BULGARIAN CULTURAL DIPLOMACY THROUGH UNESCO'S PROGRAM ON CULTURAL POLICIES, 1970-1983

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Abstract: The campaign of cultural diplomacy conducted by Bulgaria's socialist dictatorship during the 1970s and early 1980s was one of the most ambitious efforts of its kind in the modern history of the Balkans, and has been the subject of substantial research. This chapter explores one less well-known aspect of that campaign: the way the Bulgarian state used international communication about the country's domestic cultural policy to support its cultural diplomacy. It focuses on Bulgaria's participation in meetings and publications coordinated by UNESCO in the 1970s and early 1980s, when the organization led a major international program on cultural policies. It analyses several examples of how Bulgarian officials made use of UNESCO-sponsored forums, including Bulgaria's international presentation of its cultural policy at international events held in and outside of Bulgaria, books on the subject written by Bulgarian state officials but published by UNESCO, and articles that presented the country's cultural policy to a global audience in the organization's monthly magazine *The UNESCO Courier*. The chapter finds that UNESCO's cultural policy initiatives during the 1970s and early 80s were eagerly utilized by Bulgarian officials to reach audiences to which they would otherwise not have access, suggesting that international communication about cultural policies was an important aspect of Bulgaria's cultural diplomacy in this period.

Keywords: Cultural Diplomacy, Cultural Policy, UNESCO, Bulgaria, Cold War, 1970s

On August 25, 1979, UNESCO's director-general Amadou-Mahtar M'Bow had great praise for Bulgaria. He was in Sofia to attend the Symposium on Children and Peace, one

of several events hosted by the Bulgarian state in its capital city during the "Banner of Peace" International Children's Assembly, a 10-day long celebration of the United Nations' International Year of the Child. UNESCO, the UN body for education, science and culture, marked the special year with a series of activities (UNESCO 1978), of which this gathering in Sofia – bringing together over 1300 children from seventy-seven countries with more than 1000 Bulgarian children – was a high point (Dragostinova, 38).

It would be normal for UNESCO's representative to thank the host country for welcoming the foreign guests and facilitating the event. However, in his closing address, M'Bow went further than this. His speech singled out aspects of Bulgarian state policy on education, highlighting in particular its appreciation of the importance of art and culture in children's education. M'Bow particularly praised the country's socialist leadership for their keen contribution to UNESCO's recent survey on "the cultural content of education." This survey, he declared, showed "that aesthetic education in Bulgaria is considered from all angles – scientific, administrative, practical and organizational – in other words as a complex whole," and that "the cultural content of education… plays an essential role in enabling both children and adults to acquire humanistic qualities, values and attitudes" (M'Bow, 1). On the basis of creative policy choices like these, he concluded, "the Bulgarian Government and people are playing… an exemplary role in the field of creativity, and it was important for the international community to be invited to take advantage of the experience gained in this country" (*Ibid.*, 4).

The symposium's Bulgarian hosts must have been delighted. Hosting the "Banner of Peace" event was already a major achievement: Bringing children from around the world

to Sofia raised the city's status as an international cultural meeting point, and doing so under the aegis of UNESCO associated the country's socialist dictatorship with that international organization's credibility and prestige. In this sense, the event played a key role in Bulgaria's extraordinary campaign of cultural diplomacy during the 1970s and early 1980s. As the historian Theodora Dragostinova has documented, this campaign included a great deal of projection of Bulgarian culture outward to other countries, for example by holding exhibitions and concerts abroad. It also involved an explosion in the number of cultural events that brought foreigners to Bulgaria, ranging from visits by American pop musicians to international gatherings like the "Banner of Peace" children's event. M'Bow's presence in Sofia, as well as his flattering speech, certainly suggested that Bulgaria's cultural diplomatic campaign was bearing fruit.

However, M'Bow's praise for Bulgaria points to an interesting additional element to this campaign. Namely, it highlights the way the Bulgarians succeeded in deploying domestic-level cultural *policy* as a form of outward-directed cultural diplomacy. Cultural policy – the system of laws, institutions, and financing by which governments steer, regulate and promote the sphere of activities defined as "cultural" – is a complex topic in its own right, and the subject of a whole field of study (Rosenstein). This field sometime includes cultural diplomacy (see for example the special issues on cultural diplomacy in the *International Journal of Cultural Policy Studies*), but most of the time the topics are treated separately from one another. Yet, presenting new domestic-level policies on cultural matters could itself help garner attention, praise and prestige for a country that showed leadership in this policy field, especially if those policies addressed issues that had broad resonance beyond that country's borders.

Many states have surely deployed their cultural policy as a form of cultural diplomacy at various points in history, even if this has rarely been thematised in the historiography on either topic. Nevertheless, the 1970s and early 1980s in particular offered openings for this kind of outreach, not least for states in the socialist bloc. One key development, for Bulgaria, was the Helsinki Final Act, signed in August 1975 by the Eastern and Western blocs in 1975. This international agreement lowered political tensions and encouraged new forms of contact and communication between the socialist "second world" and the first and third worlds (Ivanova, 564; Dragostinova, 69).

Another crucial factor was UNESCO's growing interest and investment in a new field: "cultural policy." We use this phrase quite naturally today, to refer to activities in present or in the distant past – to say, perhaps, that gladiators and circuses were an important part of ancient Roman cultural policy, for example. In fact, the term really took off internationally only in the 1960s, especially in and through the new international forum for cultural questions that had been created after World War II: UNESCO. Beginning with a "Roundtable on Cultural Policies" held in Monaco in December 1967, UNESCO became the stage for a discussion that was quite global, and quite intense: "cultural policies" were the subject of meetings, conferences and books in which scholars and political leaders proposed grand visions of the future role of culture. Relatively quickly, the plural form settled into a somehow more definitive singular, and "cultural policy" became an obvious topic for international comparison and coordination. Indeed, "the development of the concept of cultural policy and of recognized cultural policy norms, problems, rationales, and goals was," as cultural policy studies scholar Carole Rosenstein explains,

"an international project centered at UNESCO over [the] post-war period" (Rosenstein, 4-5. See also Alasuutari and Kangas; Vestheim).

Interest in this new topic was particularly intense in the period from the late 1960s to the early 1980s – a period one scholar has called "the cultural policy moment" (Brouillette, 69). The UNESCO-sponsored conferences, meetings and publications that emerged in this context created an international infrastructure through which countries from around the world could share and compare national-level cultural policies, and evaluate competing practical and ideological arguments for their different approaches. The goal, in UNESCO's own formulation, was to "provide guidelines to countries that have not yet established cultural policies, while all countries, especially those seeking new formulations of such policies, can profit by the experience already gained" (Popov, 1972, preface). However, these events and publication outlets also created numerous opportunities for international outreach, not least for smaller countries that did not normally have easy access to international audiences. Bulgaria's leadership identified these opportunities and eagerly seized them.

In this chapter, I explore several examples of how Bulgarian officials made use of the forums offered by UNESCO to present the country's cultural policy innovations to foreign audiences in a compelling and attractive manner in the 1970s and early 80s. The examples I present here offer a modest addition to the excellent research on socialist Bulgaria's cultural diplomacy campaign of the 1970s and 80s (above all in Dragostinova). More importantly, they introduce a case study by which to consider a broader historical phenomenon: how states used UNESCO's program on cultural policy to advance their own cultural diplomacy.

Bulgarian Cultural Policy Stakes its Claim

In 1968, UNESCO's General Conference adopted a program "for the study of cultural policies" and convened an expert group on the subject. In 1969, this group launched a new book series, "Studies and Documents on Cultural Policies," and invited all member states to contribute a volume describing their country's approach, which UNESCO would translate, publish and distribute internationally. This was an attractive offer, not least for smaller countries for which translating and distributing a well-made book, printed on high-quality paper, to a global audience of interested experts would be a major, if not impossible, undertaking, since it required substantial resources and broad international networks. Bulgaria's leadership seems to have perceived the advantages of this offer and was quick to answer the call. Kostadine Popov, a cabinet advisor to the president of Bulgaria's Committee for Arts and Culture (*Komitet za izkustvo i kultura*, or KIK), was given the task of preparing a volume. *Cultural Policy in Bulgaria* was published in this series in 1972.

Bulgaria was famous (or infamous) in the West for being a particularly brutal and particularly loyal vassal of the USSR, often dismissed as a satellite state. In presenting itself to the world (through UNESCO) in the field of cultural policy, however, Bulgaria's leadership was eager to show its uniqueness as a country in the socialist bloc, its particular and distinguished cultural heritage, and its more nuanced form of communist control. The book's first pages offer a short history of Bulgaria, celebrating the country's great age ("a State for thirteen centuries") and "the beauty and boldness of imagination" of its medieval architecture (Popov, 1972, 9).

As for policy, the book highlights the ideological differences between Bulgarian policy and that of Western capital-

ism. For example, we learn that the state seeks "to ensure that creative artists enjoy the material conditions allowing them to give full rein to their talents," by treating creative production as work, and thus paying them, following "the constitutional principle whereby all work must be paid for" (*Ibid.*, 30). However, the amount paid was not based on sales or profits. As a general principle, "profitability is of secondary importance: the main effort is towards using the funds available in the most rational way possible" (*Ibid.*, 29). Rationality is indeed a key idea here; the text presents reason and scientific concepts like expertise and validity as motivating its choices of policy and of the people who should guide that policy. For example, since the members of the council that guided Bulgaria's general directorate for musical matters (Bulgarska musika) "know the real needs and the major theoretical problems which arise in matters connected with music, they are capable of making valid statements with a view to laying down rational policies in this field" (*Ibid.*, 22). This kind of language set up a contrast between "scientific socialism," which correctly identified and efficiently addressed the needs of the people, and the implicitly wasteful, hierarchical, and exploitative situation of culture in the capitalist West (even though the book does not include any attacks on Western models).

Nevertheless, the book was also eager to show that Bulgaria's policy was evolving and new, and was not a Stalinist system of total control. The book documents the changes of the 1960s, whereby the Committee on Arts and Culture had been separated from the Ministry of Education and given its own autonomous role in 1963, before a major reorganization in 1967, which also saw the creation of a network of local Councils of Arts and Culture. It celebrates that these bodies, from the bottom to the top level, are composed

of "writers, painters, musicians, journalists, artists, architects, experts and civil servants", stressing the fact that the president of the Committee, Pavel Matev, was "an eminent poet." It also celebrates the elections by which these members are selected. Bulgaria's "new system for administering cultural affairs," it explains, "is the start of a new stage in the socialist cultural development of the country, characterized by democratization of the organization of cultural activities at all levels, and by the active participation of representatives of the arts in the administration of cultural affairs" (*Ibid.*, 19-20). At no point does the book deny the role of the state in guiding Bulgaria's cultural life, but is interesting that it stresses the autonomy of the cultural sphere and the concept of democracy, or what Bulgarian President Todor Zhivkov called "socialist democratization" (Dragostinova, 31).

Bulgarian officials made sure the state was also well represented at the conferences held in the context of UNESCO's program on cultural policy. These events offered other occasions for cultural diplomatic positioning. After the relatively small Round Table event in 1967, the program began in earnest in 1970, with the Intergovernmental Conference on Institutional, Administrative and Financial Aspects of Cultural Policies in Venice (UNESCO 1970). Bulgaria had not been represented at the Monaco meeting, but the country sent a six-person delegation to Venice, headed by Pavel Matev, president of the Committee for Arts and Culture and including Kostadine Popov, author of Bulgaria's contribution to the UNESCO book series.[1] Bulgaria

[1] The Bulgarian delegation included Pavel Matev (president of KIK), Atanas Bojkov (vice-president of KIK), Demir Zhanev (president of Bulgarian National Commission to UNESCO), Stefan Stanchev (vice-president of the Committee on Foreign Cultural Relations), Kostadine Popov (KIK), and Gisela Chorchitch (KIK) (UNESCO, 1970, 60).

succeeded in raising its profile for the next major event, the Intergovernmental Conference on Cultural Policies in Europe, held in Helsinki in June 1972 (UNESCO 1972). Bulgaria's nine-person delegation, headed again by Pavel Matev and again including Popov and KIK secretary Gisela Chorchitch, now also included the head of programming for Bulgarian television (Kiril Vassilev), the president of the Bulgarian Painters' Union (Nicolas Mirtchev), as well as Lyudmila Zhivkova, Bulgarian president Zhivkov's daughter, who had been appointed Deputy Chairman of the Committee only six months earlier, in December 1971 (Ivanova, 560). Bulgaria achieved a modest breakthrough here when Pavel Matev was elected as one of five vice-presidents of the event (UNESCO, 1972, 6).

The Bulgarian delegation to the 1972 meeting in Helsinki could be pleased with the atmosphere there. Many of the central principles of Bulgaria's cultural policy that Popov highlighted in his book, which came out in the same year, enjoyed broad acceptance in the resolutions adopted there. To begin with, the notion that the state should play the leading role in formulating and applying policy on cultural matters – something that small-state liberals might ideologically oppose – was embraced without apparent controversy. So too was the language of cultural democratization. The conference's final report records that the delegates reaffirmed a set of core concepts, including "cultural development as an integral part of the general development of nations; the right to culture and the obligation resting on the public authorities to give it full effect through cultural policies; the non-elitist nature of culture; [and] the increasing access to and participation in culture, in a word, its democratization" (UNESCO, 1972, 8). Moreover, the conference gave voice to scepticism toward western capitalism's mass media: "several delega-

tions stressed the dangers of the "cultural pollution" that threatens certain countries, namely the consumer character of cultural goods, [and] the alienation of the artist" (*Ibid.*, 7). In other words, the "cultural policy moment," as the literary scholar Sarah Brouillette has observed, was characterized by concerns about the fate of culture in capitalist modernity, at the same time that broadly progressive political ideas, such as anti-elitist appeals to "democratization," were in the ascendant in many countries (Brouillette 55-69). These trends were part of what made this historical moment look like a moment of opportunity for Bulgaria to stake its claim to be a leader in the emerging field of progressive cultural policy.

Bulgarian Cultural Policy in *The UNESCO Courier*

One place where we can see Bulgaria's campaign of cultural policy as cultural diplomacy in action is in the pages of UNESCO's monthly magazine, *The UNESCO Courier*. Founded in 1948, *Courier* brought news about UNESCO and its programs, as well as feature articles about educational, scientific and cultural developments in its member states, to readers around the world. In the 1970s and 80s, the magazine was at a historic high point: it appeared in 1973 in fifteen languages (twenty by 1979) appearing by the early 1980s in a total printing of around 500,000 copies per issue (Dausse, 70; Krebs, 39). *Courier* was one of few publications that was available on both sides of the "Iron Curtain"; as decolonization advanced, *Courier*'s readership grew throughout the "Third World," as well. Placing an article in *Courier*, in other words, gave access to a quite extraordinarily large and diverse readership, not least among educators and people concerned with matters of contem-

porary cultural life, including cultural policy. Therefore, it is little surprise to find that, during the 1970s and early 1980s, Bulgaria used *Courier* to pursue a program of global outreach based on promotion of the country's ambitious cultural policy programs. More surprising is how well this effort succeeded. Not every country was the subject of a feature article in *Courier* every year, of course. But little Bulgaria managed to appear in the magazine every year but one between 1973 and 1979.

The first of these articles, "The Enigma of the Thracians" (1973) highlighted recent archaeological discoveries that shed light on the ancient residents on the territory of modern Bulgaria. The author was Magdalina Stancheva, the archaeologist who is widely credited with having spearheaded Bulgaria's state programs to preserve and highlight, rather than destroy, the rich legacies of ancient life that were to be found just below street level in central Sofia. By highlighting the cultural richness of the ancient Thracians, Stancheva's article tied in to the Bulgarian state's broader program on this ancient civilization. A new Institute of Thracology had been founded in Sofia in 1972, and Thracian art was the subject of the major exhibition, *Thracian Treasures,* that Bulgarian authorities presented in Paris in 1974, before sending it on an ambitious world tour (Dragostinova, 33, 36). By highlighting the role of Bulgaria's own archaeologists in giving the world access to this interesting historical civilization, Stancheva's article called attention to Bulgaria's advanced policy: one year after the adoption at UNESCO of the World Convention on Natural and Cultural Heritage, it was valuable to be able to announce that "over 15,000 mounds have been charted and listed by Bulgarian archaeologists and are now protected by law as important cultural relics" (Stancheva, 1973, 17).

Another article by Stancheva celebrated the newly built underground passages in central Sofia which gave access to the city's ancient architectural heritage, presented here as the happy outcome of the Bulgaria's political vision and careful coordination: "Special laws for the protection of cultural property and painstaking efforts by archaeologists working closely with architects produced a bold and original solution that reconciles urban modernization with the needs of cultural preservation" (Stancheva, 1974, 34). The following year, *Courier* ran an article that enthusiastically documented Bulgaria's state-led programs for the preservation of eighteenth and nineteenth-century buildings, which also presented a short history of the country's policy developments under state socialism. "After World War II," *Courier*'s readers learned, "the Bulgarian state was able to launch a nation-wide programme to safeguard its cultural heritage. Steps were taken to give historic buildings and old towns special legal protection. Precise regulations were laid down for the use of public buildings and private dwellings, as well as for the financing of conservation and restoration work, and of urban development" (Stancheva, 1975, 26).

This preservation program was "not without its problems," but, Stancheva assured readers, it enjoyed the support of the Bulgarian people: "public opinion in Bulgaria is solidly behind the State in its policy to preserve the cultural heritage. The authorities can count on the collaboration of specialists and specialized institutions, as well as national organizations, including youth groups" (*Ibid.*, 31). This carefully developed policy was not simply a dry matter of administration. Rather, this cooperative, coordinated and popularly supported program had results that Stancheva presented in grand historical terms: "Through these efforts a new link is being forged between the past and the future in

Bulgaria which, in its way, is a new Renaissance that echoes Bulgaria's national Renaissance in the 19th century" (*Ibid*).[2]

Forging "a new link… between the past the future" was not a problem only for Bulgaria of course. This phrase encapsulated a central challenge for all modernizing societies: how to achieve modernity while maintaining the connections to the past that were seen to be fundamental to social stability and national identity. Indeed, the idea of a balance between the ancient and the modern was the central theme of the set of events that were the culmination of Bulgaria's cultural diplomatic outreach during the 1970s: the massive celebrations in 1981 of the 1300th anniversary of the foundation of the medieval Bulgarian kingdom in 681. "1300 Years Bulgaria" included an extraordinary set of events in and outside of the country, carefully planned and lavishly financed. It also involved a new level of investment in Bulgaria's relationship with UNESCO: 1981 was, for example, the year that *Courier* first appeared in a Bulgarian-language edition. As Dragostinova shows, the planners of these events were careful not to be too politically heavy-handed, avoiding overt propaganda and drawing on historical sources that met international research standards (Dragostinova, 46). At the same time, many of these celebrations implied that Bulgaria's enlightened cultural policy helped the country achieve that special balance between moving into global modernity and pre-

[2] Articles about Bulgaria in *Courier* in this period also included: Bogomil Gerasimov, "The Gift of the Gabrovo: How Bulgaria became famous for good humour as well as yoghurt," *Courier* (1976, 4), pp. 9-11. Dimitr Angelov and Gennady Litavrin, "The Slavs and Byzantium," *Courier* (1978, 8/9), Vesselin Petkov, "Bulgaria's folk remedies stand the test of time," *Courier* (1979, 7), pp. 39-41. Like Stancheva, these authors were all authoritative figures in their fields: Dimitr Angelov was a distinguished scholar of Byzantine history at the University of Sofia (he co-wrote his piece with the Soviet Byzantinist Gennady Litavrin); Bogomil Gerasimov was a writer, humourist and former diplomat; Vesselin Petkov was director of the Institute of Physiology of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences.

serving its national traditions which was the jubilee's central theme: that the country, under its socialist leadership, was "both ancient and modern" (*Ibid.*, 2).

These themes were likewise prominent in the major feature on Bulgaria, again penned by the archaeologist Magdalina Stancheva, that appeared in the May 1981 issue of *Courier*. The issue's cover was adorned with an image of an engraved gold plaque (found in a recent archaeological dig in Preslav) and the phrase, "Bulgaria: 13 Centuries of History and Culture." Timed to coincide with the celebrations, the article launched its main point in its title (which was also an oft-repeated motto of the jubilee), "Bulgaria: A Modern Nation Salutes its Past." In this long essay, Stancheva struck similar notes, for example highlighting Bulgarian state support for innovative practices in archaeology and architectural preservation, as in her earlier articles in *Courier*. But here she reached new rhetorical heights, declaring for example that Bulgaria's "historic legacy is so full of vitality and enterprise that it can easily be incorporated into the most modern aspects of the country's culture. The youthful spirit of modern Bulgaria can draw upon knowledge and respect for the past" (Stancheva 1981, 11). This promotional message was underlined by the inclusion of photos that showed Sofia's well-preserved ancient sites, but also young people sitting at nearby cafes in view of these sites (*Ibid.*, 4).

Presenting Zhivkova's Cultural Policy to the World

In 1981, Bulgaria published a revised second edition of *Cultural Policy in Bulgaria*, its volume in UNESCO's special series, "Studies and documents on cultural policies." Compared to the more spectacular activities that took place during the mega-year for Bulgarian cultural diplomacy that was

1981, this was not a particularly conspicuous event. However, it was still important, as it reflected the regime's determination to make use of this forum, created and supported by UNESCO, to spread information about the state's cultural policy programs, cast in a favourable light, to a broad international audience of specialists. Indeed, very few states chose to publish in UNESCO's series more than once. Nevertheless, the Committee for Arts and Culture evidently believed that Bulgaria's nearly ten-year-old volume needed to be updated.

The new edition was indeed substantially different from its predecessor, and not only because it was thirty pages longer. The main difference was that this new edition showed the effects of the most important thing that had happened in Bulgaria's cultural policy since the country's first contribution to this series appeared, in 1972: namely, that it had come under the control of Lyudmila Zhivkova. Since then, she had emerged as the dominant figure in Bulgaria's cultural policy. 1975 marked a key turning point: that year she was made Chairperson of KIK, gaining a seat on the Bulgaria's Council of Ministers. Importantly, 1975 was also the year of the Helsinki Final Act, signed in August. This international agreement, designed to reduce tensions between the Eastern and Western blocs, seemed to Bulgarian officials to offer exciting new possibilities for international outreach, encouraging Zhivkova to believe that now even Bulgaria could hope to "contribute as an equal partner to world cultural, artistic and scientific progress" (quoted in Ivanova, 564).

One sign of Zhivkova's influence was the prominence granted in this new edition to presenting Bulgarian cultural policy's steps toward decentralization. In keeping with international policy trends since the 1970s, the new book emphasized the relatively decentralized nature of Bulgaria's poli-

cy apparatus. Keen to demonstrate that Bulgaria's socialist state was no Stalinist machine of brutal control over the cultural sphere, the book made much of the role of cooperation between the state and "semi-public" bodies, and highlighted the use of "various forms of material and psychological incentive" to stimulate cultural activity, for example through prizes, honorary titles (such as "People's Artist"), financial rewards, and through the "moral encouragement" offered by "eulogies, decorations, medals, certificates, etc." (Popov, 1981, 26). To make the point perfectly clear, the book insisted that while "cultural development [was] planned according to the state's cultural policy,… there is no administrative interference in the work of artists and other members of the intelligentsia" (*Ibid.*, 25).

A guarantee of the decentralized and democratic character of Bulgarian cultural policy was the state's reliance on what it called "joint bodies" to administer cultural policy: bodies, that is, like the national councils (for literature, music and so on), created by KIK, that brought together state agencies with "semi-public" bodies like the Bulgarian Writers' Association or the Bulgarian Musicians' Association. (These councils were mentioned in the 1972 book, but were not referred to by this new name). The 1981 edition celebrated the Bulgarian innovation of "joint bodies" for the way they resolved broad, competing principles: "Their structure, function and powers are so conceived as to reconcile the principle of planning with the intellectual worker's spirit of initiative" (*Ibid.*, 34). This "new joint system of administration" had proved so successful in the field of cultural policy, Popov explained, that the state had begun to apply it also to the educational sphere (*Ibid.*, 37-38). More than that: Bulgaria's "joint system" united and coordinated "state, scientific, economic, social, artistic and other semi-public bodies" in pursuing shared aims: "to en-

courage the flowering of Bulgarian culture, to satisfy the cultural needs of the people and to maximize the development of the individual and of his creative capabilities" (*Ibid.*, 37). This was one of several grand statements of the power of Bulgaria's cultural policy that characterized the 1981 edition. "Contemporary Bulgarian culture and art," the book later declared, "contribute to the solution of various historical, social, cultural and artistic problems of our times. Their universality stems from their peace-loving spirit, from their sympathy towards all those fighting for their freedom and social rights, and from their respect for the beauty and nobility of the human personality" (*Ibid.*, 76-77).

These rather grandiose pronouncements were the clearest sign of the influence of KIK's powerful leader, Lyudmila Zhivkova. Her fascination for esoteric themes from Eastern philosophy, parapsychology and the occult are well known (see especially Ivanova). Under her leadership, the language of cultural policy discussion in Bulgaria came to be "characterized by a specific idiom of expression – an eclectic weaving together of Eastern religious concepts, parapsychology jargon, and Marxist-Leninist clichés" (Ivanova, 565). The new role of this distinctive idiom gave the 1981 publication a quite different tone from the 1972 edition: loftier, more ambitious, and a bit strange. This comes across in particular in one chapter that was entirely new to the 1981 book, outlining Bulgaria's "National Programme for Popular Aesthetic Education." This was a pet project of Zhivkova's that sought to make beauty the guiding concept of policies that would cultivate every individual's innate creative powers, thereby promoting the "harmonious development" of the individual (Ivanova, 568; Dragostinova, 35).

Still, the strangeness of these proposals should not be exaggerated. As the historian Veneta Ivanova argues, Zhiv-

kova's effort to blend science and spiritualism shared "theoretical affinities" with Marxist visions of internationalism, communitarianism, and of the role of communism in making possible a "new man" whose emancipation and development would not be hindered by inequality and class repression (Ivanova 565). It was also in harmony with broader international trends, such as the interest in parapsychology and "New Age" spiritualism in many Western countries in the 1970s and 80s (*Ibid.*, 564).

The main claim of the 1981 edition of *Cultural Policy in Bulgaria*, bringing together these various elements, was that Bulgaria was succeeding in using cultural policy to resolve problems of modern society – problems that were not unique to Bulgaria. It offered, that is, policy models that could be applied elsewhere and thus helped stake Bulgaria's claim to be a country that deserved to play a leading role on the world stage. The book's final sentence underlined this message, mixing a declaration of intent with an invitation to other nations to join Bulgaria in its high-minded, ambitious efforts: "Heir to an ancient culture and possessing a strong social conscience, the Bulgarian people are well aware of contemporary international problems and are convinced that if international détente is to be strengthened, then the forces of peace and progress must endeavour to undertake common action in the field of culture as well" (Popov, 1981, 83).

Conclusion

On October 8, 1983, delegates from around the world gathered in Sofia for the opening of the twenty-third session of UNESCO's General Conference. Hosting the bi-annual meeting of UNESCO's central deliberative organ marked a culminating moment of Bulgaria's multi-year cultural-diplomatic campaign

toward, and through, UNESCO. However, this major achievement was bittersweet: the delegates assembled in the Lyudmila Zhivkova Palace of Culture, named to honour Zhivkova's memory: she had died suddenly, at the height of her cultural-political campaign, in July 1981. Moreover, the meeting began under a geopolitical shadow, as this was the first gathering of the General Conference since the United States announced its intent to withdraw from UNESCO. The Americans' departure, effected late in 1984, and followed by that of the United Kingdom in December 1985, would leave UNESCO politically weakened and financially strained. Bulgaria's campaign to reach international audiences through close cooperation with this organization, already weakened by the death of its most dynamic leader, was likewise undermined.

It is also true of course, that Bulgaria's campaign to use cultural policy as cultural diplomacy had its own weaknesses. Neither of Popov's two books presenting Bulgarian cultural policy to the world mentioned the creation in 1967 of the infamous Sixth Division of the Committee for State Security, which "focused on rooting out 'ideological sabotage' in culture and the arts" (Dragostinova, 31). This repression, along with the ongoing reality of control by state bureaucrats, meant that the genuine enthusiasm that seemed to have existed among many Bulgarian intellectuals for these reforms soon faded. Nevertheless, these books, and the broader campaign of which they were a part, did not only represent propaganda and lies. Bulgaria's dictatorship was in fact quite successful at co-opting young intellectuals and cultural producers, partly because it gave them leadership roles in a project that seemed to address important cultural values, and because it created at least the appearance of relative autonomy for the cultural sphere from the sphere of politics. Through UNESCO, the Bulgarian state wanted to

tell the world about its innovations in this regard, aiming to show that Bulgaria was not only a country with a rich cultural past, but also a dynamic, modern state that was developing a model of the state-culture relationship for the future.

The cultural rhetoric and policy solutions offered by Bulgaria's communist dictatorship in the 1970s seem quite distant today. However, the regime's participation in the global co-presentation of cultural policies that UNESCO coordinated in the 1970s – in which cultural policy served also as cultural diplomacy – suggests a number of historical insights that are compelling today. For example, it invites comparisons to the way other countries engaged with UNESCO's "cultural policy moment," suggesting approaches that might advance our understanding of the global history of cultural diplomacy. Moreover, many of the core issues raised by the international debate over cultural policies in the 1970s are still with us. What is the ideal role of the state in the cultural sphere? Where should the limits of state action be drawn, and according to which values and principles? We are also living through a period of crisis, and, like the 1970s, our own crisis is testing our answers to these questions. As we try to formulate new answers, we would do well to take a humble attitude to the historical record on this matter.

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