

# CURRICULUM PROJECT ON THE HISTORY OF BULGARIAN-UNITED STATES RELATIONS

By

Laurene Wu McClain

This curriculum project is meant for an introductory course on Twentieth Century United States history in a community college. The purpose of this unit is to educate students in Bulgaria's foreign policy towards the United States, and, in turn, enhance understanding of America's policy towards the Balkan countries, particularly Bulgaria. Through the study of each country's foreign policy, students should also gain knowledge regarding each area's internal political, economic, and social issues as well. By necessity, Bulgaria would need to be viewed in the context of Balkan or regional politics, too.

As an introduction to this region, all students would need to see where Bulgaria is located. (Many students probably have no idea where Bulgaria exists.) While Bulgaria's borders were modified several times, it was always surrounded by many neighbors, with changing alliances from period to period. For each time period covered, students would have to research the size of the country in terms of land mass and population, what resources Bulgaria had, the ethnic and religious composition of its population, its government system, the educational level of its people, its stage of economic development, and its recent relations with other countries since all of these factors could affect its foreign policy towards the United States. After a preliminary discussion of all of these factors that students would need to research, I would divide the class up into four teams. Each of the teams would tackle a particular time period in Bulgarian-United States relations. Each of the teams would be expected to write a report with an extensive bibliography on that assigned time period to submit to me, and then, on two "Bulgaria-America Days" in class, give an oral analysis to the other teams in the class.

1. Team One would be assigned to study relations during World War I and its aftermath. This team would need to research the following: What led to the outbreak of war? What factors did Bulgaria need to consider when both the Entente and the Central Powers pressured Bulgaria to support their respective sides in the War? Why did Bulgaria eventually join the Central Powers? Where did Bulgaria fight? How much did Bulgaria invest in this war in terms of its military, and economic expenditures? Was Bulgaria successful? On the American side, what prompted the United States to join this War? Where did American soldiers fight? How much did America commit to this War in terms of its military, manufactured goods, and dollars? What were the social changes that each country experience as a result of War? How did the War affect each country economically and politically? What was the outcome of this War? How did the

Treaty of Versailles and Treaty of Neuilly affect each country? Do you feel these Treaties were fair?

2. Team Two would be asked to study relations during World War II and its immediate aftermath. This Team would need to focus on the following questions: What was Bulgaria's political, economic, and social status between World War I and World War II? Did Bulgaria's defeat during World War I have any bearing on its decision to join Germany during World War II? Did Bulgaria's government between the Wars have an existing relationship with Germany and Italy even before World War II broke out? Were there forces within Bulgaria that wanted neutrality? Where did Bulgarian troops fight? Did Bulgaria persecute or kill its Jewish population? On the American side, what prompted the United States to join this War? Were there voices calling for neutrality? Where did the United States fight, and did America participate in the bombing of Sofia? How did this War, and particularly the Yalta Conference, lead to Soviet control over Bulgaria?

3. Team Three would be assigned the general topic of Cold War relations between Bulgaria and the United States. This team would research the following: What were the respective ideologies of the Communist bloc of nations, and the United States and its allies? How did these differing ideologies affect the foreign policies of each group of countries? Why was the Warsaw Pact formed? Why do scholars often consider Bulgaria, a very loyal member of the Warsaw Pact? What changes occurred in Bulgaria as a result of its alliance with the Soviet Union? Did Bulgaria's political, economic, educational, and cultural status change under its Communist government? As for the United States, what changes did America undergo during the postwar period? Why did it form NATO? What was NATO's purpose? What was the United States, and NATO's, policies toward Central and Eastern Europe, particularly Bulgaria?

4. Team Four would analyze Bulgarian-United States relations since the fall of Communism in the Soviet Union and the change of governmental system in Bulgaria by researching the following questions: Why did Communism dissolve in the Soviet Union and Bulgaria? What type of government does Bulgaria have today? What changes have occurred in Bulgaria as a result of its change in government and economic system? Why did Bulgaria join NATO? Why does Bulgaria want to join the European Union? Why is Bulgaria considered a close ally to the United States today? What is the nature of Bulgaria's involvement in the Iraq War? How has the United States demonstrated its close alliance with Bulgaria? Is America providing any military and economic assistance to Bulgaria today? What is the United States policy towards the Balkan region? Has there been any disagreement by the Bulgarian government over United States policy?

I will evaluate the students' work in their teams on the basis of 1) how well their papers are researched and written, 2) the bibliographies they provide, 3) their oral reports, and 4) individual team member's written evaluations of their other team participants' work. I will encourage students to present their oral reports to student associations, e.g. the Political Science and Economics Club, and the History Club, by giving extra credit for their additional work.

The bibliography below will be given to the students, but they will be expected to find additional books and articles, and to research evaluated websites to complete this project. I will also give to students, the e-mail addresses of students whom I met in Bulgaria, so that they can contact them regarding domestic and foreign policy questions. This direct contact with Bulgarian students will make this curriculum project less remote and more personal for my students.

Baker, Randall, Summer in the Balkans: Laughter and Tears after Communism (1994 Kumarian Press Inc.)

Crampton, R.J., A Short History of Modern Bulgaria (1987 Cambridge University Press)

Dimitrov, Bojidar, Bulgarians—Civilizers of the Slavs (1993 Sofia: Publishing House Borina)

Fol, Alexander (ed.), Bulgaria: History Retold in Brief (2003, Riva Publishing House)

Lalkov, Milcho, A History of Bulgaria: An Outline (1998, St. Kliment Ohridski University Press)

Todorova, Maria, Imagining the Balkans (1997 Oxford University Press)

---

Websites:

[www.wena.sk/En/Documents/Minchev-Post-Communist\\_Europe.rtf](http://www.wena.sk/En/Documents/Minchev-Post-Communist_Europe.rtf)

[www.usembassy.bg/embassy/histmiss.html](http://www.usembassy.bg/embassy/histmiss.html)

[www.bulgaria.com/history/bulgaria/war2.html](http://www.bulgaria.com/history/bulgaria/war2.html)

[www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2004/01/2004021-6.html](http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2004/01/2004021-6.html)

