

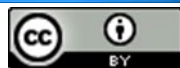
---

Ivanova, A. (2024). Three monuments, one fate. Research on the cultural heritage of socialism in Bulgaria. *Culture and Arts in the Context of World Cultural Heritage. Klironomy*, 9, 27-38. Ostrava: Tuculart Edition, European Institute for Innovation Development.

DOI: 10.47451/her2023-12-01

The paper will be published in Crossref, ICI Copernicus, BASE, Zenodo, OpenAIRE, LORY, HSLU, J-Gate, ASCI, Academic Resource Index ResearchBib, ISI International Scientific Indexing, ADL, JournalsPedia, Mendeley, eLibrary, and WebArchive databases.

---



**Alexandra Ivanova**, Associate Professor, Ph.D., Informatics Visual Arts and Communications Department, Faculty of Architecture, USEA (VSU) “Lyuben Karavelov”. Sofia, Bulgaria.

### **Three monuments, one fate. Research on the cultural heritage of socialism in Bulgaria**

*Abstract:* The socialist regime in Bulgaria left behind many monuments whose fate is a problematic issue for any government to resolve after the democratic changes. This study examines three of the most representative monuments of this legacy in Sofia – the Mausoleum of Georgi Dimitrov, the monument of “1300 Years of Bulgaria” and the Monument of the Soviet Army. Their fate is similar in many respects. All three monuments have been removed from the urban environment, but this does not solve the issue of the empty spaces left behind, which continue to be associated by Bulgarian society with places of historical memory. They have failed to transform into sites of other significance, and their historical, cultural and touristic potential remains untapped. To address the issues presented in the study, it is crucial to refine the legal framework and state strategies related to preserving cultural heritage. In the study, a comparative analysis of documents on the three monuments is made, using sources from state archives, the official website of the Sofia Municipality, the monographs of N. Paskalev, G. Gergov, etc. The study continues the author's monographic work on the significance and perspectives of the Mausoleum of Georgi Dimitrov in the contemporary urban environment.

*Keywords:* preservation, monumental heritage, socialism, urban environment.

---

**Александра Иванова**, доцент, Ph.D., катедра “Информатика, визуални изкуства и комуникации”, Архитектурен факултет, ВСУ “Любен Каравелов”. София, България.

### **Три паметника, една съдба. Изследване на културното наследство на социализма в България**

*Резюме:* Социалистическият режим в България оставя след себе си много паметници, чиято съдба е труден въпрос за всяко правителство след демократичните промени. Настоящото изследване разглежда три от най-представителните паметници на това наследство в София – Мавзолея на Георги Димитров, монумента “1300 години България” и Паметника на съветската армия. Съдбата им е сходна в много отношения. И трите паметника са премахнати от градската среда, но това не решава въпроса с празните пространства, останали след тях, които българското общество продължава да свързва с места на историческа памет. Те не са успели да се превърнат в обекти с друго значение и техният исторически, културен и туристически потенциал остава неоползотворен. За справяне с проблемите, представени в изследването, е изключително важно да се прецизират правната рамка и държавните стратегии, свързани с опазването на културното наследство. В изследването е направен сравнителен анализ на документи за трите паметника, като са използвани източници от държавните архиви, официалния сайт на Столична община, монографиите на Н.

Паскалев, Г. Гергов и др. Изследването е продължение на авторски монографичен труд за значението и перспективите на Мавзолея на Георги Димитров в съвременната градска среда.

*Ключови думи:* опазване, монументално наследство, социализъм, градска среда.

---

## Introduction

The similar fate of three monuments of the cultural heritage of socialism in Sofia is an issue that deserves attention. In fact, they no longer exist in the urban environment. The period of socialism in Bulgaria lasted 45 years and dates from September 1944 to November 1989. The totalitarian regime established at that time had a great need for visual propaganda, so the government commissioned and financed many monuments dedicated to socialist heroes and messages throughout the country. Ideology influenced art by creating a personal style, which in the first few decades came to be known as “Socialist Realism”. Inevitably, the style of state art changed over time, and by the end of the period, it was characterised by a much more abstract vision and the artists’ free play with form. What remains a characteristic feature of socialist art monuments is their monumentalism and representativeness. In most cases, these monuments are the work of the best sculptors and architects in Bulgaria and are characterised by a high level of artistic value. As such, facts from the controversial history of the *Mausoleum of Georgi Dimitrov*, the monument of “1300 Years of Bulgaria” and *The Monument to the Soviet Army* are examined here. All three monuments were placed in iconic locations in central Sofia. They were removed at different times after the democratic changes began in 1989. In society, this issue does not seem to be satisfactorily resolved, and opinions continue to divide into two opposing camps on whether the architectural and plastic heritage of socialism is valuable, whether it is worth preserving and protecting, and what its significance for the urban environment and the historical memory of the Bulgarians.

In the study, a comparative analysis of the documents found for the three monuments is made, using sources from the state archives, the official websites of the Sofia Municipality, the monographs of N. Paskalev, G. Gergov, N. Trufeshev and other researchers of the monumental and plastic heritage of socialism in Bulgaria. The study continues and extends the author’s monographic work on the significance and perspectives of the Mausoleum of Georgi Dimitrov in the contemporary urban environment (*Ivanova, 2023*). Because of the importance of the discussed topic for Bulgarian society, the conclusions reached by the author would be relevant for planning future strategies concerning the preservation, display and presentation of this cultural heritage for future generations.

## Research and analysis of sources for the Mausoleum of Georgi Dimitrov (1949-1991)

The Mausoleum of Georgi Dimitrov is the second modern mausoleum in the world containing an embalmed body built after Lenin's in Moscow. The primary source for its construction and functions is the monograph of the last commandant of the mausoleum from 1980 to 1989, Georgi Gergov, published a year after its destruction (*Gergov, 2000*). In the following lines, brief facts shared by Gergov regarding the creation of the mausoleum will be presented. After the death of the Bulgarian Prime Minister on 2<sup>nd</sup> July 1949, the cult of his personality created during his lifetime reached its culmination. The Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party decided that his body would be laid in a mausoleum on July 10 at the “9<sup>th</sup> of September” Square (now the “Knyaz Aleksandar I” Square). The

Central Architectural Design Organisation made the plan overnight with Georgi Ovcharov as chief architect. Architect Nedelcho Paskalev is the author of the monograph, which is a valuable source for understanding architect Ovcharov's contribution to modern Bulgarian architecture (*Paskalev, 1982*). Georgi Ovcharov (1889-1953) graduated in architecture from the Technical University of Munich in 1912. He designed many emblematic public buildings, such as the House of Labour (1935), the Ministry of the Interior (1936) and many others. These projects are characterised by their monumental scale and plasticity, just like their free play with architectural classics. All these monuments and complexes can be seen today, clearly standing out with their stylistic unity and uniqueness among the city ensemble, and the Mausoleum of Dimitrov is one of the most famous works of architect Ovcharov (*Figure 1*). Gergov reports that architect Ovcharov's project has been assigned to implement the Main Directorate of Labour – Sofia Construction District. Together with the architects, engineers, technicians, sculptors, artists, and workers of various specialities (600 people), they are distributed in four shifts of six working hours. At the same time, the plumbing, electrical and special air-conditioning systems were installed. On 10 July, the mausoleum was almost finished and decorated. The project called for the building to be completed in 170 hours, but the builders managed it in a record 138 hours. The building is a pure cubic volume of classical order, 12 metres high, with walls 1.2 metres thick, and occupies 560 square metres, including the tribune. The building consists of two interconnected chambers. There is an air conditioning system between them. The inner hall has a volume of 1000 cube metres, surrounded by an insulating corridor about two metres wide. The outer walls are 1.2 metres thick. In the middle of the hall, in a niche slightly below the square level, a coffin for the body is placed on a pedestal. Four spotlights illuminate the centre of this space. The air conditioning system maintains a microclimate with a temperature of around 16 degrees and a humidity of 75%. According to Gergov, the visible part of the building occupies only 1/3 of the volume, while the more significant part is located on two underground levels.

The totalitarian cult of Dimitrov developed in much the same way as that of Lenin and was nourished by similar rituals. Gergov reports that foreign delegations have been paying tribute by laying wreaths for decades, and the party-state leadership has been accepting parades and manifestations on public holidays from his tribune. He reports that between 1949 and 1989, 18 million people visited the mausoleum.

After the end of the socialist regime, the mausoleum was emptied of its contents by the decision of the Council of Ministers for the burial of Dimitrov's body. The Bulgarian society has not yet decided what to do with the building. In this connection, the Scientific Documentary Archive of Immovable Cultural Heritage materials, presented here in a summary, have been studied (*Scientific Documentary Archive..., 2023*). A commission was formed, comprising representatives of the main political forces, scientists and intellectuals, chairmen of unions and organisations, and specialists from the Sofia City People's Council. The commission's task is to perform the necessary studies, consult with experts and submit a reasoned proposal to the Council of Ministers. After the completion of the work of the Commission on the future functions of the mausoleum, the following decisions were published:

1. The Commission considers that the building of the mausoleum is worth preserving as it is of unquestionable architectural, artistic and material value.
2. The Commission recommends that the Sofia City People's Council announce. The Union of Architects in Bulgaria and the Union of Bulgarian Artists organise a national competition open to all architects, artists, sculptors and public figures for a functional rethinking of the building of the

former Mausoleum and its adjoining spaces, just like their humanisation to reflect the coming social changes. The competition participation conditions will be announced to the public by 15 August this year.

3. All materials and opinions of individuals and organisations will be available to the competition's organisers.
4. The Commission proposes to the Sofia City People's Council to take rapid measures to temporarily change the character of the square in front of the Mausoleum.

The Commission's decisions were partially implemented, and the building was preserved until 1999, but its function was never reconsidered. In the years that followed, the controversy over its fate continued. In February 1992, the Sofia Municipal Council met to discuss the report on the former mausoleum that the Mayor of Sofia presented. The report instructs the Mayor to perform the necessary procedures for the preparation and implementation of a project for the demolition of the mausoleum or parts of it by auction, including the sale of the property located therein (*State Archive..., n.d.*). The debate was polarised along political lines. Speakers from the Union of Democratic Forces fully supported the removal of the mausoleum as "one of the symbols of a dark age" that had no artistic or architectural value. However, if it remained, it would remind generations of the past. Bulgarian Socialist Party members believe the opposite: the building is a monument of architectural and cultural significance and is not worth demolishing because it is part of the city's history. The solution was approved and put to the vote. From 1992 to 1999, the institutions continued to debate the fate of the mausoleum while the building gradually fell into disrepair, was covered in graffiti, and became a venue for open-air operas, happenings, a film set, and so on. At the end of August 1999, without prior notice, the mausoleum was demolished by the Minister of Regional Development and Public Works of the Government of the Union of Democratic Forces. As a result of an official request to the State Archives, the experts did not find any documents related to the implementation of the decision to demolish the mausoleum. An empty platform remains in its place, but the underground levels of the building have been transferred to Sofia Municipality ownership. The mausoleum site has become a place for many random urban design ideas: landscape projects, summer cinemas, beer gardens, bazaars, art events, etc.

To this day, art critics are divided between those who condemn the destruction of the mausoleum and those who support its removal. In the last two decades, the issue of transforming the mausoleum site into an interactive art space has continued to open up for Bulgarian artists. The first institutionally supported work at the mausoleum site was organised jointly with the Austrian Embassy and the Sofia Municipality with the "Bronze House" project (*Figure 2*) by the artist Plamen Deyanoff in honour of the Bulgarian Presidency of the European Union Council in 2018 (*Bronze House, 2021*). Contrary to the expectations expressed by the Sofia Municipality, the "Bronze House" became a polemical centre of public debate about the choice and specifics of exhibiting contemporary art in a public space, even during the project's preparation.

As a result of the controversial experience with the "Bronze House", caused by the inconsistency between procedures, declared intentions and achieved results, Sofia Municipality promptly reconsidered its policy for creating an interactive art space at the mausoleum site. In 2018 and 2021, the Sofia Municipality, through the Directorate of Culture, announced open "Outside" programme sessions to support temporary art installations at the mausoleum site (*Outside program..., 2018*). The programme has been adopted in implementing the strategy "Sofia – Creative Capital", financially supporting the realisation of innovative works of contemporary visual arts in the public space, which will support the

creation of new public spheres and open discourse for encountering art. The Creative Commission of the Culture Directorate of Sofia Municipality, composed of visual arts and urban planning experts, will evaluate the submitted competition proposals. The main requirements for the works are high artistic value and innovation, which will contribute to greater diversity and dynamism in Sofia's cultural life.

In 2019, the installation "One Man" by Venelin Shurelov was chosen to be installed on the mausoleum grounds. The installation is a 13-metre-tall figure with a modular steel truss structure and two-sided LED screens (*Figure 3*). The screens are fed with dynamic content generated by a specially designed algorithm in two modes. "One Man" was installed and officially opened at the end of November 2020 and will remain in Sofia until the end of April 2022. The author's design is at its best in low light when it stands out through its lighting effects. The surrounding urban environment, saturated with architectural landmarks and the proximity of busy traffic along the boulevard, primarily absorbs the ambitious project idea.

Sofia Municipality will hold the next competition for temporary artistic interventions at the mausoleum site in 2021. The Creative Commission proposes to Sofia Municipality to exhibit the work of Krassimir Terziev at the mausoleum site in 2022, entitled "*Between the Past Which is about to Happen and the Future Which has Already Been*" (*Outside program...*, 2022). The temporary art installation is composed of volumetric double-sided illuminated letters inscribed in a circle with an outer diameter of 12 metres and a height and depth of the letter 50 cm – dimensions that allow the installation to be inhabited and visitors to stay in the space of the circle (*Figure 4*). The horizontal installation solution can be seen as an attempt to calm the passions and thus democratise the space. The question is whether the art installation will be able to highlight topologically by transforming the mausoleum site into an inhabited urban space. In 2022, the Sofia City Council approved the extension of the project's implementation deadlines and the transfer of the amount for the targeted project financing for 2023 (*Stolichen obshtinski svet*, 2023). The project was not implemented until the end of 2023, and the mausoleum site continues to sit empty.

In recent years, the underground has been wholly abandoned and severely damaged (*Figure 5*; *Figure 6*). Following the destruction of the building by a series of controlled explosions in 1999, parts of the underground have collapsed or been filled in with earth. There are many structural and load-bearing deficiencies. Part of the interior and specific objects were transferred to the Museum of Art of the Socialist Period and the Museum of Sofia, but the more voluminous ones, such as the hoist and embalming bed, electric generators, installations and other technical equipment, were left underground.

Given the many unresolved questions about the fate of the mausoleum, in 2023, Sofia Municipality initiated public discussions to find an appropriate solution for a new function of the mausoleum underground. In this context, Sofia Municipality held discussions among three focus groups of artists, architects, and historians to study their attitudes towards the fate of the underground building. The author of this study participated in the expert group of artists. Each focus group met for a specialised discussion of the issue, after which the three groups held a general meeting to summarise the leading suggestions. Concerning the functions of the space, the prevailing opinions of the experts are in the direction of creating a "place of historical memory" that will talk about the time of the totalitarian regime. Here, the experts are divided: some insist on a broader narrative about the regime since society has not understood and experienced the period. Another part of the experts proposes a narrative focused on a single theme – "the cult of personality", aggravated by the risk of blurring the theme, just like considering the limited area of the space. Regarding the means of presenting the functions of the place, the majority of experts offer an objective narrative without rehabilitation when exhibiting selected

artefacts with more narrative. The possibility of continuing the practice of exhibiting contemporary art as a metaphor for duality: “above-contemporary” and “below-past” was discussed at the mausoleum site. In summary, it is proposed to prepare a brief for a competition for a visionary architectural project, with an interdisciplinary team to analyse the history and the environment and to present an author’s view of what and how to preserve and what to change in the underground.

### **Research and analysis of sources for the monument “1300 Years of Bulgaria” (1981-2017)**

The monument “1300 Years of Bulgaria” was erected in Sofia between 1981 and 2017, commemorating 13 centuries since the foundation of the Bulgarian state. The main author of the monument is the sculptor, Prof. Valentin Starchev. The monument was placed in the park in front of the National Palace of Culture at the place known as Bulgaria Square. The plastic monumental complex comprises a main concrete body and brass sheets that form the plastic forms. On the insides, the sculptures are 7 metres high, while the entire monument is 35 metres high. The composition reveals the main theme of the competition: The unity of the “Past”, the “Present” and the “Future”, which was expressed through a figurative composition of three groups symbolising literacy (representing the Golden Age of Bulgaria), the “Pieta” – an image of a grieving mother, as an expression of honour to the fallen for Bulgaria, and Creation (“The Creator” – an image of the ordinary worker). Contemporary, modern and abstract have been articulated in huge tree blocks following an ascending line and ending with a wing – a symbol of the flight of thought, the freedom of the good spirit and the relentless human pursuit of perfection. Famous quotations from Bulgarian writers have been inscribed on the faces of the monument ([Trufeshev, 1981](#)).

Before the complex was assembled, a parcel was allotted to the Vitosha Barracks. During the Second World War, the barracks were bombed, so the existing monument to the fallen of the First and Sixth Infantry Regiments, built in 1934, was partially destroyed ([Draganov, 2017](#)). The “1300 years of Bulgaria” monument was erected on the dismantled military memorial site in a record-breaking eight months in 1981. The short deadlines led to many compromises in using the construction technologies of the time. As can be seen from the photographs, the monument was in a very poor state long before 2017, with a haphazard mix of materials being used over the years to protect it from falling chunks. While the public polemic for or against its restoration was going on, the monument ironically began to endanger passers-by in the very heart of Sofia ([Figure 7](#)).

In 2012, the monument became part of a European Cultural Route initiative based on selected totalitarian sites approved by the European Commission and the International Institute of Cultural Routes in Europe. In the middle of the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, literature activists held a discussion, whereof they demanded that The monument “1300 years of Bulgaria” be necessarily considered in the context of communist monuments and, as such, alongside The Monument to the Soviet Army in Sofia to be preserved as a remembrance of the epoch. In 2012-2014, members of the Union of Bulgarian Artists, the Union of Architects in Bulgaria, the Institute for Historical Research at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, just like the Ministry of Culture, the Sculpture Department of the National Academy of Fine Arts and the Sofia Regional History Museum expressed their firm opposition to the demolition ([Borisov, 2015](#)). On December 18, 2014, the Sofia City Council decided that the monumental complex should be dismantled, while the monument to the soldiers who fell for the country, which stood there, is worth restoring in its place ([Electronic](#)

*register...*, 2021). The dismantling of the “1300 years of Bulgaria” monument began again on July 3, 2017, without any prior announcement, and ended on July 28, 2017.

Today, the site of the former monument seems relatively empty. Despite the formal decisions taken six years ago to restore the original monument, only a disproportionately small sculpture of a seated lion, almost swallowed up by the surrounding rose bushes, has been placed there. The sitting lion is a detail of the Monument to the Fallen of the 1<sup>st</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiments, but without the plaques bearing the names of the 4,000 soldiers, it seems out of place (*Figure 8*; *Figure 9*).

### **Research and analysis of sources for The Monument to the Soviet Army (1954-2023)**

The monument was built in 1954 and is the work of a large collective of authors headed by architect Danko Mitov (*Electronic register...*, 2021). At the beginning of the solemn approach, two multi-figure sculptures were placed on the theme of the welcome of the Soviet Army. A team led by the professor created them. Ivan Funev. The central part of the monument is 34 metres high. It is crowned with a three-figure composition – a Soviet fighter in the centre, a Bulgarian worker on the right, and a mother with a child on the left (*Figure 10*). The authors of this group are the sculptors Mara Georgieva and Vaska Emanuilova. On the main body of the monument, on the three sides of the polished granite pedestal, there are three bas-reliefs: “October 1917” by Prof. Lyubomir Dalchev, “The Great Patriotic War of the Soviet Union” by a collective led by Vasil Zidarov and “Everything about the front, everything for the victory” by a team led by Petar Doichinov. The authors of the monument are great Bulgarian sculptors whose work is of national significance.

Like Dimitrov’s mausoleum, in the 1950s-1980s, the space became popular for Sofia’s residents and guests to visit, just like it was used for official ceremonies. After the fall of the totalitarian regime, the monument followed the fate of all the socialist monuments. The Monument to the Soviet Army was the site of a political struggle between the Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP) and the Union of Democratic Forces (SDS). In 1992, the SDS-dominated Sofia City Council attempted to move the monument to its periphery and later dismantle it (*State Archive...*, *n.d.*). In April 1993, by order of the Mayor, scaffolding was erected around the monument, and a construction team was called in. The Minister of the Interior stopped a verbal order after the intervention of the Russian ambassador. While the political discussions about the monument’s fate continue, the space around it becomes a real visual art scene. Graffiti artists from Destructive Creation repeatedly painted the monument, transforming the sculptural groups into Disney comics (2011), colouring them with the national colours of Ukraine (2014-2015), writing political slogans (2017), etc.

Finally, on March 9, 2023, the Metropolitan Municipal Council instructed the Mayor to request the State to relocate the Monument to the Soviet Army and the permanent exhibition of sculptures and bas-reliefs to the Museum of Art of the Socialist Period or another suitable public site outside the central urban area of Sofia, subject to compliance with all relevant mediation procedures (*Stolichen obshtinski syvet*, 2023). Thus, the monument dismantling began on December 12, 2023. The Museum of Art of the Socialist Period declared no room for the monument’s figures. The dismantling of the monument provoked a sharp reaction from Moscow and left-wing political parties. During the monument dismantling process, it was challenged in court as illegal. On December 14, 2023, the Ministry of Culture issued an order to stop the monument dismantling,

citing a lack of coordination with the minister responsible for cultural monuments. The Inspectorate for the Protection of Cultural Heritage at the Ministry of Culture notes that The Monument to the Soviet Army is included in the immovable historical cultural heritage list. Despite the order, the sculptures were cut up piece by piece and craned into the ground. On December 19, the Sofia City Administrative Court ordered the unconditional cessation of the dismantling of the monument, which was not being performed according to a submitted administrative act or the law (*The court...*, 2023). Paradoxically, at the time of the Administrative Court's decision, all the sculptures had been dismantled from the monument and taken away for storage on December 23. At the time of this dismantling, there is no information on what the municipality intends to place on the empty obelisk and how this key urban space for Sofia will be transformed (*Figure 11*).

### Discussion

The history of these three monuments has been marked by many vicissitudes and contradictory social attitudes towards their fate. There is no doubt that the presence of the mausoleum is a traumatic fact for many people. However, its demolition has not succeeded in erasing the physical and psychological trauma of its presence and subsequent destruction. The research considers that collective memory is linked to dynamic political, cultural and social processes, so analysing the history of all these empty but not forgotten places can help decide the fate of the hundreds of monuments from the socialist past across Bulgaria. A recent study by G. Nazarska and N. Debrune concludes that most of the communist monuments in Sofia remain active “realms of memory” and work in favour of the totalitarian past without liquidating the “difficult legacy”. The authors argue that in this respect, the “Bulgarian case” differs from the Visegrad Four and the Baltic states, where the strategy is first to reach a national consensus on the “difficult legacy” and only then to work together to dismantle it through state institutions and society (*Nazarska & Debrune, 2021*).

Raising the issue of the state of the mausoleum's underground can engage the public and experts to uncover potential resources for developing the urban environment. There is a real opportunity for Bulgarian society to recognise the underground as a potential for building a place of historical memory. According to experts, they can be used functionally and become an attractive tourist site, combining a museum underground with a space for contemporary art above. If this happens, a hard-to-accept page of Bulgarian history will be turned, and perhaps the trauma of the socialist past will be revised.

The study expands beyond the frames of the monumental heritage from the socialist regime and draws the public focus to the global question – what do we do with our past? The forlorn fate of the monument “1300 years of Bulgaria” in a strangely identical way repeats the doom of the Memorial to the Fallen of 1<sup>st</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiments, presenting no groundbreaking solution that may turn useful to exit that vicious circle of creating-then-tearing-down monuments. The recent case of dismantling The Monument to the Soviet Army shows that this act is being performed without any real plan and willingness to preserve, restore and exhibit its sculptural groups. Moreover, specialists' opinions on protecting Bulgaria's cultural heritage do not play a unique role in the fate of the three monuments examined. At the same time, what determines their future is mainly a political issue.

## Conclusion

Many such monuments of the socialist past can be found throughout the region of Eastern Europe, and the study of these issues can make a contemporary contribution to understanding a common historical and cultural identity. Looking at the vicissitudes of the three monuments, it is possible to summarise several correspondences that predetermine their fate.

1. There is no national consensus on the removal of the monuments, which divides large groups of Bulgarian society into pro and *contra*.
2. Removing the monuments appears to be a hasty, half-concealed and somewhat illegal act, instilling a sense of violence in its supporters and powerlessness in its opponents.
3. There is a lack of a national strategy for using the vacated urban space and for preserving the sculptures and artefacts that are essential to the monuments.
4. The government commissions for cultural heritage do not develop a transparent and consistent policy for preserving the plastic-monumental heritage of the socialist regime.

Despite all the mistakes made regarding the monuments of Bulgaria's socialist regime, there are also some positive examples, such as the Buzludzha monument (officially called the House Monument of the Bulgarian Communist Party). The preservation and interpretation of this monument are the subject of public debates organised by non-governmental organisations. It inspires hope that society has the potential and desire to transform itself without destroying the controversial monuments of its past.

Art is one aspect of how we reflect on and make sense of our own history. A highly professional and ethical approach to heritage is also a commitment to our future actions and decisions in relation to the wider urban environment. Understanding the causal relationship between past and present and developing continuity in cultural heritage preservation shows the extent to which a nation has matured to develop into the future.

---

## References:

- Borisov, B. (2015). Arhitekturno-hudojestvenia sintez "1300 years of Bulgaria". *Architecture*, 1, 26-28. (In Bulgarian)
- Bronze House. (2021, May 7). [Бронзовата къща]. <https://artsofia.bg/bg/bronzehouse/> (In Bulgarian)
- Draganov, D. (2017, June 29). *The Commemorative Plaques of First and Sixth Infantry Regiments* [Георги Драганов. Паметните плочи на Първи и Шести]. Konservatora. <https://conservative.bg/parvi-i-shesti-pehoten-polk/> (In Bulgarian)
- Electronic register of monuments and artistic elements on the territory of the Metropolitan Municipality. (2021, April 21). [https://registersofia.bg/index.php?view=monument&option=com\\_monuments&formdata\[id\]=120&Itemid=140](https://registersofia.bg/index.php?view=monument&option=com_monuments&formdata[id]=120&Itemid=140) (In Bulgarian)
- Epicentur. (2015, January 8). *Tova e proiava na div vandalizum*. <https://epicenter.bg/article/Tova-e-proiava-na-div-vandalizam/63106/11/0> (In Bulgarian)
- Gergov, G. (2000). *Istinata za mavzoleya*. Sofia: Sibia. (In Bulgarian)
- Ivanova, A. (2023). *Beleg vyrbu gradskata plyt*. Sofia: VSU "L. Karavelov". (In Bulgarian)

- Nazarska, G., & Debruyne, N. (2021). The communist monuments in Sofia as “realms of memory” for the policial subcultures in the Transition period. In: Subkulturite na prehoda v Bulgaria – mesta na pamet. Sofia: Za Bukvite. (In Bulgarian)
- Outside program 2018. (2018, November 10) <https://artsofia.bg/bg/outside/2018/10/01/startira-programa-navyn-na-stolichna-obshtina-za-podkrepa-na-vremenni-hudojestveni-instalacii> (In Bulgarian)
- Outside program 2022. (2022, February 21) <http://artsofia.bg/bg/outside/2022/02/21/obshtestveno-predstavjane-na-postypilite-proekti-i-reshenijata-na-komisiite-za-tvorcheska-ocenka-po-programa-navyn-za-2022-g> (In Bulgarian)
- Paskalev, N. (1982). *Georgi Ovcharov*. Sofia: Tehnika. (In Bulgarian)
- Scientific documentary archive for immovable cultural heritage: Fund Stoyan Yanev. (2023). RIM-Sofia. (In Bulgarian)
- State Archive – Sofia. Minutes of the 6th meeting of the Metropolitan Municipal Council. (n.d.). Fund No. 65, op. No. 15, arch. unit 472. (In Bulgarian)
- Stolichen obshtinski syvet. (2023, December 20). Reshenie No. 168. <https://council.sofia.bg/documents/d/guest/r-168> (In Bulgarian)
- The Mausoleum of Georgi Dimitrov. (2012, May 13). A look from 1950s. <http://www.stara-sofia.com/mavzolei2.jpg> (In Bulgarian)
- The court stopped the dismantling of the Monument to the Soviet Army. (2023, December 19). <https://www.24chasa.bg/bulgaria/article/16663988> (In Bulgarian)
- Trufeshev, N. (1981). *Arbitekturno-skulpturniat pametnik v Bulgaria*. Sofia: Tehnika. (In Bulgarian)

## Appendix



Figure 1. The Mausoleum of Georgi Dimitrov. A look from 1950s



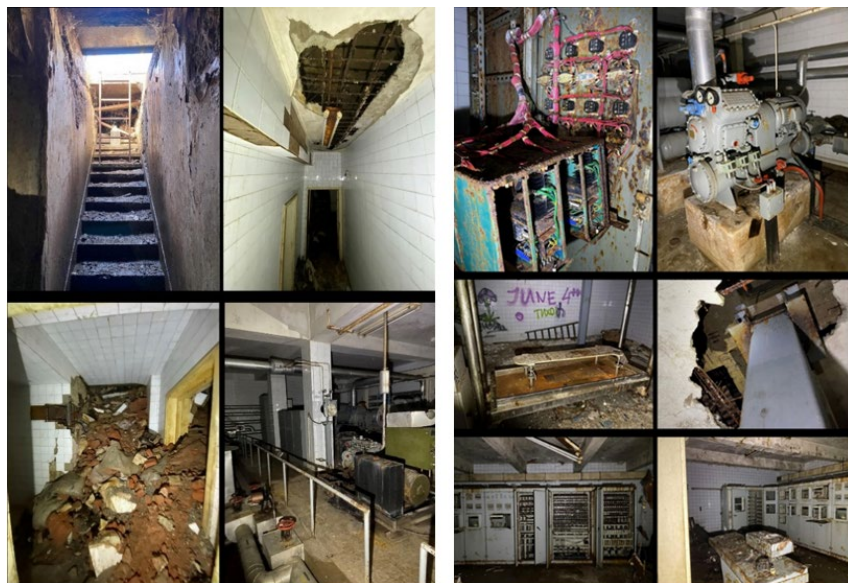
Figure 2. Bronze House



Figure 3. “One Man”, author’s photo



Figure 4. “Between the Past Which is about to Happen and the Future Which has Already Been”



Figures 5, 6. The mausoleum undergrounds in 2023 (author’s photos)



Figure 7. The monument “1300 Years of Bulgaria” in 1981 (left) and 2015 (right)



Figure 8, 9. The monument “1300 Years of Bulgaria” in 2023 (author’s photos)

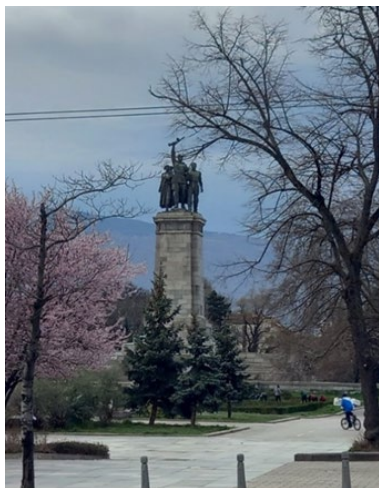


Figure 10. The Monument to the Soviet Army in March 2023 (author’s photo)

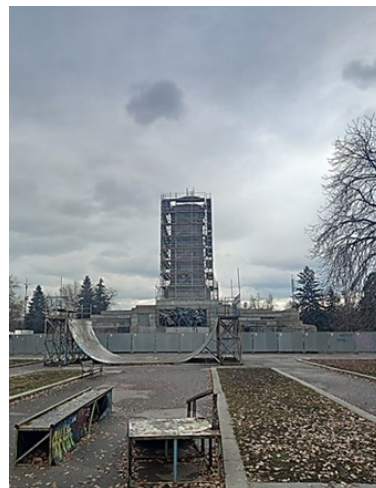


Figure 11. The Monument to the Soviet Army in December 2023 (author’s photo)