

PREFACE

I was invited to be the honorary editor of a special issue of *Sociological Problems*, published by the Institute of Sociology of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences (BAS). I know this special issue is planned, among other things, to commemorate the late Professor Alexander Fedotov (1956–2018). He made great contributions and deeply devoted himself to establishing Korean studies in Bulgaria, where no one had ever attempted to focus attention on this particular country before he undertook the seminal but lonely endeavor to achieve this dream of his. One of the reasons for Bulgaria and South Korea's (hereafter Korea) mutual ignorance of each other, perhaps lies in the political circumstances: Bulgaria was part of the Soviet-led Eastern Bloc before the Revolutions of 1989, while Korea was under incessant Communist threats from the North ever since the division of the Korean Peninsula into South and North Korea after the end of World War II. Korea still remains the last spot of the Cold War in the world. It was not until 1990 that diplomatic relations between Bulgaria and Korea were established.

Scholarly interest in Korea has emerged in Bulgarian society relatively recent, being mostly initiated by philologists, linguists and specialists in area studies. In the Korean social science community, attention has rarely been paid to East European regions over the past decades. Although academic journals such as *East European & Balkan Studies*, *Journal of Central & East European Studies*, *Slavic Studies*, and *The Journal of Slavic Studies* are published in the Korean language, no single study on Bulgarian society has ever been conducted by Korean sociologists, to the best of my knowledge. However, I believe that the devoted efforts of the late Professor Fedotov to link Bulgaria and Asia have greatly contributed to drawing Bulgaria and Korea much closer academically and socially.

In remembering Prof. Fedotov, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to Dr. Stephan E. Nikolov, who has given me the opportunity to say a few words about the relationship between Bulgaria and Korea, and to introduce the academic activities of Korean sociologists to Bulgarian colleagues. I hope this issue of *Sociological Problems* may greatly contribute to promoting scholarly exchange and cooperation between Korean and Bulgarian sociologists in the coming years.

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