

Letter from Sofia by Anton Pinschof

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I am on my way back from a meeting of European organic farming organisations that just happened in Bulgaria of all places. Unbelievable place. Brand new airport with more taxis than people, brand new banks, hotels etc alongside awfully shoddy apartment blocks and scruffy streets.



Well meaning agronomists & academics very enthusiastic about the biological farming method, litanies of statistics from Ministry officials, concluding, in reply to our questions, that the peasants have free access to street markets.



Yet we saw beggars everywhere and an evident underclass squatting on pavements in central Sofia illegally selling tiny amounts of spinach, nettles, tulips, honey, anything...and small flocks of sheep and goats grazing roadsides with the wildest looking shepherds impervious to the rain.



These are landless peasants, now struggling since all land is being newly privatised where previously they had grazing rights on state owned land...and Sofia has recently doubled from one to two million inhabitants.