



NEWSLETTER

Bulgarian Studies Association



Photo by Iliana Sirakova

Letter from the President

By **Dilyana Ivanova Zieske**

Dear Readers,

The new BSA leadership was elected by the members almost a year ago. It has been an exciting year for Daria, Traci and me and we are happy to report that along with the restart of our newsletter, the BSA website was modernized, we have adopted a logo, and we now have a Facebook page.

Very soon, our reviewers will announce the 2023 John Bell Book Prize winner and we have already awarded one travel grant to a Bulgarian scholar, Desislava Tiholova, to attend the 55th ASEES Annual Conference in Philadelphia.

Again, I would like to express our gratitude to Andoni Andreev, for working with me to put together the new BSA website, and Liam Zieske, for drafting legal terms and policies and for becoming the Website Editor.

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Special thanks to Sanja Ivanov for accepting the role of the BSA Newsletter Editor and for her wonderful work on this 2023 newsletter issue!

Please consider sending us news and materials on topics related to Bulgarian studies for our website, Facebook page and newsletter. We will be happy to share them and make your work and the field of Bulgarian studies more visible and successful.

The 12th Joint Meeting of Bulgarian and North American Scholars will take place in Sofia, Bulgaria in June of 2024. Our partner on the ground, the Council for the Bulgarian Studies Abroad, has been working on the conference arrangements. Negotiations are currently underway for the conference venue; we will update members as soon as we have further information on the conference venue and format.

If you will be at the ASEEEES Conference in Philadelphia (Nov. 29 – Dec. 3), do plan to attend the BSA Annual Meeting. You can find more information about this our business meeting in Philadelphia on page 9 of this Newsletter.

In 2023, we also received the very sad news of the passing of our colleague and friend Martha Forsyth, who was an inspiration to all of us at the Bulgarian Studies Association. Sincere condolences again to her family and friends. The memorial text for Martha is included on our website, as well in this issue of the newsletter.

I would like to suggest that we establish a Martha Forsyth BSA Travel grant to commemorate and honor Martha and her contributions to our organization. This suggestion will be discussed at the BSA Annual meeting. The full content of our agenda for this meeting is also included on pg. 9 of this newsletter.

Finally, I would like to remind you to stay current with your membership fees. Your membership helps us to support BSA's activities. Here is the [link](#) to our PayPal for membership payments. The link and information are also available on our website: <https://www.bgstudies.org/>

If you have any questions regarding the method of the payment, please contact Traci Speed at bulgarianstudiesassociation@gmail.com.

With warm regards,
Dilyana

ABOUT THE BULGARIAN STUDIES ASSOCIATION

The Bulgarian Studies Association (BSA) is a non-profit scholarly organization promoting the study of and exchange of knowledge about all aspects of Bulgaria, Bulgarian lands and Bulgarians: language, literature, folklore, culture, history, archaeology, politics, economics and international relations. BSA is an affiliate organization of the Association for Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies (ASEEES).



Photo by Peter Forsyth

In Memoriam: Martha Forsyth

October 10, 1940 - September 24, 2023

Martha Forsyth, a dedicated and faithful officer of the Bulgarian Studies Association, passed away in the early morning of September 24, 2023. Martha was the archivist and historian for the Bulgarian Studies Association, serving as its secretary-treasurer since 1982 until 2014. As a generous and warm-hearted person, and a great admirer and researcher of Bulgarian musical folklore, she will be incredibly missed by all who had the pleasure of knowing her.

“Martha was the source of continuity for the BSA throughout its many changes of officers, as well as being the institutional memory of the institution. By continuing it and devoting so much time and effort to its financial health (especially the fundraising for the BSA-BAN conferences held in the US) through good times and difficult ones, she really was the heart of the BSA”.

Cynthia Vakareliyska

Martha Forsyth was an independent scholar specializing in Bulgarian traditional singing. She finished her Slavic language and literature Bachelor's degree at Radcliffe College in 1962 and earned her Master's at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) in 1964. Her love for Bulgarian folklore dates back to the time when she studied at university and enrolled in a course on Slavic folklore, where she was introduced to the authentic folklore from Bulgaria. In 1976, she visited Bulgaria for the first time and attended the National Festival of Bulgarian Folklore in Koprivshtitsa. During that trip, she met and started collaborating with scholars from the Institute of Musicology of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. Martha visited the villages of Bistritsa and Zheleznitsa near Sofia, as well as Velingrad, and met with local singers. She ultimately made more than 16 research trips to Bulgaria, some of them funded by IREX (1980-81), and the Fulbright Program (1988). During these trips, she recorded traditional Bulgarian songs from southwestern Bulgaria which she later transcribed, even translating some of them into English. Through her 40 years of research in Bulgaria, she amassed an impressive archive that included over 4,000 songs (recorded between 1978–1983), which were transferred to the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress. Martha became the founding member of the Boston-based Bulgarian Music Ensemble ZDRAVETS [www.zdravets.com] and frequently gave lectures at various conferences.

In Memoriam: Martha Forsyth

October 10, 1940 - September 24, 2023

Among her publications was her 1996 bilingual English-Bulgarian book *Listen Daughter and Remember Well*, dedicated to the songs of Linka Gergova from the Village of Bistritsa. [Here is a link](#) to more information about the book.

In addition to her specialization in Bulgarian singing, Marta Forsyth was a master of traditional beadwork, which she studied in Sarnitze in the western Bulgarian Rhodope Mountains. She was co-founder of the cooperative "Beads Without End": [here is the link](#) to some photographs. Martha was also accomplished in the art of making carded belts in the Bulgarian tradition, a skill she learned in Bulgaria.

In 2012, during the 9th Joint Meeting of Bulgarian and North American Scholars organized by the Bulgarian Studies Association and Bulgarian Academy of Sciences (BAS) in Eugene, Oregon, Martha was recognized by the Academy for her contribution to the research and promotion of Bulgarian folklore.

Martha Forsyth's passion for her work inspired a wider interest in Bulgarian folklore and traditions in the United States and internationally. She was a great advocate and friend of Bulgaria, where she will be always remembered and loved.

We offer our deepest condolences to Martha's family, friends and colleagues during this difficult time. We would like to express our gratitude to Martha's son Peter Forsyth, Cynthia Vakareliyska and Vessela Warner for their contributions about her illustrious life and career.

From the leadership of the Bulgarian Studies Association:
Dilyana Ivanova Zieske, President
Daria White, Vice President
Traci Speed, Treasurer



Photo by Dilyana Ivanova Zieske

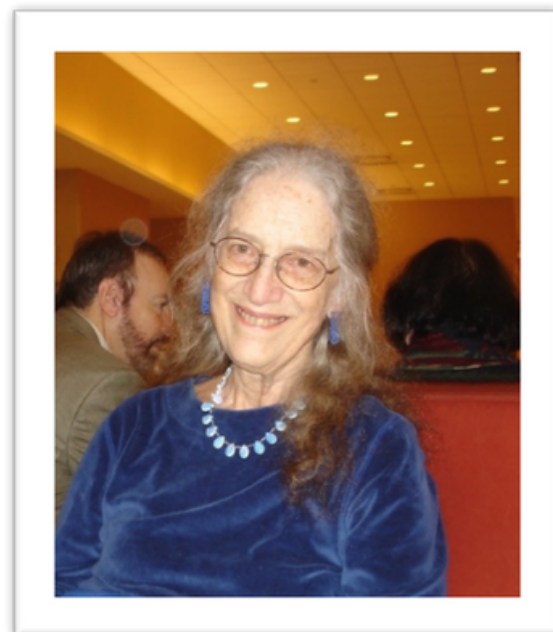


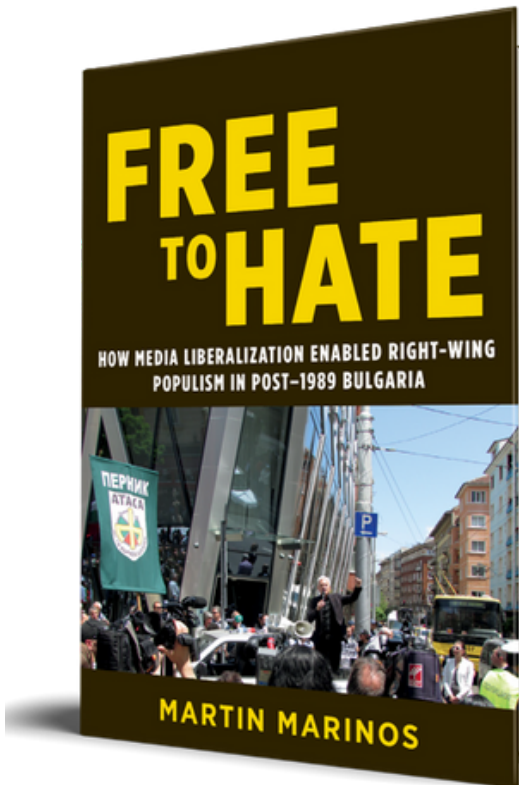
Photo by Vessela Warner

NEW BOOK:**Free to Hate: How Media Liberalization Enabled Right-Wing Populism in Post-1989 Bulgaria by Martin Marinos****Linking neoliberalism with the Right's global rise**

Bulgaria's media-driven pivot to right-wing populism parallels political developments taking place around the world. Martin Marinos applies a critical political economy approach to place Bulgarian right-wing populism within the structural transformation of the country's media institutions. As Marinos shows, media concentration under Western giants like Westdeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung and News Corporation have led to a neoliberal turn of commercialization, concentration, and tabloidization across media. The Right have used the anticommunism and racism bred by this environment to not only undermine traditional media but position their own outlets to boost new political entities like the nationalist party Ataka. Marinos's ethnographic observations and interviews with local journalists, politicians, and media experts add on-the-ground detail to his account. He also examines several related issues, including the performative appeal of populist media and the money behind it.

A timely and innovative analysis, *Free to Hate* reveals where structural changes in media intersect with right-wing populism.

MARTIN MARINOS is an assistant professor in the Department of Film Production and Media Studies at Penn State University.



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AN ORIGINAL INTERPRETATION OF THE ROLE OF THE MEDIA IN THE RISE OF POPULISM, DRAWING ON THE POLITICAL ECONOMY TRADITION OF MEDIA AND COMMUNICATION RESEARCH. HIGH-QUALITY INTERVIEWS AND ON-SITE FIELDWORK ADD ORIGINALITY AND SIGNIFICANCE TO THE BOOK.”

—SABINA MIHELJ, COAUTHOR OF MEDIA SYSTEMS TO MEDIA CULTURES: UNDERSTANDING SOCIALIST TELEVISION



Daria Borislavova White, PhD, LPC, NCC, an associate professor in mental health counseling published her first book on trauma and post traumatic growth at the end of 2022. The book is written in Bulgarian and was presented this year in Bansko, Plovdiv and BTA, Sofia, Bulgaria. The book is based on interviews with elderly women from the Pirin Macedonian region of Bulgaria and was well received by the academic community and ordinary people in Bulgaria.

NEW BOOK: Manda by Daria Borislavova White

"Have you read anything by Svetlana Alexievich? Her stories break my fast-paced reading habit. I find myself burdened with emotions and unable to take more. Daria White's book "Manda" is similar. Just like the first Alexievich book I read, "The Unwomanly Face of War", Daria White's book is about women. Daria's protagonists are the women of Bansko, born in the second, third and fourth decades of the 20th century, They survived war, poverty, emigration, political repression, de-Bulgarianization, collectivization and yes, the Revival process. In essence, these women's stories are an exploration of trauma, but the real experience is of sharing the love, faith, and strength of extraordinary people.

The women's stories are in a wonderful Bansko dialect, and the reader starts living in the universe of Bansko. We can't help but be amazed at how such a diversity can fit on so little land - Bulgarians, Pomacs and Roma, Orthodox, Protestants and Muslims.

"Manda" makes the divisive paradigms "local or global", "ethnic homogeneity or minority rights", "traditional or progressive" look ridiculous. Because in the Bansko universe, the story of the heart is told."

Momchil Petrov, Bulgarian historian (translated from Bulgarian)





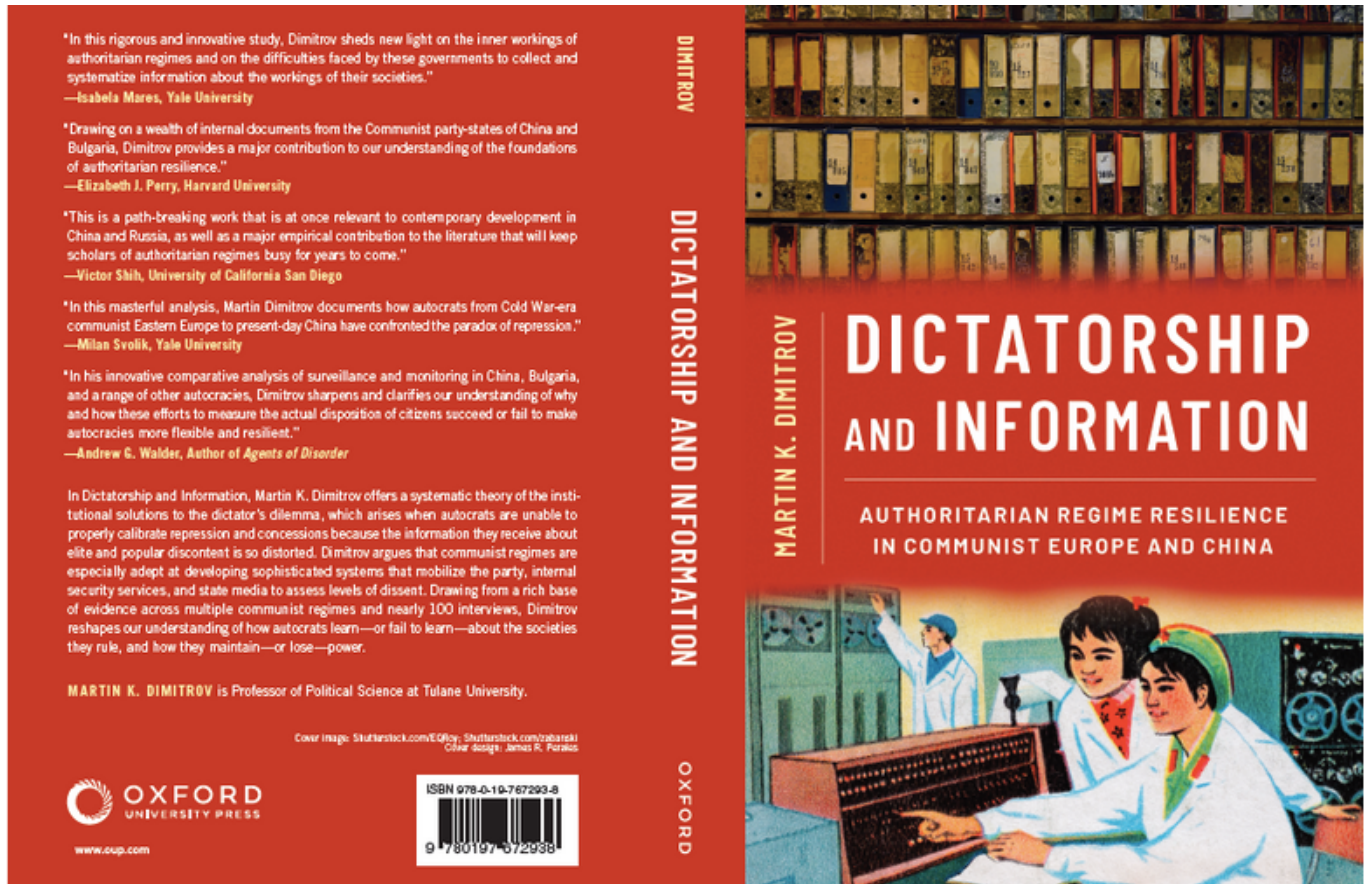
From "Manda":

Grandma Katya:

Why is it that they all repeated the same and were the same?! The partisans (in 1944) were against the injustice and came to bring righteousness, but they just like the ones before them killed who they wanted to. Go choose.... They should have judged the most guilty and let go of the rest to show being more just, but they did the same. Maybe among them there were different people who had more mercy, who were not like the others, who felt bad about what happened. We (women) did not meddle... I was 12 then; they had taken some and were keeping them in the school with hands tied behind their backs, their shoulders strained, so tight. It was not enough that they were taking them to Razlog to kill them, but they had to torture them! There was this child that was trying to give them water, but the gendarme saw him and spilled the water out. Is that human?! Jesus Christ was crucified, and they gave him a sponge with vinegar.

2023 BSA TRAVEL GRANTEE

In 2023, the BSA leadership awarded a travel grant at the amount of \$1000 to the ethnologist Desislava Tiholova to attend the 55th ASEES Annual Conference in Philadelphia. Tiholova works as a curator at the Rousse Regional Museum of History and she is delivering her paper, "The Case of 'Eberhard Undzhiyan' – from Family Migration to Mobility" At this years' aseees convention. The study analyzes the biographical interview of a third-generation descendant of Armenian refugees to Bulgaria and places his life story within the complex political, social, and cultural processes of the 20th and the early 21st centuries.



NEW BOOK: Dictatorship and Information: Authoritarian Regime Resilience in Communist Europe and China by Martin K. Dimitrov

Martin K. Dimitrov (Professor of Political Science at Tulane University) published his book *Dictatorship and Information: Authoritarian Regime Resilience in Communist Europe and China* with Oxford University Press in January 2023. The book is based on regime-generated materials prepared for insiders, including State Security, communist party, and internal media documents from Bulgaria and other communist regimes. It provides an empirically grounded theory of the origins and evolution of the entire ecosystem of information-gathering institutions in a range of communist regimes, where the most sophisticated systems for intelligence collection (party reporting, State Security, and internal journalism) emerge. The book argues that the dictator's dilemma can be solved and abundant information does extend authoritarian lifespans, but information cannot ensure the indefinite survival of dictatorships.

2023 BSA ANNUAL BUSINESS MEETING INFORMATION

The Annual Business Meeting of the Bulgarian Studies Association will be held in connection with the 55th Annual Convention of the Association for Slavic, East European, & Eurasian Studies (ASEEES) at the Philadelphia Marriott Downtown on Friday, December 1 from 6:00 to 7:30 pm, 4th floor, Meeting Room 412. The meeting will be chaired by BSA President, Dilyana Ivanova Zieske.

MEETING CHAIR: BSA PRESIDENT, DILYANA IVANOVA ZIESKE.	
December 1, 2023, Agenda Items	
1	Approval of BSA Meeting Minutes of November 10, 2022, (attachment), page Presenter: Dilyana Ivanova Zieske, President
2	BSA President Report
	<p>1. Updates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. BSA website. b. BSA logo and letterhead. c. BSA newsletter d. The next 12th Joint Meeting of Bulgarian and North American Scholars. <p>2. For discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Establishing a Martha Forsyth BSA Travel Award. b. Membership: <p>Note: Our membership is based upon the calendar year (January 1 – December 31).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to expand membership? • Should we increase the membership fees? Suggested fees and categories: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - \$10 for members living in Bulgaria. - \$35 for members living outside Bulgaria. - \$0 membership charge for retirees. c. Fundraising ideas for our activities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conference, publications, travel awards and scholarships. Any other purposes? • Fundraising venues/sources? • Volunteers to fundraise? d. BSA: unincorporated association or corporation? (Liam Zieske – BSA Member and Pro Bono Lawyer). <p>3. Announcements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. 2023 John Bell Award. b. 2023 BSA Travel Grant. <p>Presenter: Dilyana Ivanova Zieske, BSA President</p>
3	Treasurer Report, by Traci Speed, Treasurer Presenter: Dilyana Ivanova Zieske, BSA President
4	Other Business, if any.