

Come sing for these Americans!



Draginovo, Velingrad region, Bulgaria

5 January 1981—a snowy day in Bulgaria. Three Forsyths (my husband Dick, son Peter, and I), together with our musicologist guide from Sofia, head for the village of Dragínovo, a few kilometers north of Velingrad. We walk across the village square to the Cultural Center, pausing to look at the goat on its hind legs nibbling at the branches of a New Year's tree (despite this being a *pómak* [Bulgarian Muslim] village), and Peter gets excited about the children sledding behind the building on tiny home-made sleds barely big enough to sit on. (He eventually went out and joined them.)

When we get inside, we are greeted by the mayor and two male singers from the village. These magnificent singers will get a post all of their own some day, but right now I want to tell you about what happened after they had sung us a half-dozen songs. Being a little surprised to have male singers (so far I had recorded only older women), I had somewhat hesitantly asked if there weren't any women singers in the village? Well, hmm...there was going to be some difficulty finding older women for me, but someone went out to look around and see who she could find to sing for me. Back she came, with an 18-year-old girl in tow, whom I will introduce to you here as Ivánka Delsízova, the name she was using when I met her. (More on names below her song.)



Ivánka Delsízova, 5
January 1981

Ivánka had been dragged in unceremoniously off the street, plunked down in a room full of strangers (three Americans and a scholar from Sofia), and told to sing for them! She came in somewhat hesitantly and surveyed the scene. Only much later (maybe in 2010) did she tell me how disconcerted she was: she had never seen Americans face-to-face before, nor a man with a beard, and here she was being told to sing for us, all alone! Well, she told me, she snuck a look at the men who'd been singing, whom she knew well, and realized that they looked quite comfortable. So she decided it would probably be OK. She sat down and said nothing for a minute and a half! (I timed it), while she composed herself. Then she sang us a song that lasted for nearly 10 minutes.... Listen to this girl sing!

Либиха са, леле, искале са (*Libiha sa, iskale sa*)

<http://marthaforsyth.fasterthan20.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/18/2016/02/Dragnovo-80-8-Libiha-song-only.mp3>

(See song texts, below.)

Well, needless to say, Ivanka made quite an impression on us. She later took us to her home (the direct way to get there was up over a huge rock outcropping!), and we have kept in contact to this day. Some years later the Bulgarian government allowed their *potak* population to take back their original names—hers is Mehréma, but she is better known in the village as Kéra, more precisely “Kéra mláda” (Кера млада), to distinguish her from her mother, who is also called Kera.

I hope to put up many more of the songs I've recorded in Draginovo, but that will take some time.



Tsánko and Malín Kičiliev (cousins),
5 January 1981

As a bit of a teaser, here is one of the songs the men sang that day:

Ой Вело, Вело, джанам, прилико (*Oj Velo, Velo, džanam, priliko*)

http://marthaforsyth.fasterthan20.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/18/2016/02/Draginovo-80-6-Oj-Velu-Velu-dzhan_m-priliku-de.mp3

More songs from them another day!

Song texts:

(click on the song for a full-size version)

	Либиха са,	леле,	искале са	They loved each other and wanted to marry,
	Исуф сирак,	леле,	каймак Дуда } не би 'ногу,	Isuf the orphan and <i>kajmak</i> (→a really fine girl) Duda—
	девет годин	"	не би малко	not just for a short time,
		"	половина } 5 па ги никој	for nine years and a half
	Осети ги	"	не осети.	and nobody caught on.
	Дудината	"	Дудината	But the one who did catch on
	Тя не даде	Дуда	стара майка.	was Duda's old mother.
	нај я даде,	леле,	за Исуфа	She didn't give Duda to Isuf
10	на Зенгинат	"	на Зенгинат.	she gave her to Zenginat [a rich man, here maybe his name]
	Зенгини/нат	"	на Бенгина.	to Zenginat-Benginat.
	свадба прави,	"	свадба прави,	Zenginat is making ready a wedding
	а Исуфа	"	село кани	and inviting the whole village
	На Исуфа	"	не покани.	but he did not invite Isuf.
15	хатър стана	"	хатър стана,	Isuf grew very sad,
	Хем си лежи	"	бов[л]ан легна. } "Ой ле сестро	so sad that he fell ill
	я си влезе,	сестро,	хем говори —	As he lay ill, he spoke:
	Я си влезе	"	по-малката,	"Oh sister, my little sister,
	та си фани	"	при стадото.	you go out to the flock.
20	вакъл йовен	"	при стадото	Go out to the flock
	та гу карай	"	вакъл йовен	and catch the ram with black around his eye,
	на Зенгина	"	баш йовено	catch that one, the biggest in the flock
	че Зенгина	"	на Зенгина	and take him to Zenginat (as a gift),
	Че Зенгина	"	на Бенгина	to Zenginat-Benginat,
	свадба прави	"	свадба прави.	for Zenginat is preparing a wedding,
25	а мене си	"	свадба прави	He's preparing a wedding
	А зенгина,	леле,	селу кани	and inviting the whole village,
	"Ой, ле, Дудо	"	не покани."	but me, he did not invite."
	кату идеш,	Дудо,	проговаря —	Meanwhile Zenginat spoke to Duda:
	Кату идеш	"	каймак Дудо,	"Oh Duda, <i>kajmak</i> Duda,
30	да му носи	"	при Исуфа,	when you go to see Isuf (she would go because he is sick),
	жълта дуля,	"	при Исуфа,	When you go to see Isuf,
	та му носи	"	жълта дуля	take him a yellow quince,
	да разкваси	"	бело грозде	a yellow quince, and white grapes
	Кату идеш	"	бело грозде	take him white grapes
35	не разбуляй	"	кипра йуста -	to cool his fine small lips,
	на савърчай	"	при Исуфа,	when you go to see Isuf,
	Па отиде	Дуда	гюлбер ашмак,	don't unwrap your beautiful <i>ašmak</i> (a thin white kerchief),
	па му даде	"	мор' фереджа."	don't take off your <i>feredža</i> (a black cloak worn by married women)."
	жълта дуля	"	при Исуфа,	So Duda went to see Isuf
40	Па саблече	"	жълта дуля,	and gave him a yellow quince,
	па разбули	"	бело грозде,	a yellow quince and white grapes,
	Льоснаха са	Дуди	мор' фереджа,	but then she took off her <i>feredža</i>
	тельовето,	Дуди,	гюлбер ашмак.	and unwrapped her beautiful <i>ašmak</i> .
	тельовето,	Дуди,	тельовето,	Her tinsel strands (bridal decorations) glistened,
	А Исуфа,	леле,	армагите.	her tinsel strands and her golden <i>armagi</i> (bridal coin-like
			душа даде.	head decorations).
				And Isuf gave up his soul.

„Ой, Велуй, Велу, джанам, приликуй де,
чула ли си, Велу ле, разъбрало
защо ѝе барабан бийело
в сабута срещу ле в недельо?“

"Oh, Vela, who looks like me,
did you hear, Vela, did you understand
why the drum was beating
Saturday night before Sunday?"

„Ой, ягу, ягу, джанам, делиоИ де,
чуло си съм, луду ле, разъбрало
защо ѝе барабан бийело
в сабута срещу, луду, в недельо.“

"Oh, aga, crazy one,
I heard, crazy one, I understood
why the drum was beating
Saturday night before Sunday."

„Ой, Велуй, Велу, ...
барабан, Велу ле, бийело
сабута срещу ле в неделя
млади вуйници ле да збира.“

"Oh, Vela, ...
the drum, Vela, was beating
Saturday night before Sunday
to gather the young soldiers."

Ой, Велуй, ...
кату си билу, ле, там било,
чуло ли си, Велу ле, разъбрала
дали и мен са ле писале
младу вуйниче луду да йиду?“

Oh, Vela, ...
since you were there,
did you hear, Vela, did you understand
whether they wrote me down
to go as a young soldier?"

„Ой, ягу, ...
най-напред тебе са писале
младу вуйниче ле да идеш,
син-зелен байрек ле да носиш.“

"Oh, aga, ...
they wrote you down first of all
to go as a young soldier,
to carry the blue-green banner."

„Ой, Велуй, ...
може ли, Велу ле, бива ли
да можеш да ма, Велу, йокрийеш
във твойте шарени санъдъце?“

"Oh, Vela, ...
is it possible, Vela, could it be
that you, Vela, could hide me
in your colorful trunks?"

„Ой, ягу, ...
не може, луду ле, не бива -
честу ми друшки ле духаждат
тенките дари ле да вземат
юрнеци да си ле и гледат.“

"Oh, aga, ...
it isn't possible, crazy one, it couldn't be -
my girlfriends come very often
to take out the fine wedding gifts
and to look at the

Ти си ми йиди, луду, ^{йов}във горай де,
там ше са, луду ле, йокрийеш
в чостата гора ле зелено.“

You go, crazy one, into the forest,
there, crazy one, you can hide yourself
in the dense green forest."

„Може ли, Велу мори, да дойдеш де
и ти със мене, ^{луду}да дойдеш
Велу,
дене да ми си ле другарка,
нуще да ми си дивойка?“

"Is it possible, Vela, that you could come too
that you could come with me, Vela,
in the day to be my comrade,
at night to be my girl?"