

CULTURAL HERITAGE ON FOREIGN TERRITORY: BULGARIAN MONUMENTS IN BUCHAREST AND ROME

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Abstract: Many cities are connected with Bulgaria and Bulgarians in historical and political perspective – however, Rome and Bucharest certainly are among the most important. Italian and Romanian capitals host several monuments of persons who are in the heart of the national pantheon – the memory of poets, rebellions, politicians is built for generations in sculptures and plaques. These particular memorial places have a different life – usually they are not significant for the local people but are of high importance for the migrants and for the Bulgarian state and its representatives.

In the proposed article we aim to present diverse attitude towards these monuments from the point of view of local people and authorities, of Bulgarian migrants/minorities and of Bulgarian officials in the two cities. Our analysis is based on various materials collected in 2014-2016 and is trying to incorporate the perspective of cultural heritage abroad and in migration and the ideas of urban memorial spaces and connected public rituals as essential part of the nation-building.

Key words: Bulgarians in Bucharest, Bulgarians in Rome, commemorations, monuments, ceremonies, heritage, migrant communities

Introduction

The theoretical inspiration for our article came from two texts: the first one is by Pierre Bourdieu and is attempting to stress on the discussion on contradictions of heritage putting face to face fathers and sons, dowering and inheriting parts of the society somewhere between family and school [Bourdieu, 2008]; the second study is a chapter of the Laurajane Smith's book 'Uses of Heritage' – she insists that the heritage is characterised by a high level of performativity [Smith, 2006]. Anyway, the two texts actually hold different, even opposite positions concerning stability and constancy of the heritage – Bourdieu insists that its content varies depending on who how much would like to dower and inherit, as Smith thinks that heritage every time is being built through the performance. We aim to outline exactly that dynamic interactivity between givers of the heritage and the heirs, contents of heritage and its performativity potential in com-

bination with its material base. For us it is interesting to research these issues in a less typical situation – among the Bulgarian communities living abroad, which build their national ideology on the logic of national state but without its resources and in a multicultural society.

The empirical basis of our study are the public rituals performed by Bulgarian communities and the representatives of the Bulgarian states abroad on the areas of monuments dedicated to prominent Bulgarians and erected in two European countries' capitals – Bucharest and Rome. These monuments are perceived as a part of the cultural heritage of our communities in Romania and Italy as well as of the Bulgarian nation in general. We are interested in inheriting as a public act of confirmation of the minority's cultural community in the hosting society, which possesses all the mechanisms for nation building. We lean on Smith's view of uses of heritage in public performances and public rituals in terms of Durkheim [Durkheim, 1997]. Minorities' public rituals, especially of those minorities that have their own nation states – like in our case – are interesting topic having in mind its potential for understanding issues like national cultural heritage and migrant nationalism in conditions of European multiculturalism.

Why comparison between these two cities is productive – mostly because in the Bulgarian example they are diametrically opposite. The Romanian capital is tightly connected with Bulgarian history – many key figures of the Bulgarian Revival lived and worked here. Even nowadays, there is a large Bulgarian community – in the city and in the country in general. Rome – counter-wise – is not so bound with our national history; however, it is a global city where all nations trying to occupy their own place – especially in the Vatican. The Bulgarian community there is almost entirely new, who came after the democratic changes in Eastern Europe.

Our study is based on materials collected during our fieldwork in Rome and Bucharest in 2015 when we observed some of the events mentioned below and conducted interviews with migrants' cultural managers. Furthermore, we follow representations of these communities and the Bulgaria's official representatives in the social networks.¹

Bucharest

Bulgarians living in Romania are of some different types – Bulgarians of Banat who are Catholics and populate South-Western Romania, near Timișoara, Orthodox Bulgarians who inhabit mainly South and South-Eastern regions, and newcomers – migrants, mostly to Bucharest, from the end of 20th and the beginning of 21st century. The Bulgarian population is very diverse also according to its social features. Moreover the Bulgarians in Banat are a government-recognised ethnic minority in Romania according to LEGE nr. 86 from 6 February

¹ The fieldwork and the study are part of our work within the project “Cultural Heritage in Migration. Models of Consolidation and Institutionalization of the Bulgarian Communities Abroad” supported by the Bulgarian National Science Fund at the Ministry of Education and Science.

1945 on Status of National Minorities, while the Orthodox ones do not fulfill the requirements of the law.² There are many organisations of the Romanian Bulgarians (of the locals and of recent migrants) and the Democratic Union of Bulgarians in Romania is the most active in Bucharest. The Bulgarian deputy Niculae Mircovici also develops some cultural activity and attends the important events.

During the last 130 years, Bulgarian intelligentsia and political class continuously propose Bucharest and Romania in general to be important for the Bulgarian struggles for national liberation. In historical perspective, it is a fact – many prominent rebellions as well as intellectuals have been lived and worked at least for a while in the Romanian capital and other big Romanian towns on the River of Danube (Braila, Galați, etc.). In time when Bulgaria was within the Ottoman Empire and Russia had serious influence on the Southern Slavs, our northern Orthodox neighbour played a significant role in supporting revolutionary movements and development of culture, education and church affairs of the Bulgarians.

Since 1872 Bulgarian community in the Romanian capital has had many initiatives to mark the places connected with the Bulgarian Revival leaders, starting from Georgi Rakovski who died and was buried there in 1867. About five years after his death a board for building a monument dedicated to him was established in the city – it published a proclamation that they raise funds for building a monument [Traykov, 2007: 374]. It is a remarkable case because it happened even before the existence of the new Bulgarian state – his contemporaries began constructing the national myth and their starting point was the ‘father’ of the nation.

Georgi Sava Rakovski (1821-1867) was not only a revolutionary but a writer and an important figure of the Bulgarian National Revival. He was the author of the program for collecting traditional folklore, the ideologist of the national liberation, he also wrote some pseudo-scientific works on the origin of the Bulgarians. Because he was an employee of the Russian ministry of the Turkish War during the Crimean War (1853-1856) and organised an armed revolt in Bulgaria, he was sentenced to death. That is why he escaped abroad to Serbia, Romania, and Russia, where he sought European support for Bulgarian liberation and published journals. He organised a “Bulgarian Legion” of volunteers in Belgrade and later in Bucharest that was intended to form the core of a future Bulgarian army. After succeeding to send two units to Bulgaria he died of tuberculosis in Bucharest.

This monument has never been built; however, in 1885 his relics were moved to Sofia and then, in 1942, to his hometown Kotel. The gravestone left in Bucharest was removed in 1936 because the heirs of the site sold the place and today it is not even marked. On the occasion of the 100th anniversary of Rakovski’s birth in 1921 the first monument in Bucharest dedicated to him was placed – it was a commemorative plaque put on a house where the revolutionist used to live. In 1962 because of urban reconstructions the building was demolished and a block

² See also www.bgembassy-romania.org/?p=222 [accessed: 25 March 2017].

of flats appeared on its place. The plaque was lost till 2011 when it was found in the yard of a Bulgarian living in a village near Bucharest and was placed on the site again [**Kerciova-Păţan, Velcirov, 2013: 18**]. It was opened in May 2011 and the procedure of rebuilding of the plaque is significant for present trajectories of communication between local authorities, official representatives of the Bulgarian state and the Bulgarian minority in Romania. In order to restore the monument, the mayor of Sector 4, the president of the Democratic Union of Bulgarians in Romania and the Bulgarian ambassador in Bucharest cooperated.³ The ceremony of the official opening of the commemorative plaque has been the only event at this site or in memory of Georgi Rakovski in Bucharest the last few years.

At recent years patriotic non-governmental organisations from Bulgaria actively participate in processes of marking the places of national importance. However during the socialist period the Bulgarian state led the politics of commemoration of Bulgarians abroad. It is not a surprise that Hristo Botev was the flagman of the communist commemorative propaganda in Romania and in Bucharest, in particular. He was thought to be the first Bulgarian communist because of his anarchist views and socialist beliefs. Hristo Botev (1848-1876) was a Bulgarian poet and revolutionary. When in the early 1860s he studied in Russia he was much influenced by nihilist ideas. In 1867 he moved in Romania where he took part in organising a Bulgarian uprising and also published many articles and poems. During the very uprising he entered Bulgaria with a small band of rebels, but he was killed within the first few days.

In socialist times the image of Hristo Botev was constructed as an emblem of (a communist and) a revolutionary. 2nd June, the day of his death was commemorated as the Day of those perished for freedom and independence of Bulgaria. Many monuments were built all over the country and special events were organised on his steps from May 1876. So in 1953 a monument⁴ of Hristo Botev was built in the Bucharest's Herăstrău Park – a space which is not connected with the Romanian national pantheon and where many monuments of foreigners have been erected (including Leonardo da Vinci, Michael Jackson, founders of European Union, Beethoven, etc.). In 1956-1958 and 1966 three commemorative plaques were placed on Botev's last home in the Romanian capital, on his print house "Zname" (*Flag*) and on Filaret bus station from where he departed few days before his death in 1876. In 1962 due to reconstructions in the site the first one was removed. The second is still there but no events are organised. The third was removed "by mistake" [**Kerciova-Păţan, Velcirov, 2013: 20**] during the Romanian Revolution in December 1989.

On the anniversary of his birth (6th January) and death (2nd June) – the Bulgarian embassy in collaboration with the Democratic Union of Bulgarians in Romania organises a ceremony of laying flowers at the monument in the Herăstrău Park every year. The ambassador gives a speech and then officials and citizens put wreaths and – this ceremony has not changed since the building of

³ www.bgembassy-romania.org/?p=497 [accessed: 25 March 2017].

⁴ Author of the monument was the Romanian sculptor Ion Vlad (ampt.ro/monument/hristo-botev [accessed: 25 March 2017]).

the monument [**Gospodinov, 1981: 59**]. We should remark that many excursions and pilgrimage trips are organised through the whole year, especially during the warm season lots of buses with tourists from Bulgaria arrive, lay flowers and take memento photos – in internet we could find many stories and pictures from such visits. In 2015 an association of experts from the Bulgarian town Kazanlak funded the restoration of the monument and on 2nd June a delegation came and took part in the ceremonies.

In 2001 just right next to the Botev's monument a bust of Vasil Levski was placed – it was sponsored by the Foundation 'Vasil Levski' and Municipality of Sofia – the Bulgarian capital. These two monuments were built in different times, but were located side by side in order to interpret the connection between two heroes and to remind of their friendship in the winter of 1868. Vasil Levski, born Vasil Ivanov Kunchev (1837-1873), was a Bulgarian rebellion leader, the strategic and ideological inspirator of the revolutionary movement among the Bulgarians in Ottoman Empire. He is the founder of the Internal Revolutionary Organisation – a network of secret regional committees. In 1869 in Bucharest, Levski, together with Lyuben Karavelov, organised the Bulgarian Central Revolutionary Committee, which established a network of agents in Bulgaria. In this period he worked together with Hristo Botev and many other revolutionaries in the Romanian capital. In 1872, during one of his secret missions to Bulgaria, Levski was caught by the Ottomans and was later hanged.

The first commemorative site dedicated to Levski in Bucharest was built in 1998 – on the occasion of 160th anniversary of his birth (a year before) – it is a plaque and a bas-relief. Levski's life is tightly connected with other Romanian places – for instance the village Mihail Kogălniceanu (former Enichioi) where he was a teacher in 1866-1867, and Turnu Măgurele where he joined a rebellions' detachment. In the first place in 2011 a commemorative plaque was placed and opened by a Bulgarian nationalist politician, the mayor of the village who is a Bulgarian, the Bulgarian consulate and the sponsor of the initiative. In Turnu Măgurele a commemorative plaque dedicated to Danail Popov, the so called Levski's 'right hand', was opened in 2011 by the initiative of Pleven Municipality and the Bulgarian Embassy in Bucharest.

Since 2001 in Herăstrău every year on the occasion of the anniversary of his death (19th February) a ceremony is being organised and it is very similar to the one at Botev's monument. The scenario and the actors are also the same. Furthermore, there is a tradition every time when delegations lay wreaths at one of the two monuments to put a bouquet of flowers at the other one. (**Fig. 1 and 2**).

On round anniversaries guests from Bulgaria come and take part in the commemorations. For instance, on 140th anniversary of Levski's death the ceremony included a religious service and it was attended by the famous Bulgarian football player Hristo Stoichkov and the member of the parliament Emil Dimitrov. Whereas every year the audience is about 20 people – mostly from the embassy and the Democratic Union, in 2013 it was observed by over 450 people.⁵

⁵ www.bgembassy-romania.org/?p=1096 [accessed: 25 March 2017].



Fig. 1 and 2. Laying flowers both at the monuments of Botev and Levski in Herăstrău Park in Bucharest, Romania – by the Bulgarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs Mr. Daniel Mitov and the Bulgarian ambassador in Bucharest Mr. Aleksandar Filipov. Photo: Lina Gergova, 19th February 2015

Besides these annual events we have some single ceremonies connected with round anniversaries. In 2009 (rebuilt in 2011) and 2014 two commemorative plaques dedicated to Dimitar Hadzivasilev were placed on his former house and on his tomb found by chance at the Bucharest's cemetery Șerban Vodă. Dimitar Hadzivasilev (1814-1884) was a powerful Bulgarian businessman and Maecenas who lived in Bucharest. Due to his donation the Business school in the small Bulgaria town Svishtov was founded. He was one of the most successful businessmen in Romania in general. Often students and teachers from Svishtov visit Bucharest and the places connected with the Hadzivasilev's life and donations. The opening ceremony of the second plaque was especially lavish because a member of the parliament from the Bulgarian town was a guest of the event and it attracted national media. The Bulgarian embassy and the Bulgarians in Bucharest do not organise any further commemorations but the students and other people from Svishtov continue their visits.

Other markers of sites connected with the Bulgarian history are more modest – basically, commemorative plaques and bas-reliefs. Such could be found on several places – some of them placed on the authentic buildings, others – on the places where once particular buildings existed but they were demolished after-



Fig. 3. Hanul Solacolu with commemorative plaque of Lyuben Karavelov – November 2014, Bucharest, Romania. Photo: Lina Gergova

wards due to planning reasons. Such a bas-relief and plaque have been placed at Hanul⁶ Solacolu where the offices of some important newspapers and Lyuben Karavelov' publishing house were located. Karavelov (1834-1879) was a writer and among the leaders of the Bulgarian National Revival. Because his safety was threatened by his revolutionary contacts, he moved to Serbia (1867) but was shortly expelled for collaborating with the Serbian liberal opposition. Later, moving to Bucharest, he took up the Bulgarian revolutionary cause in his journals "Svoboda" (*Freedom*) and "Nezavisimost" (*Independence*). Botev collaborated in "Nezavisimost" and used to live together with Levski in Hanul Solacolu in 1868 (**Fig. 3**). Today the building is in a terrible condition and its fate is insecure and it is possible soon to observe the transformation of a site of memory.

Another plaque has been placed on a building whose owners were Bulgarians (Hanul cu Tei) but that is a part of the local policy to put information plates on cultural, historical and architectural monuments.

The third group of monuments, connected with Bulgarian presence in the city, consists of grave monuments – mostly in the Șerban Vodă cemetery, in the cemetery of Prince's Palace, as well as the memorial military cemetery "Pro patria". Besides soldiers, the most prominent Bulgarian traders and philanthropists – the brothers Hristo and Evlogi Georgievi⁷ – were buried here in a lavish

⁶ 'Han' (from Turkish) means a guesthouse with large space for livestock and wagons. Because Bucharest was an important trade centre many 'hans' existed – most of them were owned by Bulgarians.

⁷ The brothers Evlogi (1819-1897) and Hristo (1824-1872) Georgievi were Bulgarian merchants, bankers and benefactors. The main buildings of the universities of Sofia and Bucharest and many other public institutions in both countries were built with a large financial donation by them.

tomb, as well as Dimitar Hadzhivasilev. These memorial sites are also visited by Bulgarians – guests from Bulgaria or local intellectuals. However, the Bulgarian embassy does not involve them in its calendar of commemorative events.

As regards Bucharest, in recent years the local community in cooperation with the state representatives has succeeded to mark many places in the city which are connected one way or another with the revolutionary movement of the Bulgarians. This symbiosis has not always been equal or without conflicts but in general politics of the local Bulgarian associations and the Bulgarian state, including the socialist period, has been unidirectional and consistent. If we collect all sites marked as Bulgarian, we could arrange a layer of the Bulgarian map of Bucharest. This map does not cover all places and spaces considered to be Bulgarian, but is a basis of the calendar of the public celebrations and, mainly, commemorations.

As we can see, the Bulgarian state takes part only symbolically in building of the map of memory in Bucharest and its constructing is rather the result of campaigns, various initiatives and, of course, destructive influences. We should underline that this map does not match with – let's call it – the mental map of the local community which recognises many more spaces and often boosts the narrative of the Bulgarian origin of the city, of the main historical persons of local history and of the Romanian history in general.

The festive calendar linking these spaces through the public rituals is also an amalgam of multidirectional initiatives. The Bulgarian Embassy organises mainly 4 public rituals – on the dates of birth and death of Botev and Levski – on the sites of their monuments in the Herăstrău Park. The Local Bulgarian community mainly represented by the Bulgarian Democratic Union (and its president Luka Velciov), rarely and sporadically, on various occasions organises other celebrations and commemorations. Both types of commemorations consist of visiting the monuments or commemorative plaques, giving of short speeches and laying flowers or wreaths. Another type of festive acts is connected with occasional visits of groups from Bulgaria – from cultural centres, folk ensembles, patriotic clubs, schools, universities, media, etc. These rituals also often involve local community and state representatives but they have their specifics – different scenarios, including musical performances, pilgrimage and memento photos. Sometimes these groups stop at the monuments in Bucharest on their way to tourist sites in Romania, but often they are organised especially for visiting them.

Rome

Italy always has been an attractive country for Bulgarian immigrants. After the political changes in the early 21st century, and mostly the lifting of the visa regime for Bulgarian citizens in the Schengen zone in 2001 and the entering of Bulgaria in the European Union in 2007, Italy became one of the European countries, characterised by intensive and increased immigration from Bulgaria. There is no exact information about the number of Bulgarian permanent residents in the country while unofficial data shows different numbers ranging between 100 and 150 thousand.

There are several sites of memory in Rome connected with the Bulgarian culture and history. Among others the grave of St. Cyril in the basilica “San Clemente” could be highlighted because has played the most significant role not just concerning the local Bulgarian community but also in national and even European context. It has turned out into a main location and site of worship during the celebrations of 24th May. For the Bulgarian visitors and pilgrims, either tourists or representatives of the Bulgarian community in Italy, this is the place in Rome with the most prominent role for formation and expression of national pride. The visit at the grave and the tribute to the saint of the official Bulgarian government delegation and the audience with the Pope have been central to the celebrations of 24th May for decades. The first such celebration in Rome was in 1924 and it is by the initiative of the Bulgarian historian and ethnographer, who was a president of the Bulgarian academy of sciences (1926-1937) and a honorary member of the Italian Institute of East Europe in Rome – Lyubomir Miletich (1863-1937), who was in the Italian capital at this time for scientific researches [**Eldarov, 2002: 93**]. Two years later the Bulgarian society “St. Clement” was founded by the initiative of Bulgarian students, and it organised a tribute to Sts. Cyril and Methodius in the eponymous basilica. On 24th May 1929 a commemorative plaque at the grave of St. Cyril was placed. The Bulgarian celebrations in Rome continued after that and mostly Bulgarians catholic clerics and political emigrants in Italy, rarely guests from Bulgaria took a part in them. In connection with a visiting delegation of high-level state in 1975, led by the head of the state Todor Zhivkov and his daughter Lyudmila Zhivkova, and their audience with Pope Paul VII many new elements were implemented and the celebration of Sts. Cyril and Methodius in Rome was developed. The big role in that played the then counsellor at the Bulgarian Embassy and later a politician and a Deputy Prime Minister of Bulgaria Prof. Alexander Bozhkov. He initiated creating of a museum in the basilica and placing of the mosaic panel at the tomb as well as of a commemorative plaque at the grave of Bishop Petar Parchevich in the basilica “Sant’Andrea delle Fratte” and erecting a monument of Sts. Cyril and Methodius in the yard of the Bulgarian embassy in Rome [**Eldarov, 2002: 135-140; Eldarov, 2014: 63-64**].

Another important location, closely connected to Sts. Cyril and Methodius’ celebrations and also included in the festive pilgrimage route, is the basilica “Santa Maria Maggiore”. A memorial plate, which marks the place where in 868 Pope Adrian II received the Holy Slavic Apostles and sanctified the first Slavic written texts, was set in 1985 during the celebration of 1100 years from St. Methodius’ death and “on behalf of the grateful Bulgarian people” [**Nikolov, 1998: 76**].⁸ Every year during the celebrations of 24th May a Bulgarian governmental delegations passes from here and places flowers to the plate. Its replacement is provoked by the visit of the Prime Minister of Republic of Bulgaria Boyko Borisov in 2010 when misspellings in the inscription were noticed. A few months later, on 17th June, delegation headed by Borisov came to Rome especially in order to set the new memory plate without misspellings.⁹ Another plate was

⁸ A picture of the opening in 1985 see in **Nikolov, 1998: 112**.

⁹ See www.24chasa.bg/Article/549425 [accessed: 25 March 2017]; **Nikolova, 2010**.

brought by them and opened two years later by the President of Bulgaria Rosen Plevneliev, when the permission by Vatican was received. It is intended for the church “Vincent and Anastasius at Trevi” – provided for the use of the Bulgarian community on 22nd November 2002 by Pope John Paul II.¹⁰ Although the Bulgarian church was one of the most famous touristic places – Trevi fountain, in the heart of Rome and at a very representative and desirable religious place, the Bulgarian migrant community had not the opportunity to build it as site of memory, as “Bulgarian” one – the church was a marker of a national confidence for a long time but about a year later it was taken from the community.¹¹

Another “Bulgarian place” in Rome which is attended by the Bulgarian community and migrant institutions in connection with the cultural calendar is the bust statue of the Bulgarian hajduk leader Capitan Petko Voyvoda (1844-1900), which is situated among the Garibaldi’s line at the alley on the Gianicolo hill near the Giuseppe Garibaldi’s monument (**Fig. 4**). The place of the statue is not unintentional. Capitan Petko was a revolutionary who dedicated his life to the liberation of the region of Thrace and its unification with Bulgaria. He visited Italy in 1866, where he met Giuseppe Garibaldi and under his direction Petko organised the Italian and Bulgarian contribution in the Cretan Revolution of 1866-1869 [see more **Neshev, 1988**, especially pp. 54-56]. The bust statue was made by the initiative of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Bulgaria and President of the Union of Thracian Societies in Bulgaria in that time and exposed on 2nd December 2004, marking the 160th anniversary of his birth.¹² Close to the monument, there is a commemorative plaque with the inscription: “In memory of the Bulgarian Garibaldi who fought for freedom, union and independence of Italy with selflessness and heroism. By grateful Italy”.

The last Bulgarian monument which has been open in the Italian capital is the one of the Bulgarian author Ivan Vazov (1850-1921) and it is situated on Thorvaldsen Square next to Villa Borgheze (**Fig. 5**). It was unveiled on the 21st May 2010 in the presence of the Bulgarian and the Italian prime ministers. The statue was made of bronze (2.60 m height) and it was placed on a high pedestal. The Bulgarian sculptor Prof. Velichko Minekov is the author of the monument – he was a member of the opening Bulgarian delegation together with the spon-

¹⁰ The plates’ text is: “On 22 November 2002 His Holiness Pope John Paul II provide to the Bulgarian community in Italy this magnificent temple to keep the Bulgarian spirit and legacy of co-patrons of Europe Saints Cyril and Methodius. From the grateful Bulgarian people, in 2010, Prime Minister Boyko Borisov”. Among some representatives of the local Bulgarian community as well as in Bulgaria it causes dissatisfaction because of the written name of the Prime Minister. See www.trud.bg/Article.asp?ArticleId=546183 [accessed: 25 March 2017]; **Nikolova, 2010**. However, the inscription was changed and the name was removed before the official opening: “By an order of His Holiness Pope John Paul II on 22 November 2002 in this magnificent church liturgical worship of the Bulgarian community in Italy for keeping its spirituality and heritage of the Europe’s co-patrons Saints Cyril and Methodius was held”. See www.bnews.bg/article-50839 [accessed: 25 March 2017].

¹¹ See more in **Hristova, 2013**. A new church for liturgies was provided in 2014 – “San Paolo alla Regola”. See dveri.bg/993ua [accessed: 25 March 2017].

¹² See more www.mediapool.bg/pasi-otkri-pametnika-na-kapitan-petko-voivoda-v-rim-news11467.html [accessed: 25 March 2017]. According to the some authors the memorial was opened in 2003. See **Denchev, Vasileva, 2006**: 194.



Fig. 4. The monument of Capitan Petko Voyvoda. Photo: Yana Gergova



Fig. 5. The monument of Ivan Vazov. Photo: Yana Gergova

sor Bozhidar Petrakiev. The statue is situated at the Thorvaldsen Square. The idea of the memorial dedicated to Ivan Vazov was born in October 2009 during the conversation between the Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi and the Bulgarian minister of culture Vezhdi Rashidov. On 19th January 2010 the sculpture project was approved by the Rome municipality and in 4 months the monument was erected – on the eve of the celebrations of 24th May.¹³

The sculpture provokes mixed reactions because (besides the author's name) there is nor any information, neither particularly about Vazov's personality which remains unknown for foreigners. The name Ivan Vazov, written both in Bulgarian and Italian (in Cyrillic and Latin) means nothing to the visitors, who are not familiar with the Bulgarian literature and culture. According to a research, made by the Bulgarian newspaper "24 chasa" (24 hours), the passing people consider him mostly as Russian [Hristova, 2010]. Ivan Vazov was the only one among all Bulgarian figures, chosen to be honoured in Rome by a memorial statue, plaque, etc., whose life and activity was not related to Italy and in particular to its capital (except for a short visit in the country in 1884). The

¹³ See more news.bg/culture/izdigat-pametnik-na-ivan-vazov-v-rim.html; www.vesti.bg/bulgaria/politika/berluskoni-i-borisov-pri-pametnika-na-vazov-2997991; pzdnes.com/pazkazu-om-rom-prof-velichko-munekov-e/ [accessed: 25 March 2017].

erection of the monument is associated more with his work “Italy”, part of which was written on the side of the statue’s pedestal. However, the place turns to be significant for the local Bulgarian community and became one of the most important toposes in the time of festive celebrations (official governmental, school, etc.), and the presence of a monument of “the Patriarch of Bulgarian literature” not only to the Bulgarian migrants in the capital, but also to the Bulgarian tourists is a source for national pride.

Few more memorials dedicated to notables of Bulgarian culture and history exist. Their role is not of so obvious importance but in the festive calendar of the Bulgarian community in Rome they are included as well. At the grave of the Bulgarian catholic bishop Petar Parchevich (1612-1674) – a diplomat, scholar, baron of Austria and one of the architects behind the anti-Ottoman Chiprovtsi Uprising (1688) – in the basilica “San Andrea delle Fratte” in 1974 a memorial plate on the occasion of 300 years of his death was placed by the initiative, as it was already mentioned, of Prof. Aleksandar Bozhkov [**Eldarov, 2002: 139**]. During the first celebrations of the Day of National Revival Leaders (1st November), organised by the Bulgarian Sunday School “Asen and Ilia Peykovi” founded in 2014, this place was the central component. Theirs was the initiative to plant an olive tree in the churchyard on the occasion of 340 years of Petar Parchevich’s death, as well as Philip Stanislavov (1608-1674) and Petar Bogdan Bakshev (1601-1674) – both Bulgarian catholic bishops and culture figures, like Petar Parchevich, also involved in the preparation of Chiprovtsi Uprising.¹⁴

The commemorative plaque at Boncompagni Str. placed there in memory of the Bulgarian poet Pencho Slaveykov (1866-1912) is aside from the cultural life and the calendar of the Bulgarian diaspora in the city. It is situated on the house’s front view where he lived for a while in 1912. In the beginning of 20th century Slaveykov became a director of the National Library of Bulgaria and a director of the Bulgarian National Theatre. However, in 1911 he was forced to resign his post, to leave Bulgaria and to move to Italy where the favourable climate would be of help to his health. He died in a small town near the lake Como called Brunate where a memorial plate also has been placed.¹⁵ Exactly that place is more connected with celebrations of the memory of the Bulgarian poet. In 2012 the 100th anniversary of his death was marked¹⁶ with great solemnity, and Bulgarian schools in Italy often organise visits.

The festive and cultural calendar of the Bulgarian migrant institutions in Rome is strongly connected with the Bulgarian sites of memory in the city, which, due to school practices, have been valorised and became significant locations, forwarding to the national past, heroes, and symbols. These sites are mostly included in celebrations of 24th May. Besides the St. Cyril’s grave as the central component of the pilgrimage route, laying flowers at the commemora-

¹⁴ See more scuolabulgara.jimdo.com; www.bulgariasega.com/interesting_facts/balgarski_uchilishta_usa/23068.html [accessed: 25 March 2017].

¹⁵ See more **Ivanova, 2014; Uvaliev, 2014**.

¹⁶ See more www.mfa.bg/embassies/italy/events/bg/920/38/881/index.html; <http://www.rodinabg.net/?action=news&id=1737> [accessed: 25 March 2017].

tive plaque at basilica “Santa Maria Maggiore” and at the Ivan Vazov’s and Capitan Petko Voyvoda’s monuments often is a side event.

The program of the 24th May’s celebration by the Bulgarian institutions in the city, especially represented by the two Bulgarian schools “Sts. Cyril and Methodius” and “Asen and Ilia Peykovi”, is not so different. The grave in “San Clemente” is the central consolidating object focusing also the celebration on the 14th February – the Assumption of St. Cyril. In Bulgaria and by the Bulgarian institutions abroad that date is not so solemnly celebrated but there in Rome it takes an important place in the institutions’ event calendar. Exactly that closeness to the Bulgarian cultural heritage and Bulgarian monuments is typical for the Bulgarian schools in Rome – the monuments, which as sites of memory become symbolic toposes and elements of the Bulgarian diaspora, actively involved in the cultural, educational and tourist life of the community. The schools construct and use the sites of memory and Bulgarian personalities, which are connected to Rome, in their capacity of common Bulgarian heritage which is significant for all Bulgarians and often the sites of memory are used to consolidate the migrant community on the basis of the past and the national history.¹⁷

Conclusions

In our article we took a look at some commemorative events in two European capitals which – through the media and because of tradition to be attended by Bulgarian political elite – not only became important for Bulgarians living in these particular countries but enter and enlarge the Bulgarian national heritage map. These events are actually marginal and peripheral from the viewpoint of the local authorities and societies: they are not occasions for gathering of really many people, they are not a part of the local calendars or media reflections. However, we could easily outline the performative potential of the heritage and to feel the importance of the sites of memory for concentration of migrants’ representations within the host society.

The processes of construction, maintenance and valorisation of the symbolic toposes in emigration, associated with events and personalities significant for group identification, and of preserving of the memory of them, are part of the practices for consolidating the migrant community on the basis of past and history. In the case of Rome we speak about gaining of affirmation from a more prestigious host state, while in the case of Bucharest it is all about regaining of something that had been possessed by the Bulgarians in past.

The significance of these Bulgarian sites of memory is a consequence of their inclusion as ritual sites in the festive and event calendar of the community and its institutions. However it is important to note that they are perceived rather as signifying markers more for the Bulgarians in general, while the very persons remained in the background. In this sense, the policies of valorisation

¹⁷ More about cultural calendar and the significant and important role of the monuments for both Bulgarian schools in Rome see **Borisova, Gergova, 2015: 217-223.**

of the sites of memory and their inclusion in the Bulgarian cultural heritage strongly correspond with the national traditions and contexts. It means that the cultural heritage is both a condition for and a result of commemorative and festive events' calendar of the local communities. In this sense, we could assume that in present in many cases like these we cannot distinguish the function of the givers of heritage and of the heirs because it seems that, regarding commemorations and celebrations, each time the heritage is being simultaneously constructed and accepted.

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