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A Concise History of Bulgaria

Bulgaria is slated to become a member of the European Union in 2007, yet its history is amongst the least well-known in the rest of the continent. R. J. Crampton provides here a general introduction to this country at the crossroads of Christendom and Islam. The text and illustrations trace the rich and dramatic story from pre-history, through the days when Bulgaria was the centre of a powerful mediaeval empire and the five centuries of Ottoman rule, to the cultural renaissance of the nineteenth century and the political upheavals of the twentieth, upheavals which led Bulgaria into three wars. The new and updated edition covers the years from 1995 to 2004, a vital period in which Bulgaria endured financial meltdown, set itself seriously on the road to reform, elected its former king as prime minister, and finally secured membership of NATO and admission to the European Union.

R. J. CRAMPTON is Professor of East European History at the University of Oxford. He has written a number of books on modern East European history, including *Eastern Europe in the Twentieth Century – and After* (1996) and *The Balkans since the Second World War* (2002).

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SECOND EDITION

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CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
 Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore, São Paulo

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
 The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 2RU, UK

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

www.cambridge.org
 Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521616379

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First published 1997
 Reprinted 2000, 2003
 Second edition 2005

Printed in the United Kingdom at the University Press, Cambridge

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

Crampton, R. J.
 A concise history of Bulgaria / by R. J. Crampton. – 2nd ed.
 p. cm. – (Cambridge concise histories)
 Includes bibliographical references and index.
 ISBN 0 521 85085 1 (cloth) – ISBN 0 521 61637 9 (pbk.)
 I. Bulgaria – History. I. Title. II. Series.
 DR67.C72 2005
 949.9 – dc22 2005045765

ISBN-13 978-0-521-85085-8 hardback
 ISBN-10 0-521-85085-1 hardback
 ISBN-13 978-0-521-61637-9 paperback
 ISBN-10 0-521-61637-9 paperback

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For my cousin

ROBERT GRAY

With affection and in
commemoration of our childhoods of
long, long ago

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PREFACE

The crowded departure lounge at Gatwick airport on a busy summer Sunday morning may not seem the obvious place to encounter the effects of recent changes in Eastern Europe, but to see young British couples with their children queuing not to go on holiday but to go and work near the Black Sea coast assembling British cars for sale in the Balkans is something which would have been unthinkable ten years ago; it would have been even more of a fantasy in 1967 when I first went to Bulgaria. Bulgaria has opened itself to European and American culture and business.

This being so it is reasonable to assume that there is a growing need in the west for a concise history of a country which for the last fifty or so years has seldom attracted much attention. It is hoped the present volume will go some way to showing to western readers that Bulgaria has at least as much to offer in terms of historic interest as it does in financial reward.

All too often in the west we tend to blur the distinction between the nation and the state; when the Portuguese delegate suggested to the first meeting of the League of Nations that the organisation would be better called the League of States he was told that the difference was too insignificant to bother about. No-one who had any connection with the Balkans would make that mistake. And if this book is called *A Concise History of Bulgaria* it is also to some degree a concise history of the Bulgarians after they had arrived in the Balkans in the seventh century. For the most part the book concentrates on the various Bulgarian states but it cannot ignore

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Preface

the fate of the Bulgarians during the five hundred years when they were part of the Ottoman empire and there was no Bulgaria. Even when a Bulgarian state re-emerged in 1878 there still has to be a distinction between Bulgaria and the Bulgarians. Many who considered themselves to be Bulgarians lived outside Bulgaria; even more numerous were those outside Bulgaria whom the Bulgarians inside Bulgaria described as Bulgarian. Indeed, the difference between the territorial definitions of Bulgaria and the lands inhabited by the Bulgarians is one of the main themes of modern Bulgarian history.

It is on modern history that this book concentrates, though an attempt is made to illustrate how the Bulgarian nation and the Bulgarian state emerged in the second and third quarters of the nineteenth century. In that process the rebirth of Bulgarian literature and the revivifying of its culture played a vital part. In a general book limited to seventy thousand words it has not been possible to explore these phenomena to the extent which they deserve, but it is hoped that this short introduction to them will excite further interest and lead to further exploration of these fascinating processes.

For anyone writing on Balkan or East European history there are difficulties with nomenclature, dates and transliteration. In general, when English forms do not exist, I have used the modern Bulgarian name for towns or geographic features. There are however some exceptions. Istanbul seems inappropriate usage before the Ottomans took the city in 1453 and therefore I have preferred Byzantium or Constantinople; in the short chapter on the pre-Bulgarian period I have generally used classical rather than present-day names, though an obvious exception to this is 'Balkan' which is a post-classical term. Readers already familiar with Bulgaria might be surprised at the use of 'Tŭrnovo' rather than 'Veliko Tŭrnovo'; the adjective has been omitted for the sake of brevity and because no mention is made in the text of Malko Tŭrnovo. I have, I hope, been more consistent with dates. I have used the Gregorian or western calendar rather than the Julian used by Orthodox Christians; the footnote on p. 130 gives more information on this point. For transliteration I have used the system set out on page xxi.

It would be impossible to thank directly all those, in Britain and Bulgaria, who have helped me formulate the ideas and amass the

information presented in these pages. The librarians of the Bodleian Library in Oxford and the Kiril i Metodi Library in Sofia have made my life much easier, and Sasho and Daniella Shûrbanov and Andrei Pantev have always provided human companionship and endless hospitality when I have been in Bulgaria. In Britain teaching with Michael Hurst has been an enormously rewarding experience. I have also learnt much from my students, particularly Kyril Drezov, Ivan Krûstev, Marietta Stankova and Naoum Kaytchev; in addition to intellectual stimulation they have provided the dual satisfaction of seeing intelligent young Bulgarians making their way in a difficult world, and proving that Bulgarian scholarship is amongst the finest in that world. Aglika Markova and Ivan Stanciov transformed the official image of Bulgaria in Britain and for this I thank them, as well as for making it so easy to deal with Bulgaria. Vanya Stoyanova unearthed the gruesome photograph on page 109. Sheila Kane cast an expert and perceptive eye over the text and is responsible for many improvements in it. William Davies's gentle, civilised guidance made my task immeasurably easier; he is that rare and priceless phenomenon: the ideal editor. But above all I have to thank my wife for over thirty years of patience, understanding and unstinting support.

St Edmund Hall, Oxford
September 1995

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

Any observer of the contemporary world knows that much will change in a decade. This has been particularly true in the states of the former socialist bloc, and nowhere more so than in the Balkans. Bulgaria has naturally not been exempt from this process. Since the first edition of this book the country endured a serious social and political crisis after which it has rebuilt its economic foundations and made huge strides towards integration into the Euro-Atlantic structures. With entry into the EU the country also enters an entirely new chapter in its history, one in which it will be bound more tightly than ever in its past to the other states of Europe. How this monumental change affects the country and its people will be for future histories to relate.

Since the first appearance of this book friends, colleagues, and well-wishers previously unknown to me have helped me with constructive comments and suggestions for any future edition. I would like to thank them all but would also like to mention in particular Professor Martin Minchev of the University of Calgary, Canada. In the years between the publication of the original edition and now, other students have arrived in Oxford and enriched the university and my own life. In addition to those named in the original version I would like to express my thanks also to Teodora Parveva, Dimitûr Bechev, Patricia Curtis, Tressa Gipe, Ivana Gogova, Milena Grizo, Dimitrina Mihaylova, Yavor Siderov, and Matthew Tejada.

The hospitality and friendship of Sasho and Daniella Shûrbanov have contributed as much to this second edition as to the first.

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Special mention must also be made of Aglika Markova without whom the illustrations for this book would have been much impoverished and the jacket design non-existent. Her generosity with her time, together with her indefatigable energy, have made me depend on her far more than I should have done; my gratitude to her is enormous.

I must also mention Isabelle Dambricourt who, in a remarkably short time, has acquired the expertise, the patience, and the good humour which go to make an excellent editor.

St Edmund Hall, Oxford
October 2004

Cambridge University Press

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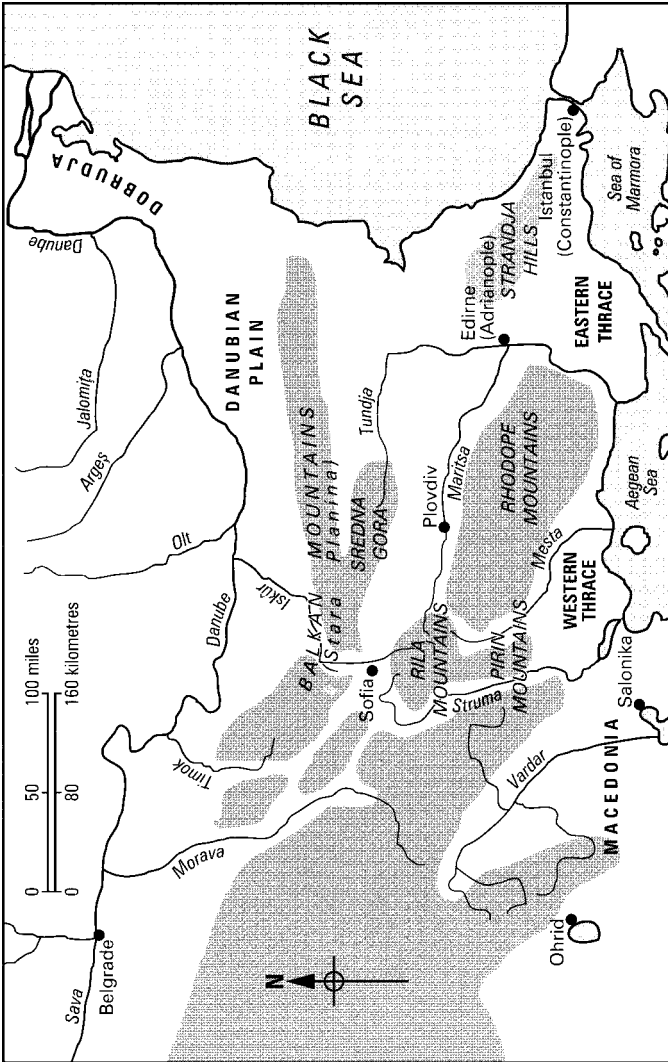
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A NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION

а	a	п	p
б	b	р	r
в	v	с	s
г	g (always hard)	т	t
д	d	у	u (long)
е	e (or é at the end of proper nouns)	ф	f
ж	zh (but дж has been transliterated 'dj')	х	h (but 'kh' in Russian and proto-Bulgarian words)
з	z	ц	ts
и	i	ч	ch
й	i	ш	sh
к	k	шт	sht (but 'shch' in Russian words)
л	l	ъ	û
м	m	ю	iu
н	n	я	ya
о	o		



The Bulgarian lands: main rivers and mountains.