

NEWS FROM BALKANS

by Alexey Zhalov

SPELEOLOGICAL EXPEDITION

„BELJANICA – BUSOVATA 06“ - North East Serbia

In the period from 5th to 13th August, in the area of Beljanica, at the Busovata locality, an international speleological expedition was organized by the Association of Speleological Organizations of Serbia.

Beljanica Mountain (the zone of Busovata valley and its surroundings) , as a part of regional Kucaj-Beljanica massif is situated in North East Serbia. It represents a large and mostly unexplored area. Beljanica Mt. generally covers the area between Resavica valley in the south, Mlava in the north, Dubasica in the east and red permian sandstone zone in the west. During the expedition activities, the most attention was given to the exploration of ponor zones of the Busovata valley and significant speleological structures in its surroundings.

The participants in the exploration of underground secrets of Beljanica massif were:

- from Republika Srpska (Speleological Society „Zelena Brda“)
- from Romania („Emil Racovita“ Institute of Speleology)
- from Bulgaria (3 members of Speleo Club “Helictit”- Sofia directed by Alexey Jalov, Vice president of Bulgarian Federation of Speleology and Secretary General of Balkan Speleological Unity.
- from Serbia:
 - 1) ASOS – expedition organizer
 - 2) PK „AS“ – speleology division
 - 3) PD „Avala“ - speleology division
 - 4) RK „Deep Star“

More than 33 participants took part in the explorations. 25 of them were speleologists, 2 graduate students from Faculty of Geology, Belgrade and 6 Faculty of Geology students. Serbian eminent experts on karst also took part; Professor Dr Zoran Stevanovic, who held a lecture about geological characteristics of Beljanica, Professor Dr Petar Milanovic and MS Igor Jemcov.

During the expedition, work was classified in several categories:

- searching the area and discovering new speleological structures
- exploration and technical preparation of new speleological structures
- creating topographic, video and photo data documentation
- working in camp / analyzing field data
- working in camp / camp maintenance and food preparation

Bad weather conditions during the expedition did not affect the work of speleologists in the field, or the realization of new results. On the contrary, it looked as if it was only

strengthening the connection between Serbian and foreign speleologists and their desire to discover something new.

During 9 days of expedition, speleologists have discovered a significant number of new structures, with depths up to 100 meters. Also, new topographic, video and photo data were collected on large number of previously known structures. Speleologists and explorers have spent app. 170 hours working in the field, with more then half of that time spent inside of speleological structures.

We would like to emphasize, apart from the exploration of various caves and pits, that new exploration and topographic record was done on Tisova jama, as one of the most impressive speleological structures in the zone of Busovata, with depth of 128 meters from the entry vertical, and 230 meters from the top of doline. Interesting fact about Tisova jama is that there is an ice cover on the bottom during the whole year.

Speleological expedition Beljanica-Busovata 2006 represents a part of larger longterm project, with primary goal being hydrogeological and speleological exploration of Beljanica massif. Project organizers were Association of Speleological Organizations of Serbia (ASOS) and Institute of hydrogeology, Faculty of Geology, Belgrade, and project coordinators were MS Sasha Milanovic and Milorad Klickovic.

For the next year, we are planning the exploration of valley Recka (Expedition Beljanica-Recka 2007), with one of the goals being, a part from discovering and exploring new structures, exploration of one of the largest ponor in this part of Serbia and the largest one in Beljanica region – Ivkov Ponor (The Recka ponor). Reported by Sasha Milanovich

Bulgarian Cavers In Albania

From 3 to 10 August 2006 the Caving Club "Studenetz" - Pleven, a member of the Bulgarian Federation of Speleology, carried out the serial Bulgarian expedition in Albanian Alps. The team members were Orlin Kolov - leader, Tz. Petrov and M. Ivanov. The aim of the expedition was the exploration behind the terminal sump of the Shpella Maja Harrapit (Arapit) Cave near Theth vill., North Albania. This cave was explored for the first time by Bulgarian expedition in 1993 with the help of Prof. Gezim Uruchi - president of the Albanian Speleological Association. At that time were surveyed 512 m of passages. Our expedition in 1994 explored 147 m more new cave passages. The sump was dived by K. Petkov, but being alone he could not continue the further exploration. In spite of that, the cave length grew to 657 m with denivelation of + 56 m. In 2005 a new Bulgarian expedition made an unsuccessful attempt to pump out the water from the sump in order to make passable for cavers without using diving equipment.

The members of this year expedition stayed two days in Skodra to organise our safe transport to vill. Theth, which is about 90 km far from the city. They were supported by the family of Gezim Uruchi and personally by Prof. Amed Ossia - botanic, who joined the expedition. After a travel to the town of Koplik, the luggage was reloaded to a small truck, owned by a local citizen. The same day the group reached the village and organised its base camp in the foothills of Maja Arapit peak (2217 m a.s.l.). After some difficulties to find the cave (situated on about 940 m a.s.l. in the base of the 1000 m high rock wall of the peak), the Pleven speleologists reached the entrance of the cave and set a temporary camp. After transportation of the whole diving equipment to the sump, inside dived O. Kolov and Tz. Petrov. They passed 70 m under the water and found a lake with length of 15 m. From the bank of the lake begins a horizontal gallery 25 m long, ended

with wide wide (approx. 2 m) vertical fissure, situated perpendicular to axis of the main gallery. The fissure is blocked with large stone boulders. Here O. Kolov started climbing and squeezing through the stones 20 m in length with denivelation of + 20 m. In the end of the passage he reaches a vertical passage, which climbing is dangerous without climbing gear and second person to secure him. The group stayed only two days, due to objective circumstances and this did not allow the cavers to continue the exploration in the rainy weather. That is why the working part of the expedition was concluded and the cavers went back to Bulgaria. The serial Bulgarian expedition managed to reach its main task. The length of the cave Maja Arapit grew to 787 m and the denivelation is + 76 m and still continues. Its situation, the geological and hydrogeological conditions suppose that behind the sump could be a cave system of serious length and positive denivelation of about + 1000 m. Whether the cave will reach its theoretical potentials will show its further exploration. The future expeditions will be motivated also of the fact, that in the left branch of the cave is unpassable (for to now) narrow passage with strong draft!!! The expedition of the Pleven cavers was supported by the Bulgarian Federation of Speleology, presented by its executive vice-president A. Zhalov - the leader of the Bulgarian cave and karst studies in Albania.

Reported by A.Zhalov; Translation in English - M.Stamenova.