

Author A.C. Frieden Researches Cold War Scenes in Bulgaria's Capital

SOPHIA, Bulgaria (Sept. 22, 2010) – Novelist A.C. Frieden arrived in Sofia, Bulgaria for an investigative trip to meet with local contacts and search for Cold War era scenes for an upcoming thriller. “Like most Eastern European capitals, Sofia was a hotbed of espionage and intrigue back in the day,” said Frieden. “So the remnants of this historical feel are what I’d like to capture during my short stay in the city, as well as find scenes that I may weave into a future novel.”



Photo above: Author A.C. Frieden in front of St. Alexander Nevsky Patriarchal Cathedral Memorial Church in the historic center of Bulgaria's capital, Sofia. Its foundation stone was laid in 1882, construction began in earnest in 1904, and the church was completed in 1912.

“When I travel to research my novels, I study the locations well in advance of my trip, including maps, aerial imagery, articles, building descriptions, historical information, etc.,” explained Frieden. “For Sofia, I already had many sites in mind that I could set for a scene, but when you’re on location, that’s when each setting comes alive in your head, and all of a sudden the details, the characters, the ambiance, the sounds, all seem to come together—that’s exciting for an author.”



Photo above: A view looking south down 15 Noemvri Street shows the main Bulgarian National Assembly building on the left and on the right the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, established in 1869.

As part of his research, Frieden walked around much of the historical center of the capital, photographing and noting details of each site. He took particular time to observe the following locations: the Bulgarian National Assembly, the Bulgarian National Assembly, St. Alexander Nevsky Patriarchal Cathedral Memorial Church, the University and the National Library, as well as off the beaten path places surrounding these locations.

Frieden also surveyed the Embassy of Algeria on Slavyanska Street for a short but important scene in his novel, perhaps even adding the nearby highly-acclaimed restaurant Krim, where Frieden had lunch. The neighborhood also includes the Bulgarian Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Economy, and Egyptian Embassy.



Photo above: The guarded main entrance of the Embassy of Algeria on Slavyanska Street which will be featured in a scene in Frieden’s future novel.



Photo above: The Grand National Assembly (Велико народно събрание) is located in Narodno Sabranie Square, across from the Radisson Blu hotel, where Frieden stayed. The monument at the center of the square is of Russian Tsar Alexander II, who helped liberate Bulgaria from Ottoman rule.



Photo above: Novelist A.C. Frieden signs a copy of his thriller TRANQUILITY DENIED while in Sofia.

Another part of Frieden's research relates to Bulgaria's Cold War political and espionage collaboration with the Soviet Union. This cooperation was firmly established by Todor Hristov Zhivkov (1911-1998), the former communist politician and ruler of the People's Republic of Bulgaria from 1954 until 1989. Zhivkov's rise to power is symptomatic of many autocratic leaders of the time, having evolved from dedicated anti-Axis revolutionary to left-wing apparatchik to hard-line ruler. After participating in Bulgaria's resistance movement against the country's alignment with Nazi Germany, he became head of the Sofia police force and soon was elected to the BKP Central Committee and a few years later to the BKP Politburo, all of which helped him strengthen his hard-line Stalinist credentials, only to soon switch to an ardent anti-Stalinist Khrushchevite after the change in leadership in the USSR. "Zhivkov's nationalist agenda and his relationship with the Soviets, in particular Brezhnev and later Gorbachev, offer interesting political undercurrents for one of my upcoming novels – for a back story in particular," Frieden said. "Zhivkov's bilateral ties strongly influenced Bulgarian espionage strategy and operations in Europe and Central America, which appears to tie nicely into one of my story's subplots." Frieden added that since Bulgaria has recently released names of high-ranking National Protection Service officials and other intelligence and security personnel who collaborated with the former communist secret police, more information about the country's secret Cold War dealings will see the light of day.



Photo above: Frieden stayed at the luxurious Radisson Blu Hotel in downtown Sofia overlooking Narodno Sabranie Square and the monument of Russian Tsar Alexander II. The hotel will likely be featured in a scene in an upcoming novel, given its proximity to the National Assembly and other government offices.

About the author: A.C. Frieden is a Swiss-Brazilian novelist and lawyer living in Chicago. He is currently working on several political/espionage/legal mysteries and thrillers, including a sequel to his latest thriller *Tranquility Denied*, as well as various other fiction and non-fiction literary projects. For more information, visit his website at www.acfrieden.com and his literary travel/research blog. Over the last two years, Frieden has traveled extensively to Eastern Europe, South America and Asia to research scenes for his upcoming novels and to interview a wide range of experts, including former intelligence officers, political figures, journalists and diplomats.

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