

# The “Natural Ally” of the “Developing World”: Bulgarian Culture in India and Mexico

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In 1980, 308 delegates of eighty-two Bulgarian-Indian Friendship Societies—representing over 150,000 due-paying members and an estimated 300,000 total supporters of Bulgaria—gathered at a convention in New Delhi to discuss the activities of their organizations.<sup>1</sup> The members of those societies tended to be affiliated with the Communist Party of India (CPI), but many were members of the ruling Congress Party of Indira Gandhi.<sup>2</sup> They partook in meetings with Bulgarian diplomats and collected a small subsidy to organize events on the occasion of Bulgarian holidays. From the Bulgarian perspective, the function of these societies was to “fulfill a noble task—to acquaint [the Indian population] with the history, culture, economy, life, and activities of the Bulgarian people, and their struggle and labor for building a new, happier life.”<sup>3</sup>

Many society members were genuinely interested in the small Balkan state. Celebrations of September 9, the national holiday marking the “socialist revolution” in Bulgaria, often featured Indian officials from the state or federal levels who wanted to find out more about the transformations in the country.<sup>4</sup> In 1977, at a meeting in the city of Hyderabad, the state minister for budget and economic planning, Narsa Redi, gave a speech about his 1973 visit to Bulgaria, declaring that “Bulgarian agriculture is the best in the world” and India had much to learn from it. The chairperson of the society, Radjesvar Rao, explained that under the cultural exchange agreement signed between the two countries in 1976, three Indian students had the opportunity to study in Bulgaria free of charge, an announcement that caused enthusiasm among the fifty attendees.<sup>5</sup>

The excitement of cooperation between Bulgaria and India was also evident at the highest levels. In November 1981, in the midst of the Bulgarian celebrations of the 1300<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of the medieval Bulgarian state in 681, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi visited Bulgaria. In her speech, she declared: “We must strengthen our bilateral relations through greater exchanges of commerce and culture. But it is even more important that

Research for this article, carried out in Bulgaria, Hungary, and the United Kingdom, was made possible through grants from the Ohio State University’s College of Arts & Sciences and the Mershon Center for International Security Studies. I am grateful to Małgorzata Fidelis for her extensive comments on an early version of this article and to the two anonymous reviewers for their thoughtful suggestions.

1. Central State Archives, Sofia, Bulgaria (hereafter TsDA), op. 405, f. 9, a.e. 622, 95–98.

2. Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Sofia, Bulgaria (hereafter MVnR), op. 38, a.e. 1208, 44–52. CPI members initially staffed the friendship societies in large numbers, but after Indira Gandhi returned to power in 1980, Congress activists took over the societies.

3. TsDA, f. 405, op. 9, a.e. 619, 54–60.

4. MVnR, op. 35, a.e. 1339 (Report from Sept. 1979).

5. *Ibid.*, op. 33, a.e. 1258, 15–17.

we work to deepen the feelings of fellowship among our peoples.”<sup>6</sup> This project of creating “fellowship” was already underway, if we are to judge from the activities of the Bulgarian-Indian Friendship Societies who organized numerous celebrations of the Bulgarian 1300-Year Jubilee in India.

Such fond exchanges were not unique to Bulgaria and India. In March 1981, a centrally-located boulevard and square in Mexico City acquired the names Bulgaria and Georgi Dimitrov, respectively, while in the city of Puebla, Mexico, a street near the main city park was given the name Sofia, the Bulgarian capital. A Bulgarian journalist in attendance was elated: “You need to be away from your motherland to feel the true power of the word ‘Sofia’ written with still wet blue paint on the otherwise short Sofia Street in the multimillion city of Puebla!”<sup>7</sup> The gesture was even more meaningful given the fact that the current Boulevard Bulgaria used to be called Boulevard California. These ceremonies occurred in the presence of Bulgaria’s “first lady,” Liudmila Zhivkova, the minister of culture and daughter of the Bulgarian leader Todor Zhivkov, who was attending celebrations in Mexico dedicated, similarly to India, to the 1300<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The events included the opening of the Medieval Bulgarian Civilization exhibition, in the presence of President Portillo, who had just been awarded the highest Bulgarian honor, the Dimitrov Prize, in recognition of his contributions to Bulgarian-Mexican friendship.

This article explores the Bulgarian cultural involvement in India and Mexico to emphasize the importance of the interactions between junior members of the “Soviet bloc” and the “developing world” in the later years of the Cold War. The article adopts a “pericentric” perspective, which seeks to emphasize the importance of the global *periphery* in the Cold War. In the analysis presented here, Sofia, New Delhi, and Mexico City were important actors that cooperated fruitfully outside of the shadows of Moscow, Washington, Bonn, or London. India and Mexico had their own reasons for pursuing contacts with the socialist states of eastern Europe, however, here I reverse the question to ask why a small state in the Balkans sought new allies outside Europe and invested in international cultural activities in the “developing world.” In the long 1970s, Bulgaria was to a large degree successfully cultivating relationships outside of the east-west trajectory, and both the east and the west were noticing. By presenting the perspective of a small state on the margins—a state that was assumed to be “the Soviet flagbearer,” too—I wish to show that interactions among actors on the periphery “gave the Cold War the character it came to have.”<sup>8</sup> Further, by focusing on cultural exchange, rather than economic cooperation, I show that Cold War interactions between the Second and Third Worlds did not follow a single logic.

Why were the Bulgarians cultivating such seemingly outlandish relations? The Bulgarian international cultural outreach to India and Mexico—as well as a variety of other states in the “developing world”—was consistent with the logic of Bulgarian cultural policies since the mid-1970s, which saw an

6. *Ibid.*, op. 38, a.e. 1171, 45–49.

7. TsDA, f. 405, op. 9, a.e. 679, 3 (Clipping from *Literaturenfront*, undated).

8. Tony Smith, “New Bottles for New Wine: A Pericentric Framework for the Study of the Cold War,” *Diplomatic History* 24, no. 4 (Fall 2000): 568.

increased investment in culture both at home and abroad.<sup>9</sup> The vast amount of money, time, and personnel committed to culture underlined the unique choices of the Bulgarian communist leadership during late socialism. In the 1970s, other countries in the Soviet sphere of influence were spending their revenues on schemes for political pacification after the disruption of the 1968 protests or on projects of economic recovery after the post-1973 recession. Yet, Bulgaria was spending money on culture, including an increasing number of international cultural projects throughout the world.

The Bulgarian international cultural program followed the template of Soviet cultural exchange, which served important ideological agendas ever since Nikita Khrushchev adopted internationalism as an aspect of Soviet foreign policy after 1956.<sup>10</sup> For Bulgarian officials, too, culture was part and parcel of state policy because it was understood to encapsulate ideas of state, rights, and welfare that the “socialist bloc” wished to disseminate throughout the world. Exporting culture was part of the battle for hearts and minds; extensive state support for culture demonstrated the level of commitment of a political system that was by the people, worked for the people, and was superior to the capitalist model.<sup>11</sup>

Yet, a unique set of factors explains the intensity of the specifically Bulgarian international cultural flirtations. The 1970s saw a resurgence of cultural nationalism in the country, which manifested itself with a domestic campaign of “patriotic education.” This “patriotic” (nationalist) turn elevated the role of the cultural intelligentsia within Bulgaria and created excitement among the population at large.<sup>12</sup> The “climax” of this campaign was the extravagant celebrations, in 1981, of the 1300<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of the medieval Bulgarian state in 681. Organizing a plethora of domestic and international cultural events on the occasion, the regime’s intention was to display “the real contribution of Bulgarian culture in the development

9. Theodora Dragostinova, “The East in the West: Bulgarian Culture in the United States of America during the Global 1970s,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 53, no.1 (January 2018): 212–39.

10. Eleonory Gilburd, “The Revival of Soviet Internationalism in the Mid to Late 1950s,” in Eleonory Gilburd and Denis Kozlov, eds., *The Thaw: Soviet Society and Culture during the 1950s and 1960s* (Toronto, 2012), 362–401. For cultural relationship between the USSR and the Third World, see also Rossen Djagalov and Masha Salazkina, “Tashkent ’68: A Cinematic Contact Zone,” *Slavic Review* 75, No. 2 (Summer 2016): 279–98.

11. Works on cultural diplomacy include Frederick Charles Barghoorn, *The Soviet Cultural Offensive: The Role of Cultural Diplomacy in Soviet Foreign Policy* (Princeton, 1960); Yale Richmond, *Cultural Exchange & the Cold War: Raising the Iron Curtain* (University Park, 2003); Laura A. Belmonte, *Selling the American Way: U.S. Propaganda and the Cold War* (Philadelphia, 2008); and Danielle Fosler-Lussier, *Music in America’s Cold War Diplomacy* (Oakland, 2015).

12. For cultural nationalism in 1970s Bulgaria, see Irina Gigova, “The Feeble Charm of National(ist) Communism: Intellectuals and Cultural Politics in Zhivkov’s Bulgaria,” in Theodora Dragostinova and Yana Hashamova, eds., *Beyond Mosque, Church, and State: Alternative Narratives of the Nation in the Balkans* (Budapest, 2016), 151–80. Two Bulgarian studies are Ivan Elenkov, *Kulturniia front: Bulgarskata kultura prez epohata na komunizma—politicheskoto upravlenie, ideologicheskoto osnovaniia, institutsionalni rezhimi* (Sofia, 2008); and Evgeniia Kalinova, *Bâlgarskata kultura i politicheskiiat imperativ: 1944–1989* (Sofia, 2011).

of human civilization” and showcase “the advantages and superiority of real socialism.”<sup>13</sup>

The decision to systematically elevate culture was made at the highest levels of the party and state bureaucracy. In 1975, the Bulgarian communist leader Todor Zhivkov appointed his daughter, Liudmila Zhivkova, as the chairperson of the Committee for Culture (the ministry for culture). Zhivkova’s idiosyncratic personality and personal interests in eastern philosophies and esoteric thought influenced the focus of international cultural cooperation. But under her guardianship, a new generation of communist elites embraced culture as an opportunity to create international contacts and secure influence in the state bureaucracy vis-à-vis the older generation in charge of the country.<sup>14</sup>

Largely because of Zhivkova’s influence, India and Mexico (and Japan, not discussed here) accounted for most of Bulgarian cultural involvement outside Europe during this time.<sup>15</sup> Yet, there is a larger picture of this cultural encounter. Between 1977 and 1981, Bulgarian officials organized 15,413 cultural events in Asia, 3,442 in the Arab countries, 2,973 in Latin America, and 1,170 in Africa.<sup>16</sup> In 1977, a Bulgarian Cultural-Information Center opened in New Delhi, and proposals were underway for the opening of similar centers in Mexico City, Lagos, and Algiers. In 1979, Bulgarian friendship societies existed in Syria, Iraq, Yemen, the Arab Emirates, Lebanon, Jordan, India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Indonesia, Nepal, Algeria, Nigeria, and Sudan; Uruguay and Argentina were the homes of Bulgarian educational-cultural associations.<sup>17</sup> Deliberating on the functions of these societies, officials concluded that they “strengthened the friendly relations between Bulgaria and other countries in the world” and “enriched the knowledge, information,

13. TsDA, f. 405, op. 9, a.e. 263, 55 (National Coordinating Committee of the 1300-Year Jubilee, “For the Dignified Celebration of the 1300<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Establishment of the Bulgarian State,” June 1979, 10, 195). Zhivkova’s speech from 1978, 9–15. For the 1300 celebrations within Bulgaria, see Elitza Stanoeva, *Sofia: Ideologîia, gradoustroistvo i zhi-vot prez sotsializma* (Sofia, 2016), esp. chapter eight.

14. There have been many studies of Zhivkova in Bulgarian, including Krum Blagov, *Zagadkata Liudmila Zhivkova* (Sofia, 2012). Two works of close associates of Zhivkova’s are Elit Nikolov, *Dâshteriata na nadezhdite* (Sofia, 2008); and Bogomil Rainov, *Liudmila: mechti i dela* (Sofia, 2001). For her interest in eastern philosophies, see Mihail Gruev, “Liudmila Zhivkova—pâtiat kâm agni ioga,” in Evgeniia Kalinova et al, *Prelomni vremena* (Sofia, 2006), 796–816. In English, see Ivanka Nedeva Atanasova, “Lyudmila Zhivkova and the Paradox of Ideology and Identity in Communist Bulgaria,” *East European Politics & Societies* 18, no. 2 (May 2004): 278–315; and Dragostinova, “The East in the West,” esp. the conclusion.

15. The case of Japan provides further nuance, but I cannot discuss it here due to considerations of brevity.

16. TsDA, f. 1b, op. 55, a.e. 780, 1–32 (Information-Sociological Center of BCP, “Public opinion for the 1300-Year Jubilee,” February 1982). There were also 7,894 cultural events in “socialist countries” and 7,420 in “developed capitalist countries,” for a total of 38,854 events.

17. For a list of the Bulgarian cultural centers and friendship societies abroad, see TsDA, f. 405, op. 9, a.e. 263, 55 (National Coordinating Committee of the 1300-Year Jubilee, “For the Dignified Celebration of the 1300<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Establishment of the Bulgarian State,” June 1979, Index 6).

and impression of the people about new socialist Bulgaria.”<sup>18</sup> Culture, in other words, served important public relations functions.

To explain the reasons for the Bulgarian cultural flirtations with the developing world, I engage the historical narrative at multiple levels. First, I situate the encounters between Bulgaria, India, and Mexico in the context of the multipolar Cold War that saw a variety of interactions between the west, east, and “the rest.” Second, I show that Bulgaria had diverse reasons to pursue contacts with a range of actors outside of Europe; while often political and economic considerations prevailed, ideological, public relations, and national(ist) factors also informed the choices. Third, I single out the intense cultural affair that developed between Bulgaria, India, and Mexico to emphasize the importance of culture in cultivating new relationships between the Second and Third Worlds. Finally, I conclude by emphasizing that culture allowed Bulgaria, the most reliable “Soviet proxy,” to pursue a degree of independence in the shifting global dynamics of the 1970s and to project its own notions of development on a global scene.

### The Multipolar Cold War: A Bulgarian Perspective

There is a growing literature on the global Cold War that has insisted on the importance of the Third World in the conflict between west and east. The emergence of the newly-sovereign states and their indigenous leaders provided an alternative to the Cold War because the “rise of the rest” challenged the bipolar political model of west versus east.<sup>19</sup> Adopting this perspective, historians have elucidated how various configurations of power between the west, the east, and “the rest” created a complex system of global interconnections. As argued by David C. Engerman, inserting the perspective of the postcolonial world in analyses of the Cold War allows us to see it “as a fundamentally multipolar conflict, with the superpowers constantly responding not just to each other but to their allies and adversaries in the Third World.”<sup>20</sup> This *multipolar* Cold War perspective is at the center of analysis in this article.

In 1952, the French economist Alfred Sauvy coined the term Third World to denote the newly independent states in Asia and Africa. Seeking the possibility of a “third way” distinct from both American capitalism and Soviet state socialism, he contrasted the Third World to both the “first world,” or the west with its traditions of imperialism and capitalism, and the “second world,” or the (rhetorically anti-imperialist) USSR that was building a Soviet empire in eastern Europe. The concept of “Third World” took hold after the Bandung Conference of African and Asian peoples in 1955, and many postcolonial states

18. TsDA, f. 405, op. 9, a.e. 619, 54–60.

19. Some influential studies on the global Cold War include Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times* (Cambridge, 2005); and Robert J. McMahon, ed., *The Cold War in the Third World* (Oxford, 2013). See also Michael E. Latham, “The Cold War in the Third World, 1963–1975,” in Melvyn P. Lefler and Odd Arne Westad, eds., *The Cambridge History of the Cold War, Vol. 2: Crisis and Détente* (New York, 2010), 258–80.

20. David C. Engerman, “The Second World’s Third World,” *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 12, no.1 (Winter 2011): 185.



embraced it as a term of common identity.<sup>21</sup> It is not coincidental that this conference paved the road for the nonaligned movement, officially launched in 1961, whose explicit goal was to create an alternative path between the two “blocs” in the Cold War.<sup>22</sup>

The term Third World enjoyed wide usage in the 1960s with the growing consciousness that post-independence Africa, Asia, and the Caribbean shared a common cause and required common action. The states of Latin America also became associated with the Third World, even though they had been independent since the early 1800s; despite their different historical trajectory, US control in the Americas helped link Latin America to the rest of the Third World through the framework of “dependency” and “structural imperialism.”<sup>23</sup> The 1970s was the classic time of the Third World when economic issues moved to the center of discussion.<sup>24</sup> Instead of dividing states politically between east and west, the differences between “North” and “South”—a taxonomy that used the latitude of the Mediterranean to distinguish between developed and developing nations—was also emerging as a new demarcation in the global community. Various proposals were advanced on how to reorder the international economic system to alleviate the gap between rich and poor. By the late 1970s, the terms Third World, South, and developing countries were used as synonyms for “poorer countries.”<sup>25</sup>

Many of these debates centered on the concept of “development.”<sup>26</sup> Despite the active role of the US, many Third World leaders did not pursue a strictly “western” model of development based on free market practices. In fact, for some newly-independent countries the Soviet model of development was attractive because it represented a repudiation of western economic

21. The literature on the Third World and development is rich, but the two analyses used here are Nick Cullather, “Development? Its History,” *Diplomatic History* 24, no. 4 (Fall 2000): 641–53; and B. R. Tomlinson, “What was the Third World?” *Journal of Contemporary History* 38, no. 2 (April 2003): 307–21.

22. Mark Atwood Lawrence, “The Rise and Fall of Nonalignment,” in McMahon, *The Cold War in the Third World*, 139–55.

23. Tomlinson, “What was the Third World?”; and Odd Arne Westad, “The Cold War and the Third World,” in McMahon, *The Cold War in the Third World*, 213.

24. Johanna Bockman, “Socialist Globalization against Capitalist Neocolonialism: The Economic Ideas behind the New International Economic Order,” *Humanity: An International Journal of Human Rights, Humanitarianism and Development* 6, no.1 (Spring 2015): 109–28.

25. Tomlinson, “What was the Third World?,” 314; and Cullather, “Development? Its History.”

26. The vast majority of the English-language literature has focused on western economic involvement in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. These narratives often use modernization theory to imply a relationship in which the “periphery” borrows superior practices from the “core” and assumes that “to be developed is to be Euro-American,” see Cullather, “Development? Its History,” 646. For recent syntheses of the vast literature on development, see Corinna R. Unger, “Histories of Development and Modernization: Findings, Reflections, Future Research,” in: H-Soz-Kult at <https://www.hsozkult.de/literaturereview/id/forschungsberichte-1130> (last accessed December 9, 2010); Joseph Morgan Hodge, “Writing the History of Development (Part 2: Longer, Deeper, Wider),” *Humanity: An International Journal of Human Rights, Humanitarianism and Development* 7, no.1 (Spring 2016): 125–74.

exploitation and political domination.<sup>27</sup> The USSR emerged as a prominent actor in the Third World under Khrushchev (1954–64), but this involvement continued under Leonid Brezhnev (1964–82).<sup>28</sup> Soviet leaders believed that their opposition to imperialism and track record of fast economic development would be appealing to postcolonial states. The USSR generously provided aid to countries whose governments had socialist credentials such as China, Cuba, Ethiopia, and Mozambique. But many recipients of Soviet aid—including India, Indonesia, Egypt, Algeria, Iraq, Syria, and Ghana—were not Marxist but rather nonaligned states that adopted selected elements of state socialist economic development.<sup>29</sup>

The multipolarity of the Cold War is especially obvious in the involvement of eastern Europe in the Third World. There is still little comparative work on this topic, but several trends are emerging out of the literature.<sup>30</sup> The Soviet allies played an important role in projects of international development in the Third World, but often they pursued their own priorities over Soviet bloc solidarity. Many of them were more developed than the USSR, so Third World leaders often preferred their expertise over Soviet advice. Further, the socialist states had the appeal of not being superpowers dictating their geopolitical terms, but states that acted as equal partners. The involvement of the Soviet allies in the Third world—sometimes acting as Soviet proxies but sometimes pursuing their own interests—created a condition that Young-Sun Hong has aptly called a “bipolar (dis)order.”<sup>31</sup>

How did this multipolar perspective on the Cold War inform Bulgarian thinking about the world? The Bulgarians tended to refrain from a “Three Worlds” model that used the designation “Second World” to refer to the east European socialist states as *second to the west*. Bulgarian diplomats occasionally used the categories of “North” and “South,” especially when in conversation with their new partners in Africa. Yet, the Bulgarian term of choice was “developing countries” (*razvivashti se strani*), and the objective criterion for this classification was a large agricultural population, industrial underdevelopment, and desire for modernization. This definition allowed Bulgaria—and the Soviet bloc states in general—to assert their credentials as “recently developed” socialist states vis-à-vis the “developed capitalist states” (*razviti kapitalisticheski strani*) and offer an alternative model of modernization to “developing states” to help them avoid the evils of capitalism. This

27. Westad, “The Cold War and the Third World,” 211.

28. Hodge, “Writing the History of Development,” 150–51; and Latham, “The Cold War in the Third World,” 263–65.

29. Vladislav Zubok, “Cold War Strategies / Power and Culture—East: Sources of Soviet Conduct Reconsidered,” in Richard H. Immerman and Petra Goedde, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of the Cold War* (Oxford, 2013), 309–12.

30. Selected works include Jude Howell, “The End of an Era: The Rise and Fall of G.D.R. Aid,” *Journal of Modern African Studies* 32, no. 2 (June 1994): 305–28; Martin Rudner, “East European Aid to Asian Developing Countries: The Legacy of the Communist Era,” *Modern Asian Studies* 30, no. 1 (February 1996): 1–28; and Massimiliano Trentin, “Tough Negotiations: The Two Germanys in Syria and Iraq from 1963 to 1974,” *Cold War History* 8, no. 3 (Summer 2008): 353–80.

31. Young-Sun Hong, *Cold War Germany, the Third World, and the Global Humanitarian Regime* (New York, 2015), 13–48.

understanding of development saw the process as natural and inevitable: achieving a “developed” status entailed a stable political system, industrialization, urbanization, high literacy rates, and high levels of public involvement of the population, all criteria that fit the socialist bill.<sup>32</sup> Having adopted the identity of a “recently developed” state, Bulgaria was now prepared to give a hand to friendly “developing states” interested in speedy socio-economic “transformation.” It is this conceptualization of the world that informed Bulgaria’s new international agenda.<sup>33</sup> In the larger Cold War context, what was unique about Bulgaria’s international outreach was the fact that “development” was expressed not only through economic or political cooperation, but also via cultural exchange.

### Discovering the “Developing World”

In the mid-1970s, Bulgaria emerged in a new international role by refocusing its attention regionally (to its Balkan neighbors) and globally (to selected developing countries). In the evaluation of the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), “Bulgaria is seeking a new role. It is tired of being type-cast”; trying to defy the stereotype of the “Soviet flag bearer,” Bulgaria was pursuing a more independent role on the world stage.<sup>34</sup> Unlike other socialist states (particularly Czechoslovakia and Poland), in the absence of internal problems, Bulgarian head of state Todor Zhivkov became the most travelled east European leader, who wished to be recognized as a great statesman and enhance the “prestige” of his country.<sup>35</sup> The travel record of Zhivkov was impressive; in 1976, he extended state visits to India, Libya, Tunisia, Iran, and Iraq and accepted visitors from Ethiopia, Tanzania, Somalia, Vietnam, Laos, Egypt, Angola, Mozambique, and Mexico.<sup>36</sup> Africa, in particular, was emerging as a new item on the Bulgarian agenda, prompting British diplomats to condescendingly talk about “Bulgaria’s jungle offensive.”<sup>37</sup> Reaching out to these states was a part of a general Warsaw Pact campaign for involvement in the developing world; there is little doubt that Zhivkov coordinated these efforts with Soviet leader Brezhnev. But a complicated tapestry of motives determined the Bulgarian international drive, including ideological and political needs, economic opportunities, public relations goals, and nationalist aspirations, as well as the personal choices of the political leaders in charge of the country.

Ideology played an important role in the Soviet bloc’s outreach to the developing world. The Soviet turn toward internationalism occurred under Khrushchev beginning in 1956. In the 1960s, the USSR abandoned attempts at “revolutionary transformation” in the developing world and adopted the

32. Cullather, “Development? Its History,” 642–43.

33. Even though Bulgarian documents rarely use the term “Third World,” I use the terms developing states and Third World interchangeably in this article.

34. The National Archives, London, UK, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (hereafter TNA, FCO) 28/3732 (Cloake to FCO, “What Use is Bulgaria?,” July 30, 1979).

35. TNA, FCO 28/2866 (British embassy report, Dec. 29, 1976).

36. *Ibid.*, 28/3023 (Annual review of Bulgaria for 1976, Jan. 1977).

37. *Ibid.*, 28/4106 (British embassy report, Oct. 6, 1980).



principle of “peaceful coexistence”: instead of working only with socialist states, the Soviet bloc now sought to create “a broad coalition of progressive forces standing in opposition to the powers of imperialism.”<sup>38</sup> In the 1970s, but especially after the signing of the Helsinki Final Act in 1975, “peaceful coexistence between different socioeconomic systems” also became the cornerstone of Bulgarian foreign policy. At the same time, ideas of “proletarian internationalism” drove contacts with countries whose governments had socialist credentials, notably Vietnam, Mozambique, and Angola. Finally, the rhetoric of “anti-imperialism” and “anti-neocolonialism” resonated with a broader group of potential allies who may not have shared the Bulgarian commitment to the Soviet political model, but were attracted to the notion of “peaceful coexistence.”

In 1976, on the eve of the Bulgarian Communist Party (BKP) Congress, a publication in the BKP daily, *Rabotnichesko delo*, explained the parameters of Bulgarian foreign policy in the developing world after Helsinki. Condemning “racism and apartheid” and proclaiming support for the “national liberation movements” of the “peoples struggling against imperialism and colonialism,” Foreign Minister Petâr Mladenov declared that Bulgaria would provide help to the young states in Africa, Asia, and Latin America “to stimulate revolutionary transformations” in their societies, framing cooperation with the developing world broadly.<sup>39</sup> Bulgarian politicians used “anti-imperialism” and “anti-neocolonialism,” in particular, as umbrella terms that appealed to a variety of postcolonial states; in 1978, during his visit to Nigeria, Zhivkov spoke of his full support for “the final eradication of colonialism in Africa and the victory of true economic independence of the free African countries.”<sup>40</sup>

Ideological and practical factors went hand in hand, however, and economic interest infused these diplomatic efforts. In addition to projecting the rhetoric of “proletarian internationalism,” Bulgaria had robust economic relations with a number of African states with a socialist orientation, including Mozambique, Angola, Ethiopia, and Tanzania, where Treaties of Friendship and Cooperation charted the terms of Bulgarian economic involvement.<sup>41</sup> But elsewhere, entirely economic factors shaped the contacts, as Bulgarians were trying to procure hard currency through specialist exchange, find markets for their industrial products or processed foods, or secure access to natural resources such as oil. Iraq, Syria, Tunisia, Libya, and Algeria were some of the places that saw Bulgarian economic investment and specialist exchange in the fields of engineering, construction, and medicine. Similarly, in Nigeria, the largest African country, Bulgaria was competing for an economic niche in the construction, industrial, and agricultural sectors of the

38. Latham, “The Cold War in the Third World,” 264. Engerman, “The Second World’s Third World,” 188–89.

39. TNA, CFO 28/2866 (British embassy report, March 22, 1976).

40. MVnR, op. 34, a.e. 3794, 16–26, 27–34 (Materials related to the visit of Zhivkov in Nigeria, 16–19 Oct. 1978).

41. TNA, FCO 28/3330 (British embassy report, “Zhivkov’s African tour,” Nov. 6, 1978).

newly independent state, which was astutely navigating Soviet and western military and economic aid.<sup>42</sup>

Next, high-profile overseas events also served public relations strategies whose goal was to “play up Bulgaria’s international role.”<sup>43</sup> Bulgarian leaders were sensitive to their reputation as the “most loyal Soviet ally” and used these contacts to project an image of independence, sovereignty, and international status. According to British diplomats, Zhivkov personally showed “considerable satisfaction to project himself as an elder statesman of the Communist world in an arena in which . . . Bulgaria seems to have a distinct role to play.”<sup>44</sup> For ordinary Bulgarians, too, involvement in Third World countries was “a demonstration that Bulgaria carries some weight in international affairs.”<sup>45</sup> There was a new level of excitement at the prospect of a small state entering the global scene and establishing a tangible presence outside the geopolitical parameters of the mainstream Cold War divide between east and west.

In this context, a growing number of Bulgarian officials, supported by Zhivkova, thought that culture could play a unique international role. Nationalist motivations no doubt informed those choices; in line with the “patriotic” turn in Bulgaria during the 1970s, these highly-positioned officials, diplomats, and cultural experts believed that cultural heritage elevated their country to the level of other “civilizations” such as the Aztecs, Mughals, Egyptians, ancient Greeks, or Romans. In Zhivkova’s words, cultural contacts served to “display the tangible contribution of Bulgarian culture in the development of human civilization.”<sup>46</sup> State investment in culture paid off because it became a tool for a small state asserting its prestige—one of the “cradles of European civilization”—on the world stage. In the end, the new encounters between Bulgaria and the developing states, being ideologically sound, politically beneficial, economically profitable, and culturally rich, became an opportunity to emphasize the superiority of the socialist system and to promote the special “civilizational model” that Bulgaria could offer to the world.

### Resolving “Contradictions”: Bulgaria in India and Mexico

India and Mexico were by far the two most important international partners of Bulgaria from the mid-1970s on, establishing “parallel histories” 10,000 miles

42. Maxim Matusevich, *No Easy Row for a Russian Hoe: Ideology and Pragmatism in Nigerian-Soviet Relations, 1960–1991* (Trenton, NJ, 2003).

43. TNA, FCO 28/4106 (British embassy report, Oct. 6, 1980).

44. TNA, CFO 28/3733 (Annual review of Bulgaria for 1978, Jan. 1979; FCO evaluation of report, Feb. 20, 1979). As self-serving as they were, the memoir of the Bulgarian ambassador in Mexico at the time captures this enthusiasm well, see Bogomil Gerasimov, *Diplomatsiia v zonata na kaktusa* (Sofia, 1998).

45. TNA, FCO28/3330 (FCO to Cloake, Dec. 15, 1978; Anderson to Lambert, Nov. 22, 1978; Annex with visits by Warsaw Pact heads of state to Africa).

46. TsDA, f. 405, op. 9, a.e. 263, 55 (National Coordinating Committee of the 1300-Year Jubilee, “For the Dignified Celebration of the 1300<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Establishment of the Bulgarian State,” June 1979, 10, 195).

and eleven times zones away.<sup>47</sup> Often, Bulgarian leaders combined their trips to the two countries in a desire to showcase their contacts with two states that, at first glance, shared few commonalities.<sup>48</sup> Bulgaria established diplomatic relations with India in 1954. In 1967, Indira Gandhi visited Bulgaria, followed by a visit of Todor Zhivkov to India in 1969. In the 1960s and 1970s, regular if not particularly robust communication developed mainly along economic lines. From the mid-1970s on, culture added a new dimension to those contacts. Mexico, however, was an entirely new phenomenon in Bulgarian diplomacy. Bulgaria only established relations with Mexico in 1974 and opened an embassy in 1975. The “sudden upsurge” of Mexican-Bulgarian contacts, including a state visit of Mexican President José López Portillo in 1978, was “something of a mystery” for foreign diplomats.<sup>49</sup> Beginning in 1975, both India and Mexico saw nearly the same string of Bulgarian political and economic delegations, agricultural experts, exhibition commissars, artists, performers, and folk troupes. What brought Bulgaria, India, and Mexico together?

From a Marxist perspective, there was much to criticize in the internal affairs of the new Bulgarian partners; Bulgarian diplomats often used the term “contradictions” (*protivorechiia*) to describe both India and Mexico. A Bulgarian study from 1981 concluded: “There are numerous political struggles, social conflicts, and religious tensions,” including lasting “feudal peculiarities” (*otzhivelitsi*) that classified India as a “developing country.” Poverty rates were at 40 to 50 per cent, adult illiteracy was rampant, and rapid population growth impeded improvements in the standard of living. The modernization projects of ruling elites, however, provided opportunities for economic cooperation with the socialist states because about 20 per cent of the economy (including 40 per cent of industry) was under state control.<sup>50</sup> In Mexico, too, the “large bourgeoisie” connected to US export capital dominated economic and political life, contributing to unequal economic development and social polarization.<sup>51</sup> After the economic crisis of the 1970s, unemployment reached 25 to 35 per cent in 1976.<sup>52</sup> President Portillo (1976–82) sought to improve the economic situation using “traditional capitalist schemes: [appeals to] calm, national unity, sacrifice, patience and trust.”<sup>53</sup> While similar policies would have been the basis of a sharp critique of the government’s choices elsewhere (especially in the west), in diplomatic memos concerning India and Mexico these “contradictions” were duly noted but then prudently ignored.

Compromise was the basis of the successful political romance between the three countries. As far as India, Bulgarian officials maintained contacts

47. I borrow this term from Kate Brown, *Plutopia: Nuclear Families, Atomic Cities, and the Great Soviet and American Plutonium Disasters* (Oxford, 2013).

48. In November 1976 and February 1981, Liudmila Zhivkova took two consecutive trips to India and Mexico when signing cultural exchange agreements and opening exhibitions for the 1300-Year Jubilee, see *Liudmila Zhivkova. Zhivot i delo, 1942–1981. Letopis* (Sofia, 1987), 158–59, 394–99.

49. TNA, FCO 28/3330 (British embassy in Mexico City, April 27, 1978).

50. MVnR, op. 38, a.e. 1171, 93–98, 104–09 (Information on India prepared for Gandhi’s visit in Nov. 1981).

51. TsDA, f. 405, op. 9, a.e. 675, 41–45 (Memo on Mexico, 1976).

52. MVnR, op. 35, a.e. 2091, 14–17 (Information on Mexico, Feb. 24, 1979).

53. *Ibid.*, 36–42 (Memo on Mexico).

and often praised the Communist Party of India (CPI), whose members periodically visited Bulgaria, but that commitment was never a priority.<sup>54</sup> Yet, the Bulgarian leadership had extremely good relations with the Congress Party of Indira Gandhi. Despite the Congress Party's "bourgeois" credentials and Gandhi's imposition of a draconian state of emergency in 1975–77, Zhivkov and his daughter visited India in 1976. Gandhi was a better, "less right-wing" alternative, even though she was likely to continue using "authoritarian" methods to maintain her rule. When Gandhi returned to power in January 1980, the new dynamism and growing enthusiasm of expanding economic and cultural contacts was hard to miss.<sup>55</sup> Similarly to India, in Mexico Bulgarian diplomats worked with the party of "financial oligarchy," the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), which had held power since 1929 and had a "practical monopoly" over political life.<sup>56</sup> Bulgarian diplomats, however, did not seek out the Mexican Communist Party but decided that the "progressive" if "bourgeois" agenda of the PRI made it an acceptable political partner.<sup>57</sup>

Despite the rapid expansion of contacts to an extent that cannot be overstated, the distance between the countries ensured that they were limited to highly ranked political leaders, party functionaries, diplomats, and their families, plus a growing number of exchange specialists, scholars, artists, and performers. In this context, the importance of the strong personal relations that developed between political leaders at the highest level was instrumental.<sup>58</sup> A close friendship existed between Gandhi and Zhivkova, both daughters of leaders that took their countries in radically new directions. Their personal patronage played an important part in the intense, cordial relations between the two countries that developed from 1976 on. The two female politicians often made comparisons between the post-1944 socialist period in Bulgaria and the post-1947 independence period in India whose common goals were modernizing their countries and lifting their peoples out of poverty. In the words of Gandhi, "we have pursued different paths but the goal is the betterment of our people's lives."<sup>59</sup> This common perception of the transformational role of their families' political choices bound the two women together in their determination to pursue the "betterment" of their respective nations.

In Mexico, the personal engagements of two presidents, Luis Echeverría (1970–76) and his political ally, José López Portillo (1976–82), were indispensable, but highly placed women played an important role, too. Zhivkova frequently visited Mexico after 1975 in her capacity as chairperson of the Committee for Culture. First Lady Carmen Romano hosted receptions, museum openings, and ceremonies honoring Zhivkova; she paid a visit to Sofia in 1977

54. MVnR, op. 38, a.e. 1171, 110–16 (Relations between CPI and the Congress Party, Nov. 1981).

55. *Ibid.*, op. 36, a.e. 1243 (Reports on Indian elections).

56. *Ibid.*, op. 35, a.e. 2091, 14–17 (Information on Mexico, Feb. 24, 1979).

57. *Ibid.*, 36–42 (Memo on Mexico).

58. The ambassadors to India and Mexico were carefully chosen to satisfy Zhivkova's preferences and reported personally to her on various matters. These included Toshho Toshhev, Ambassador in New Delhi; Bogomil Gerasimov, Ambassador in Mexico City; and Morfi Skarlatov, director of the Bulgarian Cultural-Informational Center in New Delhi.

59. MVnR, op. 38, a.e. 1171, 45–49.

and met with Bulgarian officials.<sup>60</sup> The growing fondness between the two women paved the way for the state visits of President Portillo in 1978 and General Secretary Zhivkov in 1979.<sup>61</sup> While rhetorically portrayed as the rapprochement between the Mexican and Bulgarian “peoples,” the affair had a certain royal touch because it was based on the personal connections between the political families in charge of the two countries.

The closeness between Zhivkova, Gandhi, and Romano attracted international attention, prompting the press to deliberate on the peculiarities of Bulgaria’s “red dynasty,” in comparison to those in the GDR, Albania, and Romania.<sup>62</sup> Often, Zhivkova was referred to as the “Bulgarian princess,” the protégé of a regime that enjoyed “a high degree of family management.”<sup>63</sup> But Zhivkova was thought to be bringing something fresh on the international scene; western observers were fascinated by the fact that “few men, let alone women, are able to . . . effortlessly sprinkle their press conferences with references to ancient Sanskrit philosophy.”<sup>64</sup> In Bulgaria, too, many shared the opinion that the expansion of Bulgarian cultural policies with India and Mexico was due to Zhivkova’s personal interests in eastern philosophy, meditation, and yoga.<sup>65</sup> These idiosyncrasies gave Zhivkova some legitimacy internationally because she was seen as introducing new approaches to a sphere previously dominated by ideology. In the late-1970s, the foreign press overwhelmingly evaluated her efforts a “brilliant success as an exercise of international public relations [that put] this small, obscure Balkan country on the western world’s cultural map.”<sup>66</sup> Clearly, the decision to invest in culture paid off from the perspective of the Bulgarian regime.

### Selecting New Allies: Political and Economic Cooperation

To explain these contacts solely as the wishes of the “Bulgarian princess,” however, ignores the wider Bulgarian interests in the developing world. Furthermore, India and Mexico pursued contacts with the socialist countries in eastern Europe for their own reasons.<sup>67</sup> As a founding member of the non-

60. For details, see Gerasimov, *Diplomatsiia*.

61. MVnR, op. 35, a.e. 2091, 43–49, 136–40 (Memos on Mexican-Bulgarian relations).

62. Open Society Archives–Radio Free Europe Archives, Budapest, Hungary (hereafter OSA-RFE), 300-20-1-26; “Die Herscher im sozialistische Ostblock bauer Dynastien auf,” *Muencher Merkur*, Sept. 27, 1979; and “Communist Rule: All in the Family,” *International Herald Tribune*, Aug. 24, 1979.

63. “Bulgaria’s ‘Princess’ Leads Drive for Culture,” *Chicago Tribune*, July 19, 1980. See also “President’s Daughter Plays Major Role in Bulgaria,” *New York Times*, November 9, 1980.

64. OSA-RFE, 300-20-1-26. “Zhivkov’s daughter making her mark,” *Reuters*, Sofia, May 11, 1976.

65. Zhivkova’s biographers confirm the importance of her personal interests in the way official Bulgarian cultural policies evolved; see Blagov, *Zagadkata Liudmila Zhivkova*.

66. OSA-RFE, 300-20-1-26. “Culture Boss,” *The Observer*, Feb. 29, 1976.

67. A growing literature has shown that to think about Third World choices simply in terms of western and eastern models is simplistic. Third World states—such as India and Mexico—merged elements of east and west while they also prioritized local factors in their international choices. See the interpretations of Engerman, “The Second World’s Third World,” 184; Ragna Boden, “Cold War Economics: Soviet Aid to Indonesia,” *Journal*



aligned movement, India played an important role in expressing the interests of countries that did not commit to the western or eastern blocs after independence.<sup>68</sup> Mexico, an oil-rich country that preserved its civilian government during an era of military dictatorships in Latin America, maintained its international reputation through neutrality and non-participation in international organizations, such as OPEC and the nonaligned movement.<sup>69</sup> Both India and Mexico emerged as important voices in support of the postcolonial states, making them key players in the 1970s. At different times and for different reasons, their governments sought to disentangle their economic infrastructure from former colonial masters (India) or diversify contacts beyond their immediate powerful neighbors (Mexico). Looking for alternatives, both countries turned their attention to smaller socialist states, including Bulgaria.

From the perspective of Bulgaria, close contacts with India and Mexico were possible because their foreign policy agendas were “not objectionable.” For Bulgarian leader Todor Zhivkov, overtures in the two far-away countries presented little political risk while potentially increasing his reputation as an international leader. In the 1970s, a consensus emerged in Bulgaria that “the socialist states are the natural ally of the nonaligned states.”<sup>70</sup> This foreign policy orientation allowed a systematic expansion of contacts with India, in particular. The two countries avoided discussions of their disagreements (vis-à-vis China, for example), and focused on what bound them together. Under the leadership of Indira Gandhi in the 1970s, India embraced détente, supported disarmament, proposed more contacts along north-south lines, and encouraged cooperation with socialist states.<sup>71</sup> Furthermore, despite its capitalist economy, postcolonial India sought alternative methods of modernization, and Indian political elites experimented with forms of state planning in the economy. This orientation was beneficial to Soviet bloc states as it undermined the traditional presence of “western capital” in the postcolonial world.<sup>72</sup>

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*of Cold War Studies* 10, no. 3 (Summer 2008): 110–28; and Maxim Matushevich, *No Easy Row for the Russian Hoe*.

68. For overviews of India after 1947, see Achin Vanaik, *The Painful Transition: Bourgeois Democracy in India* (London, 1990); Wendy Singer, *Independent India, 1947–2000* (Harlow, Eng., 2012); and Bipan Chandra, Aditya Mukherjee, and Mridula Mukherjee, *India after Independence* (New Delhi, 2000). For analyses of India’s foreign policy and Cold War choices, see Paul McGarr’s *The Cold War in South Asia: Britain, the United States and the Indian Subcontinent, 1945–1965* (Cambridge, Mass., 2013); and Ganguly Sumit, ed., *India’s Foreign Policy: Retrospect and Prospect* (New Delhi, 2010).

69. For the place of Latin America in the Cold War, see Gilbert Joseph and Daniela Spenser, eds., *In from the Cold: Latin America’s New Encounter with the Cold War* (Durham, 2008); Hal Brands, *Latin America’s Cold War* (Cambridge, Mass., 2010); and Nicola Miller, *Soviet Relations with Latin America, 1959–1987* (Cambridge, Mass., 1989). A work of Cold War Mexico is Rebecca M. Schreiber, *Cold War Exiles in Mexico: U.S. Dissidents and the Culture of Critical Resistance* (Minneapolis, 2008).

70. MVnR, op. 35, a.e. 1339, 1–2 (Report from Feb. 1979).

71. *Ibid.*, op. 38, a.e. 1171, 93–98, 104–09, 117–25 (Information about India, Nov. 1981).

72. MVnR, op. 38, a.e. 1173, 9–10 (Report from Dec. 1980). For an analysis of Soviet experts in India, see David C. Engerman, “Learning from the East: Soviet Experts and India in the Era of Competitive Coexistence,” *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 33, no. 2 (2013): 227–38. For two analyses of US and Soviet efforts in the Third

With its population of 320 million and vast natural resources, Latin America emerged as a region of interest for Bulgaria in the 1970s. Bulgarian diplomats were willing to work with all “democratic, progressive and revolutionary forces” that pursued cooperation outside of US influence.<sup>73</sup> Venezuela, Colombia, and Mexico were the focus of Bulgarian diplomatic efforts because the three countries had preserved their civilian governments in the 1970s. In Mexico, the ruling PRI maintained close contacts with the social-democratic parties of Latin America and western Europe. It had severed diplomatic relations with Chile after the junta in 1973.<sup>74</sup> Together with Venezuela, Mexico established the Latin American Economic System (SELA) in 1975 to promote economic cooperation in the region, including with Cuba. Mexico was also willing to expand its relations with other socialist states, including Hungary and the USSR.<sup>75</sup> For all these reasons, establishing Bulgarian presence in the region through involvement with Mexico seemed a sound idea.

Economic considerations were also an important motivation in fostering contacts with the two states. In 1973, an Indo-Bulgarian Joint Commission was established to coordinate matters of economic interest; Bulgarian correspondence suggests systematic efforts to be perceived as a “desired economic partner.”<sup>76</sup> By 1976, Bulgaria had built eight food, pharmaceutical, and chemical factories in India and expanded its reach in the spheres of agriculture, electronics, machine building, metallurgy, and light industry; by 1981, four more Bulgarian plants opened in the country.<sup>77</sup> Bulgarians also helped setting up agricultural-industrial complexes: in 1976, when Zhivkov visited India, he inaugurated a Bulgarian complex in Bangalore. In 1980, when Gandhi came to power again, trade turnout between Bulgaria and India was double compared to 1970.<sup>78</sup>

In the late 1970s, Bulgarian leaders also wished to expand economic cooperation with Mexico. Mexicans were particularly interested in Bulgarian agricultural experience, with projects already underway in India.<sup>79</sup> President Portillo had come to power promising “efficiency and productivity” in agriculture.<sup>80</sup> After his visit to Bulgaria in 1978, upon his request, Bulgarian specialists established two agricultural-industrial complexes and food processing plants

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World, see Andreas Hilger, “Building a Socialist Elite? Khrushchev’s Soviet Union and Elite Formation in India,” 241–61; and Corinna Unger, “The United States, Decolonization, and the Education of Third World Elites,” 262–86, in Jost Duellfer and Marc Frey, eds., *Elites and Decolonization in the Twentieth Century* (Basingstoke, 2011).

73. MVnR, op. 35, a.e. 2091, 85–96 (Political situation in Latin America, March 1979).

74. *Ibid.*, 14–17 (Information on Mexico, Feb. 24, 1979).

75. TsDA, f. 405, op. 9, a.e. 675, 41–45 (Memo on Mexico, 1976).

76. TNA, FCO 28/2866 (British High Commission in New Delhi, Nov. 29, 1976; Joint communiqué, Nov. 21, 1976).

77. TsDA, f. 405, op. 9, a.e. 616, 161–75 (Draft project for cooperation with India, 1976–1980); MVnR, op. 38, a.e. 1171, 93–98, 99–103.

78. MVnR, op. 36, a.e. 1243, 85–86; a.e. 1244, 50–52, 70–72; and a.e. 1245, l. 5–8, 12–32. For the cooperation between Bulgaria and India in computing, see Victor Petrov, “A Cyber-Socialism at Home and Abroad: Bulgarian Modernization, Computers, and the World, 1967–1989” (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 2017).

79. TNA, FCO 28/2866 (British embassy in Sofia, Nov. 30, 1976).

80. MVnR, op. 35, a.e. 2091, 36–42 (Memo on Mexico).

in the Mexican state of Guerrero that employed 2,100 peasants.<sup>81</sup> Bulgarians also investigated the possibility of opening refineries and petrochemical plants with Mexican help, but negotiations proceeded slowly.<sup>82</sup> Aside from the Guerrero complex, overall economic relations between Bulgaria and Mexico remained “unsatisfactory.”<sup>83</sup>

### From “Technical-scientific” to “Cultural-educational” Cooperation

Together with architects, engineers, chemists, textile and agricultural specialists, and technical personnel, Bulgaria also dispatched scholars, artists, writers, folk and jazz musicians, archaeologists, and mountain climbers to India and Mexico. “Technical-scientific cooperation” went hand in hand with “cultural-educational propaganda,” emphasizing the role of culture, alongside economics, in the projection of Bulgarian understanding of “development” abroad. In February 1981, *All India Radio* broadcast a program entitled “Growing Relations Between India and Bulgaria,” which intertwined economic and cultural themes: “Bulgaria is a small country . . . it now has highly developed modern industry and large-scale mechanized agriculture.” But it was “the field of knowledge, culture and science” that “may open new vistas of understanding between two of the most ancient civilizations.”<sup>84</sup> In the words of Zhivkov, for Bulgaria and Mexico, culture was “the trailblazer on the way toward broad and productive political and economic cooperation.”<sup>85</sup> Confirming this opinion, in 1981 observers commented that “the name Bulgaria, which six years ago was almost unfamiliar in the land of the Aztecs, today is well known as a country . . . with rich culture and ancient history [that also has] an advanced and modern economy.”<sup>86</sup>

In diplomatic correspondence, the most often-mentioned commonalities between the three countries involved references to culture and history. The ancient origins of the three states and their desire to preserve the heritage of Aztec warriors, Thracian kings, Mughal princes, and Hindu sages was a recurring theme. In the words of *All India Radio*: “Like India, Bulgaria has a hoary past and a chequered history. Both believe they have a cultural mission to fulfill and they kept up the fighting spirit even when they were down and under.”<sup>87</sup> Mexican president Portillo, too, pointed out that his first and most memorable impression of Bulgaria was the fact that “Bulgaria is truly a country with a rich ancient culture.”<sup>88</sup> On occasion of the Bulgarian exhibitions, Mexican newspapers profusely praised “the glorious history of the Bulgarian

81. *Ibid.*, op. 36, a.e. 2019 (Clippings from *Uno mas uno*, Aug. 12, 1980). Gerasimov, *Diplomatsiia*.

82. TNA, FCO 28/3330 (British embassy in Mexico City, April 27, 1978).

83. MVnR, op. 35, a.e. 2091, 43–46, 60–67, 101–06 (Memos on Bulgarian-Mexican relations, and COMECON and Mexico).

84. *Ibid.*, op. 38, a.e. 1173, 66–69.

85. TsDA, f. 405, op. 9, a.e. 675, 131–35 (Memo from 1978).

86. *Pogled*, March 3, 1981, found in TsDA, f. 405, op. 9, a.e. 679.

87. MVnR, op. 38, a.e. 1173, 66–69.

88. Gerasimov, *Diplomatsiia*, 298.

nation.”<sup>89</sup> Bulgarian and Indian leaders mentioned as a point of comparison their relatively recent independence, 1947 for postcolonial India and 1944 for “socialist” Bulgaria. Bulgarian and Mexican leaders spoke about the shared agendas of social justice of the Mexican revolution of 1910 and the “socialist revolution” of 1944. This desire to establish historical connections—and use the past to justify current political choices—explains the importance of culture in the contacts between the three states. In the context of profound anxieties about domestic and global stability during the 1970s, historical and cultural arguments provided reassurance that, as “great civilizations” of the past, the three countries would persevere in the face of adversity and succeed in their future goals.

International considerations nicely supplemented domestic agendas as well. Mexican and Indian ideas of “solidarity” and “national unity” were in striking resemblance with BKP’s own reinvigorated use of class and national rhetoric in the 1970s. The reforms of President Luis Echeverría (1970–76), supported by “progressive intellectuals,” involved more state investment in education and support for indigenous cultures in order to “transform education and culture from a monopoly of a minority to an achievement for the entire people.”<sup>90</sup> Indian cultural policies sought to preserve the country’s cultural heritage, liquidate illiteracy, raise the cultural level of the masses, and support the development of local artistic production to counter western influences.<sup>91</sup> These were progressive agendas oriented toward the “people” and the “nation” that showed appreciation for both past and future, akin to the Bulgarian vision of culture in the 1970s. Domestic agendas and international priorities reinforced each other, allowing a small Bulgaria to seamlessly connect its own visions of the nation to those of India and Mexico. In this context, a focus on culture reinforced other important interests.

### Opening “New Vistas of Understating”: Bulgarian Culture in India

Cultural relations between Bulgaria and India dated from the interwar years when Rabindranath Tagore, the Indian artist, novelist, and the first non-European Nobel Prize winner in 1913, visited Bulgaria. During this time, thirty-four Indian authors were published in Bulgarian translation. After 1944, book publications, exhibitions, and academic exchanges continued at the state level. In 1955, the first Indian films were shown in Bulgaria, becoming a popular form of entertainment throughout the socialist period. In 1956, President Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan was awarded an honorary doctorate from the University of Sofia during his visit to Bulgaria. The Punjabi writer Amrita Pritam wrote a travelogue, “A Rose with 21 Petals,” about her visit to Bulgaria, and translated Bulgarian prose, poetry, and folk songs (she was awarded the Vapsarov Prize for her dissemination of Bulgarian literature in 1979).<sup>92</sup> This solid basis of Indian-Bulgarian cultural relations led to the signing of a cultural coopera-

89. *Excelsior*, March 4, 1981, found in MVnR, op. 38, a.e. 1894.

90. TsDA, f. 405, op. 9, a.e. 675, 41–45 (Memo on Mexico, 1976).

91. MVnR, op. 32, a.e. 1402, 24–39.

92. TsDA, f. 405, op. 9, a.e. 616, 114–35 (Cultural relations with India, April 1976).

tion agreement between Bulgaria and India in 1963, which recognized higher education diplomas and set up a framework for language education, in addition to the other already-established forms of cultural exchange.<sup>93</sup>

A new, dynamic expansion of cultural contact with India began after Liudmila Zhivkova became the chairperson of the Committee for Culture in 1975. In February-March 1976, Zhivkova toured North Korea, Vietnam, Burma, and India.<sup>94</sup> After her return, the Committee for Culture discussed the possibilities for expanding relations with India. Despite the “anti-neocolonial” orientation of Bulgarian international outreach, official evaluations of Indian cultural life carried almost a colonial tone: “It will be difficult for us to reach, through culture and arts, the multi-million Indian people at this stage of its development, due to its misery and illiteracy and the lack of exposure to any culture whatsoever.” Therefore, cultural exchange with India would be a *middle-class* endeavor targeting the educated, progressive bourgeois strata: “[O]ur cultural events are aimed at the more or less educated circles in cities, which vary from those who simply have the habit to go to the movies to the upper classes with a taste for fine arts. India also has a large army of intellectuals, highly specialized technical personnel, and active university youth, a powerful element, which should become the main object of our cultural activities.”<sup>95</sup> Such statements reveal a clear claim of superiority of the Bulgarian cultural model vis-à-vis the predicament of postcolonial India, ironically echoing western colonial attitudes that the socialist world sought to combat.

During the cultural agreement talks in 1976, the Bulgarian experts learnt firsthand about the Indian priorities in cultural exchange. Specialists from the Indian Ministry of Education, Social Policy and Culture enquired about the Bulgarian experience with mass culture, illiteracy, and especially Bulgarian “reading clubs” (*chitalishta*). The Indians were also interested in collaborating with Bulgarian specialists in the arts and folklore and sought help with the preservation of ancient archaeological sites.<sup>96</sup>

In May 1977, a Bulgaria Cultural-Informational Center opened in New Delhi, in the middle-class neighborhood Golf Link, to “popularize the achievements of building new life in our country.”<sup>97</sup> The Center published a glossy monthly magazine, *News from Bulgaria*, to advertise Bulgarian political, economic, and cultural accomplishments.<sup>98</sup> Diplomats worked to establish Indian-Bulgarian Friendship Societies, which were supposed to function as hubs of Bulgarian activities in India.<sup>99</sup>

Given the small number of Indians familiar with Bulgaria, scholarly cooperation was another way of pursuing cultural contacts. The University of New Delhi established a Bulgarian language professorship in 1977, enrolling seventeen majors for the study of Bulgarian language, history, and culture.

93. *Ibid.*, 114–35, 180–96 (Cultural relations with India, April and Dec. 1976).

94. MVnR, op. 32, a.e. 1402, 24–39.

95. TsDA, f. 405, op. 9, a.e. 616, 180–96 (Cultural relations with India, Dec. 1976).

96. MVnR, op. 33, a.e. 1260, 71–77; *Ibid.*, a.e. 1261, 57–58.

97. *Ibid.*, op. 34, a.e. 1218, 10–24. TsDA, f. 405, op. 9, a.e. 617, 103–18 (Report, Dec. 1977).

98. TsDA, f. 405, op. 9, a.e. 617, 31 and 42 (*News from Bulgaria*, Feb. and March 1977).

99. *Ibid.*, a.e. 618, 1, 98–99.



These students became the vanguard of the Bulgarian presence in New Delhi; they performed at the Bulgarian Center and embassy, moving their (mostly Bulgarian) audience with recitals of Bulgarian literature on the occasion of the Bulgarian centennial celebrations in March 1978 or International Women's Day.<sup>100</sup> Indian and Bulgarian scholars proposed joint research projects focused on ancient civilizations, especially cooperation between Bulgarian specialists in Thracology and Indian specialists in ancient Indian cultures.<sup>101</sup>

The number of Bulgarian cultural events in India grew. By December 1980, Bulgarian diplomats had held seventy-six exhibitions, organized 242 film showings, fifty-six celebratory meetings, and distributed 628,000 copies of books and magazines; there were altogether 420 visits of a cultural character between Bulgaria and India. Fifty-two Indian students pursued a Bulgarian language degree. Indian children participated in the International Banner of Peace Assembly in 1979.<sup>102</sup> Bulgarian artists, jazz musicians, folk dance performers, and writers now visited India regularly. In Bulgaria, a Contemporary Indian Art exhibition opened in March 1979. In June 1981, the paintings of Rabindranath Tagore were shown in Sofia.<sup>103</sup>

With the discrepancy in size, it is clear that tiny Bulgaria exported far more cultural products to the much-larger India; the reason lies in the influence of Zhivkova, who was willing to commit state resources to this ideologically-justified cultural extravaganza that fulfilled her personal interests. During her official visits, she typically took "days off" to explore archaeological sites and meet with Indian gurus. Reports claimed that her visits were the best possible "propaganda of real socialism," but the Bulgarian cultural presence in India looked like the fulfillment of the personal aspirations of the communist dictator's daughter.

### **Culture as "The Main Element of International Relations": Bulgaria in Mexico**

Given the nascent political and economic relations between Bulgaria and Mexico, culture gave substance to the fresh political romance between the two countries. Bulgarian diplomats spoke of culture as the "obligatory and main element of international relations," because "political and economic relations are not enough to address the larger framework of our future, mutually-peaceful development."<sup>104</sup> The two Mexican presidents of these years, Echeverría and Portillo, seemed to agree that international cultural exposure could only enhance one's reputation as a great statesman.

Conditions in Mexico impeded Bulgarian cultural expansion among the Mexican "people" due to "the high percentage of illiteracy among the

100. MVnR, op. 34, a.e. 1224.

101. *Ibid.*, op. 38, a.e. 1218, 35, 36–39. Prof. Alexander Fol, the Minister of Education and noted Thracologist, proposed a joint research project on parallels between Thracian and Indian culture (including investigation on the origin of the proto-Bulgarians) with Prof. Lokesh Chandra, specialist in Indology, Tibetology, and Polynesian culture.

102. MVnR, op. 38, a.e. 1207, 12–17.

103. *Ibid.*, op. 35, a.e. 1372; and , op. 36, a.e. 1295 and 1299.

104. TsDA, f. 405, op. 10, a.e. 539, 1–7 (Memo on cultural relations from Feb. 1981).

population, the chaotic migratory processes, the distance of the largest ethnic groups from general progress, and the lack of access to professional culture of the broad masses.” Their impeccable Marxist credentials notwithstanding, Bulgarian diplomats found commonality with the Mexican elites on national(ist) grounds. After all, Mexican cultural elites had “ambition to rebuilt the reputation of the country that had given humanity the culture of the Maya, Aztecs, [and] Toltecs [and] created the geniuses of Orozco, Siqueiros, [and] Rivera.”<sup>105</sup> Given the fact that Bulgaria also wished to promote its ancient roots while displaying its contemporary progress, Bulgarian and Mexican cultural aspirations converged. Much like in India, the main conversation partners and audiences of the Bulgarians were the “progressive intelligentsia” from the “bourgeois class,” such as university students, professors, and directors of state cultural agencies and museums.<sup>106</sup>

Bulgarian cultural efforts in Mexico were not as wide-ranging as in India, given the fact that they began practically from scratch in 1976. To impress their hosts, Bulgarians relied on the prestigious exhibitions that had already successfully toured the world. In March–April 1977, the “Thracian Treasures from Bulgaria” exhibition came to Mexico City, after it concluded its visit to the British Museum.<sup>107</sup> Another exhibition that had become a worldwide sensation, the “1000 Years Bulgarian Icons,” came from Paris in March 1978 to commemorate the centennial of Bulgaria statehood.<sup>108</sup> In 1979, a Contemporary Bulgarian Art Exhibition opened on the eve of Zhivkov’s state visit.<sup>109</sup> Being new in Mexico, Bulgarians were relying on quality rather than quantity, displaying their best cultural products that had already attracted significant international attention.

Mexican culture came to Bulgaria, too. The opening of a Mexican embassy in November 1976 was accompanied by the exhibition 3,000 Years of Mexican Art, visited by Todor Zhivkov “with all the attendant publicity.”<sup>110</sup> When President Portillo came to Sofia in 1978, an exhibition of the folk artist and cartoonist José Guadalupe Posada opened in the prestigious Shipka 6 Gallery. Other events that year included the Art of the Aztecs exhibition and a week of Mexican film.<sup>111</sup>

To put these cultural contacts in perspective, during this time Bulgaria was preparing to celebrate its 1300-Year Jubilee throughout the world, while experiencing severe shortages of “cultural products” that it could send for the anniversary celebrations abroad. Practically every Bulgarian ambassador was requesting the same exhibitions and performers, but not every country was prioritized when the state bureaucracy decided where to send the Bulgarian folk ensembles, classical musicians, and archaeological treasures. Still,

105. *Ibid.*

106. TsDA, f. 405, op. 9, a.e. 675, 41–45 (Memo on Mexico, 1976).

107. After London, the exhibition first went to Cuba and, after Mexico, toured the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City.

108. TsDA, f. 405, op. 9, a.e. 675, 131–35 (Memo from 1978).

109. An overview of cultural events until early 1981 is found in TsDA, f. 405, op. 10, a.e. 539, 1–7 (Memo on cultural relations from Feb. 1981).

110. TNA, FCO 28/2866 (British embassy in Sofia, Nov. 30, 1976).

111. TsDA, f. 405, op. 10, a.e. 539, 1–7 (Memo on cultural relations, Feb. 1981).

during 1977–81, the best of Bulgarian culture came to the newest Bulgarian ally, Mexico. This fact only demonstrates the priority given to Mexico at the highest level of the cultural and state bureaucracy.

### A Momentous Year: 1981

As 1981 approached, more demands were put on Bulgarian embassies worldwide to organize events commemorating the 1300<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of the Bulgarian state. In India, Indian-Bulgarian Friendship Societies started to celebrate the anniversary at their meetings. The Bulgarian Cultural-Informational Center held celebratory talks, round tables, symposia, exhibitions, and public discussions in New Delhi, Calcutta, Madras, Hyderabad, Guntur, Vijayawada, and other cities. Bulgarian mountaineers held a meeting dedicated to the 1300<sup>th</sup> anniversary at the end of their expedition to the Himalayas. In early 1981, at the urging of Indira Gandhi, Satyanarayana Rao, General Secretary of the Congress Party and Member of Parliament, inaugurated a National Committee for the 1300-Year Jubilee in India to coordinate celebratory events with the Indian government.<sup>112</sup>

Despite the lack of any prior cultural traditions, Mexico became the first country to establish a National Celebration Committee for the 1300-Year Jubilee; in January 1978, upon Zhivkova's request, First Lady Carmen Romano agreed to chair the committee that included several ministers and mayors.<sup>113</sup> A Week of Bulgarian Culture on the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) campus, also dedicated to 1300, featured film screenings, readings of Bulgarian translations, and theatrical performances. Photo exhibitions toured Sahagun, Cuautla, and Mexico City. The biggest Mexican gesture was the gift of 1300 art works of 280 Mexican graphic artists to commemorate the Bulgarian 1300-Year Jubilee in 1980.<sup>114</sup>

But the "climax" (*kulminatsiia*) of both celebratory programs was the parallel opening of two of the most prestigious Bulgarian exhibitions in New Delhi and Mexico City. In February 1981, Zhivkova arrived in India to open the world-renowned exhibition, Thracian Treasures from Bulgaria, at the National Gallery of Modern Art in New Delhi.<sup>115</sup> Zhivkova spoke about the strong link between India and Bulgaria in historical, cultural, and spiritual terms:

Here, on Indian land, Thracian art feels more at home than anywhere else outside of Bulgaria. Here one can tangibly feel the parallels, the similarity, and the organic closeness in the symbolic nature of Thracian and Indian art . . .

112. *Ibid.*, f. 990, op. 1, a.e. 515, 259–314 (General report for jubilee activities in India, 1978–81).

113. *Ibid.*, f. 405, op. 10, a.e. 539, 23–28 (Memo on 1300 celebrations in Mexico, Feb. 1981); and f. 990, op. 1, a.e. 570, 149–78 (Memo on jubilee activities in Mexico).

114. *Ibid.*, f. 990, op. 1, a.e. 570, 149–78 (Memo on jubilee activities in Mexico).

115. Zhivkova was in India February 17–27, *Liudmila Zhivkova. Zhivot i delo*, 394–99; MVnR, op. 36, a.e. 1298, 23–25, 33–36; MVnR, op. 38, a.e. 1173, 1193. The exhibition had already toured Paris, Moscow, Leningrad, Vienna, Warsaw, Budapest, London, Havana, Mexico City, New York City, Boston, Munich, Cologne, and Tokyo.

There is no doubt that the Indian and Bulgarian people, heirs of rich culture and civilization, bearers of centuries-old life experience, having survived the tests of life and fate . . . and having preserved intact their quest for perfection, will work and cooperate even more closely and conscientiously towards . . . Fraternity and Beauty.<sup>116</sup>

Indira Gandhi paid a visit to the exhibition. Following an academic symposium and literary meetings in New Delhi, celebratory events dedicated to 1300-years were held in Lucknow, Bangalore, Hyderabad, Madras, and Aurovil. At these events, Zhivkova met with governors and mayors, impressing her hosts with her intimate knowledge of Indian philosophy and history.<sup>117</sup>

Following a 12-hour stay in Sofia to visit with her children, Zhivkova flew to Mexico to open the Medieval Bulgarian Civilization exhibition at the National Anthropological Museum in Mexico City.<sup>118</sup> President Portillo remarked that “this is one of the most beautiful exhibitions ever shown in Mexico.”<sup>119</sup> Presenting the president with a high state recognition, the Dimitrov Prize, Zhivkova spoke about the remarkable development of Bulgarian-Mexican relations, again using a spiritual vocabulary to reflect on the common historical heritage and future choices of the two states:

Our two peoples are peoples with ancient history and rich culture, heirs of important and rich civilizations. Overcoming the challenges of time, they have preserved alive the flame and fire of their freedom-loving and strong spirit, or if we are to express this symbolically, the flame of Quetzalcoatl and the light of Orpheus. This is why there is a strong desire among our peoples to travel upward, toward light, to move forward, toward progress, and to perfect themselves.<sup>120</sup>

Zhivkova then participated in a number of celebrations honoring the jubilee in Mexico City and Puebla.<sup>121</sup> First Lady Carmen Romano hosted a concert at the Mexico City Philharmonic and a private dinner for Zhivkova.<sup>122</sup> In essence, the 1300-Year Jubilee in Mexico became a celebration of the two families in power.

In July 1981, Liudmila Zhivkova died, in the midst of the jubilee celebrations in Bulgaria that had been her brainchild. Rumors have it that the two long, exhausting trips to India and Mexico, which included meetings with gurus and clairvoyants in addition to high officials, precipitated her death.<sup>123</sup> Her unexpected death generated wide international media coverage

116. TsDA, f. 405, op. 9, a.e. 497 (Speech reprinted in the *Statesman and Sunday Standard*).

117. Ibid., f. 990, op. 1, a.e. 515, 259–314, 246–54 (General report for jubilee activities in India, 1978–1981; report on the visit of Zhivkova in India in Feb. 1981).

118. Zhivkova was in Mexico from February 28 to March 6, with a 12-hour stay in Sofia after India. *Liudmila Zhivkova. Zhivot i delo*, 394–99.

119. TsDA, f. 405, op. 9, a.e. 679, 1 (Clipping from *Rabotnicheskoe delo*, March 7, 1981).

120. Ibid., 1–5, 63–65 (Clippings and report about the Bulgarian Medieval Civilization exhibition and other activities in Mexico, March 1981).

121. TsDA, f. 405, op. 9, a.e. 679, 1–5, 63–65 (An overview of cultural events until early 1981 in TsDA); f. 405, op. 10, a.e. 539, 1–7 (Memo on cultural relations from Feb. 1981).

122. Ibid., f. 405, op. 9, a.e. 679, 1–5, 63–65.

123. Blagov, *Zagadkata Liudmila Zhivkova*.

and speculation. Soon, both Indira Gandhi and Carmen Romano honored Zhivkova in their own countries. In Mexico City, on September 4, 1981, elementary school 229 was given Zhivkova's name to celebrate her personal role in the development of Bulgarian-Mexican contacts.<sup>124</sup> In November 1981, Indira Gandhi, honoring her close associate, visited Bulgaria in the midst of the 1300-Year Jubilee celebrations, in a highly symbolic gesture.<sup>125</sup> Gandhi spoke passionately at a state dinner: "I came to your land of roses from my land of the lotus," congratulating Zhivkov for the "remarkable progress [of Bulgaria] under your dynamic leadership." Gandhi then announced the establishment of the Liudmila Zhivkova Professorship in Bulgarian Studies at the University of New Delhi.<sup>126</sup>

### Why the Focus on Culture in the Developing World

What was the logic of Bulgarian involvement in the developing world? For a variety of reasons described above, certain countries in the "developing world" emerged as the "natural ally" of the Bulgarian leadership in the 1970s. No single solid, clear-cut criterion existed, however, in determining the nature of these new relationships; ideological, political, economic, and cultural factors all shaped the Bulgarian choices. In some cases, mainly in Africa and the Middle East, economic motivations drove the urge for contact. In others, such as Mexico, culture was the only thing that provided substance in the new encounters, pushing the "civilizational" and "patriotic" discourse to the forefront. In the third case of India, economic and cultural factors were closely intertwined, but perhaps the most important factor was the close relationship between Indira Gandhi and Liudmila Zhivkova, who cultivated sustained contacts between elites. In all of these encounters, the "anti-imperialist" and "anti-neocolonial" language provided the unifying rhetoric, but viewed from a distance, in many ways Bulgaria also nurtured "colonial" attitudes toward its new partners in Africa, Asia, and Latin America because it saw the Bulgarian model as superior to what it found in the Global South.

The intense, global cultural involvement of Bulgaria in the developing states—and the vast amount of money and personnel committed to it—was in many ways staggering during the precarious 1970s. But even though orchestrated at the highest political levels, this global cultural overture underlined the ability of a small socialist state to make some independent international choices. The "patriotic" message of the Bulgarian cultural contacts often clashed with Soviet expectations; increasingly, Moscow worried about the apparent unorthodoxy of its "most loyal ally." Politicians in the west also came to question whether Bulgarians were acting purely as "Soviet proxies" or pursuing independence through culture. For British diplomats, "little brother is growing up and is sometimes resentful of big brother's [Soviet] air of superiority." One of the manifestations of this attitude was the "disproportionate use of resources" to sponsor "an active program of cultural events . . . making

124. TsDA, f. 990, op. 1, a.e. 570, 149–78 (Memo on jubilee activities in Mexico).

125. MVnR, op. 38, a.e. 1162 and 1171.

126. *Ibid.*, a.e. 1171, 45–49.



the world conscious of the Bulgarian heritage.”<sup>127</sup> The Bulgarian involvement with Mexico and India makes clear that, while political agendas and economic decisions followed a predetermined role in the Soviet bloc, cultural involvement allowed more autonomy to east European states. The Bulgarian cultural engagement with “developing states” allowed it to project its own civilizational self-definition to the world outside of Moscow’s influence.

Ultimately, this analysis of the relationship between the Second and the Third Worlds highlights the importance of the “peripheral” east European players during the Cold War. There were many contradictions in the global cultural outreach program that Bulgarian elites pursued in India and Mexico. If, in the words of Frederick Cooper, “the history of development is a history of changing expectations,” the Bulgarian involvement in the developing world proved that assertion, as the Bulgarians were constantly adjusting their expectations.<sup>128</sup> Bulgarian officials had certain assumptions of what they were pursuing out in the world; their ideas of “development” fit a standard, one might even say a “western” understanding of modernization that followed a certain linear, inevitable model based on Enlightenment ideas of standardization and rationalization. The model was of course understood to be “socialist,” as it followed elements of state planning, but development was also seen as basically “European.” Most importantly, however, the entire interaction between Bulgaria and the “developing states” was based on the assumption that Bulgaria actually constituted a “developed” state. This assumption of Bulgarian “development” explains the importance of discourse—and culture—in global Bulgarian interactions. For a country to be considered developed, it had to be “generally recognized to be developed.”<sup>129</sup> Therefore, discourse now had to create reality. In short, when the Bulgarians went to India and Mexico and spoke about those countries as “developing states” in need to assistance—whether economic, political, or cultural—they also tried to create new perceptions of Bulgaria as a “developed” state that could provide that assistance. The language of development, based on notions of the inevitable convergence between the developed and developing states, provided the best perspective on the world. A small east European state representing the Second World could thus claim civilizational superiority vis-à-vis not only the Global South and the west, but also the Soviet “big brother.”

127. TNA, FCO 28/3732 (Cloake to FCO, “What use is Bulgaria?,” July 30, 1979).

128. Frederick Cooper, “Writing the History of Development,” in “Modernizing Missions: Approaches to ‘Developing’ the Non-Western World after 1945,” a special issue of *Journal of Modern European History* 8, no. 1 (2010): 5–23.

129. Cullather, “Development? Its History,” 642–43.