

Culture and history of Bulgaria :

Bulgarian History

The first Bulgarian empire was created in 681, but came to fall because of pressure from the Byzantine Empire. So the second Bulgarian empire was proclaimed, but it was ruined by the Ottoman empire for about 500 years. After the first Balkan war, Bulgaria got rid of Ottomans in Bulgaria. When Serbia and Greece attacked Bulgaria, the Bulgarian army resisted them, but Romania joined the alliance against Bulgaria, and pushed Bulgarian troops to retreat.

During the first year of World War II, Bulgaria was neutral and refused to join the pact with Ger-

many, the Balkan or the Soviets. But the increased tension in the war forced Bulgaria to sign the three-powers pact with Germany in March 1941.

In 1944, Bulgaria opened up its borders to Soviet troops. The Soviet Union didn't respect Bulgaria's neutrality and the red army conducted a putsch against Bulgaria. They took control of the country.

The Soviets replaced the country's royal monarchy by a communist regime.

Bulgaria had serious economic problems during the socialist government that came into power after the communists in 1989. After a lot of economic reforms and responsible fiscal planning, the government today has become more stable.



Parties and funny traditions

In Bulgaria, there are a lots of parties and special traditions. Bulgarian people have their own way of celebrating the new year: it's called "Nova Goding" in Bulgarian. They eat cheese puff pastry, which is like a puffed corn snake with a cheese filling. There are traditional parties happening all over Bulgaria on January 6th, they're called "Yordanov den" (Epiphany). They throw a holy cross in cold water, in a river and all the young men of the city swim to catch it. There is an other tradition called

"Baba Marta." On March the first, all of the people give a red and white doll or pompon. Bulgarian people also celebrate Dionysus on January 14th. It's a truly creative and fun celebration. At "Velikden" (Easter), you have to paint an egg and protect it

when you are playing with friends or family. On December 24th, Bulgarian people eat without meat, fish or eggs and there is imperatively an uneven number of dishes on the tables.



Bulgarian Legend

There is a Bulgarian legend, which talks about the way the Kadin Bridge was built. It is one of the most famous bridges situated in the village of Nevestino. It is a beautiful bridge made of stone.

The legend says that the vizier decided to build the bridge because one day while he was on his way to Bosnia, he couldn't cross the swift-flowing river of Struma. As the story tells, there were three brothers who were assigned to build the bridge. So the three young men started building it but whatever they did, they worked in vain. What they managed to build during the day, the river destroyed at night and washed everything away. The brothers didn't know what to do, they thought very hard trying to find a solution. After many days they arrived at a decision that the river wanted something and they should offer up a sacrifice.

In order to build the bridge and fulfil their task, the three brothers decided to place within the stone walls of the

bridge one of the wives. Since they could not choose which one, they decided that the busiest one, the one who was going to bring her husband lunch first, should be the one. It turned out to be the wife of master Manol. Her name was Struma. She came first, bringing the bread she had baked for her husband and carrying their first child. Then the brothers placed her in the middle of the bridge vault. The poor woman begged for mercy and cried. Finally, when she understood that they would not change their minds, the only thing that she asked for, crying, was to leave holes for her eyes and for her breast so she could see and feed her child. Before long the misfortune mother died and her milk turned into stone on the walls of the bridge. Since then many nursing mothers from all over the country come to the bridge, take pieces of the stone, boil it and drink the water in order to have enough milk for their children.