
NEWS OF THE PROFESSION

FIRST U.S. INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON BULGARIAN STUDIES

The University of Wisconsin, Madison, was the host, May 3–6, 1973, of the First International Conference on Bulgarian Studies to be held in the United States. Two years in preparation, the conference was truly a historic event, with delegations of scholars attending from the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Great Britain, Canada, and the United States. The conference was chaired by Michael B. Petrovich of the History Department of the University of Wisconsin. Its executive secretary was Thomas J. Butler of the University of Wisconsin Slavic Department. More than forty papers were read on subjects ranging from education to foreign policy, from demography to folklore. The attendance of a Bulgarian delegation of ten top-level scholars, headed by Dr. Dimitür Kosev, gave particular testimony to the importance of the conference. Papers were divided into two tracks, one for the social sciences and history, the other for literature, folklore, music, and linguistics. Both groups finished with plenary “state of the arts” sessions, at which scholars discussed the present state of research in their fields and prospective goals for the future.

Especially gratifying was the friendly atmosphere that prevailed throughout the meetings. With most of the scholars housed and fed in one small hotel (Lowell Hall), and the meetings taking place nearby (at the Wisconsin Center), there was ample opportunity for friendly conversation after the scholarly sessions. The Bulgarian Embassy sent Ambassador Grozev from the United Nations, its First Secretary Gotsev, and its Cultural Secretary Dimitrov.

Perhaps the greatest surprise was the exhibition of Bulgarian dancing and music put on by the “Na Lesa” ensemble of Milwaukee. The Bulgarian delegation was especially impressed by the skill of the group, and a touching extemporaneous tribute was paid them by Petür Dinekov, leading Bulgarian folklorist.

It seems clear that the gathering together of some seventy scholars interested in Bulgaria and “Bulgaristika” is an achievement that will pay dividends for Bulgarian studies in America in the years to come. New cultural contacts between the United States and Bulgaria are sure to result, and already members of the Bulgarian Studies Group are talking of the next conference, to be held in two or three years’ time.

Special thanks are owed to the International Research and Exchanges Board and to the American Council of Learned Societies for their support of travel expenses for the participants. John Matthews of IREX was especially helpful in arranging the itineraries of the Bulgarian scholars, who planned to visit several U.S. universities after the conference.

At a meeting of the Bulgarian Studies Group, held on the evening of May 4, in Madison, the following new officers were elected: Professor Charles Moser, George Washington University, president; Professor Ernest Scatton, University of Virginia, secretary-treasurer; and Professor Thomas Meininger of York University, Canada, *Newsletter* editor.

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