трѣбва да ме ядятъ, четвърти — защото не искатъ да ядятъ и пр.

Човѣче, моя плодъ трѣбва да стане народенъ хлѣбъ, национално ядене. Направи всичко възможно той да се яде отъ всички: отъ бедни и богати, отъ млади и стари.

Произхода на „Афузъ Али"

Отечеството на сорта грозде Афузъ Али е Мала Азия. За времето когато е пренесенъ у насъ, за произхода на името му, свѣдѣнията сж следнитѣ: преди 80-90 години, Махмудъ бей отъ Червена вода, Русенско, голѣмъ любитель на грозде, повикалъ отъ Бруса единъ специалистъ — лозарь, крѣбнв Афузъ Али, за да обработи лозето му, находяще се до р. Лонъ, край гр. Русе, което лозе е известно на русенци и сжществува досега. Арабинътъ донесълъ отъ Бруса единъ сортъ грозде, който по величество превъзхождалъ всички други мѣстни грозда. Въ Бруса той се наричалъ „бейрутъ хурмаса" (бейрутска фурма). Това грозде се харесало много на бея и той го наредилъ на името на арабина, въ знакъ на благодарность за получения отъ него цененъ даръ. Отъ тогава, тоя сортъ грозде носи името Афузъ Али.

Чековата сметка на вестника е 1262.

Figure 2.14: *The Strength of Grapes* (Nashe Selo, October 7, 1934)

Other photos feature girls working on various agricultural tasks such as bundling tobacco leaves or washing vegetables together.[238] But the framing of these photos is always quite close in, so that one is left with the impression that in Bulgarian villages there was not a child, elderly person or young man to be found. Instead, the countryside seemed to be peopled almost exclusively by beautiful young girls dressed at all times in their holiday best.[239] [Figures 2.15 and 2.16]

Figure 2.15: *Girl with Grapes* (Nashe Selo*,* October 6, 1940)

[238] For example, 'Manipulatsiia na tiutiunie vŭ s. Rila, Dupnishko,' *Nashe Selo,* February 1, 1940, 1 and 'Selska sedianka vŭ s. Pordimŭ,' *Nashe Selo*, February 10, 1940, 1.
[239] 'Grozdobera shte zapochne vŭ skoro vreme,' *Nashe Selo,* October 6, 1940, 1 and 'Tova razhda iugo-zapadna Bŭlgariia,' *Nashe Selo,* September 22, 1940, 1.

Figure 2.16: *Girl with Apples* (Nashe Selo*,* September 22, 1940)

Indeed, one of the interesting aspects of the *khubavitsa* is that, with a few exceptions from 1936-1937, she was almost always attired in folk dress, and even issues which figured a girl in "urban" clothing also featured ethnographic photos of village girls in folk costume.

The relationship between folk culture and peasant culture is a tricky one. Obviously, the terms themselves give a sense of uniformity and self-awareness which certainly the newspaper hoped to foster, but undoubtedly oversimplifies lived experience. Perhaps the best way to think of it would be that folk culture was the timeless, unchanging national Bulgarian spirit within the village, whereas peasant culture was more mundane lived experience, aspects of which were in constant need of improvement. So when the newspaper claimed that its purpose was to improve peasant culture, it did not refer to folk arts, crafts or music. However, at the same time, in the 1920s and 1930s, these two cultures were inextricably intertwined in the national imagination. Even though the newspaper agonized over the need for the elevation of the villages' spiritual and

moral culture, it also saw the village as the final shelter for Bulgaria's national spirit, and no where was this more graphically illustrated than in the wearing of folk costume. Although the *khubavitsa* did not always wear folk costume, when she did, she simultaneously represented the nation and the village. The emotive and political power of this image becomes particularly evident as the everyday practice of wearing folk costume began to wane.

In 1936, the paper had claimed that "The function of our newspaper is to give a true picture of life in the village."[240] But we know that by the mid-1930s, folk costume was falling out of daily use in the villages. As one columnist explained in 1938, "As with everything, folk costumes also are subject to the law of diminishment and are everywhere replaced by urban-European clothing- pants for men, petticoats and store-bought dresses for women."[241] And yet, though in reality folk costume was increasingly something brought out only for holidays, there remained within the pages of *Nashe Selo* a stubborn insistence on a romantic image of the *khubavitsa* in her best folk dress.

Part of this may have come from anxiety about the disappearance of Bulgaria's national heritage, and the loss of individuality in the face of the powerful cultural influence of the West. And part of it may have been addressing local fears of losing their identity as peasants. In an issue from 1935, Am. Terziev from the village of Rish, near Shumen in Eastern Bulgaria wrote a prolonged diatribe against the evils of European fashion. According to Terziev, European fashion was creating an economic and spiritual

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[240] '100 Broia,' *Nashe Selo* February 14, 1936, 1.
[241] 'Narodnitie ni nosii,' *Nashe Selo,* February 16, 1938, 4.

crisis in the village. He writes, "Who is going to educate the youth of today, so that they know the national, folk value [of traditional clothing, and who will help them] to come out of the clutches of this thief [European fashion]? Is not this heavy and critical fashion situation [in which the young people are no longer wearing traditional clothing] the cause of the growing crisis in the village?"[242] In other words, the loss of traditional dress was problematic not just because all of the young people were spending their money on new clothes, but also because in doing so they were losing their connection with the nation.

Throughout the 1930s and 1940s, the continued representation of peasants in folk costume symbolically tied the peasantry into the national community from which they had been politically excluded, incorporating them into the national "group." Indeed, through repetition in newspapers and in other forms of propaganda, as we shall see in Chapter 3, this image of the beautiful peasant girl with her harvest became one of the most common personifications of Bulgaria. But the representation of these peasants as almost exclusively female must also be considered. Part of the increasing feminization of the peasant image may be related to the fact that women's folk costumes were so lovely and tended to be more ornate than men's costumes. But the existence of images of the *khubavitsa* in urban clothing suggests that there was more to it than this.

In 1934, when the newspaper changed its name, it also changed its format. The look of the front page changed with larger photos and fewer, longer articles. The headings to each page became more ornate. But there were also some new columns,

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[242] 'Modata kato prichina za podsilvane krizata vŭ seloto,' *Nashe Selo,* November 16, 1935, 3.

specifically the inclusion of a page devoted to the interests of peasant women. Now, before this period, the needs of the household and the needs of the field were intermingled, with no clear indication of gender divisions. This new page, which ran from 1934-1935, was devoted to peasant women and included advice on cooking and housekeeping. Additionally, it highlighted the peasant woman's most important role: motherhood. Almost every week this page featured a photo or a drawing of a mother and child, and affecting stories about motherhood with titles like "The Heart of a Mother."[243] Even after the column was discontinued, articles and stories about motherhood appear with noticeable regularity.[244]

What is particularly interesting, here, is the connection that was made between the peasant mother and the Bulgarian land. This relationship was evident in the photo, discussed previously, from October 18, 1935 with the caption, "The blessed fruit of two mothers- Mother Earth and the peasant woman."[245] The girls in the photos are presented as mothers of Bulgaria's bounty, just as much as the land is. This connection was also reinforced continually by articles in the paper sporting titles such as, "The Earth is Our Mother"[246] or, "Two Mothers- The earth and the woman."[247] In these articles, the peasant mother becomes almost the human manifestation of Mother Earth. She is associated with bounty, and fertility. She is the symbolic mother of the Bulgarian nation. As one article,

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[243] *Nashe Selo,* 2/22/1935. Issue 73. p. 4

[244] For example, 'Maĭki,' *Nashe Selo,* February 26, 1936, 3, 'Maĭka—selska khronika,' *Nashe Selo,* October 16, 1936, 3, 'Seliankata kato maĭka i domakinia,' *Nashe Selo,* November 2, 1936, 2 and 'Zashtita na selskata maĭka,' *Nashe Selo*, March 2, 1938, 4, to name a few.

[245] 'Blagosloveniiatŭ plodŭ na dvetie maĭki,' *Nashe Selo,* October 18, 1935, 1.

[246] 'Zemiata—maĭka' *Nashe Selo* ,October 7, 1934, 4.

[247] 'Dvetie maĭki—zhenata i zemiata,' *Nashe Selo,* October 18, 1935, 3.

entitled "In defense of the village mother," writes, "The care of the village mother protects the success of the Bulgarian nation."[248]

This concept of *Maĭka Bŭlgariia* [Mother Bulgaria] was not unique to *Nashe Selo*. Indeed, it was in 1935 that well-known Bulgarian sculptor Svetoslav Ĭotsov completed his striking World War I monument "*Maĭka Bŭlgariia"* in the center of Veliko Tŭrnovo.[249] But the emphasis upon the peasant mother's connection to the nation, rather than the peasant father's, is interesting. After all, the most common word for "motherland" in Bulgarian is *"otechestvo"* literally meaning "fatherland," and certainly a male personification of the nation is not unheard of.[250] However, it must be considered that this feminization of the peasant image, with its strong ties to ideas of nation and tradition, is an expression of a specific political moment in the mid-1930s. This is not to say that the idea of *Maĭka Bŭlgariia* was new to this time period, but rather that it was particularly well suited to the era of Tsar Boris' personal rule.

Considering the political backdrop to this newspaper, with the Tsar searching for legitimacy without reenergizing the peasant political movement, it becomes clear that the glorification of the peasant woman answered both of these needs. After all, in a patriarchal society, a woman can be cherished and protected, but she is not competing for dominance. In Bulgaria, this was literally the case as well, for, while the franchise was

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[248] 'Zashtita na selskata maĭka,' *Nashe Selo*, March 2, 1938, 4.
[249] Veneta Ivanova, *Bŭlgarska monumentalna skŭlptura: Razvitie i problemi* (Sofia: Bŭlgarski Khudozhnik, 1978), 64.
[250] Consider Grandfather Czech, for example.

extended to women in 1938, women did not get full voting rights until after the war.[251] So, the veneration of the peasant woman was "safe" and allowed Tsar Boris' government to symbolically incorporate the peasantry into the national "group" without politically empowering them.

CONCLUSION

On the front page of the September 15, 1940 issue of *Nashe Selo*, a robust peasant woman stands confidently before a fertile field with a bundle of wheat over her shoulder and children playing at her feet. To her left sits a young woman with an overflowing basket of apples, and in the background we can see the figure of a lone male peasant working in the field. Beneath the image run the words, "The Bounty of the Earth."[252] [Figure 2.17]

[251] R.J. Crampton, *Bulgaria* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007) , 251.
[252] 'Zemia blagodatna,' *Nashe Selo,* September 15, 1940, 1.

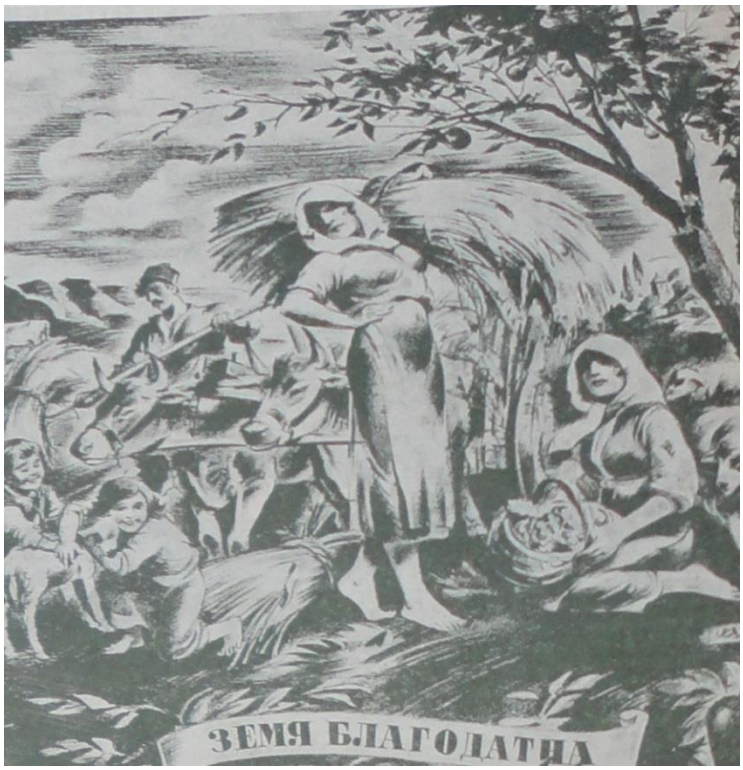

Figure 2.17: *The Bounty of the Earth* (Nashe Selo*,* September 15, 1940)

This image is an excellent example of the peasant ideal which emerged in this educational newspaper in the late 1930s. In this image, the peasant woman is tied to the fertility of the Bulgarian land. She is *Maĭka Bŭlgariia.* The peasant man, on the other hand, is in a secondary position, in the background.

The weakening of the image of the male peasant and the emergence of a powerful image of the female peasant coincided with the military coup of 1934 and undoubtedly came to reflect the political needs of Tsar Boris' government. After *Nashe Selo* came under direct government supervision in 1934, it began to take active part in a program to incorporate the peasantry into the larger national body. This national "group making"

informed both the textual and graphic aspects of the newspaper. However, politically empowering the peasantry had no part in this project. The key was to co-opt the peasantry without creating the kind of political momentum that could lead to a peasant government. The image of the peasant woman was ideal for this. Certainly, romantic images of peasant women were in no way new, however, because they answered so perfectly the political and cultural needs of the late 1930s, they came to dominate the visual register. As we shall see, these images became iconic symbols for Bulgaria- symbols which would be transformed by the new Communist government after the war.

Chapter Three: The Agrarian Proletariat: Peasants in Monumental Art in Stalinist Bulgaria

Figure 3.1: *Monument to the Soviet Army in the Capital* (Rabotnichesko Delo, September 8, 1954)

On the 7th of September, 1954, two days before the tenth anniversary of the Soviet Liberation of Bulgaria, the city of Sofia was already festooned with colorful decorations. Although official celebrations would not begin until the 9th, crowds lined the streets, making their way towards the former children's park at the intersection of Boulevards Tsar Osvoboditel and Vasil Levski, across from the University, on the far eastern side of the recently reconstructed downtown district.[253] No longer home to the children's theatre, play structures or swimming pool of former years, this park was now dominated by the newly constructed Monument to the Soviet Army. [254]

The crowd, waving tri-colored flags of the new Bulgarian People's Republic,[255] responded with appropriate fervor to the official speeches of Georgi Damianov, President of the Presidium of the National Assembly, and Soviet Army General S. S. Buriuzov. [256] Amid the din, two girls in folk costume held a thick ribbon across the broad approach to the monument. Vŭlko Chervenkov, despite his waning power as the Stalinist leader of

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[253] The Sofia city center had been damaged by Allied air raids in January 1944. A plan for reconstruction of the city center was begun almost as soon as the new regime came to power in the autumn. Anders Aman, *Architecture and Ideology in Eastern Europe During the Stalin Era: An Aspect of Cold War History* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1987), 141.

[254] 'Pametnik Na Suvetskata Armiia', <http://bg.wikipedia.org/wiki/Паметник_на_Съветската_армия>, accessed 5/25/2012.

[255] The tri-color flag (white, green and red) was initially adopted in 1879 with the signing of the Tŭrnovo Constitution. After the war, the flag included the emblem of the People's Republic of Bulgaria on the left side of the white stripe.

[256] All information about the opening ceremony from: 'Velichestven miting v Stolitsata po Sluchaĭ tŭrzhestvenoto otkrivane pametnika na Sŭvetskata Armiia-Osvoboditelka', *Rabotnichesko Delo,* September 8, 1954, 1-2.

Bulgaria and the Bulgarian Communist Party,[257] still retained his central role in the proceedings, stepping forward to cut the ribbon. [Figure 3.1]

Figure 3.2: *Vŭlko Chervenkov cuts the ribbon at the opening ceremony* (Rabotnichesko Delo, September 8, 1954)

The crowd erupted with a loud hoorah, and the military band struck up a martial air as an artillery salute rang out. Members of the Bulgarian Government, the Soviet Military, the

[257] In the wake of Stalin's death, Vŭlko Chervenkov resigned his position as General Secretary in March 1954. He would hold on to his position as Prime Minister a bit longer, not resigning until 1956.

Soviet Delegation and representatives from the other Democratic Republics stepped forward to place wreaths at the base of the monument. According to the report published the following day in *Rabotnichesko Delo*, "Until late in the evening, the people of the capital passed by the great monument to the Soviet army-liberator, built by the grateful Bulgarian Nation."[258]

The opening of a monument to the glory of the Soviet Army was not an unusual event for Bulgarians in 1954. Earlier that same year, monuments had been completed in the Sofia neighborhood of Lozenets, the city of Burgas, and a few days prior to the grand celebrations in Sofia, a similar monument opened in the Black Sea town of Kavarna.[259] All of these monuments were very much in keeping with Soviet enforced Socialist Realist aesthetic, a style of representational art dedicated to the glorification of the Soviet Union, the Party and the working class. Most of the sculptures seemed to be crude copies of the famous Soviet victory monument in Berlin-Treptow, *Sowjetisches Ehrenmal*, with the centerpiece of a lone Soviet Soldier frozen in the moment of victory.[260] The Sofia Monument to the Soviet Army, however, stands out from this throng of monumental Bulgarian and Bloc tributes, not only in the scale of the surrounding celebrations, but also

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[258] 'Velichestven miting v Stolitsata po Sluchaĭ tŭrzhestvenoto otkrivane pametnika na Sŭvetskata Armiia-Osvoboditelka', *Rabotnichesko Delo,* September 8, 1954, 1.

[259] 'Pametnika na Sŭvetskata Armiia v Burgas,' *Rabotnichesko Delo,* May 10, 1954, 1, 'Tŭrzhestveno otrkivane na Pametnik-Kostnitsa na padnalite Suvetski voĭni,' *Rabotnichesko Delo,* Februar 24, 1954, 1, 'Photo,' *Rabotnichesko Delo,* August 27, 1954, 2.

[260] Aman, *Architecture and Ideology in Eastern Europe During the Stalin Era,* 22. Red Army monuments were erected across Bulgaria in the early 1950s, including in Sliven (1952), Stara Zagora (1949), Kula (1949-1951) and Plovdiv (1956). Most of these monuments feature a central pedestal crowned with a lone Soviet Soldier. Ivanova, *Bŭlgarska Monumentalna Skulptura,* 116-126.

in the subject matter. For in the Sofia monument, Bulgaria, and more specifically, the Bulgarian peasant is given almost as much visual space as the Soviet soldier.

The monument itself is comprised of three distinct parts. The most prominent part, standing 37 meters tall, is a trio of figures striding forward confidently atop a massive granite pylon. In the fore is a Soviet soldier, raising a submachine gun toward the blue sky. Behind him, a Bulgarian peasant woman holds a child, and a worker stands with a pneumatic drill slung over his shoulder. [Figure 3.3]

Figure 3.3: *Central Pylon of Monument to the Soviet Army, Sofia* (Personal Collection)

On three sides, around the base of the monument, are detailed bas-reliefs depicting the heroism of the Soviet people during the October Revolution and the Second World War.

On the front panel, a dedication is carved in stark lettering. It reads simply, "To the Soviet Army- Liberators of the Grateful Bulgarian Nation." Stretching out before this imposing monument is a broad approach bordered by heavy blocks topped with bronze wreaths, symbolizing the long march to victory and the important battles against the Nazi forces. And finally, at the entrance to the monumental complex stand two sculptural compositions showing the joyous meeting between the Bulgarian people and their Soviet Liberators.

In his speech that day, Damianov declared that this monument was to be "a symbol of [Bulgaria's] endless love and gratitude toward the Soviet Army. This monument will be a reminder over the centuries of the great Bulgarian-Soviet friendship: a foundation and guarantee of the freedom of our nation from the chains of exploitation and a reminder of the patriotic duty of all honorable citizens of our country to guard and develop this friendship as one would guard the apple of one's eye."[261] On the one hand, these words seem to verify the narrative of the Soviet Liberator, clarifying the relationship of the newly emerging republic with their Soviet benefactor. In the speeches given that day, by politicians standing stiffly before the monument, no mention was made of the turbulent political upheavals of the postwar years, with the slow and bloody concentration of power in the hands of the Communist Party. Gone, too, were the hours of confusion when Bulgaria was at war with every major combatant in the Second World

[261] 'Rech na predsedateliia na prezidium na narodnoto sŭbranie Dr. Georgi Damianov pri otkrivaneto na pametnika na Sŭvetskata Armiia-Osvoboditelka,' *Rabotnichesko Delo,* September 8, 1954, 2.

War.[262] Bulgaria's *cooperation* with the Germans, as elsewhere in the Eastern Bloc, became a story of occupation and the collaboration of the royal family and the bourgeoisie. The Soviet invasion became an act of liberation.[263] On the other hand, the celebratory event was clearly not just about glorifying the Soviet Union, but also about defining the new Bulgarian nation as more than just a meek recipient of Russia's munificence. Bulgaria was a friend, a colleague, an almost-equal with their benefactors. Within the arsenal of symbols at play that day, and indeed throughout this period, the image of the Bulgarian peasant, albeit in a slightly altered form, remained an important and attractive tool for this kind of national self-representation.

As we have seen in Chapter 2, images of *Maĭka Bŭlgariia* [Mother Bulgaria] and fresh faced Bulgarian peasant girls in elaborate folk costumes became powerful symbols of authenticity for Tsar Boris III's government. In the postwar period, the power of the peasant image could not be simply ignored, nor could it simply be adopted in its entirety. It was in this period of transition, during the late 1940s and early 1950s, that the image of the peasant became uncoupled not only from the backwardness of the village but also from folk culture. The peasant of the new People's Republic of Bulgaria was to be modern socialist peasant, depicted as a member of the agrarian proletariat. But was this image of the modern Bulgarian peasant merely the whole-hearted adoption of the Soviet

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[262] Crampton, *A Concise History of Bulgaria,* 183.

[263] To be fair, the wartime government, under pressure from the citizens, had carefully avoided being involved in any conflict with the Soviet Union, and when the Soviet troops crossed the Danube on September 8, 1944, they were met with an overwhelmingly enthusiastic welcome. Ibid, 173-183.

Socialist Realist aesthetic or was it allowed to reflect in some way a specifically Bulgarian experience of the postwar period?

In his work on the architectural history of Eastern Europe, Anders Aman puts forward the commonly held, and not entirely incorrect, theory that in the realm of artistic conformity, as elsewhere, Bulgaria was the most compliant of the new People's Democracies.[264] In some ways, the monument seems to be merely one more example of this reality. It is undeniable that the monument shows all of the hearty idealism, enthusiasm, and excessive scale that one expects of a Socialist Realist sculpture, but by simply looking at this final product, one is left with too simplistic a picture. Undoubtedly, this time period saw a drastic shift in the representation of the Bulgarian peasant, along the lines dictated by the Soviet Union. Yet, an examination of the process of planning and designing the Monument to the Soviet Army in Sofia reveals how this new aesthetic was adopted and "domesticated" as Bulgarian artists and architects attempted to create an image of the peasant who was at once "modern" in the Soviet sense, and at the same time, *Bulgarian.*[265] It was through the central placement of this new Bulgarian peasant that the monument's creators could convey an image of a proud Bulgaria, a mere-half step behind the Soviet Union, not a liberated dependent, but a grateful friend.

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[264] Aman, *Architecture and Ideology in Eastern Europe During the Stalin Era,* 68-69.
[265] I am borrowing the term "domesticated" here from Gerald Creed, *Domesticating Revolution.*

SOCIALIST REALISM COMES TO EASTERN EUROPE[266]

The term Socialist Realism emerged in the Soviet Union in 1934 and marked a break with the years of artistic experimentation that had characterized much of the cultural sphere over the previous decade. Initially, the term primarily applied to literature, but soon, as Katerina Clark explains, it came to be understood to apply to virtually all creative fields, tied together with "mandatory optimism, aesthetic conservatism, moral Puritanism, and *partiinost.*"[267] In practical architectural terms this aesthetic conservatism translated into a return to Greek and Egyptian classical forms, albeit on a monumental scale and often with elements of national cultural expression.[268] But this architectural Socialist Realism was more than just a co-opting of traditional forms. Katerina Clark argues that "architectural schemes and tropes became dominant sources for political rhetoric."[269] This manifested itself not only in the purification of space through destruction and rebuilding, but also in the organization of the entire country into "spheres of relative sacredness, a cartography of power," with the center in Moscow.[270]

In the early postwar years, the war-torn cityscapes of Eastern Europe became a canvas upon which this Socialist Realist ideal could be painted. In Germany and Poland,

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[266] I am using Eastern Europe in its a political (rather than geographical) definition here- to refer to the countries "behind the Iron Curtain", that is Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Romania, Bulgaria and the GDR, but not including Yugoslavia, Albania and Greece, which might be considered "Eastern Europe" geographically, but had very different political experiences after the war.

[267] A term which Clark defines as "enthusiasm for all things Bolshevik." Katerina Clark, 'Socialist Realism and the Sacralizing of Space', in *The Landscape of Stalinism: The Art and Ideology of Soviet Space,* ed. Evgeny Dobrenko and Eric Naiman (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2003), 3.

[268] This last criteria led to the well-known phrase, "National in form, Socialist in content." Aman, *Architecture and Ideology in Eastern Europe During the Stalin Era,* 95.

[269] Katerina Clark, 'Socialist Realism and the Sacralizing of Space', 5.

[270] Ibid, 8.

where the damage was the worst, initial building plans were more of a practical nature. But even in the climate of scarcity in postwar Germany, usable buildings with tainted historical associations, like the former royal palace at Lustgarten, were destroyed rather than repaired and were replaced with architecture in keeping with the ideology of the Socialist Realist aesthetic.[271] In Bulgaria and Romania, on the other hand, the damage was limited, so the immediate postwar building was able to include a stronger ideological element. In Sofia, the new center was characterized by broad boulevards and the imposing new Communist Party building overlooking the great expanse of the new Lenin Square.[272] These new spaces became the stage for political theatre, for parades and acts of memorial and veneration. Of course, no city was a blank slate, and economic realities at times hampered the full realization of these ambitious reconstruction projects allowing the old cityscape to coexist with the new. But against the grandiose new architecture in the city center, even the Royal Palace (initially slated for destruction) seemed unthreatening. As Anders Aman explains, the new center proclaimed that: "The Dimitrovian epoch was superior to all epochs preceding it. How insignificant was the former royal palace compared with the center! And so, ultimately, it could do no harm where it stood."[273]

If the imperative of architectural Socialist Realism was ideological purification of space through destruction and rebuilding, the monumental sculptures that populated the

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[271] The former royal palace at Lustgarten, though usable enough to host an exhibition in 1946, was demolished in 1950. Aman, *Architecture and Ideology in Eastern Europe During the Stalin Era,* 13.
[272] Ibid, 144.
[273] Ibid, 145. Dimitrov was the first Communist leader of Bulgaria, from 1946-1949.

newly liberated cities and countryside marked one important method through which space was claimed and purified. In the early postwar years, not many monumental sculptures were in the Soviet Union itself. The lack of Soviet monumental war sculpture can undoubtedly be partially explained by the impoverished state of the Soviet Union. After all, for all practical purposes, the Soviet Union was as devastated by the end of the war as Germany or Japan. Indeed, in 1946, a drought led to wide spread food shortages and famine in the Russian countryside, as the peasants, once again had to pay the price of constructing (or in this case reconstructing) the Soviet Union.[274] But where the construction of war monuments was not a priority within the Soviet Union, it was of great concern in the newly liberated territories. This is not to say that the former-Nazi occupied territories were not similarly impoverished. Germany and Poland were particularly devastated by the war. And yet, the Soviet victory monument in Berlin-Treptow was begun and completed as the city of Berlin itself still lay in ruins.[275] Clearly, in Eastern Europe, symbolic political hegemony took precedence over housing. Nina Tumarkin remarks, "Postwar monuments, like monumental art more generally, were political statements par excellence. Most blatant were those many monuments that were quickly erected on foreign soil as tributes to the Red Army casualties in Germany, Austria, and Eastern Europe. "We spilled *our* blood to free your country from fascism, therefore you are indebted to *us*," ran the implied message."[276]

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[274] Nina Tumarkin, *The Living and the Dead: The Rise and Fall of the Cult of World War II in Russia* (New York: Harper Collins, 1994), 96.
[275] Aman, *Architecture and Ideology in Eastern Europe During the Stalin Era,* 22.
[276] Tumarkin, *The Living and the Dead,* 101.

Although the Soviet Union was largely not producing monumental art at this time, the art historical narrative fills in the gap and treats the sculptures produced in Eastern Europe as *Soviet* sculpture, [277] with an uncomplicated relationship to pre-war Socialist Realism.[278] However, to simply elide the artistic production of the new People's Democracies with Soviet production is over-simplified. After all, Socialist Realism clearly allowed for, and even encouraged, an element of national expression, so some level of variation was already inevitable. Furthermore, while some projects were indeed designed and implemented by Russian artisans, others, like the Monument to the Soviet Army in Sofia, were almost entirely local affairs. Areas deemed to be most hostile were scrutinized more closely. For example, while a few Germans did participate in the competition for designing the victory monument in Berlin-Treptow, the project was ultimately awarded to Soviet sculptor Evgenii Vuchetich, and Soviet architect Jakov Belopolskii.[279] Postwar Eastern European Socialist Realist art was bound to reflect these varying political situations.

Of course, the official narrative was always the same. The Soviet Army was an army of liberation, even in Germany where this narrative made very little logical sense. Throughout the Eastern Bloc, not just in Germany, the Soviet Army had to strike an uneasy balance between its contradictory roles as an occupier and as a liberator. In each context, the degree to which the Soviets were regarded as aggressors varied. The variety

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[277] Interestingly, in the 1969 catalog of Soviet Russian Sculpture, the only monument included for the immediate postwar period is the Berlin Victory Monument. Vladimir Mikhalovich Rogachevski, *Sovetskaia Russkaia Monumentalnaia Skulptura* (Leningrad: Khudozhnik RSFSR, 1969).
[278] For example, Tumarkin, *The Living and the Dead,* 101.
[279] Aman, *Architecture and Ideology in Eastern Europe During the Stalin Era,* 22.

was evident in the various forms these monuments took. In Bulgaria for example, the Monument to the Soviet Army spoke of Bulgarian-Soviet camaraderie, reflecting, in part, Bulgaria's historically friendly attitude towards Russia. Although these two countries were on opposite sides throughout most of the war, this traditional friendship had encouraged Tsar Boris' government to ensure that Bulgaria would not be forced to send troops against the Soviets. Of course, this Russo-philic attitude was not universally shared by all of the Democratic Republics.[280] If we briefly consider, once again, the victory monument at Berlin-Treptow, we can, unsurprisingly, see a completely different narrative expressed.

Despite the difficult economic situation in Germany at the end of the war, the Berlin monument, considered by many the finest example of Socialist Realist sculpture from this period, is enormous, far larger and more complex than its Bulgarian counterpart. At the beginning of the expansive central approach stands a statue of the sorrowing Motherland, followed by the figures of two soldiers kneeling beneath stylized red granite Soviet flags. The final approach is lined with 15 carved sarcophagi, one for each Soviet Republic, surrounding a mass grave, and finally the central sculptural monument- a 12-meter tall bronze Soviet soldier, "The Liberator," atop a mausoleum. In one hand, the soldier holds a young German child; in the other he wields a sword with

[280] Bulgarians to this day look more favorably upon Russia than do the inhabitants of many other former Eastern Bloc countries, due to Russia's involvement in gaining Bulgaria's independence from the Ottoman Empire at the end of the Russo-Turkish War. (1877-1878)

which he has shattered a swastika lying at his feet.[281] The message was clear. The story told was one of Soviet sacrifice, victory and implicitly, domination.

Elsewhere in the Eastern Bloc, monuments were not necessarily as aggressive, but often contained a similar message of dominance. The Liberation Monument in Budapest, Hungary, for example, visually dominated the city skyline. This monument depicts Lady Victory holding a palm leaf standing atop a tall column which could be seen throughout the city. The column (and Victory) was guarded by a fierce Soviet Soldier, and on either side stood allegorical figures of progress and triumph over fascism.[282] Unlike with the Sofia monument, the Soviet army was intimately involved in the design, planning and construction of the Hungarian Liberation Monument,[283]with the predictable result that the monument is more evocative of Soviet power than of anything to do with Hungary. Against the background of the Berlin and Budapest monuments, the Sofia monument, in which the Bulgarians stand as almost equal partners with the Soviets, seems more remarkable.

Despite some regional thematic variations, however, these monuments did have certain characteristics in common. For example, regardless of provenance, all of the monuments of this period are characterized by a redefinition of space: both in terms of a cityscape now dominated by their massive central sculptural elements, and also in the literal creation of new spaces. Usually, the monuments were set in the midst of expansive

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[281] Aman, *Architecture and Ideology in Eastern Europe During the Stalin Era,* 22-23.
[282] Reuben Fowkes, 'The Role of Monumental Sculpture in the Construction of Socialist Space in Stalinist Hungary', in *Socialist Spaces: Sites of Everyday Life in the Eastern Bloc*, ed. David Crowley and Susan E. Reid (Oxford: Berg, 2002), 71.
[283] Ibid.

parks and parade grounds. There, as in other spaces opening up in the postwar urban centers, the new order was to be acted out in ritualized performances.[284] In the inaugural ceremonies for the Soviet Army Monument in Sofia, as the populace dutifully filed up to and past the new monument, they were to appreciate the symbolism of the long approach and the awe inspiring grandeur of the central sculptural composition. That is, this new monumental landscape was to shape the new Bulgarian citizen- not just by creating "sacred" spaces in their everyday lives,[285] but by molding their understanding of history and their place within it.[286] In her 1978 history of Bulgarian sculpture, Veneta Ivanova explains, "To the public, [the monument's] meaning, the role which this monument played and continues to play in the education of this nation, the glorification of the eternal idea of the Bulgarian-Soviet friendship, all of these things were connected to this particularly important space in our daily life."[287] Throughout the Soviet Bloc, Socialist Realist architecture and monumental art were designed to "be able to show our heroes, […] be able to glimpse our tomorrow' such that an artist becomes an 'engineer of the human soul'"[288] Of course, as David Crowly and Susan E. Reid point out, "Much as

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[284] These spaces were opening up both due to wartime bombings and through conscious destruction of pre-war buildings.
[285] Cristofer Scarboro, *Living Socialism: The Bulgarian Socialist Humanist Experiment* (Chicago: University of Illinois, 2007).
[286] Fowkes, 'The Role of Monumental Sculpture in the Construction of Socialist Space in Stalinist Hungary', 65.
[287] Ivanova, *Bŭlgarska Monumentalna Skulptura: Razvitie I Problemi,* 123.
[288] Leading Party theoretician Andrei Zhdanov, as quoted in Victor Buchli, *An Archaeology of Socialism* (Oxford: Berg, 1999), 108.

authority sought to control the meanings and uses of space, the spatial practices of citizens were not contained by the party-state machine."[289]

Of course, the state certainly *tried* to control perception. On the one hand, the construction of the monument was to be so clear as to frustrate any alternative interpretation. Richka Krŭstanova, an architect working on the design of the Sofia monument, clarified, "One of the problems of this struggle (the struggle for the ideological meaning of the monument) is: how can a single work of art be made so that it will speak eternally […] will educationally operate over wide national masses and will not create merely a clichéd impact, [an impact that is] only striking, like some lady wearing a lot of the latest showy fashion- to attract attention, but not to give any meaningful artistic feeling [regarding the ideology of the monument.]"[290] In other words, Krŭstanova wanted to design a monument which was not merely striking but which embodied a clear, unchanging ideological message. However, if this kind of careful design were not enough, the meaning of the monument could also be shaped by its use, for, throughout the communist era, war memorials were at the center of some of the most solemn official ceremonies.

Parades culminating in speeches and the laying of wreaths occurred at least three times a year on Liberation Day, the Day of the Soviet Army and the Anniversary of the

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[289] David Crowley, And Susan E. Reid, 'Socialist Spaces: Sites of Everyday Life in the Eastern Bloc', in *Socialist Spaces: Sites of Everyday Life in the Eastern Bloc,* ed. David Crowley and Susan E. Reid (Oxford: Berg, 2002).
[290] TsDA (F-143, O-7, E-76, L-167).

October Revolution, each providing an occasion for reinforcing the political order.[291] On more ordinary days, the monument was the destination of school trips and tourists. When in May, 1962, *Turist*, the official magazine of the Bulgarian Tourist Union, published an issue dedicated to the capital city, it was not the Alexander Nevski Cathedral, the Dimitrov Mausoleum or the imposing Communist Party building that graced its cover. It was a photo of the Monument to the Soviet Army.[292]

Despite all of this official pressure and endless repetition, or perhaps even because of it, the interpretation of the monument was outside the control of the state. Reception is always tricky for historians, but a story related by Nina Tumarkin hints at some of the challenges the state faced in their attempt to control received meaning. It was 1985, and a Leningrad school teacher was horrified when her young students disrespectfully romped around a World War II grave at the 18th century palace at Pavlovsk. The following day, however, after discussing with another instructor all of the important ideological work that had been done with the children in the previous year, the teacher remarked, "Now I understood […] why the children had committed that sacrilege. Theirs was an unconscious reaction to having been forced to participate in incomprehensible rituals […] Those endless, monofaceted 'patriotic' games for show, the contests for the composition of patriotic songs, poems, posters…"[293] The effects of this

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[291] Reuben Fowkes, 'Soviet War Memorials in Eastern Europe, 1945-74', in *Figuration/Abstraction : Strategies for Public Sculpture in Europe, 1945-1968,* ed. Charlotte Benton (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2004), 17.
[292] 'Cover,' *Turist,* May 1962.
[293] As quoted in Tumarkin, *The Living and the Dead,* 25.

enforced veneration were felt across the Eastern Bloc. Even in Russo-philic Bulgaria these monuments came to be regarded with apathy even hostility.[294]

While reception is always difficult to control or assess, the Soviet state certainly expended a huge amount of effort to control the production side of these monuments. In the late 1940s, as the Communist Party consolidated its power across Eastern Europe, there was a complimentary drive toward ideological homogenization in the bloc countries. Politically, this determination resulted in a brutal purge of the Party itself, often targeting "home" communists, who had spent the war, not in Moscow, but in resistance movements in their own countries.[295] Culturally, this resolution resulted in the creation of huge state planning bureaus in each country, subsuming local architects and consultants under one roof. All building activity became dictated by the will of the state, and private architectural practices virtually ceased.[296] Obedient artists' unions were created and art academies were reformed to exclude professors not in step with the new cultural program. The artistic press was centralized and controlled by the state, and Soviet art was vigorously promoted.[297] Local projects and directions were more often than not set by Moscow, with Soviet consultants sitting in on the planning process, or at the very least weighing in with final judgments. The first country to shift to the centralized planning of art and architecture was Bulgaria, which opened the doors on their state planning bureau

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[294] Kelly Hignett, 'Monumental Makeover in Bulgaria Illustrates the Contested Status of Soviet-Era War Memorials', *The View East: Central Europe Past and Present* <http://theviewweast.wordpress.com/2011/07/04/monumental-makeover-in-bulgaria-illustrates-the-contested-status-of-soviet-era-war-memorials/>, accessed 8/8/2012 11:43am

[295] For example, the famous show trials of Lazlo Rajk in Hungary and Traicho Kostov in Bulgaria.

[296] Aman, *Architecture and Ideology in Eastern Europe During the Stalin Era,* 23.

[297] Fowkes, 'Soviet War Memorials in Eastern Europe, 1945-74', 12.

in early 1948. This early start, as well as a few other factors, gives the strong impression of Bulgaria's complete compliance on all artistic and ideological matters. Bulgaria's local artistic community certainly seems to have been less hostile to Socialist Realism than artists and architects in other parts of the Bloc.[298] Perhaps it was the Soviet faith in this very compliance which allowed Bulgarian sculptors so much voice in the construction of the new monument. Nowhere is this voice more evident than in the evolving representations of the Bulgarian peasantry and their curiously central incorporation into so many parts of the final monument.

THE PEASANT IN BULGARIAN POLITICAL ART

At first glance, the peasant woman standing at the Soviet soldier's right shoulder, in the central sculptural group of the Monument to the Soviet Army in Sofia, has more in common with *Rodina Mat',* [Mother Russia] from Soviet poster art, than with the elaborately folk costumed beauties which graced the political art and sculpture of the previous three decades. Her identity as a member of the agrarian proletariat is clearly expressed in the short kerchief in her hair and the simple cut of her dress. On the other hand, the child in her arms proclaims her motherhood and symbolic connection to *Maĭka Bŭlgariia* and is reminiscent of memorial sculptures constructed during the war. The peasant woman's Bulgarian-ness is delicately suggested by the faint hint of the *sukman*

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298 Aman, *Architecture and Ideology in Eastern Europe During the Stalin Era,* 68. Aman goes on to aver that in the Bloc the Czechs and Hungarians were the most resistant to Socialist Realism and that generally, " In the people's democracies […] Socialist Realism was something *extraneous,* looked on as part of an imminent threat, the threat to national sovereignty." (73)

on her bodice, almost as if the sculptors were trying to imagine what a peasant who was both modern and Bulgarian might look like. [299]

The image of the idealized Bulgarian peasant woman was not new to the postwar period. Chapter 2 discussed the emergence, in the interwar press, of the positive female image of the Bulgarian *khubavitsa* [beauty], as opposed to the negative male image of the *selianin* [peasant]. Unsurprisingly, the lovely *khubavitsa* was a mainstay of Bulgarian political and commercial art, as well. With her rounded cheeks, sparkling eyes and arms overflowing with the bounty of the Bulgarian land, she was an attractive symbol. Her colorful costume spoke of a unique Bulgarian culture, and her ample harvest spoke of her connection with the earth. Angel Tilov's attractive 1940 tourist poster, "Bulgaria" a young woman smiles serenely while embracing a fountain of roses with one arm.[300] Her other hand delicately tucks one of the roses behind her ear, as if she was caught in a playful moment while harvesting roses in the warm morning sun. Roses, and rose oil, of course, were one of Bulgaria's major exports. The woman's healthy frame is clad in a heavily embroidered *riza*[301]and the dark scoop necked *sukman* characteristic of the Sofia region.[302] Behind her mountains, cultivated fields and farms speak of the peace and

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[299] The *sukman* is a sleeveless overdress common to many regional variations of Bulgarian folk dress. It is made of a dark woolen material, usually black, which serves as a background for decorative embroidery, braiding, appliqué. Mercia Macdermott, *Bulgarian Folk Customs* (London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 1998), 46.

[300] Svetlin Bosilkov, *Bŭlgarskiiat Plakat* (Sofia: Izdatelstvo Bŭlgarski Khudozhnik, 1973), 61.

[301] Macdermott, *Bulgarian Folk Customs,* 44. A *riza* is an embroidered chemise (usually white) which serves as both an outer and an inner layer, whose shoulders, sleeves and bosom are generally visible under the *sukman* (overdress).

[302] Maria Veleva, *Bŭlgarski Narodni Nosii i Shevitsi* (Sofia: Dŭrzhavno Izdatelstvo "Nauka i Izkustvo", 1970). Plate 32.

bounty that the tourist will find in Bulgaria. That is not to say that Bulgaria was immutably personified as a young woman.[303]

During the war, Bulgaria was *Maĭka Bŭlgariia*, Mother Bulgaria. Always dressed in folk costume, she was the *khubavitsa* of the war years, a little older, perhaps, and a little more careworn. *Maĭka Bŭlgariia* was younger than her Soviet counterpart. Where *Rodina Mat'* called her sons to battle, *Maĭka Bŭlgariia* sent her husband to war, with a toddler in her arms.[304] She can be seen in the central figure of several wartime monumental sculptures. Unlike the postwar sculptures, which largely depicted soldiers in battle or in victory, the monuments built during the war often featured *Maĭka Bŭlgariia*. Both in her guise as a mother of young children and as a peasant, she would sadly contemplate the cost of the war. For example, in 1942, French-trained sculptor Marko Markov created a war monument in the village of Vurbitsa in the Veliko Tŭrnovo region. Wearing the long-kerchief and *sukman* associated with Bulgarian folk costume, the woman seems to have paused in her work, her hand still folded into her apron as if clutching her seeds.[305] That same year, Liubomir Dalchev erected another arresting war monument in Drianovo. In this monument, a mother stands next to a roughly hewn arch, barefoot but wearing clearly delineated folk costume with the characteristic *pafta* or metal belt buckle. In one

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[303] It should be noted also that while Bulgaria was usually personified as a woman, it could be referred to as either a motherland or a fatherland. Bulgarians use both the female *rodina* and the male *otechestvo* to refer to their homeland.

[304] This was actually the subject of a 1942 stamp in which a young woman in folk costume holds a young child in one arm, while with the other she gives flowers to a soldier on his way to the front. Anonymous, 'Katalog Bŭlgarski Poshtenski Marki 1879-1979', (Sofia: Ministerstvo na Sŭobshteniata DTP, Filateliia, 1979), 47, 49.

[305] Ivanova, *Bŭlgarska Monumentalna Skulptura,* 89.

arm she holds a toddler, whose arms are wrapped around her neck, the other arm enfolds a sad-eyed young girl.[306] Such figures, both melancholy and old fashioned, had no place in the victorious landscape being carved out in the postwar Bulgarian Republic.

The postwar period saw an important shift in general perceptions of peasant culture. While stringent hygiene campaigns attempted to reorganize all aspects of village life and industrialization campaigns pulled much of the rural population to the cities, a sanitized and modernized vision of the peasantry began to be disseminated. Interestingly, this "modern" vision was not only a rejection of the foolish backwardness of the *selianin* but also an increasing discomfort with folk culture as well. So that folk culture and peasant culture which had been so intertwined in the interwar period began to be two separate entities.[307]

In the poster art of 1950s Bulgaria, however, we see that there was also something more subtle going on, something which suggests that folk culture was never completely rejected, even if it was for a time sidelined an marginalized. In Stoian Venev's 1947 poster, "Long live the first of May!" we see women and men dressed in the clothing of the proletariat, with simple, unadorned clothing, which yet retain the slightest suggestion of folk costume.[308] As in the Monument to the Soviet Army, many poster artists seem to have tried to find a peasant who was at once modern and Bulgarian. At times this was

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[306] Ibid, 97.
[307] See Chapter 5.
[308] Bosilkov, *Bŭlgarskiiat Plakat,* 94.

expressed with the suggestion of a *sukman,*[309] or in touches of the ever popular red appearing in embroidery around the cuffs or collars of agricultural workers, who otherwise are attired in appropriately "modern" clothing.[310] At other times, it seemed that working the Bulgarian land was quite symbolic enough to make the peasants clearly Bulgarian, and it would be difficult to distinguish the clothing of this agrarian proletariat from that of their industrial comrades.[311] In the 1955 poster "Let us ensure the bread for the nation!" both images emerge. A bareheaded, dark haired young woman takes notes as she weighs out the grain. Her hands are strong but feminine. The long sleeves of her dress are loose, in the folk-style, and embroidered in red at the edges. Behind her, however, another woman and three men, all in "modern" clothing unload a truck into a warehouse.[312]

The Monument to the Soviet Army bears a striking resemblance to this final poster. The peasant woman in the central sculptural group is undoubtedly reminiscent of *Maĭka Bŭlgariia*, but the peasant girls and mothers who welcome the Soviet Soldiers in the two sculptural groups at the beginning of the approach, are for the most part dressed in the clothes of the peasant proletariat. The design of the monument was undoubtedly in step

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[309] As in Venev's poster, or Georgi Atanasov's 1946 poster "Long live the all-nation holiday of the worker!" Ibid, 106.

[310] For example, in the graphics collection of the Nationalna Biblioteka "Sv.Sv. Kiril I Metodii": 1955 poster 'Da osigurim khliaba na naroda' [Let us ensure the bread of the nation!]. Gr. 66. and 'Za nashata skŭpa, prekrasna rodina gotovi sme trud i zhivot da dadem' [For our dear, beautiful mother land, we are ready to give our work and our lives!] 1955, Gr. 1916.

[311] For example the three young women depicted in Georgi Popov's "In the battle for rich crops!" 1950. Bosilkov, *Bŭlgarskiiat Plakat,* 120.

[312] In the graphics collection of the Nationalna Biblioteka "Sv.Sv. Kiril I Metodii": 'Da osigurim khliaba na naroda,' Gr. 66. This poster dates to 1955 which is after Stalin's death, but a cultural thaw wasn't really felt in Bulgaria until after Khrushchev's 1956 speech to the 20th Party congress in which he criticized Stalin's mistakes. R. J. Crampton, *A Concise History of Bulgaria*, 196.

with a visual trope that existed at that time. However, merely looking at the final product gives an incomplete picture of the competing narratives at work within the monument. The monument was planned and constructed over a five year period, with hours of presentations, arguments and compromise going into its design. By considering this process, we not only get a window into the intention behind the final design, but also an understanding of the complex method by which Soviet cultural norms were received and negotiated in Stalinist Bulgaria. The finished product can give the impression that these images, these symbols came out fully formed, that the Socialist Realist peasant was handed down from on high and taken without question. The reality, however, was that the monument was a result of a process of negotiation, self-censorship and cautious creativity.

THE SET UP: A NEW MONUMENT IS PLANNED!

In 1949, the Committee for Science, Art and Culture (KNIK) announced a competition to find artists to create projects on the subject of the 9th of September, commemorating Bulgaria's liberation from Fascist rule. The committee included representatives from KNIK, members of the Union of Artists, and from key political institutions like the Fatherland Front and the Union of Soldiers Against Fascism (SBPF). The results of this early competition were gravely ideologically and aesthetically disappointing for the new communist authority. A report from the 27th of August declares that one submitted sketch is, "Anti-political and non-artistic,"[313] and another concept

[313] TsDA (F-143, O-2, E-311, L-1).

submitted for a bas-relief is "untutored and badly performed, with incorrect allegorical conception and without content."[314] The competition was re-opened, this time, with very specific criteria and guidelines.

Unlike the first contest, which was not widely publicized and had few restrictions in terms of content or media, and seemingly few incentives to participate, this new contest was to be far more structured. The initial stage was to be conducted in secret. All of the proposals would be geared toward a specific objective, the creation of a monument to the Soviet Army. The monument was to be located in a children's park on boulevard Tsar Osvoboditel between boulevards Evlogi Georgiev and Marshal F. I. Tolbukhin (known today as Vasil Levski), just north of the Zoological Garden.[315] This placed the monument in the center of the quickly rejuvenating downtown area of the Bulgarian capital. Across the street, stood the University of Sofia, St. Kliment Okhridski, and the golden domes of Alexander Nevski Cathedral could be seen between the trees.

These proposals had to include, "a conceptual sketch, a plaster model in scale 1:20, two horizontal and two vertical sections in diagram with scale 1:50 and a situational plan in the scale of 1:500."[316] The entries would be judged in two stages. At each stage of the contest, the public would be given the opportunity to give their input on the projects. Those projects which made it past the initial stage would be given the opportunity to

[314] Ibid.
[315] TsDA (F-143, O-2, E-311, L-3).
[316] TsDA (F143, O-2, E-311, L-10).

refine their projects for the second stage. The top ten proposals would then be ranked and awarded monetary prizes on a graduated scale.

In terms of contents, the committee was similarly specific. They required that "The monument must express in permanent artistic form,[…] easily understandable, realistic images of the strength and unbroken power of the Soviet Army, liberators of the Bulgarians and other nations… guardians of peace […] The monument must also express thereby, the gratitude and appreciation of the Bulgarian nation towards the free Russian nation and the Soviet army."[317] When finally confronted with the proposals, the committee would turn again and again to these guidelines. For although the instructions may seem straightforward, in the tricky climate of Stalinist Bulgaria, each of these elements was under contention. After all, how could the strength of the Soviet Army be expressed without depicting the Army as aggressive? How could peace be extolled without seeming to criticize the glorious war? And most difficult of all, how should Bulgaria, allied to Germany throughout the majority of the war, be represented?

On May 26th 1950, a committee met to look at the proposed projects. Of the fifteen proposals, at least three were rejected outright for failing to meet the basic requirements of the contest, while the remaining twelve proposals were carefully considered and discussed. The proposals before them read like a who's who of Bulgarian sculptural arts. All of the big names were there. Svetoslav Ĭotsov, for example, had

[317] Ibid.

designed the large World War I monument in center of Veliko Tŭrnovo.[318] Marko Markov spent the 1920s in Paris where he studied under French monumentalist Bushar, and was considered a master of the sculptural portrait. [319] His sculpture of Patriarkh Evtimiĭ marks, to this day, one of the most popular meeting places in the city of Sofia. It was Andreĭ Nikolov's sculptural portraits which lined the paths of Borisova Gradina (Liberty Park during Soviet Times).[320] And of course, the project of the mighty Ivan Funev, whose pre-war work was so evocative of the plight of the working classes, garnered a lot of attention from the committee members.[321]

Indeed, if there is one name that is most strongly associated with the Soviet Army Monument in Sofia, it is the name of Ivan Funev. In 1978, Veneta Ivanova would write that, "The works of Ivan Funev, which must be considered in the light of the issues of proletariat culture, contribute to the construction of a more active, more militant atmosphere in the artistic life of the country."[322] He was one of the most revered sculptors of his time and his name is inextricably linked with Sofia's most monumental sculpture. It thus comes as something of a surprise that, although he was ultimately the leader of the

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[318] Ivanova, *Bŭlgarska Monumentalna Skulptura,* 64. This striking monument of white stone with dark figures is well-known to all who have visited built Veliko Tŭrnovo. It was constructed between 1927-1935, and is one of the few large monuments built in this time period anywhere in Bulgaria.
[319] Ibid, 86.
[320] Ibid, 67.
[321] Mara Tsoncheva, *Ivan Funev* (Sofia: Izdatelstvo Bulgarksi Khudozhnik, 1974), 12.
[322] Ivanova, *Bŭlgarska Monumentalna Skulptura,* 101.

collective which built the monument, it was not his design which was selected. His design was reluctantly rejected in the first round on "aesthetic" grounds.[323]

Initially, it was actually unclear to the committee members whether they could make final judgments of proposals like Funev's. Was the committee merely advisory? Could it cut contestants? Make suggestions? And, most importantly, how closely did the members have to follow instructions coming from Moscow? Part of the confusion seems to have stemmed from the fact that, in the first phase of the process, no representatives of the Soviet Union were present. This meant that, on the surface, the selection of the final three contestants was entirely a local affair. Of course, in Stalinist Bulgaria there was not really such a thing as an entirely local affair. Mention is made that reports detailing the contents of the meetings were being submitted to the General Secretary of the Bulgarian Communist Party,[324] Vŭlko Chervenkov, and the members of the committee were keenly aware of pressure coming from Moscow.

For example, one afternoon, early in the discussions, the members of the committee got caught up in an argument as to whether the Soviets would rather have an imposing monument in their honor, or a more intimate affair. Sava Ganovski, President of the KNIK, interrupted his colleagues to declare, "We have to acknowledge, that the instructions from our Soviet comrades are not laws for us. These are recommendations,

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[323]TsDA (F-143, O-7, E-76, L-47). Funev's design was criticized as being quite depressing and tomb-like. And indeed, it must have just been unworkably unattractive as his design kept coming up as they were discussing other projects. Nobody seemed to like the design, yet they seemed very reluctant not to send it to the second round.

[324] TsDA (F-143, O-8, E-240, L-18).

desires."[325] An agitated Simeon Ignatevski replied, "The recommendations from the Soviet Specialists were given to us and we signed the final protocol. When we presented this to the specialists, they said, 'This is your own local project. When you have completed it, make a report.' But by the time we hand in a report about our proceedings, this jury will already have made its decision!"[326] Dimitŭr Khalov, who had been listening intently, replied that the Soviet recommendations are purely for political-ideological guidance. The substance of the monument is up the committee.[327]

If we consider, for a moment, the political climate in which these discussions are occurring, in 1950, the caution with which the committee members approached this project is understandable. The Communist Party's road to power in Bulgaria had been a bloody one. Despite the relative lack of participation in the war, the postwar trials took more lives than anywhere else in Eastern Europe.[328] For the next five years a fierce political battle would rage. During this time, the Communist Party pushed out its competition through fair means and foul, and ultimately turned upon itself in a bloody purge which culminated in the trial of Traĭcho Kostov. This trial is memorable not only for its outcome but for the grim message it sent.

It all began in 1949, when the young republic's leader, Georgi Dimitrov, died. Not long after, in a famous show-trial, his probable successor Traĭcho Kostov, a "local" communist who had spent the war in Bulgaria, vociferously and very publicly denied

[325] TsDA (F-143, O-8, E-240, L-7).
[326] Ibid.
[327] TsDA (F-143, O-8, E-240, L-8).
[328] Official numbers claim 11,667 victims, but unofficial numbers claim between 30,000 and 100,000 executions just within the first six months. Crampton, *A Short History of Bulgaria,* 149.

allegations that he was an Anglo-American spy. He was rushed out of the courtroom and an official admission of guilt was read. Not long after, Kostov was shot to death.[329] His trial cleared the road for Vŭlko Chervenkov's rise to power, who unlike Kostov must have seemed less dangerously independent. Not only did Kostov have strong ties to local communists, but he had dared to criticize Soviet economic policy after the war. Kostov's trial was merely the most dramatic of the many trials which occurred during this period. But the message was the same throughout: any kind of deviation from the Soviet party line would not be tolerated.

One would think that this ominous political atmosphere would be completely paralyzing for the members of the committee, whose task it was to make an ideologically pleasing monument to the Soviet Army. As Eric Naiman explains in his introduction to *The Landscape of Stalinism:*

> Survival and success [in navigating the social and discursive space of Stalinist culture] depended on one's skills in ideological navigation, on being able to make one's way through a world that existed on the plane of representation and imagination, a plane that exerted a kind of asymptotic and symptomatic pressure on the surface of everyday life.[330]

As a result, unlike the committees setting up the Victory Monument in Berlin, or the Liberation Monument in Budapest under direct Soviet oversight, the members of the Bulgarian committee were self-censoring. These architects, sculptors and university

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[329] Crampton, *A Concise History of Bulgaria,* 194.
[330] Eric Naiman, 'Introduction', in *The Landscape of Stalinism ,* ed. Evgeny Dobrenko (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2003), xi.

professors were second guessing what the Soviets and the top Bulgarian government officials would find ideologically appropriate.

Against this background, the final monument seems all the more remarkable. After all, we know that "The contemporary Soviet press maintained that Stalin, the Communist Party, the Red Army, and the great Soviet people (especially those who had died in the effort), in that order, had won the war, together with a little help from their friends to the west."[331] The overt presence of *two* Bulgarians on the central monumental sculpture seems a little unusual, as they are not part of this official hierarchy. But the real question was- where was Stalin? The inclusion of Stalin was in fact a very tricky subject, which is perhaps why he was so seldom incorporated into monuments of this type. As in the famous sculpture in Prague, he was allocated his own impressive monument, but was rarely featured in these more complex memorial structures.[332]

That several of the initial proposals included Stalin's figure in varying degrees of centrality suggests that there was perceived pressure to incorporate him. The inclusion of Stalin was discussed throughout the proceedings, but in one comment Dragan Lozenski, sculptor and representative of the Union of Artists, expresses both the committee's reluctance to include the Stalin figure, as well as the careful tiptoeing which occurred. Lozenski exclaimed,

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[331] Tumarkin, *The Living and the Dead,* 85.

[332] The Stalin Monument in Prague, was completed in 1955 and located on Letna hill over-looking the old town. It stood 15 meters tall and features a realistic statue of Stalin. Behind him in a straight line (and therefore only visible if seen from the side) stood Czech and Russian Soldiers, peasants, workers and scientists. Marie Klimesova, 'Czechoslovak Public Sculpture and Its Context: From 1945 to the 'Realizations' Exhibition, 1961', in *Figuration/Abstraction: Strategies for Public Sculpture in Europe 1945-1968,* ed. Charlotte Benton (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2004), 38.

> Actually the Red Army is the fruit of the work of Lenin and Stalin […] That is a separate issue! If we mix the figure of Stalin with the other elements on the monument, we will be misunderstood. The monument will become a monument of Stalin- but a monument to Stalin must be something greater, must be something bigger than the biggest scale or form that we can imagine [...] I reckon that the figure of Stalin does not have to be included.[333]

The committee members clearly did not want to make this monument into a monument to Stalin, which was certainly an option. After all, if the army was 'the fruit of his work', a monument to Stalin was one way of fulfilling the call for a monument dedicated to Bulgaria's Soviet liberators. But they wanted to hold on to a broader vision for the monument, and in truth, the casting of Stalin as anything other than the main character was problematic. For example, regarding the improvement of the project of Kiril Todorov, the committee noted that, "The inclusion of Comrade Stalin in bas-reliefs while above him dominates a seven meter tall figure-crowned monument is utterly wrong."[334] Later, one member would explain that, "in this way [through the inclusion of Stalin in the bas-relief] the idea that Stalin led the nations is belittled. Stalin must dominate. But in this project for the monument, it is shown that above him, above Stalin, other figures, weak plastic expressions, dominate."[335] The question of Stalin's relative symbolic proximity to other figures was so difficult that, when they erected the final monument, an existent monument to Stalin, standing across the street at the entrance of Freedom Park,[336] had to be relocated to the Square 9 *Septemvri*, across from the palace.[337] Perhaps

[333] TsDA (F-143, O-8, E-240, L-104).
[334] TsDA (F-143, O-7 E-75, L-22).
[335] TsDA (F-143, O-7, E-75, L-36).
[336] Today known as Borisova Gradina

the reluctance with which the "Stalinization" of the monument was perceived by the committee members is best illustrated by the fact that of the final three contestants, only one featured Stalin. In this light, the committee seems cautious, eager to please, but not without their own ideas and agency.

For the most part, the projects seemed eager to adhere to the general principles of the Socialist Realist aesthetic. For example, in the proposal put forward by the Collective of Aleksandŭr Zankov, triumphal arches would welcome the Soviet Army.[338] Ivan Funev's design also featured Classical forms with broad pedestals and pyramid shapes.[339] Other projects had obelisks and colonnades. Almost all of the projects tried to convey the undefeatable might of the Soviet Army and the Soviet Union, in the figures of soldiers, workers, peasants and of course prominent communist leaders. The minutes of these meetings reveal that there was, among the contestants and committee members, a general understanding of the aesthetic and ideological goals of the project, but there was very little agreement in terms of practical application. In fact, despite the clear connection between architectural Socialist Realism and these classical forms, several monuments were criticized for this very thing. Kiril Todorov's monument, for example, was criticized for its resemblance to a Viennese monument, with a frieze that is far "too fascist in style." [340] Ivan Funev's work was rejected for its depressing resemblance to an

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337 TsDA (F-143, O-8, E-242, L-24).
338 TsDA (F-143, O-7, E-70, L-1).
339 TsDA (F-143, O-7, E-70, L-24).
340 TsDA (F-143, O-87, E-75, L-60) and TsDA (F-143, O-7, E-76, L-168).

Egyptian tomb.[341] And at one point, Dragan Lozenski went on a tirade against too closely following Egyptian and Gothic forms, whose religious purpose, directing the audience's attention to the heavens, was quite different from the purpose of the Soviet Army Monument.[342]

The ideological content of the monument was also under constant negotiation. For example, one of the stated goals of the monument was to show the gratitude of the Bulgarian people. But how were they to be depicted on the monument? Of course, there was no question that Bulgaria's complex war experience would be glossed over. Bulgaria would be depicted as grateful, pro-Soviet, pro-communist and anti-fascist. But what did this mean in practical application? Who would personify Bulgaria on the monument? Interestingly, considering the well-known use of *Rodina Mat'* to symbolize Russia, and Bulgaria's own strong tradition of representing Bulgaria as a peasant woman, neither the image of *Maĭka Bŭlgariia* nor of the lovely *khubavitsa* were universally or even predominantly employed in the first round of submissions. Kiril Todorov's secondary proposal, for example, represented Bulgaria through the inclusion of the nation's most famous communist leaders: Blagoev and Dimitrov.[343] Ĭordan Krŭchmarov's monument featured Bulgarian partisans striding confidently alongside their Soviet brethren.[344] Svetoslav Ĭotsov's busy monument included the full gamut of possible representations,

[341] TsDA (F-143, O-7, E-76, L-47).
[342] TsDA (F-143, O-7, E-76, L-105).
[343] TsDA (F-143, O-7, E-76, L-179). This inclusion of local communist leaders was considered highly inappropriate by the committee.
[344] TsDA (F-143, O-7, E-76, L-223).

including a partisan, a worker, a peasant, an intellectual, a mother and a youth.[345] Indeed, even when peasants were included on the monument, they were not necessarily female.

This is a clear deviation from the traditional male worker/female peasant dichotomy which had been well established in Socialist Realist iconography since the creation of Vera Mukhina's famous 1937 sculpture, *Worker and Kolkhoz Woman*, for the top of the Soviet pavilion at the International Exhibition of Arts, Crafts and Sciences in Paris.[346] This idealized image portrayed a male worker and a female peasant striding forward together, each with an arm upraised- one holding a hammer, the other a sickle. It was to become one of the most iconic images in Soviet art, and was already internationally known by the time the jury began meeting in 1949.[347] It has been suggested that this monument expressed in terms of gender the hierarchical relationship between workers and peasants in Soviet society, a society in which the needs of the countryside were often tragically secondary to the needs of the city.[348] Yet, despite the existence of this established visual trope, the peasant in Iostov's proposal, for example, is undoubtedly referred to as a *selianin*, [male peasant] not a *selianka* [female peasant].[349] And even in the final monument (despite first appearances) this dichotomy is not maintained throughout, as several of the peasants welcoming Soviet soldiers at the

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[345] TsDA (F-143, O-7, E-70, L-3).
[346] Victoria E. Bonnell, 'The Peasant Woman in the Stalinist Political Art of the 1930s', in *The Aesthetic Arsenal: Socialist Realism under Stalin*, ed. Miranda Banks (New York: The Institute for Contemporary Art, 1993), 152.
[347] Indeed, the monument was adopted as the symbol of *Mosfilm,* the Soviet film studio in 1947 and appears at the beginning of many of their films.
[348] Bonnell, 'The Aesthetic Arsenal', 152.
[349] Ibid.

beginning of the main approach are undoubtedly mustachioed *selianin.* Nevertheless, the visual trope of a male worker and a female peasant did make it on to two of the three proposals which passed to the second round.

A solitary Soviet soldier is at the center of all three final proposals. In two of them, those by Kiril Todorov and Danko Mitov, he is flanked by this familiar trope of the male worker and a female peasant. In the third, by Andreĭ Nikolov, a Soviet Soldier stood alone. This simplistic design did not meet with universal approval. Architect Alexandur Obretenov vociferously declared, "Soviet army's greatness cannot be expressed in a single figure."[350] Several of the other members however, disagreed, for as Milko Vichev pointed out, the famous Victory Monument in Berlin managed to successfully represent the Soviet army with only one figure![351] Boris Dankov, representative of the Ministry of Education, could not agree, however. Siding with Obretenov he would later explain that the lone figure changed the whole character of the monument from a monument for the Soviet Army to a monument for a Soviet soldier.[352]

In light of this argument, the committee's alteration of finalist Danko Mitov's design is very interesting. For the committee did not accept the submission "as is", but demanded a vital change for the second round of the contest, which ultimately changed the entire message of the monument. Initially, Mitov's Soviet soldier had been accompanied by a *Russian* worker and a *Russian* peasant. But, as the ever opinionated

[350] TsDA (F-143, O-8, E-240, L-67).
[351] TsDA (F-143, O-8, E-240, L-57).
[352] TsDA (F-143, O-7, E-76, L-224).

Obretenov expressed, aside from their role as liberators of the Bulgarian people, the Soviet army,

> is now the most powerful factor for peace, and she is the main guarantee for our independence and for our continued existence. This is the essential meaning of the army to us, and [if the peasant and the worker are Russian] this meaning is lost. As it currently stands, the sculpture shows the Soviet army only helping itself.
> This doesn't work. The army must be connected with our reality. […] It must be connected to our nation. The ideology will be correct, if the worker is OUR worker,
> and the peasant OUR peasant.[353]

So ultimately, these ideological and aesthetic negotiations led to the emergence of an entirely new message- a message which had not been part of the initial program and which set this monument apart from its contemporaries. The Soviet Army was indeed represented by a lone soldier in all three of the final proposals. And in two of the final monuments, with Bulgarians striding a half step behind the Soviet Soldier the narrative became one of brotherhood rather than of liberation.

THE SOLDIER, THE PEASANT AND THE WORKER: "A MONUMENT OF FRIENDSHIP"

For the second round of the contest, the committee was joined by two specialists from Moscow, the prolific architect and professor, Pavel Fedotovich Alioshin and his comrade, referred to only as Architect Blokhin. Blokhin had little to say, but Alioshin was quite engaged, and his comments were seldom, if ever, disputed. It was under their guidance that the central sculpture of the monument was to take shape. [Figure 3.4]

[353] TsDA (F-143, O-8, E-240, L-16).

Figure 3.4: *Central Sculptural Group on Monument* (Personal Collection)

By the end of the first day of the second round of meetings, the committee unanimously agreed that Danko Mitov's proposal would provide the basis for the monument.[354] However, the committee was generally unhappy with the execution of the design, and refused to give Mitov first place.[355] Mitov's sculptural forms were too rough

[354] TsDA (F-143, O-87, E-75, L-81)

[355] In the end, Mitov was awarded Second place, Nikolov third, and Todorov was given only 50% of the promised commission, as he had, much to the consternation of the committee, made no alterations or improvements to his proposal for the second round, despite accepting 2 million lev as commission for the project. TsDA (F-143, O-87 E-75, L-66, 81).

and unrealistic. As Alioshin explained, "Maybe we can fill out architect Danko Mitov's design team with some other people with a more realistic approach to the sculpture."[356] But what did they mean by "realistic"? When the committee went on to elucidate, it became clear that they were not referring just to the proportionality of bodies or the believability of the figure's stances, but also to the "realism," that is correctness, of the figures' ideological message.

Ultimately, it would be Ivan Funev, Bulgaria's most ideologically correct and socially conscious sculptor, who would take over the reins of the project and his name, rather than Mitov's, which would be most indelibly associated with the monument. This selection, in itself, is quite revealing. If his pre-war credentials, as a spokesman for the working class, had been impressive, his postwar work depicting the victory of the oppressed proletariat, brought him to the forefront of Bulgarian Socialist art.[357] In his effusive biography, Mara Tsoncheva writes that his art is characterized by, "a sound link with reality and a marked interest in themes connected with working class life."[358] She further expounds that Funev "is among those restless innovators, who introduced in Bulgarian sculpture new original themes and images, as well as new plastic means of expression."[359] So, as the switch to the leadership of ideologically-minded Ivan Funev might suggest, what concerned the committee the most, was not aesthetics, but

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[356] TsDA (F-143, O-87, E-75, L-93).
[357] In addition to receiving important commissions like the Soviet Army monument, Funev was additionally awarded with the title of Honored Artist (1954), the title of People's Artist (1960) and finally the title of Hero of Socialist Labor (1967).
[358] Tsoncheva, *Ivan Funev,* 167.
[359] Ibid, 168.

ideology.[360] Consider, for example, the difficulty inherent in representing the Soviet Soldier. The monument was to represent the glory of the Soviet Army, but how were they to express the army's might without portraying the soldier as an aggressor? How could the soldier become approachable and yet not soft?

Mitov's soldier was correctly depicted as "the Russian type" but the committee was deeply concerned that he was raising a submachine gun into the air,[361] as this could seem threatening. The Soviet soldier in the Berlin-Treptow victory monument was also holding a sword, but it was pointed down, and he was holding a German child in his other hand.[362] Mitov's design had no such softening elements. As Obretenov obligingly explains, "[The soldier] lifts the submachine gun in greeting, but perhaps also in threat. There was the idea to hold the gun downwards, and a hand raised, or to hold the gun with a flower, or to lift it with flowers. But all of these ideas, we found awkward. […] It is possible to take [the soldier's action] as a threat, and that would fall into political error-the Soviet Army doesn't threaten anyone!"[363] Furthermore, if the soldier doesn't hold a gun, but just raises his hand in greeting, it bears an unfortunate resemblance to the Nazi salute.[364] So the question became, how could the surrounding sculptures be used to soften

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[360] Surely only the unmitigated grimness of Funev's original design (mentioned frequently in the text) prevented it from being selected in the first place. One gets the impression that, had Funev submitted something even vaguely workable, it would have been selected. However, although Funev would ultimately assume leadership of the project and was present and actively participating in the meetings for the improvement of Mitov's proposal, Mitov was not entirely cast aside and also attended all of the planning meetings. I merely want to suggest here, that ideological credentials were central in selecting a new collective to lead the building of the monument.
[361] TsDA (F-143, O-87, E-75, L-68).
[362] TsDA (F-143, O-87, E-75, L-61).
[363]TsDA (F-143, O-87, E-75, L-69).
[364] TsDA (F-143, O-87, E-75, L-131).

the Soviet soldier? Or rather, how could it be made clear that the soldier did not present a threat to the figures around him? In the Berlin-Treptow monument, the soldier is cradling a toddling Germany in his arms- clearly he is not a threat. But if Bulgaria was not to be represented as a cherubic tot, how was she to be represented?

In the midst of this discussion, Khristo Markolev recalls, "I saw the monument to the Soviet Army in Berlin- one soldier portraying an idea: with a leg breaking the swastika, and with one arm holding a sword- [representing the Army's] might- and with the other hand holding a child- [representing] immortality, eternity. There is the idea. And for the most ordinary man, who sees this monument, truly, this idea will hit him in the eyes."[365] What Markolev doesn't say, but which is also true, is that the German child is helpless and absolutely non-threatening. So when the committee elected to have Bulgaria represented by adults, rather than a child, the message was clearly very different from that of the German monument. Not only are these adults a mere half step behind their Soviet colleagues, but they are strong and hopeful in their own right. Their firm tread and stocky bodies spoke of their strength, but their nationality was largely expressed in the body of the peasant woman.

The committee, with no voiced objections from the Soviet advisers, was adamant that the peasant woman should look as Bulgarian as possible. In the original sculpture, she is wearing a woolen skirt and apron, which are considered "untypical of the

[365] TsDA (F-143, O-87, E-75, L-61).

Bulgarian peasant woman."[366] It was decided to clothe her in the *sukman* more typical of Bulgarian peasant clothing.[367] Furthermore, Obretenov complains, "this woman herself is not reminiscent of a Bulgarian woman, but of a smaller peasant woman. I am reminded of some sort of stone Madonna."[368] So the figure's stature and face had to be altered accordingly. The worker, in contrast, was only unsatisfactory in that he is wearing an old-fashioned apron and needed to be carrying pneumatic drill to emphasize his Socialist progress.[369] *His* Bulgarianness, only evident in his features, is reinforced through the presence of the peasant woman, just as *her* modernity, suggested by the relative simplicity of her dress, is reinforced through the presence of the worker. Ultimately, the committee sought to convey an impression of a Bulgaria that was both traditional and modern. Indeed, both the worker and the peasant were to be strong, beautiful, and quickly striding toward the new Socialist reality.[370] So, if the toddler in the Berlin monument represents immortality and eternity, as Markolev suggests, what does this mean for the Bulgarian monument? Putting the child into the arms of the Bulgarian peasant seems to be more than a reference to the familiar figure of *Maĭka Bŭlgariia*. Although the committee never spoke of it, it seems to suggest that Bulgaria's future is in her own hands.

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[366] TsDA (F-143, O-87, E-75, L-232).
[367] Ibid.
[368] TsDA (F-143, O-87, E-75, L-263-264).
[369] TsDA (F-143, O-87, E-75, L-129).
[370] TsDA (F-143, O-8, E-242, L-51, 59).

The committee agreed that the worker and the peasant were not to be depicted as dependents of the Soviet Army, but rather as comrades-in-arms and companions. In order to do this, they needed to spatially connect the three figures together. Or, as it was expressed in their official recommendation: "The jury considers that rearranging the position of the worker and the peasant in the group will improve the meaningful expressiveness of the group."[371] The peasant woman would be standing on the right, with the child in her left arm, closest to the soldier, suggesting that he poses no threat to her or the child. The worker would be on the soldier's left, with a pneumatic drill slung over his right shoulder. In the official recommendation for improvements upon the monument, the committee wrote, "The movement of the three figures will be as one, the left hand of the Soviet soldier can be relaxed on the shoulder of the worker and the idea of brotherhood and protection will be underlined very strongly."[372]

There are undoubtedly several hierarchies implicit in the three figures. As noted before, the Soviet preference for the working class is expressed by casting the worker as male and the peasant as female. This implicit inequality is reinforced by the soldier's arm warmly draped across the worker's shoulders.[373] Additionally, there is undoubtedly a difference between the Bulgarian figures and the Soviet one. After all, the soldier is slightly larger, and in the lead. But interestingly, the committee elected to minimize this

[371] TsDA (F-143, O-87, E-75, L-128).
[372] TsDA (F-143, O-87, E-75, L-129).
[373] It must be acknowledged that if the Soldier were similarly embracing the female peasant, the message of friendship would be muddied by the implication of romance.

difference and decided against having the soldier standing much taller than his companions.[374] Vasil Gachev explains this decision:

> It's true that the Soviet soldier must be underlined, that this monument is a monument of the Soviet soldier. This idea is underlined in that the Soviet soldier is in the middle, in the highest place, a little ahead. But it seems to me that if this is overly emphasized, there will not be any intimacy, and we will lose the connection between the soldier and the worker. […] It must be felt that the soldier is a little ahead, but it must also be felt that he is a patron, an intimate friend, with whom we are able to move ahead.[375]

This emphasis on camaraderie allowed the sculpture to present Bulgaria in a position of pride and power, which was surprising in a monument of this type, and certainly quite different from similar monuments in other parts of the Eastern Bloc.

At the opening of the competition, Dragan Lozenski explained that the goal of the monument was to depict, "the unbreakable strength of the Soviet Army- the army liberator of Bulgaria and other nations, guardian of peace, culture and progress. It must express also all of the gratitude and thankfulness of our nation toward the great Soviet Union and its Army."[376] After months of debates, during the final review of Mitov's project, however, Iskra Panova exclaims, "This monument must be a monument of friendship, a monument of youth, a monument of Bulgarian-Soviet friendship. This monument must show a lot of optimism, youth, and strength."[377] Undoubtedly the message of gratitude remains. But now it is the gratitude between almost equals, the gratitude shared between friends, rather than towards a distant and revered savior.

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[374] TsDA (F-143, O-87, E-75, L-25).
[375] TsDA (F-143, O-8, E-242, L-56).
[376] TsDA (F-143, O-7, E-76, L-104).
[377] TsDA (F-143, O-8, E-242, L-62).

THE VILLAGE IN TRANSITION

Aside from the central sculpture, there was one more place that the peasantry appeared on the monument: the two sculptural groups at the beginning of the main approach. These two groups were to represent the moment when the Bulgarian people enthusiastically welcomed the Soviet Army across the countryside. Although these sculptural groups got nowhere near the attention of the central three figures, they still provoked an interesting argument, during the final pre-construction review of the monument in February of 1952.

Initially, the two groups were to express two completely separate experiences. On the one side the soldiers would be greeted by peasants.[378] The soldiers would be crowded, as people attempted to embrace them, to give them food and drink. A peasant mother would hold up her child who would be struggling from her arms to get to the soldier. Without regard for comfort or safety they would press around a soldier on a motorcycle. On the other side of the approach, the Bulgarian political activists would greet their Soviet saviors. Here would be represented partisans, workers and members of the Fatherland Front.[379] The feelings of joy and gratitude would be expressed in the forms and faces of these brave individuals.

Having listened to Danko Mitov's explanation, and examining the models, Obretenov gestured to one of the sculptural groups, "So, over here we are shown the welcoming of the Soviet Army by the peasants." Mitov interrupted, "By the Nation." "By

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[378] All descriptions from TsDA (F-143, O-8, E-242, L-15).

[379] The Fatherland Front was a political coalition of Leftist parties through which the Communist Party was eventually able to take power.

the peasants," retorted Obretenov. "We [i.e. who are not peasants] are part of this nation, too. And over here (pointing at the other sculptural group) city life is given."[380] The members agreed that this presented a political problem. First of all, there were peasants involved in resistance, who had earned a place in the sculpture depicting political activists. But more importantly for our purposes, the representation of the peasants was too folksy- with "only peasant men in tight legged breeches, etc."[381] This "etc" presumably referred to the general old-fashioned nature of the peasant costume. The idea was floated that perhaps the village scene should include workers (which is not so strange a thought if we recall that during this time period the village was increasingly re-imagined as an urban space).[382] And as Obretenov argues, there is no village with only villagers. He resolves that, "It's ok to have a village and a city element- but be sure to include an intellectual element in the village."[383] Over the course of the argument, it becomes clear that the problem was not with representing the nation in the village, as it originally seemed, but rather that village life needed to reflect the values of new Bulgaria.

Looking at the monument, today, it is somewhat difficult to see how this "intellectual" element was included. What was ultimately depicted was a nation in transition. [Figures 3.5-3.8]

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[380] TsDA (F-143, O-8, E-242, L-82).
[381] TsDA (F-143, O-8, E-242, L-83).
[382] See Chapter 4.
[383] TsDA (F-143, O-8, E-242, L-86).

Figure 3.5: *Village Welcome, Front* (Personal Collection)

Figure 3.6: *Village Welcome, Rear* (Personal Collection)

Figure 3.7: *City Welcome, Front* (Personal Collection)

Figure 3.8: *City Welcome, Rear* (Personal Collection)

Two "tight breeched" old peasant men still embraced the Soviet soldiers as was described in the proposal. An elderly woman with a thick woolen apron and a long scarf wrapped around her head and shoulders offers bread to a woman soldier. But, in the younger generation, these vestiges of folk costume are all but gone. A youth in loose fitting trousers and a button up shirt enthusiastically grips a flag. Two young women greet the soldiers in sack like dresses indistinguishable from the ones worn by their urban counterpart on the other side of approach. One of these young women with a short kerchief in her hair, offers the soldier some grapes which she is cradling in her skirt. The other is bare headed and helps a young girl climb onto the back of the soldier's motorbike. The final woman, the mother of a baby that is being held up by one of the soldiers, is clearly *Maĭka Bŭlgariia*. Her dress is a simplified *sukman*. While bearing no signs of embroidery or even the teardrop curve of the traditional metal belt buckle, the dress is long and the blouse has loose sleeves. Her arms are upraised to receive the child from the soldier and her face tilted up to the sky. In the simplicity of her dress she is closer to her modern village sisters, than to mournful *Maĭka Bŭlgariia* of war-time sculpture. Her stocky frame and smiling face attest to the hopeful new world of socialist Bulgaria.

CONCLUSION

On June 5th 1950, during the first round of assessments, Dragan Lozenski remarked, "We are making a monument which the public will walk past. They will want to walk in front of it, and to associate with it." Stoian Sotirov nodded, replying, "In this

monument, sculpture will play a vital role. It must be planned carefully."[384] In the months and years of discussions which followed, the committee's attention was primarily upon the design of the sculptural elements of the monument, and in shaping the message that would be received when the public passed before it. Such excessive debate might seem unnecessary under Socialist Realism, with its strict guidelines. But, the guidance coming from Moscow was not as clear or as rigid as one might expect.

At first, perhaps it seems that all of the discussions and negotiations produced nothing more than a picture perfect example of a postwar Socialist Realist monument. The idealized sculptural figures on the Monument to the Soviet Army in Sofia seem entirely in-keeping with the aesthetic requirements coming from Moscow. But, as we have seen, the prominence of the Bulgarian peasant on the monument, the very *Bulgarianness* of the peasants, were all products of intense negotiation, tip-toeing and side stepping around half understood exterior expectations. For a monument glorifying the Soviet Army, this monument seems to speak eloquently of Bulgaria. Socialist Realism certainly allowed for national expression, but it is interesting that such expression should be happening at the height of Soviet anxieties about ideological conformity and political enemies in Eastern Europe, on a monument ostensibly glorifying the Soviet Army.

The image of the peasant was central to this self-representation on the monument. In the figure of the peasant, we see a break both from pre-communist depictions of

[384] TsDA (F-143, O-8, E-240, L-32).

peasant women in elaborate folk costume, and from a clean adoption of the Russian *kolkhoznitsa* [peasant woman]. It is not that Socialist Realism rejected folk culture. After all, two girls in folk costume held the ribbon at the opening ceremony of the monument. However, folk culture would become increasingly isolated from its peasant roots. And the new Bulgarian peasant, though retaining some flashes of red embroidery at her cuffs and collar, was emphatically a member of the agrarian proletariat. On the Monument to the Soviet Army, this new Bulgarian *selianka* expressed the sculptors' vision of a Bulgaria which was modern, but yet which retained its identity, a Bulgaria which was grateful and following, but not subservient.

Chapter Four: How to Make a Modern Peasant: Urbanization of the 1950s Bulgarian Village

Figure 4.1: *The Village of Neĭkovtsi* (Courtesy of Dr. Kristi Barnwell)

On the northern slopes of the Balkan range, about 5 miles outside of the city of Triavna, sits the small community of Neĭkovtsi.[385] Today, though still holding on to the designation of *selo* [village], the scattered collection of buildings is hardly worthy of the

[385] Descriptions of the village of Neikovtsi come from several trips to this village made in the Summer and Fall of 2009, and from discussions with inhabitants of the Neikovtsi and the neighboring settlement at Minkino.

term. Scarcely 20 people, most of whom are elderly, call the village their home. At the center of the town there is something approximating a village square, but it is more of a glorified crossroads, with one road leading from Triavna and continuing onward to the settlement of Minkino and the other leading up to the building site for an uncompleted dam, abandoned in the late 1980s.[386]

At the center of the square, an electrical tower stands awkwardly next to a modest monument to the war dead. Nearby, an empty school house slowly collapses in upon itself, too few students remaining to merit its upkeep. Across the square, a public house huddles into the rocky hillside. At one time, it had served as a store, a café, a reading room and later, a discotheque. Now, the store still opens every other Thursday to bring yogurt, cheese and bread to the aging inhabitants, but the group of old women at the door will warn you to tread carefully, as the floor has rotted through in several places. At the edge of town is a defunct tire factory, built during the 1960s push towards industrialization of the countryside,[387] but like the dam, the school and the discotheque, it was abandoned in the early 1990s. Although no buses service this community, such was clearly not always the case, as bus shelters and street lamps connect Neĭkovtsi and Minkino with the nearby town of Plachkovtsi. In general, the quiet village reflects an air of hushed abandonment so common of villages across Bulgaria today.

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[386] Galina Ivanova, 'Izgrazhdaneto na Izovir "Neikovtsi" e ot Znachenie za Tsialata Oblast' <http://www.tryavna.bg/?viewtr&3&25.02.2008>, accessed 10/15/2012.
[387] Creed, *Domesticating Revolution,* 19-20.

However, these empty buildings do not just speak of the village out-migration of recent years. Like crumbling fossils, they speak of the village's past, exposing the ideals and desires of the years after the Second World War, the years when villages across Bulgaria were incorporated into new economic, cultural and social frameworks. Neĭkovtsi might not appear on most maps, or seem to be of much importance in and of itself, but in its bones it reveals an urban vision for the countryside that characterized the developmental initiative of the postwar Communist government.

Speaking at the 3rd regular session of the National Council on March 10, 1959, Todor Zhivkov's words reflected this urbanizing vision for Bulgaria's extensive rural communities:

> We need to quickly urbanize the village in order to make it more similar to the cities not only in terms of water supply, electricity, transport, etc… but also it should be considered if it is not advisable that the inhabitants from scattered hamlets and small villages, especially in the Balkans and in the mid Balkan regions, will gradually gather to live in larger and better situated villages, many of which are planned, and the remaining may be planned in a short amount of time.[388]

Through urban planning, hygiene campaigns and cultural training, different state agencies, newly consolidated after the war, sought to make Bulgaria's villages as much like small cities as possible.

Efforts to "modernize" the Bulgarian village date back to the late 19th century, but the focus upon creating an urban space in rural locales was imported into Bulgaria along with communist ideology in the postwar period. Bulgarian modernizers borrowed the

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[388]A quoted in, E. Kamenov, *Khigiena na seloto* (Sofia: D I "Meditsina i Fizikultura", 1961), 5.

concept of 'Marxist materialism' from Soviet thought and practice. This was the idea that "new ways of organizing the home, the workplace or the street would, it was claimed, produce new social relations that would, in turn, produce a new consciousness."[389] In Bulgaria this translated to a belief that the peasantry living in the village would be literally enlightened and transformed through the reorganization, electrification and cleansing of the spaces around them.

Urbanization of the Bulgarian village was not just about the transformation of space, however. The modern peasant would be shaped through exposure to "urban culture" which included productive leisure, literacy, sports and an appreciation for the arts, as well as a new regime of personal hygiene, habits of cleanliness and so-called "sanitary culture.[390] At the same time, not all aspects of peasant culture were rejected. For example, folk music was retained. But in the context of village urbanization, folk music and other aspects of village culture deemed worthy of retention were themselves recoded as urban.[391] So when village groups came together to sing folk songs or perform folk dances they were in a sense participating in ideologically sanctioned urban culture. In theory, this meant that even when seemingly partaking in traditional village culture, the peasantry was still being shaped by the rhetoric of urbanization. And it was through interactions with these new cultural values and urban spaces that the peasantry would

[389] Crowley, 'Socialist Spaces: Sites of Everyday Life in the Eastern Bloc', 14-15.
[390] Interestingly many of these same programs regarding culture and hygiene were happening simultaneously in Bulgaria's cities.
[391] For a more in depth discussion of this process, see Chapter 5.

become something more closely approaching the ideal socialist subject- the urban proletariat.

The experience of urbanization in the village, however, rarely lived up to the ideals of policy makers and communist activists.[392] Rural urbanization may have sounded impressive on paper or in political speeches, but the implementation was fraught with difficulties. Official discourse however, did not seem to allow for delays. So when a combination of economic hardship, practical snarl ups and peasant resistance bemired the urbanization process, there was no corresponding acknowledgement in the official literature. This produced a growing rift between grim realities of village life and the optimistic official discourse. Confronted with this fissure, communist activists felt a profound anxiety that the peasants had not become a modern, agricultural proletariat as planned. And worse, despite state efforts to the contrary, they might never become one. This anxiety found voice in two competing images of the peasantry. On the one side, there was the ideal peasant: malleable, educated, cultured, organized and logical, and on the other side there was the violent, superstitious, alcoholic and lazy peasant.

The way these two images appear in the postwar literature clearly hearkens back to pre-communist stereotypes with the alcoholic, foolish, abusive male peasant, and the hardworking, long-suffering female peasant. However, in contrast to the romantic and disempowering prewar narratives, the socialist female peasant is the ultimate proletariat, who with state intervention has the potential to become a messenger of urban modernity

[392] Creed, *Domesticating Revolution,* 139.

in the village. The male peasant, on the other hand, represents oppressive tradition and backwards, destructive village culture. This dichotomy not only allowed modernizers to express their anxieties through instructional and semi-fictional narratives, but also suggests ways that modernization templates, imported from the Soviet Union, were adjusted to speak to Bulgarian sensibilities.

BULGARIAN HYGIENE BEFORE THE SECOND WORLD WAR

The postwar urbanization of Bulgaria's villages represented merely the most recent reaction to a long-term concern. Anxieties about the Balkan state's backward, unsanitary peasantry had plagued local and international modernizers since the late 19th century. And in the decades before the Second World War, this anxiety largely centered on newly emerging ideas about hygiene. When Florence Nightingale single-handedly improved the sanitary conditions in the British military hospitals during the Crimean War (1853-1856), she unknowingly began a trend which would increasingly link sanitation and hygiene with European modernity. Consequently, by the end of the 19th century, campaigns which aimed at the "improvement of village culture" generally translated into interventions for the improvement of village hygiene.

On the international level, hygiene became associated with ideas about "civilization." In this context, Southeastern Europe was seen as a kind of *cordon sanitaire* by the Western European medical establishment.[393] In other words,

[393] Zevasti Trubeta Christian Promitzer, Marius Turda, 'Framing Issues of Health, Hygiene and Eugenics in Southeastern Europe', in *Health, Hygiene and Eugenics in Southeastern Europe to 1945,* ed. Zevasti Trubeta Christian Promitzer, Marius Turda (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2011), 6.

international institutions usually associated with the military, established areas of quarantine which were meant to create a protective wall between Western Europe and the menace of perceived "eastern" diseases like the bubonic plague and cholera.[394] This kind of direct international intervention ended with the First World War, but international charitable organizations which had been working in the villages since the turn of the century continued to do so in the interwar years. In particular, American and British religious organizations sent committees into the Bulgarian countryside, in an attempt to improve the moral and sanitary culture of the village. [395]

The pre-war Bulgarian government was clearly influenced by international anxieties about the health of the peasantry, as the creation of a clean peasantry was understood to be a marker of Bulgaria's progress towards European modernity. After all, "in Southeastern Europe the health of the collective body (defined either as the nation or society) became synonymous with the health of the state."[396] Even before the First World War, hygiene publications and official reports detailed the appalling conditions in the villages and called for action. A 1909 official sanitary report, for example, states:

> Our rural population, which is busy with the everyday worries of the difficult provision of its subsistence, has had no time left to think about its appearance. It has neglected the cleanliness of the body. Consequently, among peasants several different parasites breed that are vectors for various infectious diseases.[397]

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[394] Ibid, 5.
[395] Some of these issues are discussed in Neuburger, 'Sanitizing Faith: Protestant Missionaries and the Making of Modern Bulgarians'.
[396] Christian Promitzer, 'Framing Issues of Health, Hygiene and Eugenics in Southeastern Europe', 2.
[397] Ibid, 3.

A few years later, on the eve of war, one health worker published an impassioned plea for the improvement of village sanitary culture. He writes, "If we want to preserve the future of our nation- economically and intellectually- we have to make sure to protect the lives of our villagers."[398] Health professionals agreed that improving village hygiene was essential to Bulgaria's moral and national progress, that Bulgaria's membership in European civilization was called into question by the state of its villages. However, it would not be until after the First World War that the first state-sponsored medical and sanitation establishments would take root in Bulgaria.

The first medical school was founded only in 1918, based at the Aleksandrovska Hospital in Sofia, with the inaugural class graduating in 1924.[399] Five years later, in 1929, outside funding supported the creation of an Institute for National Health, but, on the whole, health services remained decentralized during the interwar years.[400] Health initiatives were pursued by various religious and cooperative associations, foundations, municipalities, ministries and departments, but with very little reference to each other or to the policies laid down by the state. They were financially and organizationally independent, and lacked the centralized vision which characterized similar postwar initiatives.[401]

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[398]V. Iv. Kenov, *Khigiena Za Selenina* (Kiustendil: Pechatnitsa Pilev, 1914).
[399]Daskalov, *Bŭlgarskoto obshtestvo 1878-1939,* 68-69. For comparison, a medical faculty was founded in Athens in 1837 and in Bucharest in 1857. Christian Promitzer, 'Framing Issues of Health, Hygiene and Eugenics in Southeastern Europe', 10.
[400] Christian Promitzer, 'Framing Issues of Health, Hygiene and Eugenics in Southeastern Europe', 12-13.
[401] Nikola Konstantinov, *Sotsialistichesko preustroĭstvo na zdravnoto delo v Bŭlgariia, 1944-1951* (Sofia: Meditsina i fizkultura, 1983), 240.

However, that is not to say there was no effort at centralization at all. Although not as extreme as the at times forcible consolidation of health services after the war, there were initiatives to simplify this network of organizations, and to eradicate some of the consequent inefficiency, most notably with the passing of the Law for National Health in 1929. This law, while not affecting the top leadership, clearly attempted to consolidate hygiene initiatives on the local level, citing in particular initiatives to help mothers, and to fight alcoholism and tuberculosis.[402] Of course, this mostly pertained to state affiliated offices, and did not approach the drastic measures taken fifteen years later.[403]

In terms of content, interwar hygiene campaigns in Bulgaria bear striking resemblance to European "civilizing," missions among their working classes and in the colonies.[404] In the western hygiene tradition, however, rural sanitation was often overlooked. These grand "modernizing" projects which sought to clean the city through sewers and paved streets, contrasted the dirty city with the countryside- an imagined place of health and purity.[405] In the 19th century, an entire literature emerged in Europe which "approvingly set off the healthy simplicity of the rustics, their closeness to the land, to say nothing of their heartfelt faith in God, against the insincerity and materialism

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[402] Daskalov, *Bŭlgarskoto obshtestvo 1878-1939,* 69.

[403] Between 1945 and 1951, this diverse network of health services was consolidated under the state, so that by 1950, all hospitals, clinics, pharmacies and drugstores had been nationalized. See: Konstantinov, *Sotsialistichesko preustroĭstvo na zdravnoto delo v Bŭlgariia, 1944-1951,* 240-242.

[404] Alison Bashford, *Imperial Hygiene: A Critical History of Colonialism, Nationalism and Public Health* (Houndsmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004). Winks, *Europe and the Making of Modernity, 1815-1914,* 295.

[405] Rosie Cox, 'Country: Constructing Rural Dirt, Introduction', in *Dirt: New Geographies of Cleanliness and Contamination,* ed. Ben Campkin and Rosie Cox (London: I. B. Tauris, 2007), 153.

of city dwellers."[406] Of course, there was a corresponding literature which emphasized the dirt and brutality of village life, but neither group was particularly interested in the reality of peasant life. As historian Peter Gay explains, "They painted their rural portraits without a sitter."[407]

Modernizers in interwar Bulgaria struggled to reconcile the similarly idealized countryside of the national imagination with the grim reality faced by the majority of the population. Perhaps this was because Bulgaria's urban population was so small, or perhaps it was because the modernizers, themselves, were former peasants, whatever the reason, unlike their western counterparts, Bulgarian hygienists could not ignore the sanitary needs of their rural population. In response to this perceived need, Bulgarian state affiliated agencies undertook vaccination campaigns, the promotion of sanitary education in schools and the provision of adult courses on rural sanitation and personal hygiene.[408] In keeping with the symbolic importance of the peasantry, these actions undoubtedly had political and nationalist implications.[409]

After all, if the peasantry- the symbolic representation of the nation- was healthy, then the state was healthy. If the peasantry was unhealthy, what would this say about the state? This also touches on anxieties about Bulgaria's modernity, and what it meant to be both a peasant and a modern state. These two ideas would surely come into conflict if the

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[406] Gay, *Schnitzler's Century,* 183.
[407] Ibid, 184.
[408] Christian Promitzer, 'Framing Issues of Health, Hygiene and Eugenics in Southeastern Europe', 13.
[409] This was true in West European urban contexts as well. See for example: Andrew Robert Aisenberg, *Contagion : Disease, Government, and the "Social Question" in Nineteenth-Century France* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1999). Or in colonial contexts where hygiene was used to create hierarchies of belonging see, for example: Bashford, *Imperial Hygiene*.

peasantry in question was living in such abysmal conditions. Arguments about Bulgaria's modernity and her inclusion into "civilized" Europe were undoubtedly complicated by a peasant population which so clearly did not meet with European standards of behavior and hygiene.[410]

As we have seen in Chapter 1, one way these two ideas were reconciled was through the display of peasant culture in the sanitized and "scientific" display cases of the National Ethnographic Museum. There folk costumes and kukeri masks placed in the "rational" environment of the museum could be incorporated into Bulgaria's modern urban culture. However, in the villages themselves, modernizers focused upon improving the hygienic *practices* of the peasant population in order to create a peasantry that met the behavioral and sanitary expectations espoused in Europe.

This emphasis on practice is evident in both instructional publications and in the press. As we have seen in Chapter 2, during the interwar period, a press emerged catering particularly to the needs and interests of the rural population. Along with the cultural and economic issues previously discussed, the newspaper *Nasheto Selo* [Our village] published a weekly column entitled *Zdravna Prosveta* [Health Education]. Here were published questions sent in by the readers about various health concerns. For example, on

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[410] Bulgaria's desire to be considered part of Europe was always ambiguous, at times rejecting and at time accepting European standards of "civilization". Within this discourse there were simultaneously negative images of the West as exploitative and foreign and anxieties that the West perceived Bulgaria as "less civilized." See Neuburger, *The Orient Within: Muslim Minorities and the Negotiation of Nationhood in Modern Bulgaria,* 3. The evaluation of the Balkans by Western Europeans as "uncivilized" based on hygiene has emerged in several studies, including: Bozidar Jezernik, *Wild Europe: The Balkans in the Gaze of Western Travellers* (London: Saqi Books, 2004), 44, and Christian Promitzer, 'Framing Issues of Health, Hygiene and Eugenics in Southeastern Europe'.

June 15, 1932, G. Dimitrov of the village of Vishalii in the Iambolsko District, wrote in to inquire whether it was better to wash with warm or cold water. The columnist answered in scientific terms about the advantages and dangers to the "human organism" of a brisk wash in cold water.[411] Most of the entries are of this variety. How can one help with a strained neck? What is the best way to care for one's hair? Is there value in medicinal herbs?

The journal was also occasionally prescriptive, as with the column published in October 7, 1934 regarding preparing for winter. This time, without prompting from a village reader, the columnist enumerates some of the dangers facing the rural population with the onset of winter. In particular, the columnist points to the dangers of long days spent in dark, stuffy, overheated rooms. To relieve these problems, he suggests larger windows (to improve light and ventilation), and a stove rather than an open fire. This would cut down on smoke in the home and it is economical as it can be used for both heating and cooking! However, the most important action one should take is to remove your outdoor clothing when indoors, and to put it back on before going outdoors. He explains that outdoor clothing is unhygienic and far too warm for inside the house. However, the warmth of the home can give one a false sense of comfort upon emerging into the cold, so it is important to bundle up appropriately.[412]

Today, this kind of advice seems like common sense because we live in the midst of the culture which produced it, but what we are seeing is the importation of specific

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[411] Dr. Iordanov, 'Zdravna Prosveta,' *Nasheto Selo,* June 15, 1932, 3.
[412] V. Sheĭmanov, 'Zdravna Prosveta,' *Nashe Selo*, October 7, 1934, 3.

behavioral norms. These seemingly mundane recommendations are more than just health advice; they are an expression of the cultural expectations of a specific historic moment.[413] In his work on Western European perceptions of the Balkans in the 19th century, Božidar Jezernik aptly explains the relationship between hygiene and culture. He uses the example of spitting. In the early 18th century, a French traveler to the region bemoaned the indecency of *not* being allowed to spit. Fifty years later, spitting in France was falling out of fashion, and so no mention of spitting is made in the travel literature of that time. In the 19th century, however, a French traveler to Dalmatia complains at length about the locals participating in this 'odious practice.'[414] So spitting, which had once been a sign of civilization, was now an unhygienic sign of backwardness. And although there is science behind hygiene, hygiene campaigns must also be seen as a kind of cultural imperialism. As Mary Douglas writes in her study on the relationship between hygiene and religion, "As we know it, dirt is essentially disorder. There is no such thing as absolute dirt: it exists in the eye of the beholder, if we abhor dirt, it is not because of craven fear […] Nor do our ideas about disease account for the range of behavior in cleaning or avoiding dirt. Dirt offends against order. Eliminating it is not a negative movement, but a positive effort to organize the environment."[415] By recognizing that this

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[413] Hygiene as a cultural phenomenon is widely supported in the scholarly literature, for example: Virginia Smith, *Clean: A History of Personal Hygiene and Purity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 2, Bashford, *Imperial Hygiene*. 5. Tricia Starks, *The Body Soviet: Propaganda, Hygiene, and the Revolutionary State* (Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2008) 4, Hoffmann, *Stalinist Values,* 17.
[414] Jezernik, *Wild Europe,* 45.
[415] Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concept of Pollution and Taboo* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 2.

"positive effort" is more than a rational reaction to dirt, one can begin to unpack the culture behind the effort. This cultural aspect is even more obvious in some of the official literature of interwar Bulgaria, which deals with more than whether or not to wear one's coat indoors.

Take, for example, the text on village hygiene published by the Ministry of National Education in 1933. The author, Iv. Khr. Ivanov writes, "The peasants must learn how to live cleanly. Their homes must shine with cleanliness."[416] He takes issue with dark, unventilated village home, with its small windows and dirt floor. Like the columnists in *Nasheto Selo* he focuses upon sanitary habits. For example, he encourages health workers to educate peasants about the dangers of burning manure in the home.[417] Sleeping on the ground, especially the ground made of packed dirt must be discouraged. If a bed is too expensive, some kind of mattress should be procured. The mattress must be aired once or twice a month.[418] Farm animals should not be allowed in the house. Personal hygiene is of central importance here, too. The author gives recommendations regarding proper diet, and preparation of food.[419] In terms of clothing, he has opinions not just on material, but on appropriate colors for summer and winter, and the extreme hygienic importance of wearing underwear.[420] In other words, village culture, the habits of everyday life must be changed, must be brought in line with "civilization." Ivanov writes despairingly, "The peasants continue to be buried in ignorance and to live like

[416] Iv. Khr. Ivanov, *Selska khigiena* (Sofia: Ministerstvoto na Narodnoto Prosveshtenie, 1930), 17.
[417] Ibid, 15.
[418] Ibid, 18.
[419] Ibid, 30-40.
[420] Ibid, 43-44.

half-savage people,"[421] underlining this connection between hygiene and perceived civilization. It should be noted that this notion of "civilization" was not completely static during the interwar years. As international tensions grew, displays of nationalism permeated every level of cultural production, including hygiene, so that by the early years of the Second World War, the concept of "civilization" became increasingly nationalistic in form.

Although the state was embroiled in the practical effects of wartime, domestic efforts to improve the village did not cease entirely. Even as Bulgaria reluctantly joined forces with the Germans in early 1941, publications about the improvement of village culture continued to be produced.[422] Additionally, in the early years of the war, the Ministry of National Education was active in organizing courses on issues of hygiene and agriculture.[423] In content, there were many similarities with pre-war campaigns with the stated goal of "raising the general culture of the peasantry."[424] However, during the war years, there was also a strong nationalist element to these hygiene initiatives: Bulgaria could be found in the hygienic peasant home. As one program explains, "The village housewife is able to create a true Bulgarian atmosphere [in her home…] The modern Bulgarian situation must agree with the requirements of the most stringent hygiene, followed by convenience, practicality and national style."[425] And as the war allowed

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[421] Ibid, 6.
[422] For example Zl. Simeonova, *Merki za podobrenie zhivota i kulturata na selskata zhena* (Pleven: Zemedelska Kamara- Pleven, 1941).
[423] TsDA (F-177k, O-3, E-747, L-38).
[424] TsDA (F-177k, O-3, E-747, L-43).
[425] TsDA (F-177k, O-3, E-747, L-45).

Bulgaria to "reclaim" the populations of Macedonia, educators were sent to the newly acquired territories bearing this message of Bulgarian culture and hygiene.[426] As we shall see, after the war this nationalist discourse would continue to inform the development of the socialist "civilizing" project in the village.

In Bulgaria, projects for improving public health "posed a socialized and socializing resource for those technologies of power employed by the state to control, supervise and discipline its subjects."[427] The civilizing impetus of these hygiene projects is undeniable, and the keystone of this endeavor was in re-educating the population into accepting "civilized" cultural hygienic norms. Perhaps because of the de-centralized and uncoordinated nature of the health establishment, these campaigns were not hugely effective. However, they did provide an already existent framework, both cultural and practical, upon which campaigns to improve village culture could be based after the Second World War.

CREATING MODERN SOVIET CITIZENS UNDER STALIN

When considering the economic and cultural upheavals of the Bulgarian countryside after the war, it is impossible to ignore the importance of Soviet Union as an inspiration for the collectivization of agriculture and urbanization of the village. As Todor Zhivkov remarked in his March 28, 1967 report to the Co-operative Farm

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[426]For example, TsDA (F-177k, O-3, E-747, L-8, 61-62, 67, 109-110). Bulgaria occupied Macedonia in 1941 as part of the German attack on Yugoslavia and Greece. Acquiring this territory, which had been lost to the Bulgarians in 1918, was a key motivator in their participation on the Nazi side. As part of their occupation, they set about "Bulgarianizing" the population through educational and religious institutions. Crampton, *A Concise History of Bulgaria,* 170.

[427] Christian Promitzer, 'Framing Issues of Health, Hygiene and Eugenics in Southeastern Europe', 16.

Congress, "The Bulgarian Communist Party, drawing on the rich experience of the Kolkhozes in the Soviet Union […] took correct decisions on the theoretical and practical problems arising from the development of the co-operative system in the country, effectively and promptly promoting the inherent processes of its movement forward."[428] As with so many things, it has been suggested that Bulgaria's reorganization of the countryside was a direct import from the Soviet Union.[429] And indeed, the Soviet ideological influence after the war is undeniable. On the other hand, as we have seen, Bulgaria was not a blank slate. Or, as Gerald Creed puts it, in his discussion of the Bulgarian agricultural collectivization, "The ideological primacy of the Soviet example […] should not blind us to other factors."[430] So, in order to assess whether and how Bulgaria "domesticated", to borrow a term from Creed, their campaigns to improve village culture, we must first consider the Soviet template upon which these campaigns were based.

In the Soviet Union, as elsewhere, hygiene was an important stage for the performance of modernity. Under Stalinism these hygiene initiatives were closely associated with the industrialization and collectivization campaigns of the 1930s. The initiatives encompassed several overarching goals: they sought to create a healthy and productive workforce, they sought to create "cultured" citizens, and they ultimately

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[428] Todor Zhivkov, 'Today's Social Character of the Co-Operative Farm: From the Report to the Co-Operative Farm Congress, March 28, 1967', in *Problems of the Construction of an Advanced Socialist Society in Bulgaria: Reports and Speeches,* ed. A. Rizov (Sofia, Bulgaria: Sofia Press, 1969), 356.
[429] For example, Teodor Shanin, 'Cooperation and Collectivization: The Case of Eastern Europe', in *Two Blades of Grass*, ed. Peter Worsley (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1971).
[430] Creed, *Domesticating Revolution,* 36.

sought to mobilize and politicize the population.[431] Soviet hygienists believed in creating a rational, healthy lifestyle for the population based on concepts of balance and reason. As Tricia Starks explains, "ordered lives produced healthy bodies and politically enlightened, productive, and happy populations; strong bodies generated balanced minds that would, in turn, choose the most rational, equitable, and inevitable of political, social, and economic structures, namely, socialism."[432] Hygiene, however, was just one of the cultural norms being forwarded by Stalinist modernizers.

In her work, *Everyday Stalinism,* Sheila Fitzpatrick suggests that there were actually three cultural levels to be mastered in the Soviet Union of the 1930s.[433] The first level included basic hygiene and literacy. The second level consisted of the mastery of cultural norms such as table manners, public behavior, and communist ideology. This would involve such 'civilized' activities as "sleeping on sheets, wearing underwear, eating with knife and fork, washing hands before meals, reading the newspaper, not beating your wife and children, and not getting so drunk you missed work."[434] The final level of culture, applicable to the new elite managerial class, bears striking similarity to pre-revolutionary "bourgeois culture." It encompassed the mastery of "good manners" such as neat dress, polite speech and an appreciation for the fine arts such as opera and ballet.[435]

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[431] Hoffmann, *Stalinist Values,* 17-18, and Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Every Day Stalinism: Ordinary Life in Extraordinary Times: Soviet Russia in the 1930s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 80.
[432] Starks, *The Body Soviet,* 4.
[433] Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism,* 80.
[434] Ibid, 81.
[435] Ibid, 80.

In the 1930s, the Soviet population was barraged by cultural and legislative directives which sought to instill these new norms into the daily routines and behaviors practiced by every level of society. The minutiae of everyday life came under the scrutiny of health inspectors, and city ordinances punished unhygienic behaviors.[436] A 1938 Stalingrad city ordinance, for example, charged a 100-ruble fine to streetcar passengers whose clothing was insufficiently laundered,[437] an issue also taken up by the Commissariat of Health which published detailed explanations about how to properly launder clothing and how to thoroughly wash each part of the body.[438] But the population was not expected to necessarily pour over dry tomes on personal hygiene, and anyway, uniform enforcement of such petty legislation would have been impractical. So in addition to the "stick," the working classes were also offered a "carrot." This took the form of an array of officially sanctioned leisure activities which sought to educate the population about these new cultural expectations.[439]

The working classes were treated to evenings of educational films, political lectures and amateur plays on such convivial subjects as hygiene, diction, manners and comportment, which integrated these new cultural norms into leisure and entertainment.[440] Other times, actors put on mock trials of people exhibiting unacceptable

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[436] Starks, *The Body Soviet,*6.
[437] Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism,* 34.
[438] Hoffmann, *Stalinist Values,* 18.
[439] Leisure activities, often perceived as destructive or associated with decadent bourgeois culture, presented a problem for the Soviet authorities. In the 1930s, leisure had to be educational and constructive. While Party members may have spent their leisure hours at the ballet or at dances and soirees, exercising their new manners, the working classes were less pleasantly engaged.
[440] Hoffmann, *Stalinist Values,* 33.

behaviors such as illiteracy, slovenliness, alcoholism, and spitting.[441] Museums were established which "demonstrated the positive effects of fresh air, sunshine, and exercise."[442] In the countryside, the Commissariat of Education organized literary evenings, sporting events and art circles with the aim of "distracting peasants from drinking and fighting."[443] And throughout the country Soviet authorities built specialized "cultural houses" and "cultural palaces" to contain these new leisure activities.

In fact, new rational spaces, both public and private, made up an important aspect of this cultural re-education of the population. In addition to public buildings, like the palaces of culture, the homes of the workers and the peasants were supposed to reflect these new cultural values. As David Hoffman explains in his work reconstructing the cultural norms of the Stalinist era, "[Soviet officials] wished to see workers and peasants transformed into cultured people, whose tasteful homes would both reflect and promote their progress from benighted masses to Soviet citizens."[444] In the countryside, these ideals were generally slow to manifest, but the ultimate goal for the reorganization of private village spaces can be seen in the idealized "Potemkin" village, a model village, which represented "not life as it was, but life as good Soviet citizens hoped it was becoming."[445] Unlike traditional peasant homes, the model houses were made of bricks, with plastered walls which divided the space into rooms. These rooms each had distinct

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[441] Starks, *The Body Soviet,* 4.
[442] Ibid, 4.
[443] Hoffmann, *Stalinist Values,* 33.
[444] Ibid, 23.
[445] Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Stalin's Peasants: Resistance and Survival in the Russian Village after Collectivization* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 262.

uses and were brightly lit, with large windows decorated with lace curtains and potted plants.[446]

However, it should be considered that beneath this drive to reorganize the public and private spaces of the village and to bring peasant culture in line with basically urban bourgeois cultural norms, lay a deeply ingrained distaste for the peasantry within the Soviet intelligentsia. For Soviet medical and hygiene workers, as well as for the state, the peasantry was associated with an intransigent backwardness, ignorance and slovenliness: the opposite of the cleanly-dressed proletariat. One embodied everything that should be shunned and destroyed; the other symbolized the Soviet Union's positive progress towards Socialism.[447] In terms of policy, this meant that the state generally considered the peasantry "beyond the reach of Soviet order."[448]

Urbanization of the countryside offered a solution to this problem. This was expressed not only through models of urbanized rural life in the model village, but also through the emphasis upon bringing electricity to the village. It was hoped that electrification would bring socialist consciousness to the peasantry: "Electrification, the most visible manifestation of the modern, would make way for modern thought and life in the countryside and transform even the most forsaken hut into a Soviet home and the most backward peasant into a proletarian."[449] And it was this focus upon urbanizing the countryside through the illumination and reorganization of space, as well as the

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[446] Ibid, 263.
[447] Hoffmann, *Stalinist Values,* 20.
[448] Starks, *The Body Soviet,* 30.
[449] Ibid.

importation of so-called "urban culture," which was to become one of the key concepts adopted by policy makers in postwar Bulgaria.

TRANSITIONS TO SOCIALIST MODERNITY

In early February 1945, the Ministry of Education organized a series of lectures in the village of Butan in the Vratsa region. The local *chitalishte* [reading room] had been founded in 1911, and had for the previous forty years provided a space for theatrical presentations and community meetings.[450] Now, that space was given over to the project of educating the villagers about their roles in the newly emerging socialist Bulgarian state. Lecture topics varied from agricultural advice to information on the evils of tobacco and alcohol, and history lessons on the "twenty-one years since the death of Lenin."[451] Women in the village learned about their historical conditions in Bulgaria, as well as the rosy future that awaited them.[452] Similar cultural events were being staged throughout the country with a focus on historical, practical, political and artistic themes.[453]

The content of these lectures clearly reflected some of the cultural norms of the postwar government. They placed the development of the Bulgarian village within a historical frame work beginning in the Soviet Union. Like the interwar Soviet population, Bulgarian villagers were instructed on appropriate behaviors and encouraged to partake of constructive leisure activities. But these developments were also building upon an

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[450] Wikipedia Contributors, 'Butan (Selo)', <http://bg.wikipedia.org/wiki/Бутан_(село)>, accessed 10/24/2012
[451] TsDA (F-2, O-3, E-7, L-22-28).
[452] TsDA (F-2, O-3, E-7, L-28).
[453] TsDA (F-2, O-3, E-7, L-197).

already existent local infrastructure- in particular the *chitalishte.* Earlier in 1945, the Ministry of Education released an advisory report regarding cultural weeks, during which cultural events would be organized throughout the countryside: "While conducting cultural weeks in the future, the Ministry will cooperate more actively with the regional countryside […] and produce a plan for the region […] which will take into consideration the distance between settlements, the available reading rooms and school buildings in every village […]"[454] One village wrote in despair that although they did indeed have a *chitalishte* which had been founded forty years previously, "the standing structure housing reading room was destroyed, because it was not useful to the Fascists."[455] In general, however, activities for village improvement immediately after the war took advantage of whatever local facilities were to be found, and their use suggests that the new cultural and modernizing regime for the countryside was not working with a blank slate.

As it stood, one of the biggest problems facing the fledgling communist government, both politically and culturally, was the traditional distrust between the city and the countryside. Although, as we saw in Chapter 2, there had been attempts to bridge this divide before the Second World War, these initiatives were not met with resounding success. After the war, the majority of the country's population was still rural and maintained the traditional suspicion of the cities which had so worried interwar nation-builders. This position posed a problem for the socialists, for an ideology which glorifies

[454] TsDA (F-2, O-3, E-7, L-196).
[455] TsDA (F-2, O-3, E-7, L-115).

the city would sit awkwardly with a predominantly rural society which largely viewed the city with suspicion. Politically, this was resolved by the consolidation of power in the hands of the communists at the expense of the peasant parties. However, the political potential of the peasantry could not be denied, and the Agrarian party, though virtually powerless, did continue to exist in the postwar years. Nevertheless, the issue of selling and applying communist ideology among the rural masses remained.

Health and cultural workers in the countryside were keenly aware of the problem. In 1946, one activist reporting to the Ministry of Education wrote:

> Our sorrowful past has created animosity between the city and the village. […] That is why social reforms which deal with the fundamental questions of public utilities, health concerns and social concerns re-plow the dividing furrow between the village and the city […] We cannot speak of the development of public utilities without embracing both the village and the entire city; we cannot speak about health concerns without creating healthy homes in the village and in all quarters of the city. We cannot speak of democratization of education, without having sufficient schools in the village and in all quarters of the city.
>
> The fact that the greatest part of our nation lives in the village, obliges us only toward one thing: we must not forget the Bulgarian village, and we must give attention to life in the village, and we must take care of the inhabitants of the village, as much as those of the city.[456]

According to the 1934 census, out of a total number of 1, 284, 993 Bulgarian households, 919, 934 lived in villages or smaller communities, and 365, 059 lived in cities.[457] With the larger family size in the countryside, this meant that only 21% of the population represented ideal urban dweller of communist ideology. Consequently, as we have seen,

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[456] Vera Zlatareva, *Seliankata i novoto vreme* (Sofia: Izdatelstvo "EDINSTVO", 1947), 6.
[457] Ibid, 5.

the peasant justifiably held a position of symbolic importance within Bulgarian national iconography. This meant that the whole-hearted adoption of the Soviet glorification of the urban worker at the expense of the peasantry would be problematic. By looking at the literature surrounding the initiatives to "civilize" the village, we can begin to see how both the Soviet and pre-war modernization templates were adjusted for their new environment.

THE CITY IN THE VILLAGE

In postwar Bulgaria two major categories emerged in the published literature devoted to the improvement of village culture. The first type of literature might be described as "success narratives." That is, books which are lively published accounts of the great successes that have occurred in the Bulgarian countryside. Through intimate tales of personal struggles and public victories, the reader was informed about the drastic improvements that had occurred in the life of the Bulgarian peasant, and about the modernity of the Bulgarian peasantry- all brought about by the work of the Communist Party in the countryside. The second type, and the one most similar to pre-war texts, was prescriptive literature: this was your basic hygiene manual or text book. The audience for this literature varied. Some examples were clearly aimed at health workers, whereas others were the kinds of texts that might be read by the population in general.[458] It is in

[458] An example of the former is, B. Slavkov, *Uchebnik po khigiena* (Sofia: Dŭrzhavno Izdatelstvo "Nauka i Izkustvo", 1956). And of the latter, L. D. Sultanova, *Polezni i vredni navitsi* (Sofia: Meditsina i Fizikultura, 1961).

these more practical texts that we can see the most obvious break with pre-war hygiene and village improvement literature.

Where the pre-war literature focused almost exclusively upon changing peasant habits, the emphasis in postwar hygiene literature is upon changing the peasant environment. In his work on 1930s Soviet architecture and urban planning, Anatole Kopp remarks, "The object of architecture, its "goal" […] had become the creation of the structures needed to transform the nation's way of life, while the intention of the architects was to erect no longer mere buildings, but "new social condensers" capable of producing a mutation in man."[459] This is a concept which was clearly embraced by activists and policy makers in postwar Bulgaria.

The perceived effect of space upon the peasantry can be seen throughout the Bulgarian texts. The backwards, unhealthy, petit bourgeois peasant of the past was a product of his unhygienic irrational environment, just as the modern enlightened peasant-proletariat was the product of the modernized and sanitized village space. One text from 1961 contrasts the detrimental effects of the old village with the positive effects of the new village:

> Gone is the old kulak village, the village of the agricultural laborer's pain, of the cramped streets, of fences, of tumbledown huts, of stomach and spotted typhus. [Now] our village quickly emerges from many centuries' long darkness and misery and with swift steps goes towards a prosperous, healthy and happy life. The victory of socialism in the village is made possible by the radical

[459] Anatole Kopp, *Town and Revolution: Soviet Architecture and City Planning 1917-1935*, trans. Thomas E. Burton (New York: George Braziller, Inc., 1970), 101.

> transformation of the village lifestyle, by the reorganization and urban planning of the village.[460]

It was through the reorganization of the village that the mentality of the peasantry would become more like that of the working class.[461]

Such texts reject the romance of the traditional village, which they claim brought only hardship. One writer, lamenting the position of pre-war peasant women, explains,

> The household work of the village woman was much more difficult and heavier than housework in the city. In order to clean the floor, to wash the dishes, to bathe the children, and to constantly do the laundry, the peasant woman carried water on her shoulders from afar. It is possible to think romantically of spring evenings and of girls with a bachelor to shoulder the burden. But this romanticism exists at the expense of the peasant woman.[462]

The romance of the Bulgarian village was most clearly embodied in Bulgaria's folk culture. And as the text above suggests, the preservation and display of folk culture did seem problematic in the early postwar years. It was difficult to promote a new modern vision of the countryside while holding on to traditional aspects of village culture (particularly if those aspects were also associated with past political regimes.) As we shall see in chapter 5, this contradiction was partially resolved through recasting folk culture itself as urban, as a relic of Bulgaria's proto-urban past and therefore worthy of preservation.

In newly designated museum towns, the romance of the village was allowed to continue, but it was emphatically relegated to a specific historic moment. Take, for

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[460] Kamenov, *Khigiena na seloto,* 5.
[461] A point that Zhivkov reiterates in his speech: Zhivkov, 'Today's Social Character of the Co-Operative Farm: From the Report to the Co-Operative Farm Congress, March 28, 1967', 351.
[462] Zlatareva, *Seliankata i novoto vreme,* 28.

example, the museum town of Koprivshtitsa. This sleepy mountain town had been the heart of the Uprising of April 1876 against the Ottomans. In the mid-19th century it was categorized as a city with a bustling economy in crafts and livestock. Over the following seventy-five years, it fell into neglect and lost much of its population to the new urban centers of the 20th century. In the 1950s, however, the somnolent village was re-designated as a museum town and put on display as an example of a 19th century city, with cobbled streets, high walls, charming old wells and tiled rooftops. In fact, many of the aspects which made Koprivshitsa so picturesque, romantic and worthy of preservation, were the very aspects of village life which had been selected for modernization in the newly renovated Bulgarian villages.

If we consider briefly, the cobblestoned, winding streets of Koprivshitsa, a tourist brochure would exclaim, "If our nation had blood vessels, then undoubtedly they would be in the same design and would resemble Koprivshtitsa's net of streets."[463] Here the ill-organized streets became carefully preserved examples of Bulgaria's romantic revolutionary. When looking upon a very similar scene in a less glorified location, however, a 1956 hygiene textbook reads: "the majority of our villages are situated in unfavorable (from a hygienic point of view) terrain. They are badly planned with ghastly, narrow, curving streets and squares."[464] Far from finding romance in this "net of streets," the text goes on to explain that these dirty, winding thoroughfares were obstacles to the

[463] Vasil Beĭzov, *Koprivshtitsa* (Sofia: Bŭlgarski Khudozhnik, 1964), 5.
[464] Slavkov, *Uchebnik po khigiena,* 247.

cultural and political development of the Bulgarian peasant and the construction of socialism.

So, while romanticism was not entirely abandoned in the postwar years, it was rejected in the hygiene texts. Socialist modernizers did not look to traditional village culture and organization for inspiration. Indeed, the environment most conducive to the proper development of socialist culture was not a rural environment at all, but rather an urban environment. In 1967, Todor Zhivkov would declare that, "The great achievements in raising the living standards [and] the economic and social development of the Bulgarian village, and in giving them a new and modern look, are part of the general and steady process of gradually overcoming the differences between town and village inherited from the past."[465] In other words, the long standing division between village and city would be resolved by making the village as much like the city as possible.

Conceptually, this city in the village was reminiscent of the Soviet "green city" with its broad, tree lined boulevards and designated parks and athletic fields.[466] Just as in the center of the village of Neĭkovtsi, the new Bulgarian village roads would be widened, straightened and paved, with attention given to air flow and convenient connection with newly or soon to be constructed public buildings which would replace or augment the

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[465] Zhivkov, 'Today's Social Character of the Co-Operative Farm: From the Report to the Co-Operative Farm Congress, March 28, 1967', 354.

[466] Kopp, *Town and Revolution,* 178-179. Access to athletic fields and cultural buildings seems to have generally true of all schools of urban planning for the Soviet city. However, the "Green City" was one of two major schools of thought for resolving some of the problems of the 1930s Socialist city. This vision focused particularly upon thinning the urban population through providing green spaces and dispersed single family housing. For the most part, this conceptual re-working of the city remained on the drawing board as new cities like Magnitogorsk developed mostly in reaction to immediate needs rather than guided by an ideological vision.

local *chitalishte*.[467] Looking back upon the programs of the 1950s, one activist boasts, "[Our initiatives have] renewed their residential buildings, finished surfacing, paving, and asphalting of street networks, they greened the villages. More of the villages got water supply and electricity."[468]

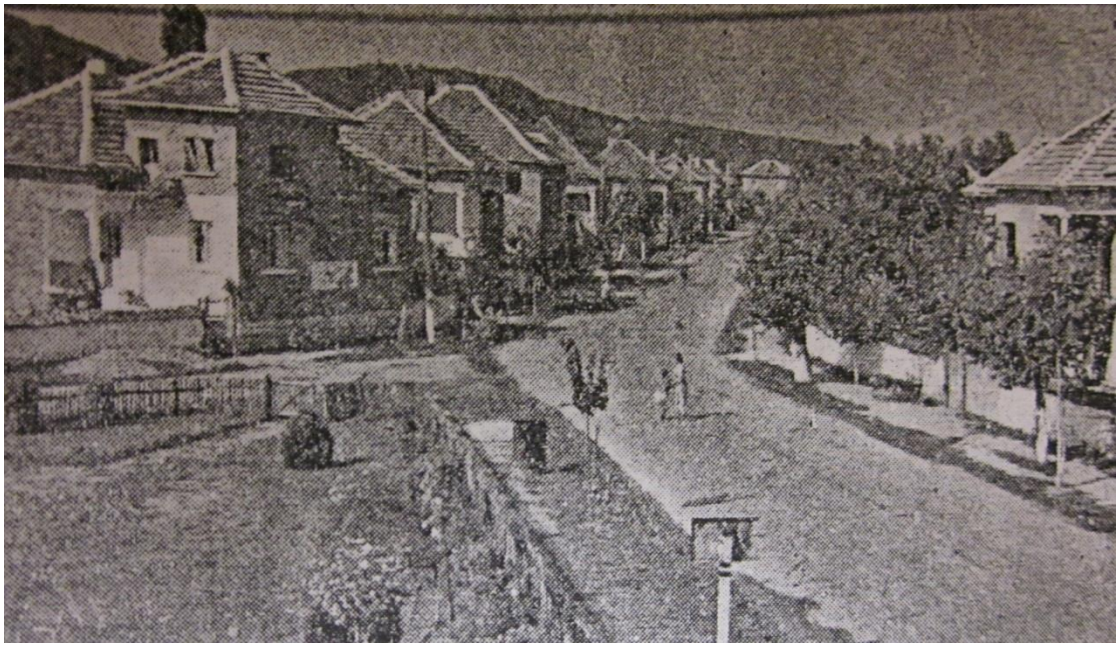

Figure 4.2: *Village Street* (Khigiena na seloto, 1961, p. 15)

A photo of a model settlement in the 1961 publication, *Khigiena na seloto,* shows the clean lines, detached houses and ordered yards that modernizers hoped would soon become the norm across the countryside.[469]

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[467]Kamenov, *Khigiena na seloto,* 8.
[468] T. Grudov, *Pochistvane na seloto* (Zdravni Besedi za Seloto; Sofia, Bulgaria: Meditsina i Fizikultura, 1960), 5.
[469] Kamenov, *Khigiena na seloto,* 14-15.

The first step towards this more urban village, before paving roads and installing sewers, was providing the population with electricity. Clearly drawing upon the Soviet model, Bulgarian policy makers believed in the transformative power of electricity.[470] One text from 1948 reads, "National strength lies in the ability to obtain more electric energy, to be able to build electric wires up to every last village."[471] In another official report written in 1947 about the progress of the electrification process, one official wrote: "The electrification of our nation […] will result in the extinguishing of the remaining gas lamps in the villages, the extinguishing of smoky village fires and [the illumination of] the entrance into the village home. It will act as a helper in the agriculture economy and in the homemaking work of the peasant woman."[472] Electricity would strengthen the nation and bring the light of modernity right into the village home.

But electrifying the peasant's home was merely the first step. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, there was a shift in state ideology from "building socialism" to "living socialism." For the Bulgarian village, this meant a reorganization of the very structure of the home. Dark, smoke-filled, tumble down residences were to give way to new bright, rational spaces.[473] The traditional village home had two rooms, one for cooking, eating and the other tasks of daily life, the other for sleeping. The rooms were dark and poorly

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[470] It should be noted that, although Bulgaria did look to the Soviet Union for inspiration, electrification was associated with modernity throughout the world. For a discussion of this process in the West see: Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *Disenchanted Night: The Industrialization of Light in the Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 1995).
[471] Peko Takov, *Otechestveniiat front i selianite* (Sofia: Pechat. Dŭrzhavno-predpriiatie PROGRES, 1948), 8.
[472] TsDA (F-2, O-1, E-84, L-16).
[473] M. Kochev, et al., *Khigienizirane na selskite naseleni mesta* (Sofia: Dŭrzhavno Izdatelstvo "Nauka i Izkustvo", 1955), 93.

ventilated. The walls were made of wood and wattle and plastered with dirt. The floor and ceiling were usually packed and coated with dirt as well. The roof would have been made of straw or tile. Generally this image was horrifying to hygienists, who imagined a very different home would soon take its place. [474]

The modern home would have spaces divided by their purpose. The model for this new home was explicitly urban. As a hygiene textbook from 1958 explains:

> The hygienic norms for the village home are the same as for the city. The necessary minimum number of rooms in the village home must be for small family- 2 rooms, of which one is the bedroom and the other a general room- day room and dining room […] The kitchen has to be well enough separated from the living quarters and to be used only for the preparation of food. The village home must have a pantry with an area of 3-6 square meters and a toilet room. In the design and realization of the building of the village home must be found space also vestibule, which as well as a veranda and a balcony are connected with the general room.[475]

In his 1961 text, *Selska Khigiena* [Village Hygiene], E. Kamenov goes even further, requiring separate sleeping rooms for all family members, in a fracturing of familial living patterns that would have been more familiar to American suburbia than the Bulgarian peasantry:

> In the planning of the village home, based on sanitary-hygienic norms and demands, the following rooms must be provided: kitchen, day room, dining room and bedrooms- providing separate bedrooms for parents, grandparents and children. A bedroom must be provided for every two children, and for boys older than 14 years old and girls older than 12 years old, there must also be a separate bedroom. The residence must have a closet for clothing, for groceries and space for a refrigerator.[476]

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[474] For example, Kamenov, *Khigiena na seloto,* 39. Kochev, *Khigienizirane na selskite naseleni mesta,* 93. Grudov, *Pochistvane na seloto,* 5.
[475] Liubomir T. Tsvetkov, *Uchebnik po khigiena* (1957), 100.
[476] Kamenov, *Khigiena na seloto,* 43.

Kamenov's inclusion of luxury items such as a refrigerator into the requirements for a hygienic village home reflect the changing norms and living standards, as policy makers in the early 1960s began to envision a Bulgaria that was living socialism instead of building it. In this context the modern conveniences of the city were to be brought to the village.

These conveniences did not just include household appliances, but also urban cultural institutions like cinemas, theatres and libraries which were to be located at the center of the village. Additionally, in an appeal hastening national economic and cultural development, Todor Zhivkov is reported to have explained that "In order to ferment a truly vigorous ideological and cultural life in the villages […], in the near future we must arrange in our villages at least 7 public buildings; we must build a school, a well organized public house, a health resort, and a gym."[477] It was through these institutions that the new peasantry was to be shaped and educated. Cinemas would show educational films which would raise the village culture.[478] Theatres and lecture halls would provide the peasantry with enlightening productions that would be a distraction from their presumed leisure pursuits of fighting and drinking.[479]

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[477] As quoted in ibid, 9.
[478] TsDA (F-405, O-1, E-153, L-223-227). This document actually enjoyably exhibits not just the educational material being shown at village cinemas in the mid 1950s, but the anxiety of the Ministry of Education when faced with very low attendance to such riveting films as "The Agriculture of Bean Production." One film festival was so massively unsuccessful, that they decided not to charge admission next time!
[479] Kamenov, *Khigiena na seloto,* 204.

FOLK CULTURE AND THE MODERN VILLAGE

The cultural ideals presented in these new village institutions were very similar to those espoused in both pre-war and Soviet modernization literature. In educational leaflets, reminiscent of the advice given in the interwar newspaper *Nasheto Selo*, peasants are encouraged to regularly sweep out the home and yard as "in the clean house there is only health, laughter, joy and happiness."[480] In these publications we also see the "cultured" citizen who shunned intoxicants, who was conscious of his appearance and dressed appropriately. For example, a 1961 booklet on the importance of maintaining personal hygiene entitled *Polezni i vredni navitsi* [Beneficial and Dangerous Habits], instructs readers about the minutiae of cleaning the body and dressing in well laundered clothing appropriate to the season (apparently a recurring issue). Readers are informed of the dangers of too little sleep as well as unproductive leisure activities like smoking and drinking.[481] As in the Soviet example, leisure activities were to be constructive and educational. Villagers were encouraged to put on amateur theatrical and musical productions, to attend political lectures and evening classes.[482]

This cultural theme is particularly prevalent in the "success narratives." For, while perhaps attending the ballet was the height of cultural achievement in the Stalinist Soviet Union, it appears that participating in officially organized folk festivals was an important sign of a cultured villager. Unlike some other aspects of village culture, folk

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[480] TsDA (F-2, O-1, E-84, L-17).
[481] Sultanova, *Polezni i vredni navitsi*.
[482] Mania Velcheva, *Elate v nashata shkola*(Sofia: Izdatelstvo na Natsionalniia sŭvet na Otechestveniia Front, 1965). And Liudmila Gulubova, *Khubavoto v Novo Selo, Vidinsko* (Sofia: Izdatelstvo na Natsionalniia sŭvet na Otechestveniia Front, 1966), 10.

dances and folk music seem to have been incorporated in the program for village improvement right from the beginning.[483] In many of the "success narratives" they appear as part of the culminating celebration of the transformation of the villages. For example, in the 1959 text *Bulgarian Peasant Women in the Great Leap Toward Communism,* Ana Veleva writes, "Nearby, the *komsomol* women's organization observed the work of the girls in stock breeding. [Together they participated in] spirited activities. The girls made music. They performed amateur folk dances. Dimitrina [a heroine of the success narrative] is the leader of the folk dances."[484] But what is so curious, is that, in keeping with the urbanizing ideology of village improvement, folk culture is presented as curiously *urban* in these narratives. Nowhere is this designation more clearly laid out than in the literature dealing with the modernization of Bulgaria's Muslim rural population.

Within the collection of success narratives, there are several which recount the success of bringing culture to Muslim villages in the 1960s. The history of Bulgaria's interactions with their Muslim minority is quite varied and burdened with many of the same fears as the state's interaction with the peasantry. Modernizers, particularly after the war, saw the Bulgarian rural population as an impediment to development. Similarly, "Muslim presence was viewed as an obstacle to [the Bulgarian nation's] survival and

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[483]TsDA (F-2, O-3, E-7, L-197)

[484]Ana Veleva, *Bŭlgarskite selianki v velikiia skok kŭm komunizma* (Sofia: Izdatelstvo na Natsionalniia sŭvet na otchestveniia front, 1959). Also see, for example, Gulubova, *Khubavoto v Novo Selo, Vidinsko*. And Zlatareva, *Seliankata i novoto vreme*.

success."[485] Between 1958 and 1960, Muslim populations became targeted for "Bulgarianization", with particular focus upon dress and discarding the Muslim veil.[486] Although this interaction was undoubtedly an expression of anxieties about a perceived foreign element, the interaction also was part of the larger drive to bring urban culture to the countryside.

By 1960, the Muslim communities in Bulgaria were overwhelmingly rural, and this rural backwardness informs the identity of the heroines of the "success narratives" almost as much as their religious identity. [487] For example, *Zheni ot Rhodopite* [Women of the Rhodope Mountains], includes the diary of a young Muslim woman named Selvie. She writes:

> Who knows my home village of Iagodino? I grew up there. It was a little bit snug, like living in a shell. There were scarcely 150 homes. A road did not reach up to it, but a path, along which only people and horses could pass. If the snow fell, it [became] cut off from the world. People here did not know what a cinema was, what a theatre was. They had only the pub/tavern, in which the men spent the entirety of each day, not leaving it. And the women again stood in their closed house, like slaves. They did not dare go outside without their veil or they would be talked about by other people.[488]

Selvie would go on to be educated, de-veiled and an active participant in the modernization of the countryside. She becomes a team leader at the local cooperative farm where she could pass on her cultural wisdom. Together with her fellow villagers, she thought about how "to create a harmonious collective and how to work better, and

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[485] Neuburger, *The Orient Within: Muslim Minorities and the Negotiation of Nationhood in Modern Bulgaria,* 61.
[486] Ibid, 130.
[487] Ibid, 119.
[488] Binka Meleva, *Zheni ot Rodopite* (Sofia: Izdatelstvo na Natsionalniia sŭvet na Otechestveniia Front, 1960), 18.

how to make our group the most productive."[489] So, ultimately, a narrative which was undoubtedly about the liberation of a Muslim woman, was also a story about the success of modernizing the countryside. Each of the narratives in this book, of which Selvie's is just one, follows a village girl through the process of becoming cultured, and in each the girl goes back to her native village to help with village hygiene, utilities and modernization. Although removing the signs of her religion, particularly the veil, is a very important to this narrative, removing the signs of the "backwardness" of village life was also central to her development as a modern Bulgarian citizen. And a powerful sign that both these things had occurred properly in these narratives about Muslim village women, just as in the "success narratives" about the Bulgarian villagers, was the presentation of folk dance and music.

For example, the book *Elate v Nashata Shkola* [Come to Our School] follows a disparate group of Muslim girls as they take courses on Bulgarian history, hygiene, politics and tobacco farming techniques. The author divides the girls into two rough groups: Muslim girls from the city, and Muslim girls from the village. "The girls come from the most different beginnings. […] Between Iakoruda, Razlog, Bansko, from one end, and Ribnovo, from the other, there are differences as wide as the clouds and the earth. Iakoruda, Razlog, Bansko are cities: they have trains, buses, cinemas, schools, reading rooms. […] But in Ribnovo until recently they had… 60 imams."[490] The turning point for these village girls from Ribnovo comes during a cultural evening set up by the

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[489] Ibid, 20.
[490] Velcheva, *Elate v nashata shkola,* 7-8.

school. The city girls have dressed gaily in their holiday best, and performed folk dances together and sung local songs. When it came time for the girls from Ribnovo to perform however, they covered their faces and would not meet the eyes of the cultural activist organizing the event. But finally, after a period of awkward coaxing, there was success! The girls agreed to sing, thus making a huge step toward the cultural development already displayed by their urban sisters.[491] This scene was replayed at the end of the book, when the girls all met for a reunion. By this time they had returned to their homes with their new knowledge and begun to bring modern farming techniques and urban developments such as electricity to their villages. And to celebrate their collective transformation, they danced folk dances.[492]

Now in one way, participation in folk dances seems to be a natural expression of the cultural "Bulgarianization" of the Muslim population. On the other hand, it is curious that it is a trope that exists in the literature of the improvement of non-Muslim village culture as well. And it is further intriguing that folk dancing is used to differentiate between urban and rural Muslim girls. Through the central placement of folk culture in these "success narratives," the ideal of the agrarian proletariat, so many aspects of which were lifted in their entirety from the Soviet model, was ever so slightly "domesticated."

ADVANCING AND RESISTING: CONTRADICTORY IMAGES OF THE PEASANTRY

The ideal of the modern Bulgarian peasant, clean, enlightened and cultured, pervades the pages of the hygiene and village improvement texts: after all, this was what

[491] Ibid, 21-22.
[492] Ibid, 33.

these texts were written to create. However, there seems to have been a real disconnect between the ideal Bulgarian village and what was happening on the ground. The effectiveness of the hygiene and modernization initiatives is highly questionable, as the state's real focus was upon economic development rather than cultural development.[493] Officially, the village was seeing massive improvements. But in reality, change was slow. The villages of the late 1950s actually saw a huge outmigration to the cities, as the unrelenting work and chaos of transforming the countryside made rural life intolerably difficult, and villagers were enticed away by the promise of new opportunities in Bulgaria's quickly developing cities.[494] Of course, the purpose of hygiene literature is to resolve these kinds of problems, but the issue was somewhat complicated by the fact that these problems were no longer supposed to exist.

In the hygiene literature this contradiction appears in the simultaneous representation of the village as a modern and backwards space. For example in Kamenov's 1961 text *Khigiena na seloto* spends a fair amount of effort expounding upon the improvements that have been made in villages around the country to the point where one begins to wonder about the purpose of the book, if everything is so rosy. But his text ends with a "to do list" which seemingly reverses all of the advancements he had previously claimed:

> All of our peasants have become richer and their interest in their health and in the health of their neighbors and of the collective has increased. This awakens in all

[493] For example, in the village of Zamfirovo, electricity only arrived in 1958, running water in the late 1960s. Few of the roads were paved, and still in the 1980s hardly any houses had an indoor toilet. Creed, *Domesticating Revolution,* 139-140.
[494] Ibid, 140.

> of them a greater interest in the importance of [living] a healthy and hygienic life. But this interest is all still inadequate. In the village health workers' rooms, the task in the near future is to deploy with revolutionary scope a large program for the introduction of the importance of health amidst the village population.
>
> The most important tasks of the health educational work in the village are:
>
> 1) To mobilize the peasants to improve the health conditions of the village way of life- to spread a true sanitary revolution within the village.
> 2) To spread amidst the village workers the importance of preserving their health by adopting new methods of increasing income from the earth- using chemicals and machines.
> 3) Propaganda for actions for preserving the health of children and mothers.
> 4) Mobilization of the village population in order to decrease and destroy infectious diseases in the village.
> 5) Agitation for group sports in the village population.
> 6) The wide explanation of the harm of alcoholism and smoking.
> 7) Preparation of the population for sanitary defense.
> 8) Spreading of the importance of natural science amidst the population.
> 9) Introducing the population to party and state actions in the area of health protection.
> 10) Battle with superstition.[495]

Thus, the author claims to have succeeded in educating the peasants, and at the same time he admits that the whole apparatus of health workers had abysmally failed. To a certain extent, hygiene literature by its nature is negative. Its purpose is to fix a problem and so a problem must exist. In this case, the problem was a dirty and uneducated peasantry. This negativity regarding the peasantry did not disappear from the discourse, merely because officially the problem had been resolved. As we shall see, almost from the outset this contradiction was expressed through gender. In particular peasant women became first

[495] Kamenov, *Khigiena na seloto,* 204.

the object and later the instigator of change in the village, where as peasant men were portrayed as obstacles to proper socialist development.

If there was any group that was perceived by modernizers as the most in need of state intervention, that group would be peasant women. As one activist expressed it: "The fact is, however, this one thing: that women, […] becoming soaked in misery, were the most underprivileged, the most tormented of creatures."[496] She continues, "The peasant woman was exhausted from constant suffering in the house and in the field, without rulers to care about lightening her load through substitution, to a great degree, of her physical labor with machines."[497] Easing her suffering was a central concern of the hygiene and modernization initiatives.

In the Soviet tradition, women were also an object of concern, whose ultimate reform would signal one of the state's greatest successes. However, while Bulgarian reformers portrayed peasant women as victims in need of rescue, Soviet modernizers portrayed the same population as impediments to socialist development. As Tricia Starks explains: "Since women resisted this conversion to Soviet life, they dismembered the social body. Women served as a convenient metaphor for describing the flaws of the revolution."[498] So, while the reform objective was in line with the Soviet model, the portrayal of women was actually a reflection of pre-war stereotyping.

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[496] Mania Belcheva, *Polozhenieto na zhenata predi i sled 9 Septemvri* (Burgas, 1949), 4.
[497] Ibid, 7.
[498] Starks, *The Body Soviet,* 31. Actually, in many ways, the Bulgarian portrayal of women was quite similar to the Soviet portrayal of women amongst the muslim populations of Central Asia. See:Douglas Taylor Northrop, *Veiled Empire : Gender & Power in Stalinist Central Asia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004).

As we saw in Chapter 2, interwar newspapers published comics featuring an alcoholic, often violent or foolish peasant man and his long suffering wife represented one of the mainstays of village related humor.[499] [Figure 4.3]

Figure 4.3: *Didn't you say that you wanted a vacuum cleaner?* (O, Svoboda, 1965)

After the war, this comic narrative remained. For example, in a humorous cartoon at the back of a propaganda text entitled *O, Svoboda!* [Oh, Freedom!] a man in peasant garb has returned with the shopping. With one hand he grasps a bag full of wine bottles, with the other, he hands a broom to a bewildered peasant woman. The text below the image reads, "Didn't you say that you wanted a vacuum cleaner? [The Bulgarian word, *prakhosmukachka,* means literally "dust sucker"]- this [broom] is for the dust, and this in

[499] For example: 'Slivane na malkitie obshini,' *Nasheto Selo,* May 29, 1933, 1. 'Iazaka ti kazvakhŭ...,' *Nasheto Selo*, February 1, 1934, 1. 'Zhenski razmishleniia,' *Nashe Selo,* October 24, 1937, 1. 'Otmůstitelno lŭkarstvo,' *Nashe Selo,* October 6, 1940, 3.

my other hand is for me to suck on."[500] This cartoon could easily have been published in the humor section of interwar paper *Nasheto Selo*. Though not so humorously expressed, this gender dichotomy made its way into the village improvement literature as well.

The modernization and liberation of the peasant woman was central to modernizers' efforts in the village, as can be seen in the focus upon improving the home, and in particular in providing maternity wards, crèches, kindergartens, public dining halls, laundries and other services. Instructional texts are often accompanied by photos of modern peasant women in their new environment. For example, in Kamenov's work, it is the modern peasant woman who inhabits the new dormitories of the kolkhoz; it is she who draws water from the new modern wells or from the new public fountains on the main village square.[501] In contrast, the peasant man only appears once, drinking at a bar.[502][Figures 4.4-4.6] This gender dichotomy was further fleshed out in the pages of the "success narratives."

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[500] P. Atanasova, *O, Svoboda* (Sofia: Izdatelstvo na Natsionalniia Sŭvet na Otechestveniia Front, 1965), 49.
[501] Kamenov, *Khigiena na seloto,* 30, 33, 71.
[502] Ibid, 97.

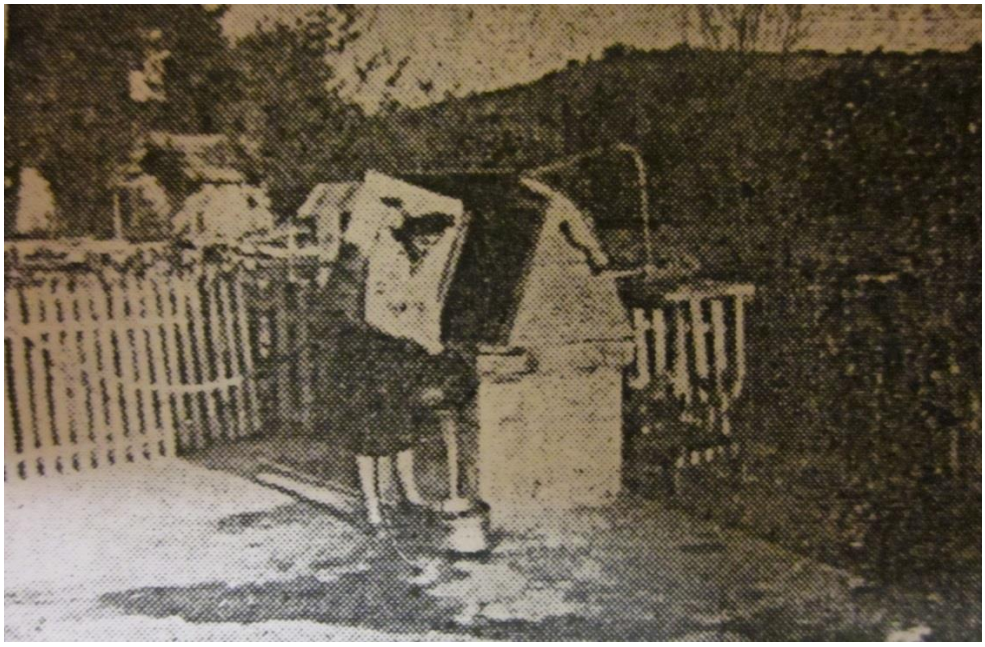

Figure 4.4: *Peasant Woman at a Well* (Khigiena na seloto, 1961, p. 33)

Figure 4.5: *Life in the Dormitory* (Khigiena na seloto, 1961, p. 71)

Figure 4.6: *Peasant Man at a Bar* (Khigiena na seloto, 1961, p. 97)

These narratives all follow a similar pattern: the peasant woman struggles to escape from the backwards village and the peasant man tries to hold her back. Take for example *Bŭlgarskite selianki vŭv velikiia skok kŭm komunizma* [Bulgarian Peasant Women in the Great Leap towards Communism]. In this work, the story is recounted of two girls, Penka Zaĭkova and Ginka Maĭmuska, who decided to become herders at the collective farm. When they announce to their friends their plan, they are greeted with mockery. But when they tell their family, there is a terrible fight in which their fathers "glowered severely and shouted…"[503] Ultimately, the girls have to run away from home, stay in dormitories and wait for the shock to blow over. The girls, stifled of opportunity, slaves to traditional domestic labor that is the woman's lot in the village, represent not

[503] Veleva, *Bŭlgarskite selianki v velikiia skok kŭm komunizma,* 10.

only the victims of the old order but ultimately the agents of the coming revolution.[504] For, often the girl will eventually return to the village, but now as an activist. In these narratives, the liberation of the girls from the old village through joining the kolkhoz or going to school represents an important victory for the construction of socialism in the countryside. Opposition to this noble cause comes from all of the family members, (particularly grandmothers), but it is the fathers who put up the greatest resistance, citing reasons of tradition and decency. The fathers' voices represent the general village opposition to the positive social changes that the state was bringing.

This negative image of the peasant male extends to the more instructive texts where peasant men are presented as abusive and alcoholic. As one pamphlet explains, "[Taverns represent] a painful question for the peasant woman because [men] who drink in the village tavern drink away the work of their wives and children. In defense of the work of the peasant woman, in defense of the earnings of her work- [we must question] whether to have taverns."[505] Domestic abuse and oppressive marital situations were also popular topics. One author decries the village wisdom which tells women to obey their husbands, but husbands need only to love their wives.[506] In the instructional literature, lazy and abusive peasant men oppress their wives and stifle women's opportunities for socialist development, just like the fathers in the "success narratives." Interestingly, it is education of the women which will bring about change in this unhealthy relationship.

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[504]Other examples of similar narratives appear in: Velcheva, *Elate v nashata shkola,* 26. Meleva, *Zheni ot Rodopite,* 20. Belcheva, *Polozhenieto na zhenata predi i sled 9 Septemvri,* 20. Zlatareva, *Seliankata i novoto vreme.* 8.
[505] TsDA (F-2, O-1, E-84, L-16).
[506] Zlatareva, *Seliankata i novoto vreme,* 13-16.

Partially this is because the audience for many of these books is women, but partially these books must have been published because women were seen as the key to improving village culture.

These gendered images populated a narrative which simultaneously lamented village resistance to change and lauded the successful implementation of these changes. In this scenario, successes were marked by the liberation of peasant women, and failures attributed to the cultural backwardness and opposition of village men- the negative image of the male peasant occupying as important a space in the official discourse about the peasantry as positive peasant image of propaganda.[507] Though the images of an advancing and resisting peasantry were seemingly contradictory, this narrative allowed them to exist in the same ideological space, giving an acceptable venue for expressing anxieties about the rift between official and actual realities.

CONCLUSION

With its new electrical tower, paved roads, bus stops and reading room, the tiny village of Neĭkovtsi continues to reflect the urban aesthetic of the postwar era. But to this day not every home in the village has electricity or indoor plumbing. The local women still go to the river to wash their clothing, even in the depths of winter. The project of urbanizing the countryside was left incomplete. In the 1950s drive towards a more urban Bulgaria, reality increasingly diverged from official representations of the village. In the official literature, the depiction of the peasantry was fractured as well: the peasantry was

[507] Undoubtedly in other contexts, male agricultural workers could be and were portrayed positively. However, in the context of hygiene and village improvement, men are portrayed negatively.

represented as at once progressive and backwards. Drawing on the pre-war gender dichotomy with the positive female peasant image and negative male peasant image, hygienists and modernizers could express their anxieties about Bulgaria's progress slow towards Soviet modernity.

Figure 4.7: *War Monument and Electrical Tower in the Center of Neĭkovtsi* (Courtesy of Dr. Kristi Barnwell)

Chapter Five: "Ethnographic Tourism": Folk Culture and Socialist Leisure in 1960s Bulgaria

Figure 5.1: *The Ethnographic Park Museum-Etŭra* (Personal Collection)

In February of 1963, the steep valley around the Sivek river was still blanketed with snow. There was a path there which led from the village of Iabulka up to the old Sokolski Monastery, but otherwise it was a secluded and empty place. Every day of that cold month, a man trudged through the snow to mark the boundaries of what would become the first open air museum in Bulgaria- the Ethnographic Park Museum-Etŭra.[508]

[508] Sonia Aleksieva, *Chovekŭt, koito sŭzdade "Etŭra"- kniga za Lazar Donkov* (Sofia, Bulgaria: Atlantis, 1994), 40. In this volume, Aleksieva has published many of Donkov's personal papers regarding the construction of the museum.

Soon volunteers would struggle in the speckled shade of the oak and beech forest to clear the dense thicket of bushes and brambles. The unstable earth on the river banks would need to be reinforced before building could commence. But, eventually, the museum-town would straddle the river, and small canals would be built to harness the water's power for the museum's various mills. The steep slopes of the Balkans loomed over the valley, and the old forest, famous for hiding bandits and revolutionaries, would envelop the museum in a kind of romantic timelessness that belied its proximity to the bustling city of Gabrovo, just a few miles to the north.

As work commenced on the museum park, Gabrovo was going through its own metamorphosis. Villagers had begun to flood into the urban center in staggering numbers. The city's population had more than doubled since the end of the war.[509] A new world was emerging. In 1958, there was an official proclamation stating that collectivization had been completed. The following year, Bulgarian First Secretary, Todor Zhivkov, announced an astonishing new economic plan which called for astronomic advances in industrial and agricultural outputs.[510] During this period an estimated 12 percent of the population gave up agricultural labor in favor of working in a factory.[511] This push towards "the highest peak" of communism,[512] drastically changed the village, the symbolic center of the Bulgarian national soul for so many decades. As we saw in Chapter 4, new economies, new centers of power, new household arrangements- the logic

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[509] Tim Bespyatov, 'Bulgaria', <http://pop-stat.mashke.org/bulgaria-cities.htm>, accessed 3/24/11, 1:17pm
[510]Crampton, *A Short History of Bulgaria,* 182.
[511]John R. Lampe, *The Bulgarian Economy in the Twentieth Century* (London: Croom Helm, 1986), 153.
[512] 'Kŭm visokiia vrŭkh,' *Turist,* December 1962, 40-41.

of everyday life was turned upside down.[513] In 1971, artist Lazar Donkov would recall of this period that "Modern life evolved quickly, and the appearance and organization of homes and unique architectural monuments were knocked down mercilessly for wood or abandoned and ill-kept, destroyed by the pressure of the years. Leaving one epoch behind, […] Time, like a tempestuous stream, carried off all material signs of [that epoch's] existence."[514]

It was in the midst of this change that Donkov dreamed of creating an "Ethnographic Village" to commemorate what was being lost. He had selected old water mills and "architectural gems" from nearby villages and hamlets to be transported, reconstructed or replicated on this chosen site in the Sivek river valley. Named "Etŭra" after the old name for the River Iantra which runs through the center of Gabrovo, [515] the Ethnographic Park Museum would hopefully to speak "irrefutably for Gabrovo's exceptional ability to understand and create elegance and beauty."[516] Donkov had vowed to "create a real museum in the open, in which one could see domestic life, one could be shown the reality of all the mechanical equipment and craft workshops, the past would be able to remain visible, easily perceived and understood, would be able to be cherished and this huge national treasure would be saved." [517] And so that cold February, dreaming

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[513] For an in depth discussion of the material and cultural changes in the village during collectivization, see Creed, *Domesticating Revolution*.
[514] Aleksieva, *Chovekŭt, koĭto sŭzdade "Etŭra",* 15.
[515] "Etŭr" is the old name of the river Iantra- the river which passes through Gabrovo, and to which the Sivek eventually connects. "Etŭra" means "The Etŭr" in Bulgarian, with the "a" at the end of the word signifying the definite article "the". Ibid, 40.
[516] Ibid, 15.
[517] Ibid, 16.

of this "ethnographic village," Lazar Donkov trudged through the snow in the quiet fastness of the Balkan mountains. For fifteen years he had struggled and planned, and now that work was finally going to pay off.

It seems obvious in retrospect why Donkov had so much trouble getting Communist Party support for the project. After all, a large part of Zhivkov's "Great Leap Forward" was the modernization of agricultural and village life. [518] Surely it was politically dangerous to create a nostalgic monument to a way of life that all of the country's combined efforts for the past fifteen years had been attempting to erase! And yet, the Ethnographic Park Museum-Etŭra was built, and in the *following* fifteen years, almost a dozen more "living museums" were organized. How was it possible for peasant folk culture to be preserved and remembered in a way that was not critical of recent transformations?

The answer came in two parts. The first, which emerged in the 1950s, was to relegate folk culture to the distant past. As agriculture was collectivized, as villages were reorganized and as traditional life-ways fell into disuse, folk culture became detached from lived experience. Bulgarian ethnography, as presented to the public, became a historical pursuit, with ethnographic collections appearing in newly founded regional history museums. In these exhibits, folk culture grew dry and lifeless- not explicitly

[518] "The Great Leap Forward" refers to Todor Zhivkov's grandiose economic program of the late 1950s and early 1960s. Its name is derived from its similarity to Mao's economic program in China at the time- though there is disagreement as to whether Zhivkov was inspired by China or whether these similarities were merely coincidence. Crampton, *A Short History of Bulgaria,* 183.

associated with the peasantry or any living human, projecting by its static nature, a great distance between the present and past.

The second part of the answer came in the wake of the economic disasters of the early 1960s. A failed harvest undoubtedly contributed to the strain put on an economy already stressed by trying to fulfill the wildly unrealistic goals of Zhivkov's economic plan. But combined with the years of deprivation that people had already experienced in the interest of "building socialism," this meant that the Zhivkov regime had to search for new sources of legitimacy. In this tense climate, the display of folk culture became a commodity to be consumed by a population with a growing demand for new forms of leisure culture.

It was as part of this emerging leisure culture that folk objects completed their transformation into politically acceptable symbols which could be used to bolster the struggling state. As we have seen, in the immediate postwar years, the regime did not unhesitatingly embrace folk culture as a representation of the peasantry or of the nation. Visions of a modern agricultural proletariat, as well as a need to reject the symbols of the former corrupt regime, made folk culture a complicated tool for the communists. However, a decade of museum work had begun the process of cleansing folk culture of its past associations, and by the 1960s folk festivals and reconstructed towns allowed folk culture to reemerge- but not as *peasant culture*. Folk culture was re-imagined as an integral part of the development of mid-19th century Revival Period *city*. When spectators went to a folk festival or a museum town, they participated in a ritual glorifying- not of a

lived (and quickly deteriorating) peasant reality- but of a mythic heroic *urban* past. As part of this new vocabulary of "ethnographic tourism," folk culture became a commodity to be experienced and enjoyed- a symbol of a world moving toward a brighter communist future.

INTO THE MUSEUM

In 1947, all cultural institutions, from cinemas to publishing houses, were taken over by the State.[519] Soon after, the Bulgarian Committee of Science, Art and Culture began to actively work to preserve cultural landmarks and develop museums in Bulgaria.[520] Between 1944 and 1972, the number of museums increased more than ten times. [521] In his well-known article, 'The Exhibitionary Complex', Tony Bennet writes that during the 19th century, "museums, galleries, and, more intermittently, exhibitions played a pivotal role in the formation of the modern state and are fundamental to its conception as, among other things, a set of educative and civilizing agencies."[522] As he further argues, the power of the museum was "a power made manifest […] by its ability to organize and co-ordinate an order of things and to produce a place for the people in relation to that order."[523] In the context of the new Bulgarian socialist state, consolidating power and struggling for legitimacy after the war, museums clearly played this important role. When describing the socialist art museum, Cristofer Scarboro suggests that,

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[519] Kostadin Popov, *Cultural Policy in Bulgaria* (Paris: Unesco, 1972), 15.
[520] Regional Museum Of History, 'Regional Museum of History "Stoyu Shishkov" Smolyan', <http://www.museumsmolyan.eu/eng/Z_istoria_en.html>, accessed 2/7/2012.
[521] Growing from 13 state museums to 163. Popov, *Cultural Policy in Bulgaria,* 48.
[522] Bennett, 'The Exhibitionary Complex', 122.
[523] Ibid, 123.

"galleries were a place where Party officials sought to transform Bulgarians […]—a place where members of the public learned how to orient themselves in time and space and to find their place within a larger socialist world."[524] In effect, museums presented a way for spectators to understand the flow of history and the structure of society. Within the organized museum spaces, spectators could participate in the project of myth building, of story-telling. The exhibits provided a channel through which the state could disseminate a version of what Katerina Clark, in her work on the Soviet novel, calls the "master plot"- a Marxist-Leninist narrative that permeated the entire cultural sphere.[525]

The place of folk culture within this urbanizing-industrializing narrative is not immediately apparent. As a political symbol, the image of "*Maĭka Bŭlgariia"*[Mother Bulgaria] charmingly garbed in folk costume was strongly associated with Tsar Boris III's regime.[526] As class symbols, folk objects were seemingly inextricably entwined with representations of the pre-war peasantry- a group which was often represented as backwards, superstitious and uneducated by postwar modernizers.[527] But folk culture's symbolic power was undeniable.

Before the war, only a few ethnographic collections of any size were housed in museums, most notably the National Ethnographic Museum in Sofia and the Ethnographic Museum in Plovdiv. Otherwise, ethnographic collections were generally

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[524]Scarboro, *Living Socialism,* 133.
[525] Katerina Clark, *The Soviet Novel: History as Ritual* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 6-8.
[526] See Chapter 3.
[527] See Chapters 2 and 4.

scattered between private collectors and local reading rooms [*chitalishte*].[528] As we have seen, the prewar National Ethnographic Museum had been active in collecting and preserving cultural objects across the country, going into local communities to enrich and expand its collection. The obvious course might seem to have been to build on this already existing structure to create annexes of the national museum. But in the decade after the war, no purely ethnographic museums were founded. Instead ethnographic collections were transferred into *history* museums.

Tony Bennett observed that in 19th century France, "[museums] were involved in the transfer of objects and bodies from the enclosed and private domains in which they had previously been displayed (but to a restricted public) into progressively more open and public arenas where, through the representations to which they were subjected, they formed vehicles for inscribing and broadcasting the messages of power […] throughout society."[529] A similar phenomenon can be found in the mid-20th century Bulgarian context. After the 1947 decree, smaller collections of ethnographic materials were appropriated by the state and gathered into either new history museums, as in Gorna Oriadovitsa,[530] or, as in the Museum of National Freedom in Teteven, incorporated into pre-existing history museums.[531] These older museums, which were often quite narrow in

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[528]For an example of such exhibits see: Anatas Dushkov (ed.), *50 Godini chitalishte "Vŭzrazhdane" kvartal "Poduiane" Sofia, 1928-1978,* (Sofia: Izdatelstvo na Otechestveniia Front 1978), 59-60.
[529] Bennett, 'The Exhibitionary Complex', 118.
[530] Svetla Ivanova, 'Istoricheski Muzeĭ v Gorna Oriadovitsa', <http://www.bulgariainside.com/bg/articles/Исторически-музей-в-Горна-Орядовица/528/index.html>, accessed 2/8/2012.
[531] 'Istoricheski Muzeĭ Teteven', <http://www.plevenmuseum.dir.bg/BG_version/maps/museums/teteven_mus.htm>, accessed 2/7/2012.

focus, were reorganized to tell a broader historical narrative which often included the display of ethnographic objects. During the 1950s, there was a flurry of museum work, and one of the major developments seems to have been the creation of a regional museum of Bulgarian history in virtually every major population center.

During that time, more than twenty-four history museums were founded or restructured to contain ethnographic exhibits.[532] The National Ethnographic Museum itself was settled into the East wing of the Royal Palace in 1954, nearly a decade after the destruction of the old museum premises in the Allied bombing of March 30, 1944.[533] There, the ethnographic objects in its exhibits were symbolically transformed into relics of Bulgaria's rejected past. As current ethnographer at the museum, Radostina Sharenkova explains, "The museum's new political masters saw the old social and cultural system as degraded and obstructing progress towards a communist ideal. What better way to demonstrate this than through the collection and exhibition of artifacts of that old order?"[534]

Within these historical museums, as in the interwar museum, folk objects were displayed as ethnographic "fragments" completely divorced from their original context. Despite the hopes expressed by ethnographers before the Second World War,

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[532]Including: historical and national museums in Melnik (1956), Razlog (1957), Provadia (1959), Abarnassi (1958), Gorna Oriadovitsa (1962), Vratsa (1956), Gabrovo (1966), Bozhentsi (1964), Sevlievo (1954), Balchik (1950s), Kardzhali (1963), Kiustendil (1960), Lovech (1959), Teteven (1972), Troyan (1968), Montana (1951), Berkovitsa (1960), Velingrad (1952), Panagiurishte (1966), Pernik (1968), Perushtitsa (1955), Isperikh (1963), Smolian (1951), Ikhtiman (1951), Kazanlŭk (1970). For a detailed description of the contents of many of these museums in the late 1950s, see: K. Draganov, *Muzei i pametnitsi v Narodna Republika Bulgaria* (Sofia: Nauka i Izkustvo, 1959).

[533] Bagra Georgieva, 'Letopis', *Pametnitsi restavratsiia muzeĭ,* 5-6 (December 2005), 83-88.

[534] Sharenkova, 'After the Fall of the Berlin Wall: Nationalism and Multiculturalism at the Bulgarian National Ethnographic Museum,' 419-420.

ethnographic display did not become more "lively", if anything, it became less so. The hope had been that through exhibiting artifacts *in situ* the viewer would get a stronger impression of living peasant culture. After the war, however, the new historic museums presented folk culture in isolated glass cases, not in reconstructed village homes.

These fragments would be given meaning through the accompanying text and through their relationship to other objects in the room. As Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett writes, "In-context approaches exert strong cognitive control over the objects, asserting the power of classification and arrangement to order large numbers of artifacts from diverse cultural and historical settings and to position them in relation to one another."[535] In these new and reconstructed museums, the ethnographic fragments were generally displayed "in context," that is, they were cut loose from their original peasant surroundings and placed within an officially sanctioned historical narrative. For example, in the National Museum in Samokov (restructured in 1949) a collection of folk art pieces, including iron working, embroidered textiles, and leatherwork, was incorporated into a hall meant to display the blossoming of culture after Bulgarian liberation from the Ottomans in the 19th century.[536] And even when these objects were displayed *in situ,* as in the Ethnographic Museum in Plovdiv, they were still placed within a clearly delineated historical narrative.[537] In an informational pamphlet regarding Bulgaria's cultural policy, Kostadin Popov, Counselor to the Office of the President of the Committee for Arts and

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535 Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, *Destination Culture,* 22-23.
536 Draganov, *Muzei i pametnitsi v Narodna Republika Bulgaria,* 221.
537 Ibid, 285-287.

Culture, exclaimed that, "The museums […] have a capital role to play. Several of them possess unique products of the national genius. Their exhibitions illustrate the heroic deeds of the sons of the Bulgarian people, and reflect its long struggle for liberty and national independence."[538] Surrounded by artifacts of the April Uprising and archaeological remains of Roman occupation and Thracian gold, folk costumes and crafts became relics of Bulgaria's history.

These new museums were inevitably housed in buildings constructed during the 19th century. By far the majority of these buildings were built in the Revival style- with tile roofs, exposed wooden beams, and a second floor which overhangs the first.[539] This phenomenon highlights the second advantage to housing ethnographic displays within museums of Bulgarian history. Not only do the displays become historical by placing them in a blatantly historical context, but they also argue for the Bulgarianness of these historical buildings and by extension, the Bulgarianness of the cities.

In the late Ottoman period, most cities in the territory that became Bulgaria were dominated by Greeks, Turks, Vlachs, Armenians, Jews and other foreign populations. In the mid-19th century Plovdiv, Shumen and Sofia, less than 40% of the population was Bulgarian. Towns along the Black Sea coast were similarly un-Bulgarian, and even if the majority of the population was Bulgarian, as in Veliko Târnovo, most cities still contained a sizable foreign presence. Only a few cities like Gabrovo, in the heart of the

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[538] Popov, *Cultural Policy in Bulgaria,* 48. This pamphlet was part of a series commissioned by Unesco to give an international audience an insight into the cultural policies of the states within the Eastern Bloc.
[539] For example the Historical Museums of Razlog, Sevlievo, Berkovitsa and Pazardzhik, to name a few.

Stara Planina, had a truly Bulgarian demographic makeup.[540] As Bulgarian nationalism grew in strength, ethnic relationships deteriorated between the different quarters of the cities and between the perceived "foreign" city and the "Bulgarian" countryside.[541] After liberation, despite the massacre and emigration of large numbers of Bulgarian Turks,[542] cities continued to be perceived with hostility by many, but now because of Europeanization.

By the turn of the twentieth century, there was a general perception among educated Bulgarians that society had been divided in two: the common people in the countryside and the foreign-educated intelligentsia in the cities.[543] In the 1920s, this tension came to a head with the rise of the Bulgarian Agrarian National Union (BANU) which was particularly aggressive in its anti-urban stance. Its leader, Alexander Stamboliski, was famed for his vociferous diatribes against urban corruption, threatening to "bring down fire and brimstone on the 'Sodom and Gomorra' of Sofia."[544] And though the Agrarians fell out of power, the tension between city and countryside remained. In this context, the placement of the new museums of history with their ethnographic collections takes on a symbolic significance.

The Ethnographic Museum in Plovdiv, for example, was located in the home of Argir Kuyumdzhioglu, a Greek Bulgarian or *Grecoman* who fled to Istanbul after

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[540] Gavrilova, *Bulgarian Urban Culture in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries,* 47-50.
[541] Ibid, 72.
[542] Neuburger, *The Orient Within,* 35.
[543] Ivan Kolarov, *Etâra* (Sofia: Meditsina i Fizikultura, 1977), 7.
[544] Bell, *Peasants in Power,* 155.

Liberation.[545] The ornate building, constructed in what is now recognized as the Plovdiv Baroque style, is located on a cobbled street near the Old Town's Roman-built Eastern Gate (*Hisar Kapia)*- a section of the city which was predominantly Greek at the time of the building's construction. By locating the collection within this building, its Greek Ottoman origins become Bulgarian origins. Symbolically, the ethnographic and historic collections transform Ottoman urban history into Bulgarian urban history. This history had to be reclaimed in order to fit in to the "master plot". This plot was founded upon the idea that the new government was working on behalf of a disenfranchised urban industrial population. In order to solidify the legitimacy of this narrative for the Bulgarian rural, agricultural context, a new historical narrative with an acceptable urban past had to be unearthed.

The Bulgarianness of folk culture, and in particular- folk costume, was seemingly indisputable. Half a century of propaganda displaying beautiful women in folk costume, official occasions featuring folk music troops, and photo opportunities of the royal family posing with girls in elaborate folk dress[546] had long since established folk culture as part of the vocabulary of national iconography. The placement of these images into urban mass culture had the double effect of symbolically Bulgarianizing the city and urbanizing Bulgarian folk culture.

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[545] Elena Koleva and Nadezhda Dobreva, *Ethnografski Muzeĭ- Plovdiv, "Unikalni pametnitsi ot fonda na muzeĭa"* (Sofia: Izdava- Forsk, 1974), 1. A *Grecoman* is a term (usually pejorative) for an ethnic Bulgarian who very strongly associates himself with Greek culture, often expressed as a person who "pretends to be Greek." Kuyumdzhioglu's last name also has a Turkish ending on it, suggesting he had strong ties with the Ottoman culture as well.

[546] Boris Lulchev Pulekov, *Turistiko istoricheski vodach za grad Koprivshtitsa i okolnostite mu s 101 ilustratsii* (Sofia: Blagotvoritelno D-vo "20 April 1876 g", 1938), 101.

Eventually, as in the Historical Museum of Gabrovo, the ethnographic exhibits would present folk culture as part of each city's history, placing the objects neatly within the narrative of urban development so necessary to the application of the Marxist-Leninist teleology to the Bulgarian context.[547] At the same time, folk objects were now physically part of the city landscape. As museum exhibits they became part of the *current* urban mass culture. Indeed, Vanessa Schwartz, in her work on spectacle in late 19th century Paris, argues that the consumption of such displays, along with other media, formed one of the pillars of 'mass society.' That is:

> The visual representation of reality as spectacle in late nineteenth-century Paris created a common culture and a sense of shared experiences through which people might begin to imagine themselves as participating in a metropolitan culture because they had visual evidence that such a shared world, of which they were a part, existed.[548]

Although her work focuses on "the thematic display of a press-style version of everyday life"[549], it does not seem like a stretch to suggest that displays which posit a shared past serve a similar function. That is, museum spectators looking at ethnographic displays could imagine that they were participating in a long tradition of Bulgarian urban culture, because they had visual evidence that this culture existed. As the folk past was increasingly portrayed as an urban past, it became entwined with the urban present.

Placed behind glass, hanging shapeless from walls and collected together in scientific displays, folk objects became historical relics. But in these stark environments,

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[547] P. Tikhov, *Gabrovo prez vekovete*, (Gabrovo: Regionalen Istoricheski Muzeĭ--Gabrovo, 2009).
[548] Vanessa R. Schwartz, *Spectacular Realities: Early Mass Culture in Fin-De-Siecle Paris* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 6.
[549] Ibid, 2.

despite the symbolic significance of their placement, they had lost some of their emotive power. After all, whose heart swells to see a loom, be it ever so well-preserved, standing unused, or a dress un-worn, or a bag-pipe un-played? Lazar Donkov would later complain, "In truth, in museum exhibitions, ethnographic materials were shown in isolation, accompanied only by explanatory texts. Occasionally, photographs showed the objects grouped together, but this did not place the spectator in immediate contact with the past. It did not illuminate this bright period of our history."[550] This impulse towards experience and away from dryly informative displays, missing in museum since the Second World War, aligned with the emerging idea, promoted by a state searching for legitimacy, that the era of "building Socialism" was coming to an end, and the era of "living Socialism" was at hand.

In this new era, "the promotion of a socialist good life under socialist humanism was often couched in notions of living standards, free time, and the measured consumption of consumer goods."[551] Finding productive, non-bourgeois ways to fulfill these needs was of primary importance. Folk culture would be swept up into this new project. "Ethnographic tourism" as it emerged in the mid-1960s, was not some kind of ethnographic safari to isolated hamlets and mountain villages, but rather a controlled visit to the Revival Period, the one bright moment in the dark Ottoman past. Folk culture

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[550] Lazar Donkov, *Kratki belezhki po sŭzdavaneto na Etnografskiia Park-Muzeĭ "Etŭr"* (Gabrovo: Izdatelstvo "Faber", 2008), 5.
[551] Scarboro, *Living Socialism,* 3. See also Paulina Bren and Mary Neuburger, ed. *Communism Unwrapped: Consumption in Cold War Eastern Europe,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

became at once a commodity to be enjoyed, and a gateway to a shared imagined urban past.

TOURISM IN BULGARIA

Bulgaria's dramatically beautiful mountains had long been an important destination for domestic and foreign alpine enthusiasts. However, in the pre-war period, mountain villages figure merely as starting points- certainly not destinations in and of themselves. The goal of tourism, in the words of writer Aleko Konstantinov, was for tourists to "get to know their homeland in order to love it."[552] But the focus of these excursions was to experience Bulgarian nature, not culture. The Tourist Union collected dues from its members to build modest shelters and mark mountain trails.[553] Between 1924 and 1944, the Union constructed more than sixty cabins and shelters.[554] Even in the capital, mountaineering was never far away. By the 1930s, Mount Vitosha had become a popular weekend destination for the inhabitants of Sofia, and in 1934, it was designated as a national park.[555] Though peasant images were undoubtedly central to Bulgaria's national iconography, the villages were of far more interest to modernizers and ethnographers than to tourists. After all, most of the country's population lived in a village, and their urban compatriots were more concerned with climbing peaks than in peeking around rural communities.

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[552] Aleko Konstantinov in Scarboro, *Living Socialism*, 91.
[553] For example, D. Sŭsŭlov, 'Khizhestroenie', *Bŭlgarski Turist,* November 1922, 59-63.
[554] Scarboro, *Living Socialism,* 91.
[555] Ibid, 91.

If one looks at *Bŭlgarski Turist*, the pre-war publication of the Bulgarian Tourist Union[556], undoubtedly the overwhelming majority of the articles focus upon Bulgaria's wealth of natural beauty. However, that is not to say that there was no cultural tourism at all. A significant minority of the articles also explore the country's cultural heritage. In the May 1922, edition of *Bŭlgarski Turist*, for example, almost the entire magazine is devoted to exploring the city of Veliko Târnovo. The pages guide the reader from the shores of the River Yantra up the steep slopes to the ruins of the ancient palace of Asenovgrad and the treasured mosaics at the Church of St. Dimitŭr.[557] In the 1920s and 30s, tourists were led to isolated monasteries, medieval ruins, and other sites of national significance. However, their cultural importance was often of secondary importance. One article from 1923 directs travelers to Koprivshtitsa, home of the April 1876 uprising, but few lines are given to recounting the heroic struggle that took place there. Most of the words are devoted to suggesting pleasant outlooks and conveniently located trails.[558] Villages did not find their way into this tour of the national "sacred." On the other hand, they were not entirely absent from the pages of this publication, either. For example, in an article entitled "Along the River Chernelka" from 1922, there is a small photo of the modest village of Karagui. However, it quickly becomes clear that the village is not a

[556] Published between 1902-1943.
[557] A. Ishirkov, 'Tŭrnovo', *Bŭlgarski Turist,* May 1922.
[558] T. Panchev, 'Koprivshtitsa', *Bŭlgarski Turist,* October 1923, 29-31.

destination, but a reference point for travelers seeking to view the unusual local rock formations.[559]

After the war, socialist state builders became increasingly interested in organizing worker's leisure hours. The 1948 "Dimitrov constitution" guaranteed every citizen the right to two weeks of vacation a year with another free day for every two years worked.[560] With the new era of "living Socialism," Bulgarians were no longer asked to live their days in deprivation and strife, but they were to exist in a world of socialist plenty with refrigerators and televisions. And now they even had the time to enjoy these new commodities, with the advent of the weekend![561] Of course, their leisure hours were not supposed to be their own. There was a great deal of concern that socialist leisure had to be productive and, more specifically, differentiated from bourgeois leisure. The newly reconstituted Bulgarian Tourist Union was to play a central role in organizing this newly acquired free time.[562] Their stated goal was "to work for the Communist education of its membership through the cultivation of a Marxist Leninist worldview and to teach them in the spirit of Socialist patriotism, of love and devotion to the Party and the people against

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[559] Iv. Bardzhiev, 'Po reka chenelka', *Bŭlgarski Turist*, November 1922, 36.
[560]Frank Carter, 'Bulgaria', in *Tourism and Economic Development in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union,* ed. Derek R. Hall (New York: Halsted Press, 1991), 220-21..
[561]Scarboro, *Living Socialism: The Bulgarian Socialist Humanist Experiment,* 9. The 1960s saw a move towards shorter working hours and a reservation of Saturdays and Sundays as regular "days of rest."
[562] In 1945, the Bulgarian Tourist Union (BTS) and the Youth Tourist Union (IuTS) were united with several other associations (including the Association of Boat owners). In 1946 it was further consolidated with the NSGS and the NKMS under the National Society of Physical Culture (NFS). In 1957, the associations of tourism and alpinism were detached from the NFS, and united again as the BTS, taking on all of its pre-war responsibilities. During this time the Union expanded vigorously, putting out several new publications and becoming actively involved in the organization of tourist festivals and national excursion days. Bŭlgarski Turisticheski Sŭiuz, 'Istoriia na BTS', <http://100nto.org/Bŭlgarski-turisticheski-syiuz/istoriq.html>, accessed 2/15/2012 2:34pm

fascism and capitalism and the beauty of the socialist present."[563] With this goal in mind, the emergence of ethnographic tourism, with its seeming focus upon the peasant past, appears all the more curious.

ETHNOGRAPHIC TOURISM

The term, "ethnographic tourism" was not one that was used at the time. I employ it here in order to describe the intertwining of tourism and folk culture which emerged in the 1960s. In practical terms, this trend manifested itself in the form of folk festivals, ethnographic parks, and the use of folk objects as commodities for an emerging tourist market. If we consider, briefly, the well-known Bulgarian communist travel journal, *Turist,* we see a striking change in content from its pre-war counterpart, *Bŭlgarski Turist*.

While the majority of articles within *Turist* continued to focus upon mountaineering, a significant minority encouraged travelers to pursue more cultural interests. Folk festivals figure largely among these writings. In the July 1965 issue, alone, two articles enthusiastically recount two separate folk festivals that occurred that summer.[564] These texts are accompanied by photos of young men and women in full folk costume singing, playing music, and, excitingly enough, riding horses through a sun soaked meadow, "on the road to the festival."[565] In October of that year, *Turist* reported that the National Tourist Union had held its second annual festival. Amid the expected

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[563] As quoted in Scarboro, *Living Socialism: The Bulgarian Socialist Humanist Experiment*. 94. This point is also well illustrated by the article from Bulgarian Communist travel magazine, *Turist,* entitled "A Day of Rest" in which the reader is shown the material advantages of spending their leisure time out in nature rather than at home smoking. Anonymous, 'A Day of Rest', *Turist,* August, 1969, 16-17.
[564] Iantai Kavalov, 'Sto Reda Za Krasotata Suzvuchieto', ibid.7 (July 1965), 5-7. Nikola Primovski, 'Otlomka Ot Rodopa', *Turist,* July 1965, 7-8.
[565] Iantai Kavalov, 'Sto Reda Za Krasotata Suzvuchieto', ibid. (5-7.

reported speeches and photos of healthy-looking young people dressed for mountaineering, equal numbers of young people were dressed in folk costumes and are photographed playing folk instruments. Why were these performers there? "The mountains sing," we are told.[566]

In his 1962 article of the same name, Khristo Georgiev explores this connection between mountaineering and folk music:

> "Nation, mountains and song- an inseparable trio in the lives of our grandparents, filled with echoes of the past, with memories of heroic days, with thoughts for the future, beginning enthusiastically to live on the healthy earth, because, as Todor Zhivkov says, 'Socialism and Communism-that is the golden century of development for amateur art activities!'"[567]

His words suggest that by hiking and listening to folk music, the tourist is put in touch with their national past and prepared for their socialist future. Both tourism and folk culture brought people closer to the nation, and provided "a place where members of the public learned how to orient themselves in time and space and to find their place within a larger socialist world."[568] Folk crafts and folk music were key to inventing this new enlightened consumer, for as Georgiev goes on to explain, "It is well-known that he who sings can think no evil."[569]

The connection between tourism and folk culture is echoed in the advertisements at the end of several copies of the magazine *Turist*. For example, a 1965 advertisement from Balkanton exclaims: "Mountains, Sun, Music! Balkanton Records offers cheerful

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566 Rangel Matanski, 'Rozhen Si Porti Paztvori', ibid.10 (October 1965), 14-15.
567 Hristo Georgiev, 'Planinite Peiat', ibid.11 (November 1962), 15-17.
568Scarboro, *Living Socialism: The Bulgarian Socialist Humanist Experiment,* 133.
569 Georgiev, 'Planinite Peiat.'

music for rest and relaxation to all lovers of the mountains."[570] Accompanying these assurances is a striking illustration of a woman in folk costume and script promising "Bulgarian Folk Songs and Dances." Folk marketing was not limited to music, either. A small group of women in folk dress urge us to purchase fruit for our mountain hikes, and children are encouraged to buy dolls in daintily embroidered folk costumes.[571] What we see here again is Kirshenblatt-Gimblett's "surgical procedure." The ethnographic fragments are pulled into a new context, removed from the village environment and incorporated into tourist culture.

Villages were also featured in these tourist publications, but as with the folk festivals and advertisements, the accompanying text pulled them out of their present context and into the tourist narrative. In terms of concrete locations, the tourist of the 1960s was advised to go to historic towns in order to experience, in person, the folk culture of their glorious national past. Articles like, "Melnik during the Revival"[572] and "Balchik: Past and Future,"[573] carefully guided the reader through these destinations, situating them historically, and placing their ethnographic artifacts within a timeline, leading from a glorious proto-urban past to a modern and developed urban future.

Of course, ethnographic tourism did not emerge fully formed. Like all trends, it was negotiated and re-imagined- even within the constraints of the socialist context. By looking at a few concrete examples, one can not only get a glimpse of the complex

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570 'Advertisement "Balkanton"', *Turist,* March 1965, 32.
571 Anonymous, 'Igrachki', *Turist,* April 1964, Back Cover. 'Plodove i Zelenchutsi', *Turist,* May 1964, Back Cover.
572 Iordan Iliev, 'Melnik Prez Vuzrazhdaneto', *Turist,* February 1965, 2-3.
573 Velizar Velkov, 'Balchik: Stariat i Utreshniat', *Turist,* July 1963, 2-3.

interactions that occur as part of any project of cultural production, but also one can see how the contents of the accepted historical narrative changed over time.

THE ROAD TO ETŬRA

In 1965, an article appeared in *Turist*, declaring the opening of the new Ethnographic park. It had opened the year before on the eve of the 20th anniversary of the 9th September,[574] a politically auspicious date. The article claims that "the idea for the park came from the grandchildren and great grandchildren of the working people of old Gabrovo."[575] But of course, the true originator of the idea was not some descendent of a forgotten generation attempting to excavate a strange and distant way of life. It was Lazar Donkov who, in 1971, claimed that "even now I hear in my ears the grinding of the lathe from near the village of Tople."[576] The article in *Turist* promises a trip to a distant time. "In the ancient washing machine, they wash Gabrovan rugs in the characteristic gold pattern and for a moment you imagine that you live a whole century ago, without civilization and technology- that you are in the old craft-working village on the edge of the Iantra. Truly an original, the park is built strong with the spirit of the Revival Period."[577] A visit to the park is not supposed to bring back memories of the visitors' own youths spent in nearby villages- but that of an imagined long distant past: an urban past- *Gabrovo's* past.

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[574] The 9th September 1944, is the date that the Socialists officially took over control of the Bulgarian government. After the war, the coup was styled as a popular uprising and celebrated with great pomp every year. (See, for example, Chapter 3)
[575] Dimo Todorov, 'Etnografski Park Muzeĭ Krai Gabrovo', *Turist,* April 1965, 9.
[576] Aleksieva, *Chovekŭt, koĭto sŭzdade "Etŭra",* 16.
[577] Todorov, 'Etnografski Park Muzeĭ Krai Gabrovo', 9.

Gabrovo was a uniquely powerful tool in the symbolic arsenal which attempted to unearth Bulgaria's urban past. The city had been one of the few truly Bulgarian towns to thrive during the Ottoman Period and was strongly associated with the cultural awakening of the Revival Period. By styling itself as an exhibition of Gabrovo's past, the new museum not only reinforced a narrative which attempted to reclaim Bulgarian urban history for Bulgarians, but it incorporated fragments of existing village culture into this historical context.

Lazar Donkov had first conceived of the project during the summer of 1948, when his failing health had caused a doctor to recommend that he "go out more often in nature." In his memoirs, Donkov would recall that he and his wife Maria frequently took their little car and drove around to nearby villages. There, Donkov began sketching the beautiful old buildings and speaking to aging craftsmen. His memoirs, written in 1971, suggest that from the beginning, Donkov associated these structures with Gabrovo's past, rather than the past of the villages in which they were situated.[578] Perhaps this is because Donkov, himself, grew up in his father's leather workshop in Gabrovo and his childhood had been spent lurking around the workshops of various masters of folk crafts.[579] Or perhaps this was a reflection of the atmosphere in which his memoirs were written, an atmosphere which increasingly disassociated folk culture from rural agricultural life. Whatever the reason, in his health-inspired trips around the region, Donkov became

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[578] Aleksieva, *Chovekŭt, koĭto sŭzdade "Etŭra",* 14-15. Aleksieva's book is actually an edited collection of all of Donkov's writings about the creation of the museum, including pertinent parts of his memoirs, his correspondence, and various other official documents.
[579] Donkov, *Kratki belezhki po sŭzdavaneto na Etnografskiia Park-Muzeĭ "Etŭr",* 3.

increasingly concerned by the state of these examples of Bulgarian national architecture as the last remaining examples of Gabrovo's rich history.

Decades of economic hardship undoubtedly contributed to the deterioration of these buildings, a problem which was aggravated by the harsh realities of the early postwar years.[580] Certainly, the sad condition of these structures was not the result of a mere season or two of neglect. As new technologies and building materials reached the countryside, rendering these mills and farm houses increasingly obsolete, these structures were abandoned and dismantled for parts. Donkov looked on in dismay. Hoping to rescue at least some of these old buildings, he became Gabrovo's representative to the Ministry of Education and Culture, part of a committee dedicated to registering landmarks. This proved to be completely ineffectual as a conservation measure. As Donkov notes, "The destruction of valuable ethnographic monuments continued with this distinction- that earlier they were not registered and now they were destroyed as registered objects."[581] During the following decade, he himself meticulously researched and sketched various monuments which caught his interest. With his own funds, he created miniatures of several structures, and tried to interest others in a plan to rescue these objects from oblivion- largely to no avail.

At this time, official histories were no more interested in narratives about the urban bourgeois past than they were in narratives about the recent peasant past. In the early postwar years, the cultural Revival of the mid-19th century was tainted by

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[580]Creed, *Domesticating Revolution,* 38-53.
[581] Donkov, *Kratki belezhki po sŭzdavaneto na Etnografskiia Park-Muzeĭ "Etŭr",* 4.

association with pre-war regimes, and communist scholarship ignored or rejected its legacy in favor of stories of violent revolutionary struggles.[582] However, even in Stalinist Bulgaria, the intellectual world was not monolithic. Indeed, Donkov himself proves that alternative narratives could be pursued which ran contrary to current fashions. And his project did find some support among the ethnographers at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. Khristo Vakarelski, director of the National Ethnographic Museum in Sofia, expressed particular interest. But Donkov had powerful enemies among the leadership at the Ministry of Education and Culture. As the son of a petty bourgeois workshop owner, Donkov was susceptible to virulent political attacks. Historian Roumen Daskalov argues that, in the complex and interconnected world of the Bulgarian socialist scholarly bureaucracy, who you were was at times more important than what you said. He writes that some "had the "authority" to state a certain view or thesis (whatever its content), and [others] in disfavor […] came under attack whatever he or she suggested."[583] For one reason or another, Donkov was clearly in disfavor. [584]

While his class background undoubtedly provided ammunition for his opponents, when the time came he was able to rise above it. Indeed in his final successful proposal, Donkov agreed "to undertake the leadership of the entire work, […] as long as well-known comrades at the Regional Department of "Education and Culture" will be restrained from spreading any more biased and untrue rumors to the conscientious

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[582] Daskalov, *The Making of a Nation in the Balkans,* 245.
[583] Ibid, 120.
[584] In particular, he had strong opponents in the ministry of education and culture- and some important supporters in the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences- particularly at the National Ethnographic Museum.

comrades of the Ministry of Culture and the Institute for Monuments."[585] Such rumors, however, had not been enough to permanently sideline his project. Considering the political changes which were occurring around the time that his proposal was finally successful, one must consider that perhaps its acceptance was largely an issue of timing.

Timing, and perhaps a certain amount of persistence. One Sunday in 1961, Lazar and Maria Donkov attended a wedding in the village of Girgini. The godfather of the bride was none other than Politburo member Raĭko Damianov. Through a certain amount of canny maneuvering, Donkov found himself dancing next to Damianov in one of the many line-dances that occur at such occasions. Not one to miss an opportunity, Donkov poured out his plan to his enthusiastic audience of one. Damianov was impressed and suggested that Donkov come in to his office in Gabrovo the following day. This was the kind of official support that the ethnographic park needed in order to get off the ground.

The meeting was not immediately forthcoming, but Donkov was tenacious. In his carefully constructed letters to Damianov, Donkov explained the national importance of saving these ethnographic objects. With protestations regarding his own solid socialist motivations, he situated the artifacts within an increasingly politically acceptable narrative:

> Is it not a shame, Comrade Damianov, that today in Gabrovo and the Gabrovo region, from the pre-Liberation epoch not even one original lathe for creating *gavanki* and *bŭklitsi*[586] has been saved, […]not one braid making workshop, not even one craft workshop with the complete instruments. [….] The water mill in the village of Trapezkovtsi, near Sokolski monastery, is already decayed and

585 Aleksieva, *Chovekŭt, koito sŭzdade "Etŭra",* 25-26.
586 These are wooden vessels.

> almost collapsing. In all of Bulgaria, though not in Gabrovo, there is only one unique, pre-Liberation water mill preserved- from 1867. Two months ago, [this watermill] was in fair condition- [but then] its parts were used as wood for burning. […]
>
> I reckon, although in the 12th hour, that, with minimal resources, these architectural objects may be recovered, [and] form[ed into] a group in one park museum along the direction of Sokolski Monastery or in a separate park near the city. […] I am ready to take up the engagement to restore to original appearance of all vanished ethnographic objects, everything necessary for [this project] can be made and gathered. One such museum would represent great national wealth and would be the pride of our city.
>
> I ask not to be misunderstood. My proposal comes exclusively from a feeling of civil consciousness and duty. […]All of my trade, work, and gathered materials I want to give for free to the city of my birth and to my socialist homeland.[587]

There are several aspects of this proposal which make it particularly interesting. First of all, though the mills and buildings were to come from nearby villages, Donkov presents them as representative of the city of Gabrovo's golden age, in the late Ottoman period. Though the original construction of the objects dates to the 18th and 19th century, most of the buildings in question were still in active use within a decade of this proposal. Their cultural significance surely extended beyond the few years of the cultural revival.[588] But relieved of the baggage of a century of use, these buildings could become artifacts of a heroic moment in history. They could be subsumed into the national myth of the Revival. Indeed, by situating these objects as part of Gabrovo's past, and by extension Bulgaria's urban past, Donkov was in line with early 1960s scholarship of the Revival

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[587]Aleksieva, *Chovekŭt, koito sŭzdade "Etŭra",* 25.

[588] Just a few examples- The lathe from the village of Spaseta was destroyed in the mid-1950s. The grindstone from the area around Garvanov rock was abandoned around 1950. The fulling mill from the village of Trapekovtsi stopped work in 1959. Ibid, 24-25.

Period, which rehabilitated and even glorified 19th century bourgeois urban culture as a precursor to the communist present.

Under Vŭlko Chevenkov, general secretary of the Bulgarian Communist Party from 1950-1956, scholarship of the Revival Period had been strongly influenced by attitudes vilifying the bourgeois class enemy. In his famous 1953 speech, Chervenkov outlined the *entire* bourgeoisie's traitorous role in the failure of the national liberation movement. In 1950s scholarship, the bourgeoisie became elided with the traditional enemies of the Revival Period- the *chorbadzhii* (notables with close ties to the Ottoman regime).[589] Essentially, the bourgeoisie betrayed its own revolution. This thesis was discredited over time, and by the mid-1960s, the petty and middle bourgeoisie were rehabilitated. In particular, the bourgeoisie's role in Bulgaria's cultural Revival came to be emphasized.[590] Although the cultural Revival was of undoubtedly bourgeois origins, these new scholars sought to place it within a narrative of Leninist historical progression. As historian Roumen Daskalov explains, "The ideologues of the Communist regime made increasing claims on the legacy of the Revival epoch, even on its non-revolutionary part. This was argued using the Leninist precept that the proletariat and its party are successors of all democratic traditions of the past, regardless of their origin, the progressive legacy of the bourgeoisie included."[591] For Lazar Donkov this meant that by

[589] Daskalov, *The Making of a Nation in the Balkans,* 118.
[590] Ibid, 119.
[591] Ibid, 244.

framing his museum as a memorial to the Revival past, he was presenting it as an important and increasingly glorified precursor to the Bulgarian communist present.

At the Ethnographic Park-Museum Etŭra, one can almost see how the development of the museum was shaped by these shifts in the official historic narrative. In one of the original, rejected proposals for the open-air museum, Donkov outlines the specifics of his envisioned ethnographic park. He writes:

> Along the continuation of the river from the village of Etŭr to the bridge of the village Strashna Reka, along the trail for Sokolski Monastery, [we would] restore ethnographic objects such as the following:
>
> 1. One old water mill (to be restored on location from the village Potoka, registered as a monument of culture)
> 2. One water mill with water wheel. A copy of the water mill from the village of Dlijetsi, built in 1874, collapsed in March of this year.
> 3. To stabilize the existing tumbledown fulling mill[592] and water mill of Iu. Partenev, in the village of Trapeskovtsii. (Built around 1820, held from operation and abandoned two years ago.) These mills are part of a collapsed ensemble, though at least they are registered. […][593]

The list continues at some length, and for each architectural object Donkov lists the function, current location and condition. In comparison, his description of the craft workshops is so vague as to be almost dismissive. He simply explains, "There shall be separated space within the park-museum for the crafts of the pre-Liberation period. For the first time- to reproduce workshops with complete instruments of the fundamental crafts…"[594] And then he goes on to list some of these possible crafts. He also suggests

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[592] Fulling is step in the wool cloth making process in which the wool is beaten or stamped on to remove excess oils, dirt, etc. In a fulling mill, this process is powered by water, rather than by human feet.
[593] Aleksieva, *Chovekŭt, koito sŭzdade "Etŭra",* 24.
[594] Ibid.

recreating a Revival Period school house, and a replica of the original building which housed the first club of the Workers Party in Gabrovo. In these early proposals there is no mention of what would become the biggest draw for tourists: the creation of a small urban shopping street of folk crafts. This focus on mechanical objects showcased the 19th century Gabrovans' technological spirit- but stopped short of fully embracing bourgeois Revival Period commerce. By beginning with these less politically sensitive objects, the museum seems to sidestep some of the controversy surrounding the Revival Period bourgeoisie.

THE ETHNOGRAPHIC COMPLEX AT ETŬRA

When the park opened in 1964, the focus of the exhibition space was undoubtedly upon water technology. The original park consisted of "a fulling mill, a water mill, a mechanical grindstone, an ancient washing machine, and a lathe for carving covered bowls, [uncovered] bowls and salt vessels." Further downstream there was additionally a saw-mill, a braiding room with six cogs and another lathe for carving wine-vessels.[595] The *content* of the museum did not differ greatly from similar projects emerging around this time throughout the Soviet Bloc.[596] But the *framing* of these ethnographic objects was very different from these other museum complexes. In his comprehensive study of open air museums, Sten Rentzhog suggests that such museums were associated with Eastern Europe's traditional agricultural economy. He writes, "Farming culture was part

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[595] Todorov, 'Etnografski Park Muzeĭ Krai Gabrovo', 9.
[596] Sten Rentzhog, *Open Air Museums: The History and Future of a Visionary Idea*, trans. Skans Victoria Airey (Kristianstad, Sweden: Jamtli Forlag and Carlsson Bokforlag, 2007), 189.

of what [the Communist Party] wished to emphasize rather than the decadent bourgeoisie. And so great efforts were made to develop folk art, crafts, dance, music and other folk traditions—all of them linking quite naturally with open air museums."[597] And yet, in the case of Etŭra, the opposite seems to have been the case. These mills and workshops, only recently relocated from local villages, were framed not as part of farming culture but rather urban culture.

In his 1964 *Turist* article, Dimo Torodov writes: "The land [around Gabrovo] did not give bread, but trade flourished. Life in this narrow valley was as dynamic as the river rapids. The waterway helped Gabrovo's development of a trade economy. It set all the new technologies in motion […] the historical past of the National Revival, has it been forgotten? No! The Ethnographic Park-Museum revives the craftsmanship of Gabrovo."[598] By associating these ethnographic objects with old Gabrovo, folk culture became explicitly linked to proto-industrialization rather than agricultural backwardness. So, when the tourist listened to the clacking of the fulling mill or watched the machinist make a small wooden bowl with a water-powered lathe, he bore witness to early steps on the road to urban-industrial socialism- not the recently reorganized and officially disparaged agrarian past.

Nevertheless, these water-powered wonders were soon to be overshadowed by what was to become the main attraction of the museum-park- the *charshiia* or market street. The construction of the market began in 1967. Barely a year had passed since

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[597] Ibid.
[598] Todorov, 'Etnografski Park Muzeĭ Krai Gabrovo', 9.

scholar Veselin Hadzhinikolov had officially announced the rehabilitation of the Revival Period bourgeoisie in his speech in honor of the 90th anniversary of the April Uprising.[599] That year marked an enormous shift in the focus of the museum. As Lazar Donkov recalled, "In [the museum] it became necessary to clearly show the original architectural wealth of our region, to show the architectural landscape of the Revival, and also the most important aspect of our economic past--the artisans."[600] Construction of the *charshiia* would last for a decade, continuing several years beyond Donkov's own death in 1976. With the construction of the clock tower and the inn of Krustnik Kolchovia in 1978, the work was finally completed.[601] Situated on a narrow stretch of land on the opposite side of the river Sivek, the market was an attractive cluster of 19th century buildings, which like the water mills, had been collected from nearby villages. The dark-timbered, and gaily painted houses lined a narrow, cobbled lane. [Figure 5.2]

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[599] Veselin Khadzhinikolov, 'Traditsiite na aprilskoto vŭstanie i Bŭlgarskata Komunisticheska Partiia', in *Aprilskoto Vustanie*, ed. Drumka Sharova, et. al. (Sofia: Bŭlgarska akademiia na naukite, 1966), 221-42.
[600] Aleksieva, *Chovekŭt, koĭto sŭzdade "Etŭra",* 70.
[601] Simeon Nedkov, *Muzeĭ na otkrito* (Sofia: Izdatelsvo "LIK", 2000), 117. Additionally, a church was constructed at the end of the market street between 1998-2004.

Figure 5.2: *The Charshiia* (Personal Collection)

Each building housed a different master craftsman-- a blacksmith, a potter, a weaver of goat hair bags, etc. There, masters trained apprentices in ancient crafting techniques and tourists could purchase souvenirs of their visit "to the past." In the autumn, smoke would curl up out of the meticulously constructed stone chimneys, and the aroma of fresh bread-rolls would entice the visitors to step into the old-time bakery. In the summer, guests were encouraged to linger over Turkish coffee on the open balcony of the Motkovo café, or to taste Revival Period delicacies such as *lokŭm* [Turkish delight] and lollipops shaped

like roosters or "Tsarigradskoe on a stick".[602] Visitors were literally consuming the Bulgarian Revival past. These Revival Era delicacies were obviously also Ottoman in origin and reflect the complexity of Bulgarians' relationship with their Ottoman past—a past which was simultaneously rejected and reclaimed as their own, both exotic and familiar. Sold in the neighboring shops, leather slippers, painted ceramics, and brass cowbells became enveloped in this ambiguous Revival past.

In designing the market street, Donkov gave more weight to the natural flow of the market than to the accurate reconstruction of the buildings' original situation.[603] He agonized over the artificial positioning of the buildings, and repeatedly turned to architectural experts for support. He recalls,

> In the process of building the western side of the museum, [the site] was visited by the entire leadership of the Union of Architects in Bulgaria with comrade architect Georgi Stoĭlov, then director of the union, at the head. They found that the compositional decisions, thus also the completion of the detached houses, were very successful. Their valuation […] calmed me and inspired greater belief in the good success of the future work. [604]

While the location of these craft shops in such proximity to each other did not represent their previously scattered settlement pattern, they did successfully create an appropriately urban atmosphere, hopefully erasing by their very configuration, all memory of their recent rural past, and situating them within the history of Revival-era city.

Folk crafts and farm houses were not the only objects of peasant culture to be appropriated into this model Revival city. The second floor of the pottery workshop

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[602] i.e. caramel apples. Ibid, 71.
[603] Aleksieva, *Chovekŭt, koĭto sŭzdade "Etŭra",* 71.
[604] Ibid.

would come to contain a small exhibition space for regional folk costumes. Although as time passed, folk costumes were also worn as part of the celebration of seasonal festivals,[605] on any ordinary day the brightly colored costumes were pinned flatly against the museum walls. And in their workshops, the masters wore quite ordinary clothing.

In a house from the village of Tumbalovo, guests could look into cordoned off rooms showing a "typical" Revival Period peasant home with its large open hearth and simple low furniture.[606] The type of room on display was exactly the type of space that modernizers in the village were decrying. But set in a museum, the simple village home with its communal space, and smoky fire lost its offensiveness. For these rooms, like the costumes, were empty of human inhabitants. By their display, these objects were disengaged from lived peasant experience. By their proximity, these objects became artificially associated with the proto-urban environment of the Revival Period. Framed historically, they became respectable.

In reality, the everyday life and economy of Revival Period towns was intertwined with that of the surrounding countryside. Peasant culture and urban culture coexisted in the Revival Period city, in a way that they did not within the Ethnographic complex.[607] The urban-countryside divide which widened in the twentieth century, was much less extreme in the mid-nineteenth century. The petit bourgeois shopkeeper probably kept his own livestock, and certainly grew at least some of his own food, and on

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[605] Ibid, (in illustration insert) 5.
[606] *Etŭr: Pŭtovoditel*, (Gabrovo, 1999), 2.
[607] For more regarding the Revival Period city see, Gavrilova, *Bulgarian Urban Culture in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries*.

any given day, peasants would travel in town to take advantage of the markets.[608] At times, it would probably be difficult to clearly define who was a peasant, and who was a city-dweller. And folk crafts were also not necessarily coded as urban or as agrarian. However, this ambiguity in which the village and the city comingled was not what emerged in the Etŭra Ethnographic Complex.

Etŭra was a proto-industrial Revival city, foreshadowing an urban culture completely separated from the surrounding countryside. In Etŭra, there were no fields, no animals to tend. It was a Revival Era city, which would have been unrecognizable to 19th century urban dwellers: a purely Bulgarian city without a living agrarian population. Across the river from the market, next to the clock tower, a separate and contained shed was erected to house agricultural implements characteristic of the region.[609] This silent collection of plows and threshers, yokes and scythes, was different from the interactive presentation of folk culture in the workshops. [Figure 5.3]

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[608] Ibid, 82.
[609] Nedkov, *Muzeĭ na otkrito,* 115.

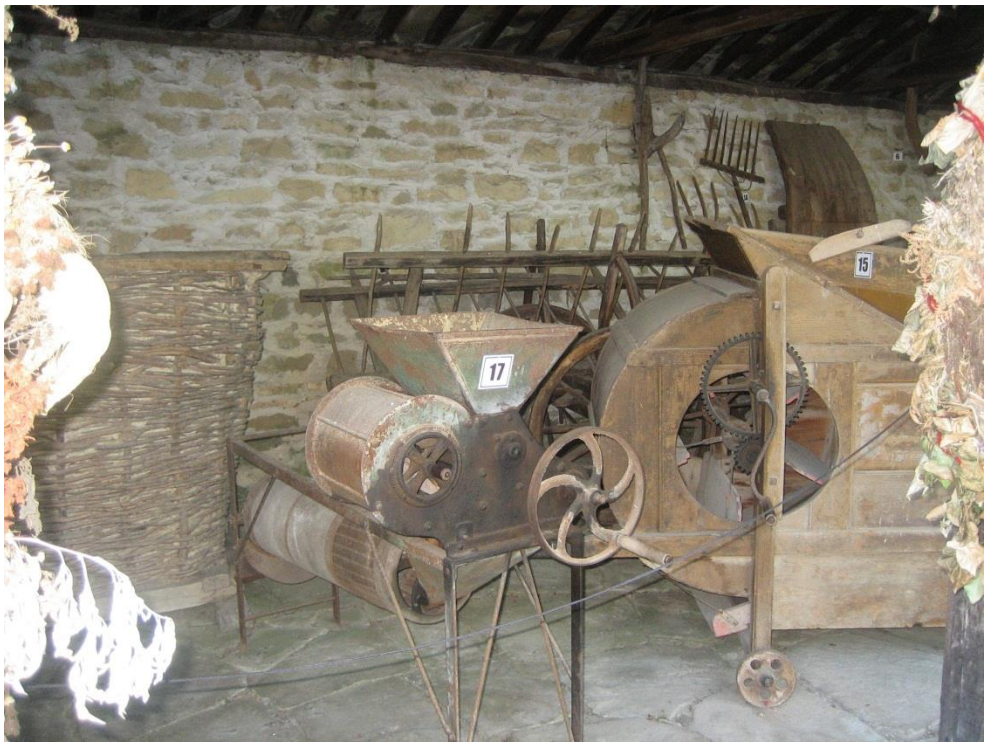

Figure 5.3: *Shed Containing Agricultural Equipment* (Personal Collection)

The peasant's home, clothing, tools and crafts were part of the museum complex, but the peasant himself was entirely missing. Visitors did not get to relive the region's agricultural past, a past that was as central a part of the city's economy as the craft workshops or market street; they inspected it from afar as lifeless skeletons of a bygone era.

In his memoirs, Donkov declared that he wanted to "create a real museum in the open, in which one could see the home life, one could be shown the reality of all mechanical equipment and craft workshops, the past would be able to remain visible,

easily perceived and understood..."[610] The "home life" he spoke of never truly became part of the museum. Etŭra was not a "living history" museum where a robust peasant woman would act out her daily chores before the flashing cameras of tourists. Only certain aspects of the complex were allowed to "live" on a day-to-day basis: the newly rehabilitated craftsmen and petty bourgeoisie. In this respect, Etŭra was quite different from other open air museums in the Soviet bloc.

In the years immediately following the Second World war, open air museums fell into disfavor in Eastern Europe due to their potentially nationalist and ideologically bourgeois content. By the 1950s and 60s, however the cultural thaw saw a resurgence of these museums throughout Soviet Bloc and particularly in places like Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Poland.[611] These museums, unlike Etŭra, were "living" museums, where all aspects of village life were on active display, not just craft work. In the Czechoslovak museum, Rožnov, for example, visitors could not only help with household tasks and sample home cooked meals, but they could see the entire cycle of sheep farming from caring for the animal through to the production of wool and cheese.[612] At the Folk Architecture Museum in Sanok, Poland, "Everything was to be 'as it was in the villages'. Fields and meadows would show the appearance of the landscape at the beginning of the twentieth century and be cultivated in the old way with authentic equipment from the

[610] Aleksieva, *Chovekŭt, koito sŭzdade "Etŭra",* 16.
[611] Rentzhog, *Open Air Museums,* 187.
[612] Ibid, 189.

time."[613] In all of these museums, folk crafts were presented as part of a larger peasant village culture. Even the Museum of Folk Technology in Sibiu, Romania, with its emphasis on proto-industrialization, included no fewer than thirty-three working farms as well as folk objects like plum distilleries.[614]

Etŭra did not exist in a vacuum, with its creators ignorant of open air museums in the rest of Europe. In fact, when Khristo Vakarelski, director of the National Ethnographic Museum in Sofia, reviewed the museum, he wrote:

> It is necessary to underline that in this [museum], from the point of view of history, education and visitor entertainment, Gabrovo is creating an opportunity for the exhibition of national folk crafts, which are of extraordinary importance. With this [museum], Bulgaria is striving to overtake countries like Sweden, Finland, Holland and … Romania. The merit of Gabrovo is that, in this respect we are organized much sooner than many others- neighboring and non-neighboring countries, in the ranks of museum work.[615]

Vakarelski clearly saw in Etŭra, not only proof of Bulgaria's cultural advancement, but also the country's entry into a larger European tradition of museum work- a tradition which until that time had largely framed folk crafts within an agricultural environment. In this context, the absence of the peasant within the Bulgarian museum seems all the more poignant.

Vakarelski's statement implies something further about this project. His words about the museum allowing Bulgaria to overtake the museum work in Western Europe, suggests a feeling of inferiority in comparison to western culture. An anxiety about

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[613] Ibid, 197.
[614] Ibid, 208.
[615] Aleksieva, *Chovekŭt, koito sŭzdade "Etŭra",* 52.

Bulgaria's lack of a distinct 19th century urban culture, something which was pre-supposed in the Marxist teleology, could go some way towards explaining the urbanization of the peasant city. Interspersed with folk crafts which had become synonymous with Bulgarian culture, the Ottoman city became a Bulgarian city- exotic yes, but like the past is always exotic to the present. The Revival city posited by the museum was emphatically urban and emphatically Bulgarian. The composition of the museum argued for a European-style urban cultural history in Bulgaria. The construction of the museum argued for Bulgaria's current ability to compete culturally with Western Europe. Both the museum's existence and its design argued for Bulgaria's inclusion in a European modernity.[616]

"I AM MORE OF A BULGARIAN THAN WHEN I ARRIVED!"

Etŭra was not only a symbolic success, showcasing Bulgaria's cultural innovation in the realm of museum work, but almost immediately, the museum was a huge popular success as well. In 1964, when construction of the mills was still underway, and well before work began on the market street, 12,000 visitors explored the verdant park.[617] In his memoir, Lazar Donkov recalled that,

> during 1965, The popularity of the museum leapt over the boundaries of the country. Museum workers from Leningrad, Budapest, Prague, Martin [Slovakia], Warsaw, Bucharest and Cardiff, came to become acquainted with this new kind of active museum. There were visitors from the USSR, Australia, USA, Sudan, OAR, Mali, Morocco, Burundi, Lebanon, England, Israel, GDR, Romania, India, and Sweden. The stream of visitors was continuous almost every day. Often […]

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[616] For additional discussion of Bulgaria's complex relationship with Western Modernity see: Neuburger, *The Orient Within: Muslim Minorities and the Negotiation of Nationhood in Modern Bulgaria,* 7.
[617] Aleksieva, *Chovekŭt, koito sŭzdade "Etŭra",* 47.

> as a tour guide we walked twenty to twenty-five times a day from the one to the other edge of the museum, and that was 15-20 km.[618]

By 1968, the number of yearly visitors had increased to 182,970.[619] Between 1978 and 1984, the number of tourists arriving in busses and private cars became such that the museum urgently had to expand the available parking.[620] By 1981, a hotel with 77 beds, a day bar and a Bulgarian-style restaurant (*mekhana)* was constructed to accommodate visitors wanting to make a longer sojourn into the once deserted valley.[621] The quickly growing number of visitors attests to the museum's popularity. And if providing new leisure opportunities to the populace was a goal of a regime searching for legitimacy, the park-museum was undoubtedly successful in that regard.

How did all of these visitors receive the intended message, so carefully laid out before them? In the book of appraisals, visitor response was generally positive and many professed to be quite genuinely moved. One visitor wrote, "Leaving, I am more of a Bulgarian than I was when I arrived."[622] But was this visitor more Bulgarian because they recognized their own culture in the museum, or because he came to understand a key part of his national heritage? Was the attempt at historicizing and urbanizing peasant culture effective? Did the spectator experience this ethnographic town as a relic of a distant past? Of course, it is nearly impossible to know. But a note from Vakarelski's review of the museum gives a promising clue. He writes,

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618 Ibid, 49-50.
619 Ibid, 72.
620 Nedkov, *Muzeĭ na otkrito,* 115.
621 Ibid.
622 Ibid, 50.

> Also interestingly, there is value from a scientific and educational point of view that all 13 of the objects constructed at this point are active. They work under the care and with the help of old masters.[…] The neighboring population makes use of them.[623]

Again Vakarelski's words give us an insight into the complexity of the museum. The ethnographic park was not a static display, but a living part of the community. The initial intentions of the creators could only be part of the story. The interactions of the visitors, the locals and the museum workers also were not static. One must wonder how distant the past could remain, when the local villagers could see these "historical" objects and make use of them in their everyday life. This practical usage of museum objects is not too surprising. After all, these objects had actually been located in the neighboring villages until quite recently. Is it any wonder that those who used them before should seek to use them again? But seeing these objects in active use by their contemporaries, would visitors leave with the "correct" message? Clearly, received meaning is never so easy to control or predict.

BRINGING THE VILLAGE TO THE CITY- KOPRIVSHTITSA

The Ethnographic Complex at Etŭra highlights an interesting shift in ethnographic museum work that occurred in the mid-1960s. Whereas before, ethnographic exhibits only appeared as part of museums of Bulgarian history, during this period we also see a blossoming of purely ethnographic complexes.[624] These complexes,

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[623] Aleksieva, *Chovekŭt, koito sŭzdade "Etŭra",* 51.

[624] For example, Etnografski Muzeĭ, Varna (1974) Etnografski Kompleks, Vratsa (1976) Arkhitekturno Istoricheskiiat Reservat- "Bozhentsi" (1964), Etnografski Kompleks- Staryat Dobrich (1980), Etnografski Kompleks, Lovech (1976), Muzeĭ na khudozhestvenite zanaiatii prilozhnite izkustva- Troyan (1968),

similar to Etŭra, were groups of buildings, clustered together on cobbled streets. Unlike Etŭra, most of these new complexes were in city centers, separated from the hustle of modern life only by a hedge, lawn or wall. Although none of the complexes were as elaborate as the one in Etŭra, they had striking symbolic similarities. All of these museums effectively urbanized folk culture, both by recreation of a proto-urban environment, and by the literal placement of the museums in city centers. Additionally, each museum was also explicitly attempting to recreate life during the Revival Period.[625]

In addition to these artificially created ethnographic complexes, there was also the re-designation of certain well-preserved architectural collections as "museum towns." At times areas of certain cities were deemed historically significant, and set aside in such a way so as to preserve their authenticity. This was the case in Veliko Tŭrnovo and Plovdiv. At other times, a much larger area was highlighted for preservation, as in Triavna. Perhaps the most well-known 'museum town' in Bulgaria is the lovely settlement of Koprivshtitsa. Today, a foreign tourist who makes it beyond the Black Sea resorts is quite likely to be hauled by his or her host to this picturesque mountain town. Not only is this town fairly bristling with Revival Era buildings, but it is there that the first shot was fired, which began the doomed and bloody April Uprising of 1876.[626]

Etnografska Ekspozitsia, Pazardzhik (1974), Etnografska Ekspozitsia "Stoiova Kŭshta", Radomir (1979), Etnografski Kompleks "Kulata", Kazanlŭk (1970).

[625] For example: 'Etnografski Muzeĭ-Grad Lovech', <http://bulgariatravel.org/bg/object/159/Etnografski_muzej_Lovech>, accessed 2/16/2012 2:28 pm

[626] Koprivshtitsa was one of several towns clustered in the Sredna Gora which were took take part in a planned uprising that April, but due to unforeseen circumstances, fighting broke out several days early in Koprivshtitsa. Ultimately the uprising was a failure, leading to the death of many of Bulgaria's national heroes, and bloody reprisals by the Ottomans.

Indeed, "First Shot Bridge" will likely be the starting point of the tour of this Revival Era town. Symbolically, Koprivshtitsa represents not only Bulgaria's resistance to Ottoman domination, but also Bulgaria's strongest claim to a truly *Bulgarian* 19th century urban culture that is not distressingly intertwined with Ottoman culture.

By the late Ottoman period, Koprivshtitsa had become a relatively wealthy Bulgarian merchant and craftsman community. Unlike many other cities of this time period, there were virtually no foreign elements in this town.[627] The inhabitants from this time raised cattle stock for Constantinople, and became the empire's premier suppliers of meat and wool products. Merchants with contacts in the capital negotiated with the Sublime Porte, so that they had access to imperial pastures from the Balkans to the Thracian flatlands.[628] Despite having to contend with raids, one of which resulted in a fire which destroyed almost the entire town, Koprivshtitsa entered the mid-19th century as a prosperous city, with a population of around 8,000.[629] Artistic and artisanal culture blossomed amidst this material prosperity. Koprivshtitsa became known for its intricate textile work throughout the Empire, and most of the town's beautiful architecture dates from this period.

After Liberation, however, the city went into decline. The city's artisanal economy could not compete with cheap industrially manufactured goods from abroad. Young people left in search of work in the new capital of Sofia, and Koprivshtitsa

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[627] Gavrilova, *Bulgarian Urban Culture in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries,* 48.
[628] Boris and Ilia Boudenov Kolev, *Koprivshtitsa* (Sofia: Bŭlgarski Hudozhnik Publishing House, 1967), 7-8.
[629] Petko Teofilov, *Koprivshtitsa: Pŭtovoditel* (Sofia: Nauka i Izkustvo, 1966), 7. Gavrilova, *Bulgarian Urban Culture in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries,* 48.

became a sleepy little mountain village.[630] By 1900, not even 4,000 inhabitants remained, and twenty years later there were barely half that number.[631] When the settlement was declared a town-museum in 1956, its population was just over 3,000.[632]

Over the decades, however, despite a dwindling and aging population, Koprivshtitsa retained its symbolic importance. In 1926, Prof. Archimandrit Evtimiĭ, edited a Jubilee volume which collected memories, statistics and an exhaustive list of the city's historic inhabitants. In the forward, he explains: "The role of Koprivshtitsa in our National Revival, with its clear cultural and revolutionary attitude is enormous. It can scarcely, even from our direction, be left unstudied."[633] Evtimiĭ then proceeds in two large volumes, to recount every facet of life in Koprivshtitsa over the preceding 50 years. During the 1920s and 30s it was not uncommon to publish a short history of a village. However, these were usually dainty volumes that fit easily into the palm of your hand, not massive tomes. Some years later, in 1938, a guide book was published, which carefully directs tourists to the important attractions in the mountain town. Although cultural tourism was still scarce in this period, the author explains why one might be interested in Koprivshtitsa:

> When you decide to visit the city of Koprivshtitsa, dear readers, I am sure that you are not only stopping in from the desire to find the clean air of the Sredna Gora[634], high mountain sunshine, beautiful environs to walk in and fresh,

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[630] Viara Kandzheva and Antonii Khandzhiiski, *Koprivshtitsa : History and Architecture* (Sofia: Borina, 2005), 12.
[631] Teofilov, *Koprivshtitsa: Pŭtovoditel,* 7.
[632] Ibid, 8.
[633] Arkhimandrit Evtimii, *Iubileen sbornik po minaloto na Koprivshtitsa (20 April 1876 god-20 April 1926 god)* (Sofia: Duzhavna Pechatnitsa, 1926), 4.
[634] The Sredna Gora is a mountain range that runs parallel to the Balkans through Central Bulgaria.

> inexpensive and abundant food, but that you will also bring with you the desire to travel and to rediscover- the great and mysterious […] the sacred enclave of our famous and honored grandfathers.[635]

Interspersed with photos of the royal family and dramatically rendered illustrations depicting fierce battles and brave revolutionaries, the guidebook then proceeds to recount the events leading up to the April Uprising and to guide the reader to each of the combatant's homes. This recognition of Koprivshtita's cultural and historical importance continued into the Communist period. As one guide book from 1967 explains:

> Koprivshtitsa is a living monument of the past. Every street, every house, every nook reminds one of the life and customs of the Bulgarians of yore who through the long night of Turkish domination kept alive the torch of Bulgarian national consciousness, flaring up into the sacrificial flame of the historic April 1876 Uprising.[636]

What is so interesting, therefore, is how, over time, this important national symbol was re-imagined. By looking at how Koprivshtitsa was developed as a tourist destination in the 1950s and 60s, one can see how it was incorporated into the "master plot" of ethnographic tourism.

We know, from the journal *Bŭlgarski Turist*, as well as a few other tourist publications, that Koprivshtitsa was already a tourist destination well before the war.[637] Boris Pulekov's 1938 guidebook gives us a glimpse of how Koprivshtitsa was presented to the popular imagination. He writes: "The streets are deserted and the swift streams do not babble for the pleasure of mischievous children, but only as a surprise for tired

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[635] Pulekov, *Turistiko istoricheski vodach za grad Koprivshtitsa i okolnostite mu s 101 ilustratsii*. 11.
[636] Kolev, *Koprivshtitsa*. 7.
[637] For example, Panchev, 'Koprivshtitsa', Arkhimandrit Evtimi, *Koprivshtitsa 1837-1937 : Iubileen Sbornik* (Sofia Koprivshtenskoto druzhestvo "20 april 1876 god.", 1937). Pulekov, *Turistiko istoricheski vodach za grad Koprivshtitsa i okolnostite mu s 101 ilustratsii*.

tourists. […] No, no. Through the doors, though, peer two resigned old people who already cannot remember […] that it was once otherwise."[638] His words then go on to evoke a Koprivshtitsa lost to time: a Koprivshtitsa of great economic and cultural wealth, whose sons went on to become leaders, doctors, teachers and poets.[639] In Pulekov's work, the present Koprivshtitsa was like a shadow which allowed one to see the shape of the town's glorious past. But this view of Koprivshtitsa as a decaying commercial urban center was questioned in the years following the war.

Despite its clear Revival credentials, Koprivshtitsa's inclusion into the urbanizing narrative of ethnographic tourism was not a forgone conclusion. By the end of the Second World War, the town was far more reminiscent of a sleepy village than a bustling Revival Era city. This is certainly how it was portrayed in Pulekov's 1938 guide book, and this is an idea which remained after the war. In 1964 Vasil Beĭzov authored a poetic guide to Koprivshtitsa, which begins with the words, "Village, village, deserted village…"[640] clearly casting the erstwhile city as a mere cluster of a few crumbling buildings. Both the 1938 and the 1964 guides share a melancholy tone, focusing on the town's current state of picturesque decay. For example, Beĭzov writes, "If silence were made into a picture, this picture would look like the village of Koprivshtitsa."[641] But where the 1938 guidebook draws out the town's vibrant commercial and cultural past, the 1964 guide pays little overt attention to the town's former economy, but still manages to portray the

[638] Pulekov, *Turistiko istoricheski vodach za grad Koprivshtitsa i okolnostite mu s 101 ilustratsii,* 9.
[639] Ibid, 58-100. Unusually for a guidebook, Pulekov literally lists all of the culturally significant inhabitants of Koprivshtitsa.
[640] Beĭzov, *Koprivshtitsa,* 5.
[641] Ibid, 8.

past and present Koprivshtitsa as a sleepy agricultural settlement. For example when describing the entrances to the old houses he writes, "Small doors are for every day, for work days. And the gate is for holidays, for weddings, for carts loaded with sickles, hay, and for the next exit from home."[642]

The Koprivshtitsa which emerges from Beĭzov's 1964 guide is outside of the flow of history. Past and present are intertwined with seemingly no change from one to the other. This timeless quality is graphically illustrated by the collection of photographs which are the main focus of the book. Most of the photos are artistically framed shots of Koprivshtitsa, often details of ironwork or woodcarvings. Several of these shots feature what one must assume to be present-day inhabitants of the town. One can see old women huddled in doorways and walking by crumbling fountains,[643] the blur of a child running through an overgrown courtyard.[644] But, confusingly, in one early photo an elderly man in traditional dress walks in the shadow of a stone wall.[645] However, that same man is clearly featured in a collection of portraits at the end of the book entitled, "From the Life of Old Koprivshtitsa".[646] In this later collection, young women in elaborate folk costumes stand together naturally, as if caught in a moment of candid conversation. A grandfather and a small child ride a donkey through town. A boy hides in his mother's embroidered skirts. The photos have an unstudied quality, as if documenting everyday life. It is entirely unclear from the text whether this is Koprivshtitsa of today or Koprivshtitsa of

[642] Ibid, 5.
[643] Ibid, 61.
[644] Ibid, 47.
[645] Ibid, 46.
[646] Ibid, 90-95.

the past. But perhaps that is unimportant to Beĭzov. In his text, he seems to be re-calling pre-war nationalist narratives which found the nation in the timeless village.

By the mid-sixties, a more familiar image of Koprivshtitsa began to emerge in the travel literature. In 1966, Petko Teofilov's guide book clearly represents Koprivshtitsa, past and present, as a city [*grad*], not a village [*selo*]. The town retained its cultural and national significance, but for Teofilov, its early and continued classification as a city seems important. His narrative encompasses the rise and decline of the town, including the exact date of its first official classification as a city (in 1873).[647] He explains that today tourists come to Koprivshtitsa, "to see the architectural and historical riches of the city…"[648] Like Beĭzov, Teofilov neatly avoids discussing Koprivshtitsa's commercial past. But instead focuses on the city's cultural and political wealth, and its current rejuvenation under the enlightened agricultural policies of the socialist government.[649] However, only a year later, a guidebook co-written by Boris Kolev and Ilia Boudenov discusses Koprivshtitsa's commercial roots in some detail.[650] This 1967 guide also emphasizes Koprivshtitsa's Revival Era urban credentials, favorably comparing it with other well-known Revival Era urban centers, such as Plovdiv and Melnik.[651]

In the 1966 guide, tourists are encouraged to see Bulgaria's glorious past *and* present. In the 1967 guide, however, Koprivshtitsa becomes a true museum town- a static memorial to the glorious 19th century Revival. In words reminiscent of Dimo Tordorov's

[647] Teofilov, *Koprivshtitsa: Putovoditel,* 7.
[648] Ibid, 58.
[649] Ibid, 51.
[650] Kolev, *Koprivshtitsa,* 7.
[651] Ibid, 11.

claim that a visit to Etŭra would be a "trip through time", Kolev and Boudenov write, "Like a 19th-century oasis, Koprivshtitsa abounds in historic monuments amid houses of rare artistic beauty which truly make it a museum-town."[652] To step into Koprivshtitsa, was to step back in time a hundred years. The photos which accompany this guide suggest that tourists visiting can see a bygone way of life. A boy waters his goats at one of the old fountains[653], and a woman hauls water with an elegantly carved shoulder yoke.[654] The text describes Koprivshtitsa as a city,[655] but inhabitants of Sofia would not look at these pictures of cobbled streets and timbered houses and find them familiar. So Koprivshtitsa must be that most desired of all things, a Bulgarian 19th century city frozen in time for all to enjoy. By 1973, however, in Rumiana Savova-Kasabova's guide, there are no images of Koprivshtitsa's inhabitants. All that remain are brightly clothed tourists, holiday-makers, enjoying their new leisure hours, exploring the museum-town.[656]

The association of folk culture with Koprivshtitsa was also undoubtedly a product of the socialist period. None of the pre-war publications make any link between either folk-costume or folk-music and Koprivshtitsa, and though Koprivshtitsa was undoubtedly a center of craft-work in the 19th century, pre-war tourists went to the town to relive the April Uprising, not to indulge in an interest in folk crafts. This all began to change when in 1956, as the city was being categorized as a town-museum, an ethnographic museum

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652 Ibid, 12.
653 Ibid, 30.
654 Ibid, 42.
655 Ibid, 10.
656 Rumiana Savova-Kasabova, *Koprivshtitsa* (Sofia: Izdatelstvo Nauka i Izkustvo, 1973). For example, the photo entitled, "On the Streets."

was founded in Oslekova House, one of the most stunning buildings in Koprivshtitsa. [Figure 5.4]

Figure 5.4: *Oslekova House-The Ethnographic Museum* (Personal Collection)

The house had been constructed, a century before, for a merchant called Nencho Oslekov.[657] The façade is unusual, in that, unlike most Bulgarian houses of this time period, it has a consciously European look with a row of columns and colorful frescoes

[657] Elydesign, 'Muzeĭ "Oslekova Kushta" Bul. Kh. Nencho Palaveev, 39', <http://koprivshtitsa-bg.com/index.php?page=cp&cat=3&scid=93&sscid=124>2/24/2012 2:04 pm.

featuring European-style buildings. Undoubtedly, the museum displays took some time to be finalized, as the museum was apparently not worth mentioning in Vasil Beĭzov's poetic 1964 guide.[658] In 1966, however, the museum is discussed in some detail giving us a rare glimpse of how ethnographers constructed visual meaning during this period.

On the ground floor, visitors would see a "Revival Era" kitchen and pantry, as well as a display of old stamps and Oslekov family portraits. On the second floor, the formal receiving rooms were organized to display artisanal crafts, including jewelry and folk costumes. The rooms themselves are arranged both *a la franga* (that is, with European style furniture) and in the "Bulgarian" style with thick felt carpeting and brightly colored pillows along the window enclosures.[659]

There are several interesting points to note here. First of all, the decision to place folk costumes in a room arranged *a la franga* was highly symbolic. The effect of displaying folk costumes, which had become symbolic of Bulgarianess in propaganda posters and sculptural monuments, with 19th century chairs, instead of floor cushions is fascinating. In the early 20th century, nationalists had attempted to reclaim Revival Era architecture as intrinsically Bulgarian.[660] Included in this process were these rooms, which to an outsider seem unmistakably reminiscent of Turkish rooms, in which the inhabitants would sit on thick carpeting around a low table, or on the long benches around the perimeter of the room. Even though these rooms were coded as "Bulgarian",

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[658] Beĭzov, *Koprivshtitsa*.
[659] Teofilov, *Koprivshtitsa: Putovoditel,* 86.
[660] Neuburger, 'Housing the Nation'.

they were still associated with the Ottoman time period. So, to have placed the folk costumes in this room would have been to associate them with Bulgaria's Ottoman past. However, by placing the costumes in the European style room, these strong nationalist symbols become associated with the growing influence of European culture in Bulgaria. In a sense, the European-ness of Bulgaria's national culture is demonstrated by placing these costumes in the room arranged *a la franga*. This European association is further emphasized by locating the museum in a consciously European inspired building.

The museum could have been placed in a modest peasant cottage, to associate the objects with the region's peasantry. Instead, the museum is placed in one of the most *monumental* looking houses in town, and undoubtedly the one that most closely resembles the classically inspired facades of 19th century national museums. Symbolically, the effect of housing the museum in this building was similar to the effect of housing the National Ethnographic Museum in the royal palace, that is, it locates the collection within a specific historical and cultural framework. In addition to its European appearance, the building's credentials as the former residence of a participant of the April Uprising, unmistakably argues for the association of folk-culture with that particular historic moment. After all, the Oslekov house was not the only one available. Not every home in Koprivshtitsa used to house a rebel leader and at least one, the Pavlikianska house, predates the Revival Period.[661] So the decision to place the ethnographic materials

[661] Savova-Kasabova, *Koprivshtitsa,* 3.

within the Oslekov house was a conscious one. Petko Teofilov carefully explains the meaning that we are meant to walk away with:

> When a visitor stands in this historic house, it is impossible not be transported to Revival Era Koprivshtitsa and to not see the self-confidence of freedom-loving Bulgarians who were living, working and flourishing in their secluded mountain town. It is impossible not to examine and taste the national pride before the artisanal achievement of national masters in the heavy conditions of the Turkish yoke.[662]

In other words, the folk objects themselves were an integral part of the experience of the 19th century city.

By the late 1960s, Koprivshtitsa would become a center for the display of folk culture, not just folk costumes, but also folk music. In chapter 4, we discussed how folk music had in the postwar years become central to urbanizing narratives in the Bulgarian countryside. This association of folk music with urban culture was reinforced, as the Revival Era city of Koprivshtitsa became the center of Bulgaria's folk music industry. If you ask any folk music enthusiast today, they will tell you that the largest and most well-known Bulgarian folk festival occurs every five years in Koprivshtitsa.

The first festival was held in the summer of 1965. A *Turist* article from October of that year, entitled "Bulgaria in Koprivshtitsa," describes the event in poetic detail. As Stefan Stanev ecstatically recounts, "under the sunny sky of the Sredno Gore mountains, which were the home of our Bulgarian revolutionaries, [the folk musicians] shone like eternal earthly stars, in order to convince everyone that "folklore" is not a lifeless and

[662] Teofilov, *Koprivshtitsa: Putovoditel,* 87.

dead concept, but is the symbol of the spiritual celebration of our nation."[663] He lovingly describes the haunting music and beautiful folk costumes on display. In his words Bulgaria's folk culture and rebel past occupy the same imaginary space, and Bulgarian folk songs become entwined with this particular historic narrative. For, as he explains, "Koprivshtitsa was not a fair of folklore, but a holiday dedicated to our nation spirit. […] To her [Koprvishtitsa]- thank you for recreating the joy of old times, and rejuvenating this incorruptibly magical art!"[664] It is interesting to consider that throughout the 1970s and 1980s, Balkanton recorded a majority of its folk music in Koprivshtitsa, cementing the relationship between folk music and this Revival Era city.[665]

In some ways, Koprivshtita can be said to show the development of ethnographic tourism in miniature: first with the foundation of a museum in the 1950s, and then with the experience of "living" folk culture in the festival in the mid 1960s. Undoubtedly, over the course of the 1960s, Koprivshtitsa was enfolded into the "master narrative" of ethnographic tourism. Its position as a Revival Era city and revolutionary center were solidified, and folk culture became a centerpiece of the tourist's experience of the town.

CONCLUSION

Since the late 19th century, the display of folk culture allowed ethnographers and nation-builders to grapple with the challenges of a "modern" national identity in predominantly rural Bulgaria. As we saw at the beginning of this dissertation,

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[663] Stefan Stanev, 'Bulgaria V Koprivshtitsa', *Turist,* October 1965, 13-14.
[664] Ibid.
[665] Anonymous, 'Koprivshtitsa', <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Koprivshtitsa>, accessed 3/5/2012 10:20pm

ethnographers before the Second World War, used ethnographic display to present a sanitized vision of a lived reality, a vision which could reconcile Bulgaria's rural character with the desire to pursue a European vision of modernity. After the war, however, this reality and ethnographers' representation of it changed drastically.

As late as 1946, only 24% of the Bulgarian population was designated as urban, by 1975, this number had ballooned to almost 60%.[666] These intervening decades, with swift industrialization, urban crowding, deprivation and hardship, translated to real changes in village life (if not as thorough as the government had hoped). The urbanization of the village, discussed in Chapter 4, not only meant the loss of certain aspects of village culture, with the importation of "urban" goods and modes of living, but it also came with political costs. By the 1960s, the regime started to make attempts to provide the "socialist good-life" in the form of expanded leisure opportunities in order to placate a population exhausted by the cost of "building socialism." One incarnation this new leisure culture took was "ethnographic tourism" which focused on nationalist images of folk culture and village life.

The paradox was, of course, that the very peasant culture that was being promoted was simultaneously being destroyed as the state completed collectivization and rapidly increasing numbers of villagers moved to the city in search of employment. This presented a seeming contradiction was negotiated through the construction of "ethnographic tourism". Lazar Donkov wrote of the Ethnographic Park-Museum, Etŭra:

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[666] Creed, *Domesticating Revolution, 125*.

"Here the lively spirit and practical and inventive mind of the Bulgarian is most clearly manifested."[667] During the 1950s and 60s, within historic museum and ethnographic parks, peasant crafts, homes, tools and clothes, were uncoupled from their recent rural roots and reframed as part of Bulgaria's 19th century urban experience. Imagined as part of a distant heroic Revival Period past, folk culture no longer seemed to criticize the regime which recently destroyed it. It could once again be utilized on behalf of national pride.

[667] Aleksieva, *Chovekŭt, koito sŭzdade "Etŭra",* 31.

Conclusion

On a sultry night in 2005, I was sitting with two other American students and our language teacher at one of the many "traditional" Bulgarian restaurants to be found in Sofia. The tables were made of roughly hewn wood, some of them covered in the woven red table cloths characteristic of this kind of establishment. Attached to the walls were old guns and farming implements and a few folk costumes, recalling Bulgaria's revolutionary, agricultural and folk culture roots.

At the end of the meal, we exchanged gifts. Our teacher gave each of us a souvenir of our stay in the Bulgarian capital. Mine was a magnet. The small photo fit into the palm my hand and featured two heavily made-up girls in elaborate folk costumes, photo-shopped onto a photograph of (presumably) the Black Sea at sunset. At the top, in English, ran the script. "Welcome to Bulgaria!" Although I did not realize it then, the meal I shared that night and the picture I held in my hand were not the signs of the end of a journey, but rather its beginning. The restaurant and the souvenir exemplified the image that would come to be the heart of my research. They represented the on-going project to imagine and express Bulgaria's national identity through the imagined Bulgarian peasant.

Perhaps the power of these images lies in the burden of their long history. For, just as the restaurant spoke to long-standing associations between agriculture and folk culture,[668] the two girls on the edge of the sea spoke to the continuing process of

[668] Indeed, the themed restaurant suggests that some aspects of the push to "urbanize" folk culture in the 1960s was not entirely successful. That is- while the weapons suggest the continuing association of folk culture with the Revival Era, the old pitchforks and scythes displayed on the restaurant's walls visually

"cleansing" this folk image for foreign and domestic audiences, a process which can be traced to the poorly lit halls of the interwar National Ethnographic Museum, or perhaps even earlier to the Plovdiv exhibition in 1892. The narratives and meanings of these images multiply like shadows cast by the light of a candle, and yet they are all united in that they have come to represent *Bulgaria.*

The goal of this dissertation has been to explore some of these narratives during the twentieth century. It has sought to illuminate how a single image, the Bulgarian peasant, was used to express conflicting and complimentary ideas about Bulgaria's identity as a modern nation. At first it might seem strange to look to the peasantry to try to imagine modernity. However, the peasant image is particularly suited to this endeavor precisely because it both falls outside of traditional definitions of European modernity, and at the same time it falls inside definitions of Bulgarian national identity. The Bulgarian peasant, both symbolic and real, was an inescapable problem that had to be resolved by modern nation builders.

My dissertation does not set out to define Bulgaria's particular experience of an "alternative modernity" but instead suggests how the dream of and drive towards modernity (or perhaps really modernities, as the Soviet vision of modernity was as important as the European one), were negotiated on the borders of Europe. Bulgaria's geographical and cultural liminality is important here for, as one of the "small states" of Southeastern Europe, Bulgaria was often at the mercy of her more powerful neighbors. In

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connected folk culture with Bulgaria's agricultural past, a connection which was never completely abandoned, even at the height of urbanizing efforts.

this context, adopting and emulating cultural trends from the East and West became a diplomatic endeavor. And yet, although the models of Europe and the Soviet Union stood brightly before Bulgaria, the Bulgarians in this study did not accept these forms in entirety, but in a sense "domesticated" the modernity they strove for. They struggled to imagine a modern Bulgaria which did not deny its peasant roots. Over the decades, different regimes developed various solutions to this seeming contradiction. And the shape of that changing ideal could be seen in the embroidered blouses and organized homes of the imagined Bulgarian peasantry.

Before the war, the folk peasant became the face of Bulgaria. Sanitized and categorized, these images provided proof of Bulgaria's modern European culture. After the war, folk culture became separated from peasant culture. The former became detached from the present, a timeless symbol of Bulgarian national culture. The reformation of the latter, for a while at least, became the proof of Socialist Bulgaria's successful attainment of Soviet Modernity.

Today, images of the Bulgarian folk peasants people the urban spaces of Bulgaria. They are to be found on postcards and telephone advertisements, on huge towering murals and in displays of modern art. They are on war monuments and in glass museum cases. They are inescapably woven into the fabric of the city. The current inhabitants of Bulgaria's half-abandoned rural communities, however, are largely invisible.

The symbolic power of folk culture only increased in the late years of Socialism. Deema Kaneff argues that during this time, folklore (by which she means folk music and

dance as well as other traditional customs) was appropriated by the state through educational institutions.[669] Folk traditions associated with the seasons were removed from their original religious contexts and inserted into folk festivals and museum towns, becoming part of performative acts of nationhood.[670] In this context they were removed from the flow of history. Folk costumes and dances no longer spoke of Bulgaria's living peasantry but became timeless symbols of Bulgarian culture, a culture rooted in the past. She writes, "[Folkloric celebrations'] contemporary relevance was established only through its separation of the past from the present and future. […] In representing a past that was spatially and temporally dislocated from the present, folklore was a transformational process by which traditional practices were appropriated by the state and then exhibited as objects belonging to another time."[671]

It is this figure who is used today to express the many incarnations of an imagined Bulgaria. She is so like and yet so unlike her sisters of the previous century. Perhaps this is why the many of the images which form the basis of this study continue to populate the landscape of Bulgaria today. The National Ethnographic Museum and the Ethnographic Park Museum-Etŭra continue to be important tourist destinations and unlike many postwar monuments, the Monument to the Soviet Army in Sofia, has not been dismantled. In fact, it is now a pleasant skateboarding park. Jazz musicians sit in the shade of the massive monument and entertain tourists. Furthermore, the monument has

[669] Deema Kaneff, *Who Owns the Past?*, 150. The period of focus for Kaneff's study is the 1980s, but this process was clearly one that began much earlier.
[670] Ibid, 151.
[671] Ibid, 152.

not lost all political relevance. The Communist Party still uses it for official celebrations, and over the last few years the monument has been coopted several times for various protests.[672] These aging images have found new contexts and new meanings in the post-communist Bulgaria. The image is not static, but ever changing. If a century ago, the peasant image was related to the peasantry as a footprint is to a foot; this is no longer the case. The foot has changed. So has the print. The folk peasant image reflects different realities now and tells new stories.

[672] Including a protest against the influence of America, against the imprisonment of the Russian punk band "Pussy Riot" and a protest against the World Bank.

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Vita

Emily Anne Hillhouse received a Bachelor of Arts from Wellesley College in May, 2000. She lived in Prague from 2001 to 2002, where she studied the Czech language. From 2002 to 2003 she studied Russian Language at the University of California, Santa Barbara. In September, 2003, she entered Graduate School at the University of Texas. She completed her Masters representations of imperialism in 1960s Soviet Film in December of 2006. In 2008, she gave birth to a daughter. Later that same year she took her comprehensive exams before beginning her research in Bulgaria in 2009.

Permanent address (or email): 4407 Rosedale Avenue, Austin, Texas 78756

This dissertation was typed by the author.