

# 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 Draginovo, 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](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!

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