

Vasil Paraskevov

Sotirov Fellow for the year 2012-2013

The Balkan International Affairs Programme at LSE IDEAS, Centre for diplomacy and strategy appointed Prof Vasil Paraskevov as the 2012 Mladena and Dianko Sotirov Visiting Fellow for a period of three months (5 July - 12 September 2012) in order to further his research on Britain's policy towards Bulgaria during the Cold War years of 1953 - 1979. His work looks at Foreign Office observations and analyses of political, diplomatic, economic, cultural, social and historical specifics of Bulgaria. Dr Paraskevov aims to shed light on various research questions regarding British policy towards Bulgaria, and also on more sensitive issues, such as the borders of true European division. He believes that the real division of the continent was rooted not so much in the distinctions between democracy and communism or even monarchical and republican rule, but rather in the disparity created between effective and poorly organized societies, between the rich and the poor, between open and closed cultures and between countries with and without freedom of press and speech.

During his fellowship, Prof Paraskevov embarked on an impressive archival research, profiting from the ideal location of LSE IDEAS, situated at the heart of London. Indeed, the Sotirov fellow visited a wide range of primary collections ranging from United Kingdom's National Archives (UKNA), Churchill Archives Centre at the Churchill College (Cambridge University) to the Archives of the Royal Institute of International Affairs. Moreover, Prof Paraskevov discovered the merits and wealth of the LSE Library's holdings and electronic resources, particularly regarding Cold War and modern European historiography

His stay in London also made it possible to meet and discuss his research topic with renowned academics and practitioners such as Dr Michael Kandiah (King's College), Dr Keith Hamilton (Foreign and Commonwealth Office), Dr Robert Knight (Loughborough University) and Sir Roger Carrick, who worked at the British Legation/Embassy in Sofia from 1962 to 1965.

According to Prof Paraskevov, "the LSE IDEAS experience overall was invaluable. My talks with Mrs Mladena Sotirov whose lively memories transferred me to a period, places and people that I only knew from historical books, will never be forgotten. Furthermore, the excellent and stimulating environment at LSE Ideas made my research in London not only particularly useful but also a rather enjoyable period. I really hope that our contacts and cooperation will continue in the future."