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American Missionary/Journalist Reuben Markham's Response to Bulgaria's 1923 Coup and Its Aftermath

Stuart Van Dyke Jr.

Abstract: Reuben Markham was an American missionary-educator sent to the American Boys' and Girls' Schools in Samokov in 1912. An inspiring teacher, he returned to the United States in 1918 carrying secret Bulgarian government documents to persuade America to refrain from declaring war. Back in Bulgaria in 1920, he focused on journalism, editing several Bulgarian language periodicals. He criticized the Stambolisky government's use of violence, then, after the 1923 coup, exposed the regime's extrajudicial killings. He also helped many Bulgarians, regardless of political affiliation, either flee, reduce their sentences or be released from prison. His actions led the government to force his resignation from the American mission in 1925 and to arrest and try him in 1927. In 1931, Markham published his well-regarded *Meet Bulgaria*. Returning to the United States in 1939, he continued his opposition to authoritarian governments, first against Nazi Germany, and then after World War II, the Soviet Union's domination of Eastern Europe. Using newspaper stories from the 1920s, descriptions of Markham, his personal letters and American archival sources, this article provides new information about Markham's life, his teaching, his descriptions of government killings and his assistance to those in danger during this tumultuous period.

Keywords: Reuben Markham, Bulgaria, 1923 Coup, Journalist, Extrajudicial Killing

In 1925, when Bulgarian government was taking very severe reprisals against Communists, a Communist Alexander Dimitroff was condemned to death for subversive activity.

A day before the date of execution, an Eastern Orthodox priest, wearing his customary long black robe and high black hat, and accompanied by his wife and daughter, who was the wife of the condemned Communist, appeared in Markham's house in Sofia. With many tears, they implored Markham to ask King Boris to save the Communist husband and son-in-law from execution.

It was a moving meeting. In view of the political hatred then dividing Bulgaria into two camps and causing many murders, even massacres, Markham felt that further executions would only fan the fire of hatred. So, he immediately urged King Boris to suspend Dimitroff's execution, in hopes that such an act of

*mercy might help assuage the spirit of civil war. That same evening Markham got a written communication from the King saying the death sentence had been commuted.*¹

Reuben Henry Markham (RHM), a “household name” in Bulgaria, was “listened to at the highest level”.² In fact, Markham has been put alongside Januarius MacGahan and William Gladstone as “one of the best foreign friends Bulgaria has ever had”.³ “His remarkable linguistic gifts enabled him to master Bulgarian... and to wield the pen with a power that is the marvel of Bulgarians”.⁴ Markham “spoke the language like a Bulgarian, and wrote it like a Bulgarian in a very amazing way; he knew and understood the ways of the Bulgarians, and he became a Bulgarian figure just as much as he was an American figure”.⁵

Born on a farm in Kansas in 1887, Markham attended Washburn College in Topeka and then New York City’s Union Theological Seminary. In 1912, Reuben and his wife Mary were sent as missionary-educators to the American Boys’ and Girls’ Schools in Samokov by the Congregationalist American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM).

An historian of the Balkan missionaries painted this portrait of the young minister:

*Markham was in a sense the epitome of the evangelical missionary spirit, for his enthusiasm was boundless and his faith in the power of the social gospel to remake a broken world undimmed. (He was) a free spirit, highly imaginative, temperamental in the sense that he was subject to moods like the Old Testament prophets whom he quoted, with a certain unintended combativeness in the terseness and color of his speech... As a ... stimulator to thought and action ... he was unparalleled in effectiveness.*⁶

¹ MARKHAM, R. Memo for Mr. Deland, Erwin D. Canham Collection, Box 20226, Folder 127734, Mary Baker Eddy Library.

² BACHVAROVA, S. Target Land. The Chase. Chapter 2. 1987; VELICHKOV, Al. Reuben Henry Markham and Bulgaria. – Bulgarian Historical Review, 2001, № 1–2, pp. 129–162.

³ CHOUKANOFF, B. Markham of Bulgaria. – American Bulgarian Review, 1986–87, Volumes, XXVI–XXVII; See also Velichkov who wrote about Markham’s contributions to Bulgaria that “his efforts... deserve recognition.”

⁴ HALL, WILLIAM WEBSTER, JR. Puritans in the Balkans. – Studia Historica-Philologica Serdecensia (Sofia: 1938). p. 239.

⁵ BLACK, Fl. American Bulgarian Review, Volume XIII, Spring, 1962, Number 1, p. 23.

⁶ HALL, WILLIAM WEBSTER, JR. Op. cit., pp. 238–239.

He judged Markham to have stood “in the first rank among American Board representatives in any mission”.⁷

An American visitor to Bulgaria in 1914, the President of the World Peace Foundation, reported being “greeted by Reuben H. Markham, ... then principal of the American Girls’ School at Samokov... A man of liberal spirit and large capacity, he spoke Bulgarian fluently and is remarkably well posted on Balkan affairs”.⁸

The Markhams arrived in Samokov at a tumultuous time, experiencing both Balkan Wars and Bulgaria’s 1915 entry into World War I on the side of the Central Powers. After the United States declared war on Germany in April 1917, the young missionary wanted to play a part. He helped devise a plan, with the assistance of the United States consul in Sofia, in which he and a colleague took secret documents from the Bulgarian government across a war-torn Europe to the United States. The documents declared that Sofia had no animosity toward Washington and that its sole intent was to assert its claims to Macedonia based on self-determination.⁹ The goal of this 1918 mission was successful as the United States Senate voted not to declare war on Bulgaria.

Joining a U.S. government sponsored, agricultural assistance program to Russia that summer, Markham reached Murmansk, but was prevented by the newly empowered Soviet authorities from proceeding further. After completing his yearlong commitment by working with Russian POWs in France, Reuben returned to the United States.

He was offered the pulpit of the Unitarian Church in Palo Alto, California with a salary of \$1800.¹⁰ Remarkably, Markham already had a firm vision of his goals, and he wrote back that his interest was in explaining the Balkans to Americans and in giving Bulgarians “more information about the best things in Anglo-Saxon religion, education and literature”.¹¹ Bringing them “to 5 million people is well worth one’s efforts,” and he was convinced “of my duty in this respect.” He wanted to put out “little books on Bulgarian history, Bulgarian poetry, Bulgarian short stories, Bulgarian struggle for liberty and union and the

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 238.

⁸ JORDAN, D., S. *The Days of a Man*. Volume II. World Book Company: Yonkers on Hudson, N.Y: 1922, p. 574

⁹ See: VELICHKOV, Al. *Op. cit.*

¹⁰ Letter, David Starr Jordan to Reuben Markham, October 20, 1919; David Starr Jordan Papers, Hoover Institution, Box 71, Folder 24.

¹¹ *Ibidem.*

like.” “Furthermore, I have come to the conclusion that I ought to go back to Bulgaria in a year or two and publish a monthly magazine there”.¹² With this plan, he signed on again with the ABCFM, arriving back in Samokov in the fall of 1920. Eventually, Reuben was able to accomplish all his goals by starting several periodicals, and, with the publication of *Meet Bulgaria* in 1931, explaining Bulgarian history, poetry, literature “and the like” to English speaking readers.

In Samokov, Reuben resumed teaching, and, for the 1921–22 school year, demonstrated his radical thinking when he introduced, into a still traditional society, the innovative proposal of having his family live in the same building with a class of female students, who would make many of the decisions for themselves. This was a progressive idea, and it involved the Markhams, their three children, and 14 senior girls moving together into an old tobacco factory Reuben had fixed up, sharing common spaces and meals.¹³

Our household of Seniors was a new educational experiment – especially for patriarchal Bulgaria. My gracious lady and I launched an adventure which every educator likes to try and which some keep trying all their lives. We set up a completely self-governing home, whose members managed all their own affairs, from study hours, through discipline, to handling the household funds.

*Our experiment was frowned upon by many elders, who thought it absurd and dangerous for young people to manage their own affairs – especially for mere girls to be so free. Old Turkish traditions still prevailed in Bulgaria, according to which women were supposed to listen and obey. Not a few colleagues thought the adventure would crack up, so they rather eagerly watched to see which girl would push down the pillars of our Komuna and precipitate the wreck. We, in the Komuna, felt quite heroic and imagined ourselves marching boldly at the head of the world’s democratic procession.*¹⁴

This educational experience made a lasting impression on the girls of the class. Fifty-two years later, in 1974, after Mary Markham’s death, her daughter received the following letter.

We were very sorry to hear that your mother passed away in August last year... We have read ... all the letters your mother sent ... and were wondering

¹² Letter, Reuben Markham to David Starr Jordan, December 31, 1919; David Starr Jordan Papers, Hoover Institution, Box 71, Folder 24.

¹³ MARKHAM, M. Interviewed by Eleanora Van Dyke, 1971.

¹⁴ MARKHAM, R. Ruska Jumps Out the Window. – Christian Science Monitor, April 30, 1941.

why there was nothing for a long time. We all remember your mother as a very fine kind woman, always quiet and composed. If you can recollect we are the class of 1922 who lived with your family in the 'Comouna' in Samokov. Some of us have passed away.

It was signed by seven names, Rouska, Gherta, Gyusha, Mary, Raina, Margarita and Kalinka.¹⁵

Boyan Choukanoff, one of Markham's students, remembered how inspiring a teacher he was. One evening Boyan was sent to see Mr. Markham for punishment after acting up in the long evening study period. When Boyan entered his office, Reuben motioned him to join him at his desk where he was looking at a large "tableau ... representing most Bulgarian men of letters..." "As his finger moved slowly from one sketch to another, he had something to say about almost every one of the men portrayed." "Speaking with knowledge and appreciation of their works, Mr. Markham continued until late in the night, giving me what turned out to be about the most thorough, the most revealing and the most fascinating lecture on Bulgarian literature I had hitherto had." Leaving, "sometime after midnight ... it never occurred to me I had gone to Mr. Markham's office to be reprimanded for my misbehavior".¹⁶

According to another student, "Markham ... was idolized for his manners, ... teaching skills and general good character." "Among the teaching staff," he added, "Mr. Markham was the most loved and respected, due to his particular eloquence, personal charm and warmth... His speeches, regardless how impromptu they were delivered, bore inspiration, logic and conviction... Everything he said or did earned the admiration of the students".¹⁷

Markham had been interested in journalism for some time. As early as 1915, he had written, "Someday I would like to publish the best weekly journal in the Bulgarian language, and make it contribute to peace in the Balkans, but years will pass before I realize this hope".¹⁸ He began to "take a leading part in the editing of Zornitsa," the Mission's weekly publication.¹⁹ "It became so popu-

¹⁵ Letter to Eleonora Van Dyke, January 25, 1974.

¹⁶ CHOUKANOFF, B. Markham..., p. 67.

¹⁷ TABAKOFF, G. The Challenge of Freedom. Sofia: St. Kliment Ohridski University Press, 1993, pp. 60, 65.

¹⁸ Letter, Reuben Markham to David Starr Jordan, May 5 1915, Jordan papers, Hoover, Box 71, Folder 23.

¹⁹ CHOUKANOFF, B. Op. cit., p. 67.

lar it was available at some newsstands”.²⁰ He also wrote for the periodical *Seme* (Seed) that he had co-founded with other Americans. *Seme* would deal in character and ideals, rather than politics.²¹ As Reuben’s sister Maude observed, “... Preaching was not enough and he wanted to write, not simply because he wanted to write, but because he had so many things that he believed needed to be said”.²²

In a February 16, 1922 letter, Reuben explained that Bulgaria had a “strong bold government...” “Stamboliisky ... is one of the most refreshing men in Europe.” Land was being redivided, the army reduced, schools and roads improved, food was abundant, new construction was everywhere and order prevailed. Nonetheless he foresaw trouble ahead. There was much “bitter opposition” by bankers, merchants, bishops, lawyers, professors and officers. Stamboliisky would not win, “because his own party is not true blue.” “His henchmen and subordinates are very often insolent and corrupt,” and “ignorant farmers” had come into power.²³

Markham also criticized the Stambolisky government publicly, writing in *Zornitsa* on November 9, 1922, that “... we can never reconcile ourselves to a Government which boasts of its violent measures, which exalts the sceptre and the fist to a cult, which relies on terror, which encourages its partisans to beat their political opponents, and which before the whole nation and the whole world, extols the cleaver.” “Either the present rulers will immediately reject their savage policy ... or they will cast themselves off from the people”.²⁴ Markham was beginning his forceful entry into Bulgarian political life and his lifelong support of democracy and opposition to authoritarian rule.

Scholar Alexander Velichkov characterized RHM’s position as an “intolerance of violence ... and ... desire to dedicate his journalism to the cause of reconciliation between the people and the rulers in Bulgaria”.²⁵ In a 1931 anniversary edition, *Zornitsa* summed up his contribution to Bulgarian political life.

²⁰ TABAKOFF, G. *The Challenge...*, p. 64.

²¹ CHOUKANOFF, B. *Op. cit.*, p. 65.

²² MARKHAM, GEBHARDT, M. *Dedication*. Twelve Mile Cemetery, May 28, 1956.

²³ Letter, Reuben Markham to David Starr Jordan, February 16, 1922, David Starr Jordan Papers, Hoover Institution, Box 71, Folder 24.

²⁴ “The Cleaver”. *Zornitsa*, November 9, 1922; this article uses a pseudonym which plays on the initials RHM, another article in *Zornitsa* on March 19, 1941, p. 4, confirms that Reuben Markham was the author of the November 9, 1922 article. Information provided by George Dimitrov, email, March 28, 2024.

²⁵ VELICHKOV, Al. *Op. cit.*

It would not be fair if we did not mention the great participation of R.H. Markham in this struggle for legality, for humanity, for mercy and brotherhood. His inspiring impartiality, frankly often bordering on tactlessness, won the hearts of the masses. *Zornitsa* became an essential necessity for thousands of Bulgarian families. Mr. R. H. Markham, although not an official editor, gave *Zornitsa* its current appearance. He outlined the ways in which she must move if she wants to serve her people.²⁶

Reuben described the events of 1923–25 in his 1931 *Meet Bulgaria*. The Agrarian Party in Bulgaria, and its leader, Alexander Stambolisky, gained power after World War I in reaction to the country's disappointment in its defeat and loss of territory. While able, Stambolisky "surrounded himself with incompetent boys, whose only qualification was that they constantly flattered him, and opened war on everything in Bulgaria that was not from and of the village." "Unrestrained, he went headlong to his destruction." For instance, "All the former ministers were to be tried before a special court." "Anarchy...broke loose. Peasants used to take charge of the trains, they used to come in bands to Sofia, looting stores ... and firing their guns in the streets".²⁷

Meanwhile the Communist Party in Bulgaria was gaining strength. "Bulgaria at that time had more Communists in proportion to the number of her inhabitants than any other country."²⁸ They were "the best organized ... political group in Bulgaria; ... Communism was a religion..." and Markham was close to "proletarian' leaders".²⁹

"To the educated people of the country everything seemed to be upside down. The whole country smelled of the stable. All the rules of social organization were reversed. Ignorance was a passport to position and education was made a sign of incompetence."³⁰ "The Communists and Agrarians were not allies but ... the numerical strength of one and the aggressiveness of the other created an extremely dangerous situation for the people who had always governed Bulgaria... On the night of June, the eighth 1923 a conspiracy led by professors and officers arrested most of the Agrarian ministers..."³¹

²⁶ *Zornitsa*, anniversary issue, April 8, 1931.

²⁷ MARKHAM, R. *Meet Bulgaria*. Sofia, Bulgaria: Published by the author, 1931, p. 304.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 304–305.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp 305–306; Reuben Markham, self-written bio for the University of North Carolina Press's publication of *The Wave of the Past*, February 4, 1941.

³⁰ MARKHAM, R. *Meet...*, p. 304.

³¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 307–308.

Stambolisky was captured in his native village and put to death, but “there was not much bloodshed”.³² In September 1923, “the peasants and workers ... following directions from Moscow launched a rather extensive revolution... which after being cruelly suppressed ... was followed by terrible reprisals”.³³ “I had never seen such beating, torture and killing,” Reuben wrote. “Many people who I knew personally were assassinated.” “I got stirred up at all the bloodshed, said so, wrote, so...”³⁴

Markham “was the first to expose in print the so-called ‘white terror’ of the Tsankoff regime in the mid-twenties”.³⁵ In *Zornitsa*, “he made ... one of the most sensational exposes of the time by running a series of articles on the... ‘white terror’ that was reigning over the country in the mid-twenties. This outspoken opposition ... to official maltreatment of peasants and workers had a devastating effect on the Tsankoff regime”.³⁶

Another observer who knew Markham described him at this time as *The American whose blazing articles in the Protestant Weekly, Zornitsa, (Morning Star) were against the authoritarian government of Professor Tsankov and the terror it employed. One entire issue dealt exclusively with the evil of Tsankov’s regime, and all was written by Mr. Markham – a feat of daring... It endeared Mr. Markham to the Bulgarian people and made him, an American, the most popular foreigner in Bulgaria. He was acclaimed nation-wide by the intelligentsia, the youth, and especially by the Agrarian Union representing 70% of the nation.*³⁷

Markham was back in Samokov for the 1923–24 school year, with another class of students in the *Komuna*. After the September uprising, some parents and relatives of students went missing, a troubling occurrence about which Reuben wrote in the October 30 issue of *Zornitsa*. The Western press, he shared, was reporting that “a ‘white’ army commits great atrocities,” and “that the government participates in it.” The missionaries had always been great defenders of Bulgaria, including convincing the United States to refrain “from

³² Ibid., p. 308.

³³ Ibid., p. 308.

³⁴ MARKHAM, R. If the Light Be Darkness. *The New Leader*, November 16, 1946.

³⁵ CHOUKANOFF, B. Markham..., pp. 64–65.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 67.

³⁷ TABAKOFF, G. Op. cit., p. 57; see also: CHOUKANOFF, B. Markham..., pp. 66–67.

declaring war on Bulgaria.” “But what can we say...now about the atrocities committed?”

Three of his students, sisters, told him that their father, Boris H. Sotirov, had been imprisoned on September 12, but then removed from prison and killed. Sotirov was an influential Communist, but he wasn't a military leader, and by the time he was alleged to have been killed, the rebellion was over. No disturbances had occurred in Samokov. Another student's Communist father, an assistant mayor, had also disappeared. A colleague's husband, also a Communist, “has been extracted from prison and killed.” “The weight of the present...lays extremely heavy on top of everyone who loves Bulgaria. I do not know what to do, I don't know what to say, so I deny the accusations... But what can I say in (Bulgaria's) defense?... Am I authorized to say that the Government had no part in the atrocities, and that it will punish any murderer whether communist, bourgeois or military?”³⁸

The next month, the 36-year-old American missionary published another story in *Zornitsa* about the missing men. He recounted how he met “two ladies dressed in mourning”. They were his acquaintances. “Have you found the lost?” he asked them. “Yes... In the meadow on the road to Sofia ... buried by a creek.” There were the corpses of six murdered men, including the member of Parliament, Boris Sotirov. Some of the others “were graduates of the American College,” whom Reuben knew.³⁹

The relatives had been searching for a month and finally “walking tiredly along a small stream, ... saw ... shepherd dogs digging in the ground and gnawing bones.” “What are the dogs doing?” the relatives asked the shepherd. “There are people there-... there are three graves by the river.” “We convinced ourselves,” the older lady told Reuben, “that this was the corpse of my husband.” The next day, they exhumed the corpses in front of a prosecutor and the

³⁸ MARKHAM, R. One Request. *Zornitsa*, October 30, 1923, Vol. 83, p. 4, https://digital.libplovdiv.com/bg/w/6551c78a8ddb6434204f5809?q%3Acontent=%D0%A1%D0%BE%D1%82%D0%B8%D1%80%D0%BE%D0%B2%2a&q%3Afts=content,mapped,meta&_x=content.

³⁹ MARKHAM, R. The Dogs Found Him... Friend (Samokov newspaper), April 10, 2012, in Bulgarian, translated by Litcho Datzov. I appreciate his informing me of this article. Originally published as “One Burial,” in *Zornitsa*, November 15, 1923, Vol. 88, p. 4., <https://digital.libplovdiv.com/3rdparty/pdfjs/web/viewer.html?file=/asset/default/d0bf7747-b512-45d8-aca0-de2ee2710a59.pdf&locale=bg> Not signed. See also <http://old.duma.bg/2006/1106/201106/iskam/isk-2.html>. Both *Friend* and *Culture* attribute the article to Reuben Markham, and it is consistent with Markham's October 30, 2023 article cited in the previous footnote.

local doctor. When RHM went to the exhumation and burial, he “passed by the indicated places... I saw a pile of torn clothes, a leg and the bones of an eaten arm...” A group of young men were digging a grave for the three corpses.

Four hundred meters further on, Reuben came to a second set of graves for three young lawyers who had also been found. “The women came and poured some wine on the newly dug earth.” Then Markham returned to the first set of three corpses. “Two youths were digging (up) the middle grave, and soon caught hold of the exposed corpse by both legs, and pulled it out.” “Behind us were the women.”

The older woman said: If this corpse is my husband's, you will find on him: a black tie, a breastplate, gray trousers, white trousers and gray woolen socks. On either side of the upper jaw you will find gold teeth. On the breast on the left side, a little below the nipple, you will see a small wound.

The doctor put on his rubber gloves, took his knife and began his examination. The black tie, gray trousers, woolen socks and white trousers were noticed. A bandage is removed from the abdomen. The doctor probed the bruised, soil-covered abdomen on the left side and found the gash. He announced it was Kosta Petrunov.

The golden crowns came out of his mouth. A small hole was noticed on the forehead a little to the right of the nose, a hole was also found on the back of the head...

All this was described by the judge.

The corpse to Petrunov's left was then dug up. He was recognized as Konev. The third body was pulled out and turned over. A young lady called out, “Ah, this is Dad's body, you will find a coat, a flannel, a long white shirt, ... a wide white woolen belt...” “All this was found. The belt and girdle were particularly convincing. The young lady's father suffered from a hernia, so he always wore a special belt equipped in one place with a hard, smooth pillow.” “There was a large hole on his forehead on the left side – the same hole gaped from behind.” Emptying his pockets, “they...found a small receipt which showed that in the month of August, Boris H. Sotirov paid his subscription to ‘Rabotnicheski Vestnik’. The corpse was that of a representative of the people.”

Markham had described what he had seen in excruciating detail in a nationally recognized newspaper. He had revealed the truth about “Bulgarian justice.

After completing the 1923–24 schoolyear, Reuben took a trip to the Holy Land that summer, which he wrote up in Bulgarian as “A Poor Man's Hadj.” In

“Hadj,” he painted the portrait of his idea of a worthy man, clearly affected by the violence Bulgaria was living through at that moment. Reuben attempted all his life to live up to the ideals he described.

And what is human dignity? It is full responsiveness and unrelenting self-control. Who responds to joy and sorrow, to beauty and majesty, to innocence and nobility, to self-sacrifice and moral celebration; who does not despair in sorrow and does not dissolve in joy; who can stand alone against the crowd and in times of crisis lead a struggle with and without companions; in whom many passions burn, but who never allows them to break out into fire; who steadfastly follows the road which his personality draws, either in quiet time or in the midst of storms, – he is worthy;

A decent man...always resents oppression and abhors baseness. No defeat takes away his ideals, no fall leaves him failed, no evil shakes his faith; ... every cry for help reaches his ears. The laughter of the bride and the sighs of the widow touched his heart...

*The worthy man ... is not a slave of anything.*⁴⁰

Reuben was feeling less connected to the Mission by this point. He tried to resign in 1924 saying that he could not do apostolic work and was “unwilling to live on an apostolic basis.” “In order to be honest with himself and his God, he should resign.” By “apostolic work,” it appears he meant proselytizing for Protestantism among the Bulgarians. His colleagues, however, convinced him to remain by emphasizing “his great success and the importance of his influence on the country”.⁴¹

The following school year, the Markhams lived in Sofia, where Reuben focused on his journalistic work, editing *Polet (Flight)*. His reporting was more overtly political than it had been in *Seme*, addressing such “socially significant issues” as “the role of the intelligentsia, the consequences of the Neuilly Treaty, the class struggle, the situation in Soviet Russia, etc.”⁴²

These “two turbulent years ... culminated in the blowing up of the Sofia church, ‘Sveta Nedelya’”.⁴³ A bomb planted by Communists at the occasion of

⁴⁰ MARKHAM, R. A Poor Man’s Hadj (translated by Litcho Datzov). Sofia: Published by the author), 1924, p. 11.

⁴¹ MOJZES, P. B. A History of the Congregational and Methodist Churches in Bulgaria and Yugoslavia. Boston University, Ph.D. dissertation, 1965, pp. 309–310.

⁴² VELICHKOV, Al. Op. cit.

⁴³ MARKHAM, R. Meet..., p. 308.

a funeral of a general who had been murdered for this very purpose, attended by “the most prominent people in Bulgaria,” killed 150, although none of the intended Ministers.⁴⁴ Under the government of Alexander Tsankoff, “... it precipitated a furious outburst of vengeance that ignored the forms of jurisprudence and summarily disposed of most of the Communist and Agrarian leaders who were still alive and in the country”.⁴⁵

Coincidentally, on the day of the bombing, Markham’s eleven-year-old twin daughters were being driven to Samokov by a young American missionary. “We heard a tremendous explosion, so loud it seemed right beside us... Then there was a brief silence, followed by cries of terror and agony. A cloud of smoke and dust rose billowing into the sky above the buildings to our left.”

“We continued on our way, but the scene was eerie. The street was almost empty... When we turned the next corner, we began to see figures, covered with white dust, staggering along.” The car was ordered to stop by two policemen on horseback, their horses “rearing and prancing, almost out of control.” “‘Stop or we’ll shoot!’ they shouted.”

“‘Get out, girls, right now! This is an emergency! ... We need this car and driver to take people to the hospital. Tell him to follow us!’” “More dusty figures staggered by. Still trembling, we held hands and started running in the opposite direction”.⁴⁶

In response to the upsurge in violence, Markham continued his Bulgarian journalism, described events for American newspapers and took “foreign journalists, diplomats and politicians to prominent public and cultural figures to reflect on the atrocities”.⁴⁷ He also helped people who were trying to escape, or had been convicted, and was known as someone who “helped people persecuted by terror”.⁴⁸ His assistance to the Communist, Alexander Dimitrov, has already been described.⁴⁹

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 309.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 310.

⁴⁶ VAN DYKE, EL. Sveta Nedelya – A Bomb Explodes. Growing Up American in Bulgaria, Volume II, The Sofia Years, 1923–1928, unpublished.

⁴⁷ https://probuzhdane.blogspot.com/2014/01/blog-post_7.html, Todor Angelov, (Bosnanata) The Unbreakable, Awakening, January 7, 2014.

⁴⁸ BACHVAROVA, S. Target Land. The Chase. Chapter 2, 1987; I appreciate George Dimitrov’s having brought *The Chase* to my attention.

⁴⁹ CANHAM, ER., *Monitor* editor, described Alexander Dimitrov as “well known” in his *Commitment to Freedom*. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1958) p. 348. The implication was that Markham had helped “well known” Georgi Dimitrov, later Prime Minister of Bulgaria.

A Bulgarian pastor, Vasil Zyapkov, cited Markham as having “raised his voice in defense of the wronged and trampled Bulgarian people. Not a few are those he freed from prison and saved from destruction.” One such, Petkov D., said, “My impressions are still fresh when Mr. Markham ... released me through a lawyer from prison and provided me with money...”⁵⁰

In 1945, back in Bulgaria, Markham described, “a sad-faced woman meeting me on the street (who) said: You don’t remember me, do you? I regretfully admitted that I didn’t and she continued, ‘Twenty years ago you helped me when my husband, an Agrarian leader, was beaten up by the Fascists’”.⁵¹

Another case was that of Todor Angelov, an anarchist/communist, who, having been arrested after the Sveta Nedelya bombing, but released, needed to flee the country. His wife, Alexandra Sharlandjieva had been a student in Samokov. She “thinks of the former director of the ... American College – pastor Markham... She remembers him as a very noble man, a great democrat and a true Christian. He does not believe in refusing help. And she is not mistaken... They go with the child and tell him their drama. He understands them and really sets out to help them, and provides them with a certain amount of money.”⁵² “They managed to get passports with foreign names,” according to a second source, “with the help of the American missionary, Reuben Markham”.⁵³

In exile, Angelov fought in the Bulgarian Dimitrov Battalion in the Spanish Civil War, while later, in Belgium, became “a leader of the *Partisans Armees* as part of the Belgian resistance”.⁵⁴ He was captured by the Germans and executed in 1943. His wife and daughter had returned to Bulgaria in 1930 as a result of an amnesty.

That identification is unlikely because it was RHM who wrote Alexander Dimitrov, he did not use the adjective “well known” and he wrote that after the 1923 revolution, “...Dimitroff fled through Serbia and Germany to Russia...” *Tito’s Imperial Communism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1947) p. 206.

⁵⁰ ZYAPKOV, B. Zornitsa. “Welcome Mr. Markham”. September 15, 1945. In Bulgarian, translated with www.DeepL.com/Translator (free version), I think the author is V. (for Vasil) Zyapkov.

⁵¹ MARKHAM, R. Democracy Peers Through Balkan Rifts. – The Christian Science Monitor, September 28, 1945.

⁵² https://probuzhdane.blogspot.com/2014/01/blog-post_7.html, Todor Angelov, (Bozanata) The Unbreakable, *Awakening*. January 7, 2014, accessed April 17, 2024.

⁵³ ZHEREV, Rh. Telegraph, Bulgaria, October 8, 2023.

⁵⁴ Todor Angelov, Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Todor_Angelov, accessed April 16, 2024.

The daughter, Svoboda Bachvarova, became a well-known Bulgarian novelist and screenwriter and included a character, named Reuben Markham, in her five-volume work, *Target Land*, based on the life of banker Atanas Burov.⁵⁵ She portrays Reuben as protecting those in peril and publicizing the regime's extrajudicial killings. The scenes in volumes four and five, in which Markham figures, appear very real to life, and her depiction of the American conforms to other accounts.

Her protagonist, the banker, Skarlatov, remembers that “during the stormy events in Bulgaria after the war (Markham) took a humane position against the cries and atrocities that were committed.” Reuben tells him, “I think it is quite logical to help the wronged in whatever way we can, and not least – materially.” When Reuben asks whether he is in danger, the banker responds, “They wouldn't dare touch an American journalist... You are a household name, Mr. Markham. They fear you.”

In the book, RHM agrees to hide a family at risk in a warehouse behind his house, and promises that “My ambassador ... won't deny me American passports.” Markham, the banker thought, “is a brave Christian.” Eventually, the man in hiding leaves Markham's property and is caught and killed. Skarlatov, too, is told he is on the “lists,” but “His Majesty personally gave orders not to deal with you”.⁵⁶

Bachvarova's account is fictional, but it depicts the atmosphere of the time, as well as a popularized version of Markham's standing, views and activity in Bulgaria. The author seems very well informed about the American, but there is no corroboration of his ever having hidden a family. The account, though, certainly raises the question of whether Markham also was on the “lists,” and whether he had some protection, other than his being an American journalist. As the account of his assistance to Alexander Dimitrov showed, Reuben, too, had a relationship with the King. It is hard not to think that in writing *Target Land*, Bachvarova was incorporating the story of her parents and paying homage to Reuben Markham for his help to them in 1925.

Markham's positions put him at odds with the regime, and his “missionary job was a casualty”.⁵⁷ He “fell into disfavor with the new autocratic govern-

⁵⁵ <https://m3.chitanka.info/text/37303-gonitbata/10#textstart>, accessed April 24, 2024; I appreciate George Dimitrov's having brought this book to my attention.

⁵⁶ BACHVAROVA, S. *Target Land*. The Chase. Chapters 2, 10, 11, 12.

⁵⁷ CANHAM, ER. *Commitment to Freedom*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1958, p. 346.

ment because of his defense of the peasants and workers and was required to leave the mission...”⁵⁸ At the 1925 Annual Meeting, his colleagues expressed their regret, as “The Mission ... recognizes the great influence Mr. Markham has had, and continues to have with many groups of the Bulgarian people”.⁵⁹ The former missionary was provided “a year’s furlough salary”.⁶⁰

“When it was rumored that Markham might leave Bulgaria someone drew up a lengthy petition in which contributions of Markham to the life of Bulgaria were recounted, and reasons why his withdrawal would be a loss... Among the scores of signatures to that document were the names of practically every leader of importance outside the immediate government circle”.⁶¹ “A group of prominent Bulgarians came to him and asked him to edit an independent newspaper. They said, ‘You are one person who is known to have championed the masses when they were being murdered, one who has always been against violence, one who has never been mixed up with any party. You have the good will of the common people’”.⁶²

With this encouragement, he started the Bulgarian-language newspaper *Svet* (World), which became the nation’s most widely circulated weekly as well as its most widely read publication in Bulgaria’s rural areas.⁶³ After six issues, sales had jumped from 2000 to 5600.⁶⁴ Later Markham reported sales of 7000, reaching 15–20,000 readers.⁶⁵ “In his Bulgarian language newspaper he tried to speak for the real interests of the Bulgarian people. He was attacked by all parties – one called him a capitalist stooge, another a Bolshevik”.⁶⁶ “He

⁵⁸ MARKHAM, R. Bullies in the Balkans. – *Colliers Magazine*, September 7, 1946.

⁵⁹ MOJZES, P. B. A History of the Congregational and Methodist Churches in Bulgaria and Yugoslavia. Boston University, Ph.D. dissertation, 1965, p. 311.

⁶⁰ MARKHAM, R. R. H. Markham’s Work for the Christian Science Monitor. Memo to Mr. DeLand, January 26, 1949.

⁶¹ *Alumnus Prominent in Bulgarian Life*. – *Washburn Review*, October 27, 1926, p. 1, quoting from an article by Rev. Hubert C. Hering in the *Christian Century*.

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ MARKHAM, R. R.H. Markham’s Work for the Christian Science Monitor. Memo to Mr. DeLand, January 26, 1949; CHOUKANOFF, B. *Markham...*, p. 67.

⁶⁴ *Washburn Review*, 1926.

⁶⁵ Letter, Reuben Markham to David Starr Jordan, January 20, 1927, David Starr Jordan Papers, Hoover Institution, Box 71, Folder 24.

⁶⁶ COVER, B. *About the Author. Tito’s Imperial Communism*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1947.

proclaimed his principles and ideals publicly at a time when to do so was to be labeled a Communist and to put one's life in jeopardy.⁶⁷

Reuben had addressed his relationship with the Communist Party in *Zornitsa*. "They accuse us of knowingly or not supporting communists... No one can be less of a communist than we are. We are individualists and we want the freedom to develop the ... triumph of our soul. We believe that personality and Spirituality are the greatest engines in the world, and we are against violence and revolution. But the Communist denies these three fundamental premises of our worldview." Nevertheless, "we have something in common with the communists..., namely that we work mainly for the people's masses." "The main purpose of Christianity is to support...the poor and the disadvantaged." "Religion is inextricably intertwined with the economic struggle".⁶⁸

Writing in *Svet*, Markham continued to identify and publicize instances of extrajudicial killing that "deserve to be qualified as 'slaughter.'" He gave examples of 16 such prisoners in Samokov and 28 in Ihtiman, among others.⁶⁹

It took courage for Reuben to continue accusing the government of extra-legal killings while still living in Bulgaria. It was a time when "the standard fee for an...assassination was twenty dollars, so ... politicians walked around with trains of bodyguards".⁷⁰ "The party struggles have been so bitter and violent," Reuben reported, "that every leading Bulgarian politician has at one time or another been in exile or in prison or both and ... and many have been murdered".⁷¹

By early 1927, Markham's year-long severance pay had run out and his financial situation had become serious. So much so that he wrote very candidly to an older acquaintance who had helped him in the past. "Life is not always easy for us," he began.

We are now at a crossroad in our life work. A year ago we resigned from the mission here. I felt it was too narrowing and limiting. As a result we have no regular income. I earn from 75 to 100 dollars a month as a correspondent, but we can't live on that... We try to bring courage, enlightenment, faith & love to confused and discouraged people... The times here are very turbulent and we meet with much opposition. Sometimes we are in danger. The worse of all

⁶⁷ HALL, WILLIAM WEBSTER, Jr., p. 239.

⁶⁸ MARKHAM, R. Land. Zornitsa, June 21, 2024, translated by DeepL.

⁶⁹ VELICHKOV, Al., Op. cit.

⁷⁰ KAPLAN, R. *Balkan Ghosts*. New York: St Martin's Press, 1993, p. 66.

⁷¹ MARKHAM, R. Meet..., p. 293.

*is that we are financially in a very uncertain position. It may be that we shall have to return to America. If we do, do you suppose that I could find a job as a Unitarian preacher, where I could work for peace, liberty, brotherliness and social justice, and also get enough to humbly maintain my family of five.*⁷²

The letter's recipient actually made a sincere attempt to help Markham, contacting two men who might know of such a position, but to no avail. In his response, however, he also advised Reuben not "to skin people alive," probably referring both to his relations with his fellow missionaries, as well as the Bulgarian government.⁷³ Knowledgeable sources, after all, had referred to his "tactlessness" and his "unintended combativeness."

Markham, however, interpreted this advice as referring to his relations with the Bulgarian people. Reuben was at a low ebb, and this interpretation set off a defensive reaction. He responded with an unusually critical letter to a man who had helped him a great deal. His emotional disturbance, though led him to be unusually candid about himself and what he felt he had accomplished.

As you know, ... I leave Bulgaria with great reluctance. I have been here a long time – fifteen years ago today I first came. My life work is really here and I should like to work on in Bulgaria. But I see no way to do it because of financial difficulties. In the letter...you stated that it doesn't do any good "to skin people alive." Perhaps you have gained the impression that is the way I work here. I think that such an impression by no means corresponds to reality. I shall be so bold and presumptuous (sic) as to say that no foreigner who has ever worked in Bulgaria has got so close to the Bulgarian people, has shown more abounding love and affection for these people to the extreme limit. I praise all their virtues, never harp on social failures or defects...and invariably plead the case of national progress and prosperity. As a people, not only have I never skinned them, I haven't even slapped them on the wrist. That is why...so many accept me as their friend and brother... I am accepted as part of the people and treated as one of the Bulgarians ... you would be surprised to see the outpouring of good will and affection and gratitude and trust that is shown me. I have on occasion condemned certain terrible deeds.... I have used strong words regarding a few men who have brutally murdered innocent peo-

⁷² Letter, Reuben Markham to David Starr Jordan, January 20, 1927, David Starr Jordan Papers, Hoover Institution, Box 71, Folder 24.

⁷³ Ibidem.

ple. So did the prophets and Jesus and Paul use strong words. But I have been very gentle and patient and brotherly to the nation as a whole and am esteemed as a champion of those in Bulgaria who labor and are heavy laden. I hope you will pardon me for writing so much about myself, but I would grieve to leave you with the impression that I ever skin the Bulgarian people alive... We shall return to America permanently or temporarily by the end of the summer.⁷⁴

Not long after, Markham's difficulties worsened, as Reuben was arrested based on the emergency law Bulgaria had put into effect. On May 25, 1927, the newspaper *Zora* reported that "the next day the Sofia District Court would hear a case against (Reuben Markham) with charges under Article 7 of the CPA for data on the killing of prisoners and temporary detainees in Plovdiv last year and Ihtimasko..."⁷⁵ Thus, he was being tried for accusing the government of killing people in custody without judicial process. When the case was heard, though, Reuben was acquitted, an outcome that *Zora* applauded.

Using the third person, Markham himself described the event slightly differently.

He was once arrested for helping the families of the victims of terror, and once brought to trial for writing against atrocities; he was freed by an amnesty law. The 'bourgeois' press bitterly attacked him and urged that he be kicked out, but he never was. After all, most Bulgarians are peasants and poor people, and a friend of Bulgarian peasants and poor people was a friend of Bulgaria. Every government, of whatever political views, realized that.⁷⁶

Fortunately, RHM was able to find a new job, first as the Bulgarian and then the Balkan correspondent for the *Christian Science Monitor*. He was able to remain in Bulgaria, living in Sofia until 1933, when he moved to Vienna as the *Monitor's* Central European correspondent. His arrest, though, was a turning point in his life. He had to give up his "life work," explaining the Balkans to Americans and vice-versa. He would no longer be the national commentator and opinion maker in Bulgaria he had been. Instead, he would have to focus on providing for his family.

⁷⁴ Letter, Reuben Markham to David Starr Jordan, March 5, 1927, David Starr Jordan Papers, Hoover Institution, Box 71, Folder 24.

⁷⁵ VELICHKOV, Al., Op. cit.

⁷⁶ Reuben Markham, self-written bio for the University of North Carolina Press's publication of *The Wave of the Past*, February 4, 1941, p. 4.

Despite this setback, though, by the time his life ended, he had worked himself into the position of being a national commentator and opinion maker in the United States, continuing to lead the fight against authoritarian rule, this time in relation first to Nazi Germany and then the Soviet Union. He eventually became a valued liaison between the American government and democratic forces in Eastern Europe after Communist rule had been firmly established.⁷⁷

In 1931, RHM published *Meet Bulgaria*, which has been described as “the best book on Bulgaria in the English language”.⁷⁸ Markham described how he wrote it.

*This book is a quickly prepared journalistic creation, written on the wing at many different places and times. I am not proud of that kind of writing nor do I recommend it. I used it because it was that or nothing. The way I earn my daily bread does not permit me to sit long in one place nor to delve deeply and leisurely into the treasures of cool wise libraries. I wrote some of these chapters in Bucharest, others in Belgrade, several in Geneva, a good many in Sofia and parts of chapters in trains and at railroad stations. In looking over the manuscript later I wondered if those short, choppy sentences, that keep you hopping from one to the other as though you were crossing a muddy street on small slippery stones placed rather close together were written to the tune of jouncing, staccato car wheels and whether those long, long sentences which I cannot get through myself unless I take a strong running start were written in the quiet of a solemn Sofia night when movement gives way to being and there is no beginning nor end, no long nor short, but just an oriental eternity resting in one place.*⁷⁹

Fortuitously, Markham returned to the United States in the summer of 1939 for a lecture tour and a *Monitor* assignment, entitled *Rediscovering America*. He was there when war broke out on September 1, 1939. He did not return to Bulgaria until September 1945, when Western journalists were admitted, arriving again as a correspondent for the *Christian Science Monitor*.

Markham was welcomed back as “an old and tried friend. So much so that...his suite at the Hotel Bulgaria was actually turned into a reception room.

⁷⁷ Markham’s 1941 *The Wave of the Past* was a best-selling call for the United States to enter the war against Germany. He also authored *Tito’s Imperial Communism* in 1947 and *Romania Under the Soviet Yoke* in 1949.

⁷⁸ CHOUKANOFF, B. Op. cit., p. 69.

⁷⁹ MARKHAM, R. *Meet...*, p. 380.

So many old friends and new admirers wanted to see him, to tell him about themselves and their new life... But Mr. Markham was ... sad. The things he was hearing from old friends and new acquaintances alike were quite different from the high-sounding official professions of freedom and ... Democracy".⁸⁰

Reuben wrote his wife that people "come to see me all day long. They often begin arriving before eight in the morning. This morn the first one came at seven, I never have a minute's rest".⁸¹ "This period has been one of strain and unhappiness. I have lived day and night amid sorrow and hopelessness. I never had such a hard time in my life. It robs one of balance... The reason I am so terribly unhappy is that horrible things have happened, the country is in hands cruel incompetent people and all seems hopeless. And I can't get out of this stream of blood and terror because people come to see me all day long."⁸²

Markham's journalism reporting on the subversion of free elections, the repression of political parties and a free press, the use of political violence, extrajudicial killing and concentration camps earned him a Pulitzer Prize nomination.⁸³ In June 1946, after spending ten months in Bulgaria, Hungary and Romania, RHM was expelled by the Soviet Union from Eastern Europe.⁸⁴ Upon his return to the United States, he met with President Harry Truman at the White House to report on the situation he had found.⁸⁵ Although he never returned to the Balkans, his constant preoccupation for the rest of his life was chronicling conditions there for the American public.

One Sunday during that fall of 1945, Markham accompanied Pastor Vasil Ziapkov "to a little Bulgarian village church in Aprilovtzi where the American Protestant gave a talk to his former Bulgarian peasant friends on the fortieth chapter of Isaiah, which is a paean regarding the power of God".⁸⁶ When Ziapkov was arrested three years later, on November 4, 1948, therefore, it was

⁸⁰ CHOUKANOFF, B. Op. cit., p. 70.

⁸¹ Letter, Reuben Markham to Mary Markham, September 23, 1945.

⁸² Letter, Reuben Markham to Mary Markham, October 15, 1945.

⁸³ Columbia University, Carl Ackerman, Secretary to the Advisory Board, "We wish gratefully to acknowledge the nomination of Reuben H. Markham of the *Christian Science Monitor* for a Pulitzer Prize in Journalism."

⁸⁴ Obituary, New York Herald Tribune, December 31, 1949.

⁸⁵ "Daily Appointments, August 7, 1946". *Harry S. Truman Library & Museum*. Retrieved May 23, 2020.

⁸⁶ MARKHAM, R. *Let Us Protestants Awake*. Boston: published by the author, 1949, second edition, pp. 66–67.

personal to Reuben. Other Protestant pastors and laymen were also imprisoned during the course of 1948.

Ziapkov was officially and publicly charged with having accompanied a visiting American journalist (Markham) in the autumn of 1945 to... Aprilovt-si... For that, among other charges, pastor Ziapkov was condemned to life imprisonment.

There was no intimation in the indictment that the American had made a single political allusion. I am in a position to say there was no such allusion whatsoever. The journalist who had long lived in Bulgaria simply said that the author of that chapter believed God rules the world and is above princes, nations, worldly might...

In any case a Bulgarian Congregational preacher is in jail for life on the charge that – among other things – he presided at a meeting where an American read Isaiah 40.

*That basically explains the situation.*⁸⁷

At the trial, “all but one publicly confessed the crimes of which they were accused and said everything which their tormentors demanded. Four were convicted to life imprisonment...”⁸⁸ A friend described a visit from Reuben in February 1949 “when he came to the (American) Board (in Boston) rooms to talk with us about the trial of the Bulgarian pastors. I have never seen a man more truly identified with them in their suffering, than he was”.⁸⁹

According to Markham, “Dictator George Dimitrov marked them for destruction, already in 1946 – although Dimitrov’s mother was a Protestant”.⁹⁰ Reuben “was very well acquainted with the whole family of the famous Communist revolutionist, George Dimitroff”.⁹¹

Dimitrov belonged to a Samokov family, some members of which were Protestants working with the American missionaries. His brother-in-law, Barumov by name, was employed by the mission for many years as printer... He and his wife, sister of Georgi Dimitrov, kept a small orphanage and were respected

⁸⁷ Ibid., pp. 66–67.

⁸⁸ MARKHAM, R. *Communists Crush Churches in Eastern Europe*. Boston: Meador, 1959, p. 46.

⁸⁹ EMERSON, M. E. Condolence letter to Mary Markham after Reuben’s death, December 29, 1949.

⁹⁰ MARKHAM, R. *Churches...*, p. 41–42.

⁹¹ MARKHAM, R. Unpublished bio..., February 4, 1941.

*members of the local Protestant community and church... A nephew of Georgi Dimitrov was a student in the College for some years.*⁹²

The arrest, torture and trial of the Protestant pastors was personal to Dimitrov as well.

In the spring of 1949, the United States government created the National Committee for a Free Europe. Based on a proposal by George Kennan, it was a front organization under the aegis of the newly formed Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), designed to help democratic emigres from Eastern Europe by providing them jobs, funding and outlets for their ideas and knowledge.⁹³ National committees of each of the satellite countries were formed, such as the Bulgarian National Committee headed by Agrarian leader George Dimitrov, which were intended to rival the Communist-led governments in Eastern Europe. RHM began work on May 1, 1949 with the CIA's Office of Policy Coordination.⁹⁴ "When the National Committee for a Free Europe was formed..., it was only natural that Markham would be asked to head up its news and information department in Washington".⁹⁵

His last act, completed the night before he suffered his fatal heart attack, dying December 29, 1949, was the final editing of *Communists Crush Churches in Eastern Europe*. With the help of information provided by the Bulgarian National Committee, he drew up a detailed description of the physical and psychological methods of torture used to break the wills of victims such as the Bulgarian Protestant pastors. As Mary Markham wrote, "Some people have been astonished at their conduct at the trials, but we must not judge them. No one knows what they and their families have been suffering".⁹⁶ These methods

⁹² BLACK, FL. American College of Sofia. The Trustees of the Sofia American Schools, Inc., 1958, p. 49.

⁹³ Department of State, Office of the Historian, Editorial Note, Foreign Relations of the United States, The Intelligence Community 1950–1955, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1950-55Intel/d15>

⁹⁴ Central Intelligence Agency, Notice of Personnel Action, Mr. R.H. Markham, Chief of Program, Intelligence Officer, P-8, \$10,305 per annum. Markham family files; See also <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/208857>, accessed April 12, 2021.

⁹⁵ RADITSA, B. Reuben H. Markham, 1887–1949. – The New Leader, January 14, 1950.

⁹⁶ MARKHAM, M. Letter to Round Robiners, March 6, 1949.

were used on them because “Protestants had qualities and connections which hindered the absolute domination that the Communists sought”.⁹⁷

Markham’s relationship with Bulgaria was a profound one. Starting as an inspiring teacher, he expanded his influence by writing on critical political issues for a national audience. He courageously exposed extrajudicial killings during the period from 1923–27 and helped save numerous individuals, regardless of their political beliefs. He paid for these acts by losing his position with the American Mission and being arrested and tried. At that point, he was without work and in danger in a distant land experiencing violent political disturbances.

Despite these circumstances, he published an important and well-regarded book portraying Bulgaria in an honest and sympathetic manner. He returned to Sofia as soon as possible after World War II, when he relayed to the free world the suffering and oppression being imposed on it by the occupying power. He tried, literally until his very end, to bring Bulgaria’s injustices to the attention of America’s highest authorities and help those fighting to restore democratic principles in the Balkans.

In January 1954, Reuben’s brother-in-law, Damon Gall, went to the Detroit Economic Club, to hear Bulgarian National Committee President George Dimitrov give a speech. Dimitrov, Damon wrote his sister, Mary, “openly stated that (Reuben) was the best American friend Bulgaria ever had”.⁹⁸

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⁹⁷ MARKHAM, R., Churches..., p. 41.

⁹⁸ Letter, Damon Gall to Mary Markham, January 26, 1954.

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✉ Stuart Van Dyke Jr.
B.A. from Yale University,
M.A. from Boston University,
D.E.A. from the Institute d'Etudes Politiques de Paris,
Ph.D. in modern European history from the University of Chicago.
E-mail: tvandyke1948@gmail.com