

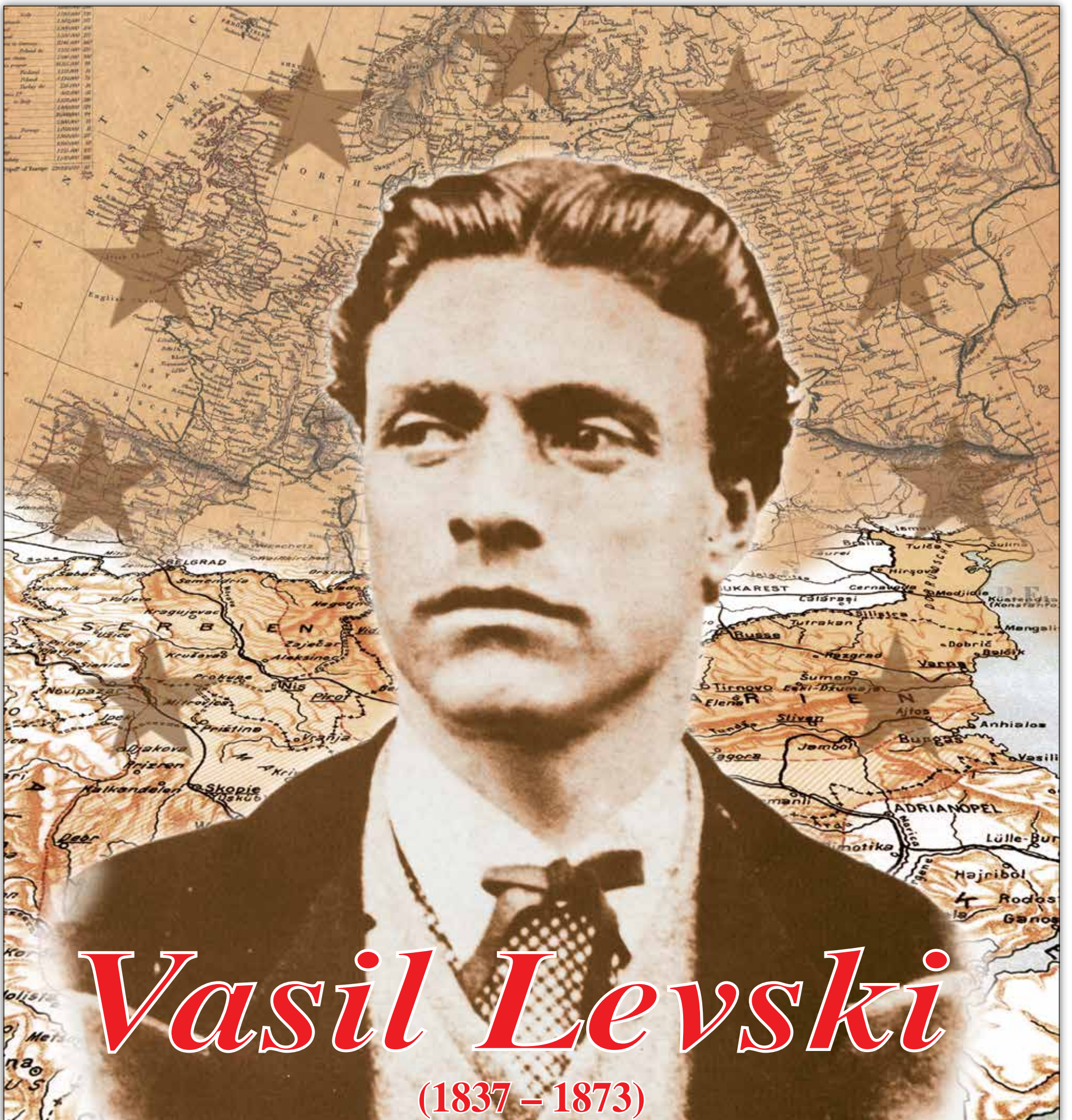
ЗА БУКВЕНИТЕ

КИРИЛО МЕТОДИЕВСКИ ВЕСТНИК

О ПИСМЕНАХЪ



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Vasil Levski

(1837 – 1873)

The Ideologist of Our Freedom

Vasil Vasilev, Chairperson of the LEVSKI Bulgarian Committee

On the 19th February of this year, a little boy dressed in Levski's uniform was standing guard in front of Levski's Monument in Sofia. He was 4 years old and was holding a real rifle "Mannlicher", almost as tall as himself. When his sentry was over, someone asked him, "How do you picture Levski in your mind?"

"Something like Superman, but a real one", was the answer. The image of a superman is somehow inspired by the life of the Apostle.



Vasil Vasilev

In life – he was an ordinary person, just like any of his contemporaries. But in character, in deeds, in his sense of duty, in his patriotism and his revolutionary nature, he rose above and beyond human

boundaries and turned into an honest superhuman. What is most impressive in him is the ability to overcome his sense of survival in the name of a much higher ideal – the quench for freedom. Aristotle said, "Plato is dear to me, but the truth is even dearer." Levski maintained, "My life is dear, but freedom is even dearer."

To Levski without freedom life has no meaning. Such a craving for freedom, stronger than the love for life, can be met in limited numbers throughout Bulgaria's and the world's history.

With Levski's Ideas in the Heart

Dr. Emil Kabaivanov, Mayor of Karlovo Municipality



Dr. Emil Kabaivanov

Today, 180 years after his birth, we – the chosen ones to preserve and pass on to the next generation Levski's legacy, ask ourselves whether we do it and how we do it. As Mayor of Karlovo, I am convinced that being from Karlovo is a great responsibility, pride and duty. It is important to talk about Levski not only at anniversaries. Bulgaria needs people who are clearly patriots in their minds in this global, dynamic and

risky world. Levski has given us his personal example how to work and die for Bulgaria and therefore our task is to convey this to the next generations. Each Bulgarian should carry in their hearts Levski's ideas – "For a pure and holy republic", for before we sit and wait for someone else to set us free or help us, first of all, we should take each other's hand and do our job. Or as the Apostle said once, "Being equal to other European peoples depends on our mutual efforts, brothers!". It is this ingenious sentence that holds the whole philosophy of success or failure of a nation.

The program for the commemoration of Levski's birth prepared by Karlovo Municipality is full of a lot of events. I invite all Bulgarians to be guests during the days of the commemoration so we can together experience the joy of celebrating.

Levski is Not a name but a Verb

Kornelia Marinova, Mayor of Lovech Municipality

When we say LEVSKI, we mostly mean a historical and ideological circle of values. Levski as a symbol today is a tool for orientation among values and not just a sign of national belonging and an attractive image. He is an example of boundless love towards his people and self-sacrifice in the name of the motherland. He is an example of political creativity and tolerance as well as loyalty to the republican statesmanship. Levski is an action call, a call for service to the motherland, to an active stand in society. In this



Kornelia Marinova

sense Levski is not a noun but a verb – a significant engine of the people's sobriety and the social life.



The Apostle of Freedom is the only one who can indisputably be considered the greatest Bulgarian of all time. Levski unites all Bulgarians and is the national hero who remains unstained of political intrigues and belonging. The deed of Vasil Levski is an everlasting source of national self-esteem of the Bulgarians,

a personification of the image that has gathered in itself the idealism and self-sacrifice in the name of the freedom for the motherland. Today his legacy for a pure and holy republic, where all are equal, regardless of their national background and religion, is more relevant than ever before. The self-sacrifice of the Apostle of Freedom is related to the European ideals for freedom, national dignity and humanity. The deed of Vasil Levski is an ideal that we should all cherish today.

Tsvetan Tsvetanov, Chairperson of the Parliamentary Group of the Political Party GERB



Vasil Levski is the perfect image of the struggle for freedom and equality. The Bulgarian who devoted his mind, heart and strength to one idea – "a holy and pure republic". The Apostle left us not only his legacy, but he also set an example how to put this into practice – with integrity, self-denial and faith.

Kornelia Ninova, Chairperson of the Parliamentary Group of "BSP for Bulgaria"



To me Levski is a role model for self-sacrifice who we, the offspring of his contemporaries, we – all Bulgarians, are indebted to. For we neither saved him, nor do we know where his grave is, nor do we know the exact date and year of his birth.

Volen Siderov, Chairperson of the Parliamentary Group "United Patriots"



Everyone has their way to Levski, his words and deeds, to the deep meaning of his thoughts. So ingenious is the revelation of the revolutionary strategist: "We are in time and time is within us. It changes us and we in turn change it". Levski was ahead of his time and is extremely relevant today. And needed at the same time. He is a philosophically

existential symbol of freedom, a measurement of strength, of national memory and historical pride of our own deeds.

Mustafa Karadayi, Chairperson of the Parliamentary Group "Movement for Rights And Freedoms"



Everyone remembers Vasil Levski's lessons. His feat and self-sacrifice have impressed generations of children. We have breathlessly listened to the story of the Lion's leap that gave rise to his name. In awe did we learn the lines of Botev's poem of the black gallows near Sofia. This emotion has remained forever in our minds. The self-sacrifice of the heroes and the memory of them is the thread that keeps us tied to our Motherland. Levski is one of those colossal individuals in our age-old history who was ahead of his time. His ideal for a pure and holy republic is our own, too. He said it so wisely: "We are in time and time is within us".

Gergana Stefanova, Chairperson of the Parliamentary group of Political Party Volya.



Dear friends,
you are holding in your hands or watching on your PC screens the anniversary issue of the unique edition of the newspaper

"Za bukvite – O' pismeneh"

This issue is dedicated to the 180th Anniversary of the birth of the most dignified son of the Bulgarian people – Vasil Levski!

On behalf of the academic management, the lecturers, students, PhD candidates and administrative staff of the University of Library Studies and Information Technologies (ULSIT), me personally and on behalf of the editor-in-chief of the newspaper I would like to congratulate you on this remarkable anniversary and wish you forever to carry in your hearts the image of Vasil Levski – the ever unattainable height of the Bulgarian national spirit!

**Prof. Stoyan Denchev,
Rector of ULSIT!**

**A PROMISE KEPT
AND READY TO TAKE
IN YOUR HANDS!**

In issue 51 of the newspaper Za Bukvite – O' Pismeneh, the management of ULSIT and the editor's team promised to publish a translated into English version of the issue dedicated to Vasil Levski.

The Free Person

Levski changed the fate of his people

Rumen Radev, President of the Republic of Bulgaria

This year we commemorate 180 years of the birth of Vasil Ivanov Kunchev. When he was born into this world, The Revival was barely making its way and freedom was a daydream. Today Levski's portrait hangs on every school wall. In less than two centuries, the Bulgarian people have walked the way of self-awareness, cultural affirmation, the riot and joy of freedom, the fast progress, the defended statesmanship and the pride of the worldwide recognition of the Bulgarian genius in spirit and creation. History is a deceitful perspective. The black-and-white portrait of Levski looks like a sign from the distant past, but I will say it again: it's been just 180 years since his birth.

Bulgaria has come a long way and that is due to unique people like the Deacon, Botev, Zahariy Stoyanov, and then Aleko, Pencho Slaveykov and so on. They are kind of accelerators of history who lead the Bulgarian people out of the desert of the slavery into the Promised Land of freedom, where the Bulgarian creative genius keeps up with "The Europe".



Rumen Radev

In the 1850s, the Bulgarians still spoke of Europe as something far away and unreachable. Levski is the highest personification of the free person who will change the fate of his people. Many generations have passed since then: the way of the Bulgarian spirit is hard, it goes through years of misery and weakness, but always follows one: Levski, the boy from Karlovo, who threw away the priest's gown in order not to offer his people comfort, but freedom. The man who dared challenge a whole empire, he who lost himself, but "won for all his people."

Let's Unite our Energy so We Can Walk Ahead!

Boyko Borisov
 Prime Minister of the Republic of Bulgaria

Let's see through the eyes of Levski – let's stop hating each other and unite our energy so we can walk ahead!

Absolute integrity and absolute self-sacrifice on the long way of turning the slave into a free person and the Motherland – into a pure and holy republic.

These qualities immanent to a saint turned the ordinary person that Vasil Ivanov Kunchev was into Vasil Levski, the Apostle of freedom, the Icon to whom the Bulgarians bow with most sincerity.

We quote him way too often, we use him as an example far too much. I believe that we would have a good reason to say his name if we joined his tolerance, integrity, dedication and vision a little bit more. We



Boyko Borisov

could start by looking through the eyes of Levski upon the future of our people and our country, if we stop hating each other, if we channel our energy into helping Bulgaria go ahead. As the Apostle said, "It all depends on our joined powers".

Let's Remember the Way

Dimitar Glavchev, Chairperson of the National Assembly

There is no other historical figure that our national memory has managed to keep for 180 years so pure and holy. The immortal feat of Levski has been Bulgaria's strive for freedom, democracy and justice. It is our true and real reason for national pride and joy. For the ideas of Levski are inseparably linked to the European ideals for progress, solidarity and human rights. Today, when our country is respected and dignified, we must rediscover the democratic values that Levski legated to us so we can pass them on to the posterity. Levski is the image of all that's precious, holy and great; the thing that

builds up as a social ideal the era of the Bulgarian Revival. Let's remember the way that the Apostle showed us and ask ourselves what country he really wanted us to live in. It was the country whose flag read "A holy and pure republic". A country with "people's governance", a state of "personal and people's freedom". A state where people abide to "pure and holy laws". This is the state of Levski's legacy. Today our modern world offers dramatic ordeals, we need determination and will, unity and stability.

Where else, if not from the immortal feat of Levski can we



Dimitar Glavchev

draw the strength and energy to deal with the challenges?

Vasil Levski lies forever in the historical memory of Bulgaria. His name is our conscience, the benchmark for ourselves and for the future of our country.

His Testaments for us are Written

Iliyana Yotova, Vice President of the Republic of Bulgaria

Levski's Anniversary – 180 years of his birth

Are 2 centuries enough for the symbol, the legend and the personality of the Apostle to sink in?!

It's hard to write about Levski. His contemporaries have legated an image that we recognize from the first lessons of the textbooks. Even today everyone can see themselves and measure their look upon life against Levski's words and deeds. And this dialogue with the Apostle and this measuring is really personal.

Apostle of Freedom! You do not need fanfares and pomposity today. You do not need state protocol unless we feel the need to talk to you, unless we have faith that it is you and only you who has the right to judge our actions.

It is difficult to avoid clichés and yet we have to say: your testaments sound as if they were written for us. When does Levski speak of Bulgarian statesmanship: when there is no state, when hope is gone, when the spirit is about to give in. When does he speak of the Bulgarian people?

When it's necessary to light the spark of its power. When does he leave his testaments for a pure and holy republic? When the most important decision on the future of the motherland has to be made. Apostle, you realized the dream of us having a country. But there is no state.

It's hard to find not just people but statespeople who put meaning to this word, and it's even harder to find those



Iliyana Yotova

who would fight for it. He said it in 1871: "A test is needed for everyone. A human he is today, but an arse tomorrow". Today we still need strong people, not just leaders but role models. We are facing a defeat if we think that we have fulfilled our national aims and we have no cause. It doesn't work just to tick shallow thinking and hatred in the agenda of our daily grind. We have managed to become part of Europe, but still our biggest aim is to be "equal to other European peoples", as the Apostle desired. Separation has left its mark on the institutions.

The oaths for united actions are for the cameras, then actions demolish them and breed distrust. Opposition does not result in development, hatred cannot unite people. The Bulgaria Project demands of us to say honestly, just as Levski did, how we are going to live in the years to come. Will there be job opportunities for young people in order to stop the brain drain and the erasure of the nation? Shall we curb corruption in practice, which frustrates and scares entrepreneurs. The cause is now not to "become

members of the club of..." but to walk the way to ourselves, to overcome nihilism and distrust, to build consensus despite the differences. The slogan "the people of Bulgaria are its most precious treasure" must be turned into our credo.

Levski is different. He fits none of the traditional images of the Bulgarian people's stereotypes so much written about by many authors. But the image that's in each Bulgarian's heart is the one of a true patriot. "PEOPLE..." exclaimed the Apostle on one page of his notebook. Is it a coincidence that he left this word followed by dots? He knew well the mentality of his contemporaries, he knew their shortcomings, he wrote about betrayal, embezzlement, loyalty and faith.// But each line of his writing radiates the faith that people are the greatest treasure. Merciless towards traitors and the indecisive ones, Levski raised his Fatherland into a cult and believed in the worthy and brave people who committed themselves to the freedom of Bulgaria.

"All peoples in it (Bulgaria) will live under the same pure and holy laws, as is given to a human by God: to the Turk, to the Jew, etc. It will be like that as long as they bow to the law side by side with the Bulgarians. That's the way it will be in our Bulgaria!"

This is the suffered daydream of great Bulgarian! A daydream that should not be forgotten. A Bulgarian whose dreams and testaments we should be worthy of!

The Outcome of our Deeds Depends on our Own Endeavors

Associate Professor Krasimira Aleksandrova, Director of the National Library St. St. Cyril and Methodius

To speak about Levski is a necessity for his spirit resides in each of us. The interest in his personality never dies. 2017 has been announced as THE YEAR OF LEVSKI in relation with the commemoration of 180 years since his birth. And this is no coincidence – his image has been a symbol of bravery and self-denial. In front of the Sultan judges, in front of the altar of the Gallows, Levski categorically justifies his status of a most beloved national hero – lively and real. Levski is the person who came to realize that our actions today can change the reality of tomorrow. What he did carries the charisma to to unite us as a nation.

HOW TO PRESERVE TODAY THE MEMORY OF THE APOSTLE'S PERSONALITY

Levski's collections comprise 162 documents, the first of which dates back to 1869, and the last one to 1872. As for structure, there are several thematic units. In the first place, it's his personal notebook also known as "Levski's Notebook". Levski's correspondence comes in two groups – with his followers outside Bulgaria and with the adherents within the country during his revolutionary activity between 1869 and 1872. His apostle activity is represented by a few circular letters on behalf of the Bulgarian Central Revolutionary Commit-

tee (BCRC) within the period 1871-1872. The oath that each committee member candidate had to take has also been preserved. The letter of attorney empowering Levski to act within the country on behalf of the Central Committee is also intact. There are also reference numbers related to received letters. An extremely valuable document is the draft-statute

vidual people, lists of sponsors to the Svoboda Newspaper, etc. can be seen. Those 162 documents in the collections can reach the number 255 when combined with the documents related to the Apostle from the archives of Luben Karavelov, the BCRC, Danail Popov, Ivan Kurshovski and Nayden Gerov. Among them can be found those 7 photos of the Apostle.



Vasil Levski's Notebook

being 10 years ago with a photo-type edition and readable content. So far the notebook has been out of the treasure box



180 Years Since the Birth of The Apostle of Freedom

of conservation is a guarantee to its preservation.

What happened in practice during the digital copy processing? The quality of the scanned image was improved by adding a better contrast, the 'hues' have been cleared and twice as great text resolution was achieved.

We were given serious support on the project by the Aikido society Obelisk, headed by Hristo Mihaylov. We are in the process of issuing 100 copies of the digital version of Levski's notebook, soon to reach connoisseurs. There's a project to promote the notebook online on the National Library's website. This will be a token of respect to those Bulgarians who live abroad. There will be a special QR-code, which will allow an easy access to the Notebook without having to enter an address. Thus, everyone who wishes will be able to download it to their mobiles and read it. At the same time, this e-format of the Notebook will provide specialists with an additional opportunity for scientific research.



of the Bulgarian Central Revolutionary Committee or the so-called "Regulation of the Workers for the Liberation of the Bulgarian People", where the principles behind the BCRC are laid out. Another interesting document to the researchers is an incomplete note by Levski to the editors of the Svoboda Newspaper, where he expresses his satisfaction that the newspaper has been released. Then follow receipts, accounts – 25 in total providing evidence of the strict material accountability that Levski demanded of all committees and activists. levski's collections also contain notes on his revolutionary activity, where pseudonyms of different revolutionary activists, passwords, addresses of indi-

This invaluable documentation treasure is well cared for and therefore kept in a treasure box of the Bulgarian National Bank. Special curators take care of their condition and make sure the temperature and humidity stay as necessary. The documents have been digitized and patrons are able to use the digital copies through the site of the National Library St. St. Cyril and Methodius. Only in exceptional situations and occasions can the documents be taken out of the treasure box under strict security measures.

LEVSKI'S NOTEBOOK IN 3D

Levski's notebook has been published several times by TRUD Publishers, the latest

twice – to exhibitions in the National Assembly and the Presidency. But in order for the notebook to reach a wider audience and the youngest of the readership, a team of inspired young Bulgarians will present it in an electronic format. A major contribution in this project is due to the computer specialist Peyo Peev. With inspiration and patriotic dedication he has committed himself to the realization of this project. It is a well-known fact that the notebook contains pencil scripts on highly acidic paper and this poses great risks in preserving it. We have often been accused of conservative attitude and 'hiding' the document, but all for this reason. It is clear to every specialist that only strict keeping to the rules



A souvenir from the 180th anniversary of Levski's birth



Vasil Levski on Five Continents

For 25 years the Museum of the Apostle in Karlovo has presented Vasil Levski to the world

Dora Chausheva, Director of the National Museum of Vasil Levski in Karlovo

In the early 1990s the museum's team made crucial steps towards presenting Levski's individuality outside the national borders. Levski is a great historical personality. What he created in ideological and political terms is compatible with the achievements of the European political thought of the 19th century. And if Vasil Ivanov Kunchev /Levski/ had not been born in Bulgaria, but in a western European or central European country, he would have gained the popularity of Garibaldi, Lajos Kossuth, Mazzini or any other famous political or revolutionary activist of Europe from the 19th Century.

For this reason the museum prepared the exhibition "Everything I did I did for the Fatherland" in English, French and Hungarian, which was presented in the Bulgarian Cultural Institutes in Budapest (2003), Paris (2007) and London (2009), etc. The support from the Ministry of Culture and the Bulgarian Embassies has always been crucial, for this demonstrates the attitude of the official state authorities toward the serious issue of promoting the personality of Vasil Levski in the European capitals.

In 2003 the exhibition dedicated to Levski was presented twice in Hungary. The first time was in Budapest in front of Bulgarians only, but the second time was in front of Hungarians in the museum of Lajos Kossuth in the town of Cegléd.

In 2005 Vasil Levski was presented through the exhibition in several Bulgarian and American meetings in the USA. Those were the American University in Washington DC following an invitation by the Center of the Bulgarian Community with the support of Mr. Asen Asenov, in New York and Chicago. The contact with the Bulgarian and American Association, whose Chair is the Bulgarian artist Ms Kina Bugovska, has existed for more than a decade with the museum assisting from far away Bulgaria for the holding of different initiatives directed towards preserving the memory of the Apostle.

A warm welcome the exhibition on the Apostle of the Bulgarian Freedom received in

the Bulgarian Cultural Institute in Paris 2007. It became the basis, on which the development of a closer cultural cooperation between Bulgarians and French people was established. In 2009 on the occasion of the 3rd of March 2009 in the European Parliament in Brussels the exhibition dedicated to the Apostle was opened. A discussion was held attended by the special guest of the exhibition – the British writer Mercia McDermott. Two months later, on the occasion of the 24th May and the end of the school year in Bulgaria, for the children from the Bulgarian school there the exhibition was once again displayed for the Bulgarian Community in Brussels to see.

In London 2009 the theme of the Apostle and the exhibition were a leading event in the activities of the Bulgarian Embassy, the school and the Bulgarian Cultural Center there. Owing to the Bulgarian Ruzhka Nikolova, the exhibition had a huge success in 2012 in Buenos Aires – Argentina as well.

Throughout the years, the Museum responded to the invitations they received from nearby living compatriots – in Tzaribrod, Bosilegrad Nis, Bucharest, Ukraine, Moldova and Russia. What is impressive is that those who have emigrated or remained outside the Bulgarian state borders know and remember what they have read or studied about Vasil Levski. Unfortunately though, each new generation grows apart from the Apostle in their knowledge and feelings for him. In these lines, the efforts to present the thematic exhibition should continue in the future so that more Bulgarians are able to be close to Vasil Levski.

The exhibitions are accompanied by a lot of exciting meetings and talks with our compatriots in different countries. Throughout the years they have contributed to the organization of scientific forums dedicated to Vasil Levski in cooperation with local organizations and the Bulgarian Levski Committee and Vasil Levski Foundation – in Odessa, Bucharest, Taraclia, Thessaloniki, Skopje, etc.

Growing in number are the Bulgarian schools that provide the opportunity for children to

study their native language and history far from their native land. Annually we meet the teachers there, we are invited as guests in the schools in London, Vienna, Bratislava and Bolgrade. We cooperate fruitfully with the management of their association, we send our children's books to Bulgarian kids abroad. Our meetings in Vienna in "Haus Wittgenstein"



International seminar on Levski in Vienna University (2014)



Exhibition in Brussels, Kingdom of Belgium (2009)

gave rise to the idea of an international students' seminar in Karlovo in 2013 with the participation of students from Bulgaria, Austria, Germany Poland and France under the initiative and support of Prof. Liubka Lipcheva-Pranzheva, Borislav Petranov and Ambassador Her Excellency Elena Shekerletova.

Besides the photo documental exhibition on the Apostle, our missionary around the world has been a publication about him from 2011– "Vasil Levski – The Apostle of the Bulgarian Freedom" in 8 languages:



A publication about Vasil Levski in eight languages



Opening of the exhibition in the European Parliament in Brussels (2009)

English French, German, Spanish Italian, Hungarian, Norwegian and Russian. This read is addressed to the foreign readership and aims to present the personality, ideals and deeds of Vasil Levski. The book was published under the so-called Norwegian program with the support of the Embassy of Norway, the Bulgarian-

Norwegian association in Oslo and its Chairperson Dr. Venelina Kostova.

The book was presented in some of the Bulgarian Cultural Institutes in Paris, Vienna, Budapest, Cegléd, Bratislava, Moscow, etc. It went on to be distributed in a lot of public libraries on the European Continent and beyond – in North America: The USA Canada as well as South America: Argentina, as well as Seoul,

Tokyo, China and Australia. Thus the Bulgarian National hero – The Apostle of the Bulgarian Freedom found followers to his relevant humanistic ideas today on five continents. The ideas of freedom, democracy, equality between different in nationality and religion people. Vasil Levski is probably the best image representing Bulgaria around the world.



Exhibition in the Bulgarian Cultural Institute in Paris (2007)



A portrait of Vasil Levski, painted by Sergey Ivoylov
National Military and History Museum

Vasil Levski (Vasil Ivanov Kunchev) was born on 6th July 1837 (old calendar system) in Karlovo in the family of an influential craftsman-painter. He had a difficult childhood. He was an orphan at 14 and took it upon himself to tend to his big family. He studied at the Class school in Karlovo. In 1852, after the death of his father, he was left to the care of his mother's brother Hadji Vasiliy, a monk from the Hilendar Monastery and then sent to Karlovo to become a 'taxidiot' (a travelling monk who gathers donations for the church) and a confessor. Vasil became his uncle's apprentice and help him gather donations for Sveta Gora /the church/ in the villages. In 1858 he became a monk under the name of Ignatiy and the following year he became a deacon. From 1861 onwards Levski dedicated his life to the struggle for freedom from the Ottoman enslaver. In 1862 he was admitted a member of the first Bulgarian Armed Organization under the command of Georgi Stoykov Rakovski. After this organized armed group disbanded, he joined the revolutionary group of Iliyo Voivoda. In the spring of 1863, he came back to Bulgaria. Being alleged in crime to the Ottoman authorities by his uncle, he then was arrested and spent 3 months in prison in Plovdiv. He was set free due to

the advocacy of Nayden Gerov, who at that time was a Russian Vice-consulate in the city.

At Easter - 1st May 1864 - in the afternoon in the Zlatna Livada range together with his friends Hadji Georgi pophrstov and hristo Vasilev Pulev, Deacon Ignatiy cut off his hair and put an end to his monk's career singing for the last time in the Karlovo church St. Virgin Mary putting on a civil suit.

With a decent education for his time, he went on to become a teacher.

For 2 years, he taught in Voyniagovo, Karlovo region. Levski was suspected of revolutionary propaganda by the Ottoman authorities and had to go to Medzhidie through Tulcha in early spring of 1866, where he hoped to meet Stefan Karadja, whom he met during his stay in Belgrade. In the village of Enikiy (today's Romania), Levski worked as a teacher for six months.

At the beginning of 1867, Levski was attracted by the next movement of the Bulgarian emigration circles in Romania and he went to Bucharest, where he contacted Rakovski. It was Rakovski's recommendation that helped him become a flag-bearer of the rebel group of Panayot Hitov. In April the armed group crossed the Danube near Tutrakan and traversed Deliorman, Razgrad and Osmanpazar region, where

there was a high concentration of Ottoman settlers. The group managed to pass unnoticed and then split into two- one part went to Kotel, and the other - to Sliven. After a three-month trek in the Balkan mountain, the armed group went to Serbia.

Levski participated in the Second Bulgarian Armed Organization in Belgrade in 1868.

After the failure of the armed group tactics, Vasil Levski came up with the idea of transferring the center of preparation for the national-liberation revolution into the Bulgarian lands.

In the spring of 1868, Levski went to Bucharest. In Wallachia, among the great centers of Bulgarian emigration, he shared with close friends and acquaintances his thoughts and sought ground for the ideas that stirred him. At that time, immigration in Bucharest was split in three ideological groups: Russian supporters, dualists and supporters of the old revolutionary movement. As for organization, emigration was actually split in two: old thinkers, Russian supporters represented by the Virtuous Company and the young ones - revolutionaries and dualists, i.e. ex-freedom fighters and members of the Central Secret Committee, who are gathered around the Bulgarian society in Bucharest, who actually support Levski's plans. Levski was funded and he went to Constantinople on 11th December. The Apostle hoped that passing through the ottoman capital he wouldn't be bothered by the authorities when he went into Bulgaria in order to make his first tour around the country. Everywhere he went, he talked to close confidantes and acquaintances in order to win them for the cause. In



Levski's hair, National Military and History museum

Constantinople, he met Stefan ilich, Kiro Popov and Dr. Hristo Stambolski

Then he headed for Thrace and Northern Bulgaria. His first tour was informative but also organizational. In those 2 and a half months, Levski

visited revolutionary groups in places and organized such where none existed.

At the beginning of May 1869, the Apostle, armed with the necessary proclamations and letters of attorney given to



A cross that belonged to Vasil Levski, National Military and History museum

country and to start immediate preparation for a common uprising.

In the spring of 1870, Levski entered Bulgaria again. For a year and a half, he built a network of local revolutionary committees, which he united into an Internal Revolutionary Organization (IRO), with a command center known as "Temporary Government in Bulgaria" in the town of Lovech. Documents were ratified by a seal sent from Wallachia that read: "First Department of the BRCC".

In February 1871 in Turnu Mugurele, a point was established for the connections between the internal committees and the emigration activists headed by Danail

180 Y since th of Vasil

him by representatives of the Bulgarian society in Bucharest, crossed the Danube and from Nikopol started his second tour around Bulgaria, which lasted 4 months. In Plevna, Lovech, Karlovo, Plovdiv, Perushtitsa, Pazardjik, Stara Zagora and Sliven, he founded the first revolutionary committees in Bulgaria. Then he returned to Bucharest on 26th August 1869 and together with Liuben Karavelov he participated in the founding of the Bulgarian Revolutionary Central Committee (BRCC).

For almost a year Vasil Levski tried to persuade the emigration that it was essential to transfer the center of the liberation movement into the

hristov Popov. Such a point in Bulgaria was Plevna, where An.hinov, Popov's brother, who was assigned a distributor and receiver of the letters and arms that came to and went from Lovech.

Under levski's leadership, the committees deployed active propaganda among the population and this gave rise to the preparation towards a factual national revolution. The creation of IRO as a center for the liberation movement made Vasil Levski set out to develop its ideological and political platform. At the heart of his vision is his endless faith in the "natural power of the people".

In the summer of 1871, a draft statute was developed of the IRO - A "Regulation of the People for the Liberation of the Bulgarian People". The main idea of the statute was to transfer the command center of the revolution into the country in order to sway the liberation activities from foreign influences and base it on a new democratic grounds.



A small plate that belonged to Vasil Levski, National Military and History museum

The second important principle in the "Regulations" suggested the creation of a common command center. This was the Bulgarian Revolutionary Central Committee (BRCC) in Bulgaria. With the growth of the IRO, its management became harder and so in mid 1871 Dimitar Obshti and Angel Kunchev agreed to become Levski's assistants. They were sent to him by Panayot Hitov through Danail Hristov Popov.

At the end of 1871, the revolutionary emigration in Bucharest, united under the BRCC, led by Liuben Karavelov on the one hand, and the Internal Organization led by Levski on the other, concluded that for the success

committees in his hands. Those were the relations between the IRO and the BRCC. The unity was signed in such a way so that the Internal Organization kept its independence. While still in Bucharest in May-June 1872, the Apostle tried to expand his influence amongst the emigration circles. Levski returned to Bulgaria on 1st July 1872 and made structural changes in the IRO. The summer and autumn of 1872 were a very productive period in the activity of the Bulgarian revolutionaries. The committee network was expanded, regional centers were established – Goliam Izvor, Pazardjik, Stara Zagora, Sliven, Turnovo, Lovech. Besides, a system of military



Vasil Levski establishes a revolution committee. Painted by Vasil Stoilov, National Military and History Museum

Years the Birth Levski

of the liberation movement, a unity of the forces was needed. A general meeting was held in the Romanian capital lasting from 29th April to 4th May 1872.

The delegates voted a program and a statute choosing Karavelov as the chairperson of the Bulgarian Revolutionary Central Committee. Levski, whose activity within the country was acknowledged, became Chief Apostle for the country. His document is largely based on the "Regulations" from 1871 but with a lot of amendments. Compromises were made in the name of unity. In the statute, Levski conceded that the headquarters should be in Bucharest not in the country, but an additional text was included which postulated that the BRCC had the right to issue Letters of Attorney that gave certain people powers to represent the Committee everywhere and in everything. Such powers were received just by Levski and thus he managed to keep the management of the internal

leaders of the committees was introduced. Feeling that the movement was growing in strength, Levski issued a password for an immediate preparation for an uprising, ordering the development of mobilization plans and raising funds for the purchase of weaponry.

In the conditions of this progress, some signs of degradation emerged. Levski's first assistant – Dimitar Obshti – began to question his authority, to spread intrigues and disagreements among the committees. At the same time, the preparation for the uprising is under way and the organization is faced with a serious problem with the funding of the organization.



Revolver "Gaser" M 1870, 11mm, belonged to Vasil Levski, National Military and History Museum

The donations that came from inside the country turned out to be extremely insufficient. The sharp shortage of funding that the organization was suffering from led some of the revolutionaries to seek funding in all possible ways despite the danger of possible disclosures. Dimitar Obshti neglected Levski's objections and together with activists from the Teteven committee decided to rob the Turkish post office at the Arabakonak Pass and on 22nd September 1872 he pulled out the robbery. A lot of money came into the hands of the robbers – 125,000 Grosh.

The Turkish police force responded immediately. They took immediate measures and caught Dimitar Obshti and a lot of revolutionaries from Teteven and Orhaniy (today's Botevgrad)

A special trial was organized in Sofia. Massive arrests



A chain from the prison in Sofia, National Military and History Museum

followed of committee activists, which neutralized IRO and it began to disband. Vasil Levski paid a visit to Lovech to save the archives of the organization. He was caught after being betrayed at the Inn of Kukrin. In front of

the court Levski acted with dignity and did not deny his organizational activity. He came across as implementing the will of the Central Committee outside Bulgaria but he did not disclose the participants in the revolution activities. On 14th January 1873 the investigation commission issued a conclusive record with the death sentence, which was later confirmed 8 days later by Sultan Abdul Azis.

Vasil Levski was hanged on the 6th February (today's 18th February) 1873 in the outskirts of Sofia.

After the Apostle's demise the BRCC suffered a crisis which was overcome at the end of 1875 by activists of the younger generation of revolutionaries like Georgi Benkovski, Panayot Volov and Todor Kableshev. They drew upon the already created by Levski committees and started an accelerated preparation for an uprising in the spring of 1876. The April uprising is the zenith of the activities of the revolutionary forces and led to the involvement of Western Europe and Russia in the Bulgarian issue and consequently to our liberation from the Ottoman slavery.

In the permanent chronological exhibition of the National Military and History Museum, emblematic cultural valuables are on display related to the life of Vasil Levski. The window dedicated to the Apostle hosts two exhibits donated in 1940 by his niece Sofia Zidarova.

These are Levski's small plate and his cross presented to him as a gift by his uncle archimandrite Vasiliiy from his visit to Jerusalem in 1861. The cross comes with a chain and its face depicts Christ's Crucifixion. Next to these exhibits are Levski's personal gun – a revolver "Gaser", M 1870, 11 mm; his hair, which was cut on 1st May 1864 in Zlatna Livada area and the chains where he was chained after his capture by the Turkish police. Those cultural valuables were presented to the Museum in 1942 after being in the Ethnographic museum before that.

The life and activity of Vasil Levski are presented in the permanent exhibition of the National Military and History Museum by three works of art. These are two portraits of the Apostle painted in oil paint by Sergey Ivoylov and Dionisii Donchev as well as the emblematic painting by Vasil Stoilov entitled "Levski Establishes a Revolutionary Committee".

There is one more exhibit in the collections of the National Military and History Museum directly related to the revolutionary activities of the Apostle. That is a knife with a case, which came in 1938 from the Palace with instructions that it was used by Levski when he pretended to be a Turkish authority during his tours of the country.

**Nikolay Ivanov, PhD
 National Military and History Museum**



Academician Konstantin Kosev

This year we commemorate 180 years since the birth of the legendary Apostle of Freedom – Vasil Levski. Born in Karlovo in 1837, he died tragically when he was barely 35. During his relatively short life, this unique Bulgarian managed to accomplish feats so great that he has rightly earned his leading place in the pantheon of the Bulgarian history. A truly unique achievement! What was he like, though and what exactly did he do? What is his contribution?

The sinister gallows in Sofia 144 years ago unintentionally reminds us of the Jesus' Crucifixion. The analogy is striking. Just like Jesus, at almost the same age, Levski seems to have resurrected after the hanging. Up until his death he was almost unknown. He was only known to some of his adherents related to the struggle for freedom. After the hanging his popularity began to grow drastically. What's interesting is that the physical absence of Levski gives rise to his popularity. After the Liberation, Levski came to be known as a national hero in no time – he became an all people's icon.

People worship him without even realizing clearly what exactly his particular merit to history is. Levski seems to attract the common interest with his mysterious secrecy. The information about his life and activity are scarce. The highly conspiracy nature of his activity covers everything related to the Apostle. The only piece of information that we have is his partly kept by accident correspondence. Those are the letters he received and sent. But even these authentic documents are a hard source of information for they are riddled with passwords, pseudonyms, codes, metaphoric phrases

and other types of encryption that need to be specifically decoded.

What is interesting though is that despite the scarce authentic information, a large number of authors and artists of other genre dedicate numerous and versatile works to the life deed of Vasil Levski. Endless memoirs of contemporaries, scientific historical collections, documental publications and literary works are known by all kinds of people of culture and art. All these are one way or another motivated by the emotional charge of admiration. And this also refers to the strictly scientific historical research.

But since the factual database is so limited, a lot of authors just let go of their fantasy. This is evident in the memories of contemporaries and the works of fiction. Sometimes it comes to absurd statements and clearly made up stories. Something paradoxical is then born. The limited information on the Apostle in combination with the growing interest in the person and his deeds turn him into a legend. Truth and rumor intertwine in an incredible combination which hampers his objective and relevant recognition. To such an extent is it hampered that even his major contribution to history becomes blurred – what he built as the "Internal Revolutionary Organization" (IRO). This was a strictly conspiracy structure with a dense network of private revolutionary committees all over the country compliant to one governing body with a statute, a program and strict discipline. Through this organization Levski sought, brought up and trained a myriad of heroic Bulgarian men who were ready to die for freedom.

In Memory of The Apostle

Academician Konstantin Kosev

Heroes, as is known, are not born. They are raised and brought up. IRO became a real hotbed for heroic Bulgarians. And if in 1868 the so-called Hadjidimitrovs were only 120 people, at the end of 1872 his number had grown to be thousands. All this due to the IRO. Levski was trying to make the struggle for national liberation an all people's cause. This is the idea behind his strategy – to attract as many people as possible to the organization.

IRO is Levski's greatest achievement of crucial importance to the resurrection of the modern Bulgarian state.

It is in fact the first Bulgarian political organization that lays the foundations for the

Padishah into a real modern people with confidence and audacious claims for independence in their own country.

As is known, it was thanks to the IRO that the Bulgarian liberation cause sparked a serious crisis on the international arena and the Bulgarian Issue was central in the agenda of the European diplomatic negotiations for its urgent political resolution.

In the course of creating this unique organization, Levski displayed a stunning combination of most impressive human qualities and moral virtues – radiant patriotism, iron will and firm character, astounding audacity, bravery and cool, physical power and sports abilities

person with a fresh mood and contagious optimism. With an angelic voice, he was helpful and generous, far-seeing with the right judgment for people, he was preventive and thoughtful with unbelievable organizational flexibility, a perfect master of conspiracy, a well-spoken orator with a mesmerizing influence over those listening to him, he was precise and resourceful, honest and humane with his Christian morals and fabulous modesty, brilliant intellectual skills and remarkable memory, natural intelligence with enormous intellectual potential. Levski artistically gifted and a master of disguise, he had colossal spiritual energy, amazing devotion and a complete readiness for self-sacrifice.

Levski dedicated literally all his life to the liberation cause. In the name of this cause he voluntarily robbed himself of the normal human comforts, the family, home coziness and living comforts, professional career, he got rid of the relief in calmness in order to live in daily extreme pressure with the constant risk of a deadly threat. To Levski this was no whim, nor was it a pathological masochism, but a deeply recognized necessity and a specific spiritual attitude for a lifestyle.

The versatile natural gifts of the Apostle helped him come across as a brilliant propagandist capable of imposing respect and trust as well as stimulating the love for the motherland. In many places all over Bulgaria Levski found and attracted ardent patriots and adherents who whole-heartedly adopted his ideas demonstrated unconditional readiness for cooperation. Feeling the support of so many people in the whole country, Levski grew even more confident. Thus he gradually matured as the true leader of the Bulgarian National Liberation Movement in the years of the Revival. It can be said that owing to what he did, it was possible for the April Uprising to break, which opened the way to the modern Bulgarian National State.



maturity of the Bulgarian people as a political subject on the international arena and as an independent factor in the Eastern Issue.

In this sense, through IRO, Levski helped turn the Bulgarians from timid slaves and obedient adherents to the

with a lion's leap, flash-like reflexes and agility, incredible psychological and physical stamina. He was strict and demanding, yet with a sharp sense of justice, wise with a rationally pragmatic attitude and determination in his actions. Levski was a radiant

I was looking at his clear eyes, I was listening to his truthful words and I painted him

Prof. Plamen Vulchev, a painter

I grew up among the proud joyful shouts of our Revival leaders and revolutionaries. This was inevitable as my father the painter Petar Vulchev had turned our home into a studio where the portraits of these great men were born. The inspiration and the passion,

similarity that I particularly sought, was not there. Then, as I doubled my efforts, I adjusted the so-typical bow-tie and believed that this approach would dispel all doubts that this was Levski.

Those were the reasons I took to Levski and I still do. With

years gone by, I grew jealous of this lovable image. I was so much into the features of this person that I drew him by memory only. And even now when I paint, I only use my imagination and never a photo. And if I ever succeed, it is all

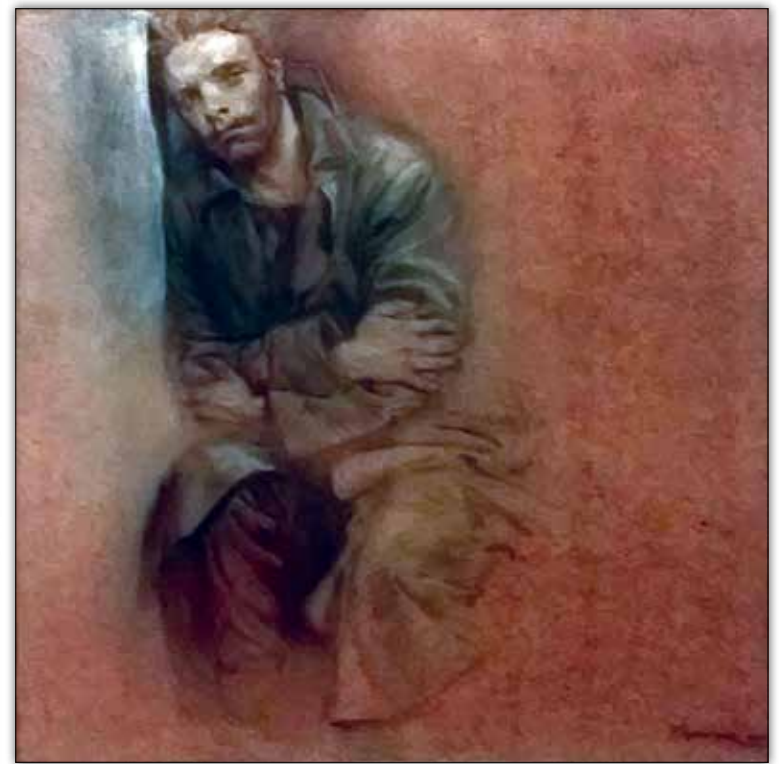
due to this in fact – to the true love that I embrace him with.

Today, when I go back to my life and to the stuff that came out of my brush, I come to the conclusion that I drew Levski inspired by my dad, who took so much after the hero, with the same virtues he had. Later destiny introduced me to another great worthy Bulgarian who also radiated those same virtues. This was the great Bulgarian painter Aleksander Poplilov, who poured his love and adulation to the Apostle in a number of portraits, paintings, drawings and illustrations, most of which are pearls in the treasury of our art.

I'll say it once more – I had the exclusive opportunity to have role models in art and in life who radiate with the features of the Apostle and if I have sporadic moments of

success in the interpretation of the image of this most beloved son of Bulgaria, it was due to the fact that I sat before him, I was looking at his clear eyes, I was listening to his truthful words, I vowed in him and I painted him. This is where I draw my courage to freely select the postures, to seek unexpected conditions of the spirit and discover unsuspected recourse.

That is why I receive the warmest of the awards: the recognition of the Bulgarians from all walks of life that I have drawn their Levski – the one who they carry in their hearts. This fills me with confidence and makes me even more confidently to follow his principles and his example. No matter how inconspicuous my height is, I still keep emulating him.



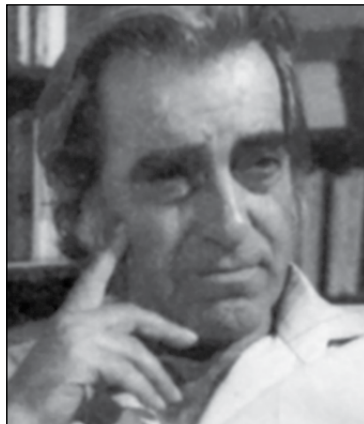
with which my dad built this gallery of images, got hold of me, too. Like a domestic pet I used to potter around him and did what was only natural to do: imitate. But Vasil Levski appealed to me most. Surely it was the shocking stories about his devotion to the deed for Bulgaria and his tragic demise that were to blame. But it was probably also the feeling I had for that special emphasis that my dad would place on the creation of this image and the responsibility he felt when he stood in front of that Bulgarian.

The preparation for the portrait composition that was the cherry on the pie in this 'gallery' was not just longer. It was full of facts that blew my childhood imagination.

Dozens of times I have naively tried to draw Levski. Sometimes, according to my own criteria, I succeeded. But more often than not, the

Who Levski Belongs to?

Prof. Nikolay Genchev



Проф. Николай Генчев

Who does Vasil Levski belong to? This grand and light human figure!

Mostly to Bulgaria and the Bulgarians. Levski was born in Bulgaria, he grew up under the wings of the Balkan mountain, he lived from beginning to end amongst his people. He fought

for his people's freedom and future and he died for their happiness.

The giant son of Bulgaria, Levski was an ingenious creator of its biggest historical era – the Bulgarian Revival, the Bulgarian 19th Century. Without him, without the thoughts and deeds of this unique genius, the Bulgarian Revival would have been much poorer in spirit, much more limited in ideas, much less beautiful for it would have lacked the boldness and bravery immanent to every grand and single-minded era.

But Levski comes not only from the depths of our history, he not only ornaments the Bulgarian Renaissance, he does enter mightily into the new times in order to stay for real in

the Bulgarian historical reality. Hardly have the children of our lands learned to say 'mama' when they also learn about Levski. Among the stories of proud kings and beautiful Cinderellas and wonderful remote lands, as a legend in the souls of the little Bulgarian kids emerges the image of the blue-eyed Apostle. They see his portrait in the school hall, they recite Vazov's poems, they thrill, experience and glee when hearing his every ordeal, he sinks into their souls, he makes them better and more humane.

Levski did not write odes of Bulgaria, he did not say, as Rakovski did, that there is nothing holier than the Fatherland. He did not cry like Karavelov in front of his 'Dear

Fatherland', nor did he sing the inspiring songs of Botev. He simply and humanely expressed his love as a son of Bulgaria by fighting and perishing for her future in order to stay in her history as the greatest and complete patriot.

But Levski does not belong only to Bulgaria and the Bulgarians. His ideas of freedom and revolution, his accomplishments and mostly the unsurpassed in the history of liberation movements National Revolutionary Organization, his looks into the future where he projected a sensible human world and his immortal spirit belong to the whole human kind. With all this, the blue-eyed boy from Karlovo became one of the

greatest citizens of the world, he placed his name side by side



with the greatest men that the 19th Century gave us.

From the book "Levski, the Revolution and the Future World"

The Image of Levski in Foreign Literature

Svetoslav Dimitrov, ULSIT Student

Vasil Ivanov Kunchev was a strong personality, ideologist and organizer of the Bulgarian National Revolution, the founder of the Internal Revolutionary Organization (IRO) and the Bulgarian Revolutionary Central Committee (BRCC).

Despite his youth, the Deacon was a man who was ahead of his time. And despite the initial distrust towards his plans, he did not give up the idea for freedom and the creation of a democratic republic. Tirelessly and with a heart that does not take 'no' for an answer, he traversed the motherland under different pseudonyms:

The Deacon, the Little Deacon, the Apostle, the Main Bookkeeper, Tropcho, Vasil Luvski, Derwishouglu Aslan Effendi, Aslanoolu Vidinli, Afuz Aga, David Mehmed Kurdjalu, Dragoycho, Deacon Ignatij Vasil Ginin, Hadji Assana, Ibriama Anadollu, Dragan Kurdjaliata and other pseudonyms and fake names.

It is interesting to trace though the image of Levski in foreign literature. In 1877 Ilya Ivanovich gave the first evaluation of the importance and the deed of Levski in "Fighters and Martyrs for the Freedom of Bulgaria" – a collection of stories from the history of the Bulgarian

uprisings, published in issue number 1 and 3 of the "Severen Vestnik" St. Petersburg.

The Slovenian poet Anton Ashkertz published in his "Fourth Collection of Poems", issued in Ljubljana, 13 poems-rapsodies that glorify the struggles of the Bulgarian people for liberation from the Turkish slavery. One of the poems is dedicated to Levski.

Konstantin Irechek wrote of the deeds and life of the Apostle as well in the complement of the "Maritsa Newspaper" in the article "Principality of Bulgaria".

In 1890 the Armenian historian Agop Ulupian printed the book "The April Uprising – 1876 in Russia", where special attention is paid to Levski. At the same time, an anonymous author published

a brochure in Armenian in Petersburg entitled "The Deacon". The life of the legendary person Vasil Levski is described in it.

After his visit to Bulgaria in 1950, the French poet Paul Eluard had a look at the birth home of the Apostle. A little later, he wrote the sonnet "The Winners", dedicated to "The Lion of Bulgaria", included in the famous "Antology of

Modern French Poetry". The sonnet is foreworded: "If I win, I win for all the people, If I lose, I only lose myself...".

In the series "The Life of Remarkable People", the Russian writer Alexander Stekolnikov wrote a fictionalized biography dedicated to Vasil Levski.

The Romanian authors Petre Konstantinesku-Yash and Chestmar Amort also pay their respect to the personality of the Apostle. They wrote the book "Vasil Levski and the Revolutionary Organization".

The fate and deed of Levski have been studied by historians. The Polish historian Apolonium Zavliski wrote the "Committees of Vasil Levski", and the Argentinian historian Fario Manon Himenes created his famous work "An Apostle and a Prophet", where he defined the Deacon as "a prophet of the future and a flag-bearer of freedom".

It is clear that the image of Vasil Levski attracts the authors who have visited our country. They have received a touch of Bulgaria by getting to know the Apostle, the spirit and the values of our people. And to all of us, Levski is the personification of the self-sacrifice in the name of freedom.



Vasil Levski in the storm, painted by Zhechko Popov

On the Grave of Levski...

Mercia MacDermott

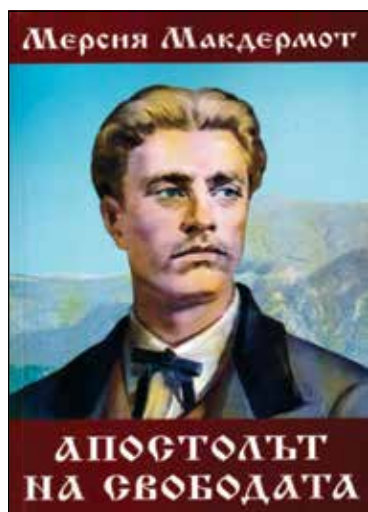
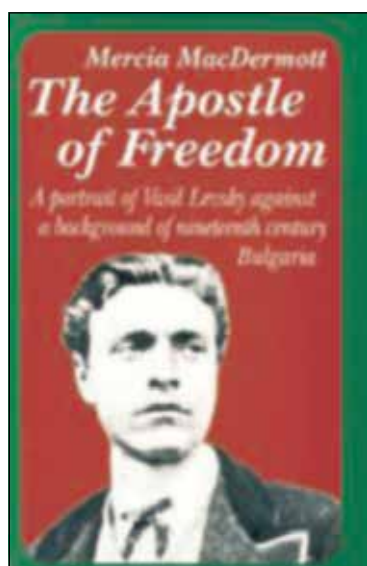
In 1967, the great London publisher “George Allan and Unwin” located at the entrance of the British Museum printed in English the book by Mercia MacDermott called “The Apostle of Freedom. A Portrait of Vasil Levski against the



Мерсия Макдермот

Background of Bulgaria during the 19th Century”. Distributed all over the world, this book sparked the international recognition of a little-known personality up to then.

It is worth mentioning the final lines of the book on the periodically brought up arguments on the grave of the Apostle.



“Levski’s grave hasn’t been discovered yet. But in fact a grave seems totally unnecessary for a person that has remained alive in the memory of their people and so deeply loved.

History has rightly given Levski the only reward that he ever wanted for himself or promised those who took part in his deeds: immortality in the memory of posterity.

To them Levski sets an ever fresh example of integrity and moral purity – he is the living proof of the weakness of the tyrants and the unbreakable dignity of man.

For what does the tyrant gain if a land after 500 years of slavery bears no slaves but men like Vasil Levski?”

This excerpt the author used to quote as her opinion as to why the search for the remains of Levski is a pointless and needless activity.

Let’s consider that...



The team of the Newspaper “Za Bukvite – O Pismeneh” extends special thank-yous to Ms. Valeria Veleva for her support and assistance in the preparation of the materials for this issue.

VASIL LEVSKI OF THE PEOPLE

Today’s century is a century of the freedom.

◆ ◆ ◆
People’s business is above all else.

◆ ◆ ◆
Brotherhood with everyone, regardless of religion and nationality.

◆ ◆ ◆
Think twice, for deceived we have been a lot.

◆ ◆ ◆
Support should not be given to fools.

◆ ◆ ◆
Everyone should be held accountable for their deeds.

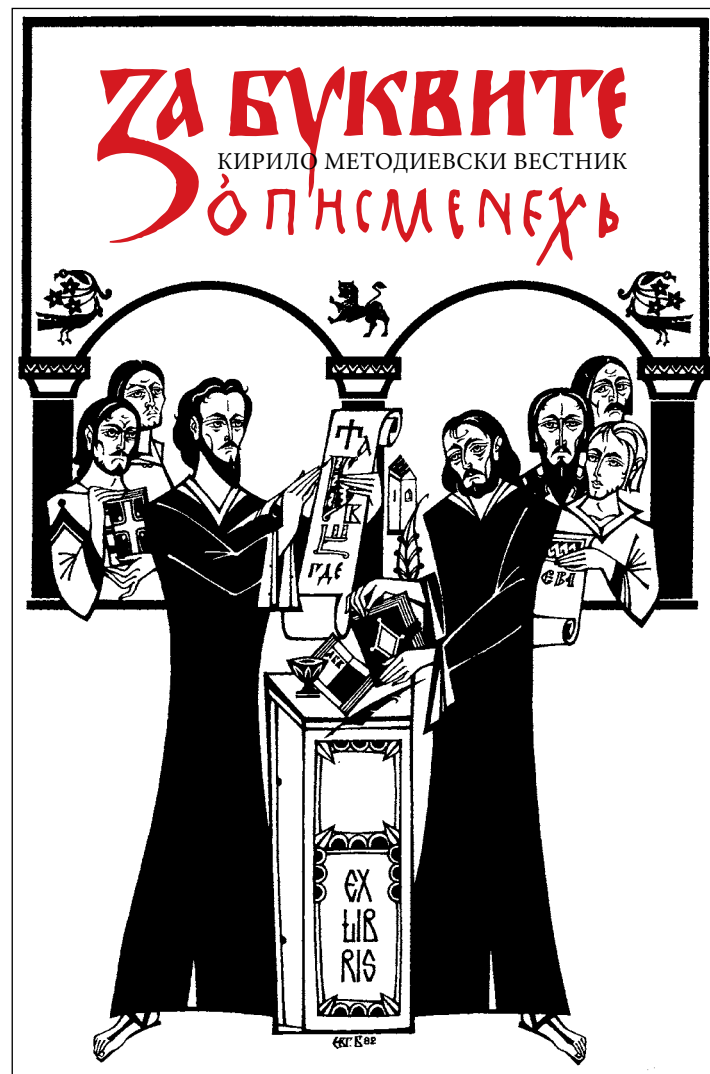
◆ ◆ ◆
We have been bitten many times, but yet no shy we are.

◆ ◆ ◆
We are dealing with the lives of 7 million Bulgarians, we should be mature enough in our deeds.

◆ ◆ ◆
Names should be changed – many have become famous.

◆ ◆ ◆
It’s all in our mutual powers.

Work on this issue was finished on the date of the birth of the Apostle of Freedom – 6th July 2017, when in 1837 was born the immortal son of Bulgaria – Vasil Levski.



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This issue is dedicated to the 180th Anniversary of the Birth of the Apostle.

Deacon Vasil Levski

O my Mother, dear Motherland
Why weep you so mournfully, so plaintively?
And you, raven, cursed bird -
On whose grave croak you with such a
dread?

Ah, I know – I know you're weeping, Mother
Because you are a dismal slave,
Because your holy voice, Mother
Is a helpless voice - a voice in the wilderness.

Weep! There, near the edge of Sofia town
Stretches – I saw it – a dismal gallows
And one of your sons, Bulgaria
Hangs from it with a terrible power.

Winter croons its evil song,
Gales sweep thistle across the field
And cold and frost and hopeless weeping
Heap sorrow on your heart.

The raven croaks dreadfully, ominously
Dogs and wolves howl in the fields,
Old people pray to God with fervor
Women weep, children cry.

He is dead already! A heroic power
your tyrants hid underground!
O my Mother, dear Motherland
weep for him, curse the destiny!

Translated by © Thomas Butler

This is the first version of the poem "The Hanging of Vasil Levski". It was published in the newspaper "Bulgaria" issue 22 of the 12th August 1876. The final version of the poem was published in 1876 Calendar under the image of Vasil Levski, and then it was published in "Hristo Botiyov Compositions" edited by Zahari Stoyanov, 1888, page 43.



Vasil Levski in front of the Turkish Court, painted by Kalina Taseva



The hanging of Vasil Levski. Painted by Boris Angelushev (1942)