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Bulgaria's Freemasons - from Bogomils to the Failed 21st Century Project

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Several **Bulgarian Freemasons** have been interviewed for this story and their opinions are included below. Most, however, spoke only under condition of remaining anonymous.

Dimitar Nedkov is considered by many the top expert on **Freemasonry** in Bulgaria. He was initiated into one of the first Bulgarian Blue Lodges shortly after the fall of Communism in Eastern Europe in the early 1990s. He is an active participant in the restoration of **Freemasonry** in Bulgaria and has served as Grand Chaplain of the Grand Lodge of Bulgaria. Nedkov is a Mason 33 Degree (the highest), co-founder of the Supreme Council, 33 of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite, former Grand Orator of the Grand Lodge of the Ancient, Free and Accepted Masons in Bulgaria. An avid Masonic scholar, he is the author of “The Freemasons Returned to Bulgaria” (1998) and “The Third Millennium of **Freemasonry**” (2000), “The Lessons of **Freemasonry** (2005). His last book, a fiction - “33 **The Menace Dan Brown**” appeared on the book stands in December. One of the founders of the Masonic magazine Svetlina (Light) and the web site freemasonry.bg. Nedkov is a member of the International Academy of the Illuminati in Rome

The article below is also based on Nedkov’s book “The Freemasons Returned to Bulgaria” and the book “Masonic Lodges in Bulgaria” by Dr. Mitko Ivanov.

Secret Society

Nowadays, a Masonic Temple can be found in just about every city, but in the history of human kind, there is hardly another organization so much surrounded by mystery, intrigue, secrecy, opposition, and controversy than **Freemasonry**.

No one has been both revered and hated by the entire spectrum of society as the **Freemason**. Freemasons are honored by many for their humanitarian beliefs and as the true founders of contemporary democracy, and at the same time, despite the fact they are required to obey the law and banned from discussing religion or politics, Freemasons face the staunch opposition of groups, often as irreconcilable among themselves as they are critical to the **Freemasonry** - from Christianity to Islam, from Fascism to Communism, and almost everyone in between.

Freemasons have long declared that **Freemasonry** is not a religion or its substitute; however, the roots of the resistance towards them are most often attributed to the Roman Catholic Church. The controversy stems from the fact that many **Freemason** teachings (mainly deism) don’t align with the official church’s doctrine – **Freemasonry**

is based on the belief that the Universe is the work of what they call The Grand Architect, who, as the expression of Deity, governs both society and nature.

According to **Dimitar Nedkov**, the membership of a Lodge is a representative sample of society because all kinds of people are behind it - white and black, Christians and Muslims, monarchists and democrats, rich and poor, powerful and ordinary voters, bad and good people. The Masonic rites and rules make, however, all members strive for harmony in human relations, the harmony that is missing more and more in real life, he says.

Freemasons and their history have intrigued scores of Masonic and non-Masonic researchers, but, as much as everything else, the exact establishment of the **Freemason** societies remains surrounded by mystery and controversy. For historians, the origins of **Freemasonry** range from Noah's Ark through the King Solomon's Temple and the Great Pyramids in Egypt to the Middle Ages.

The one certain fact is that those societies were created by free men, people, who due to their skills, abilities, knowledge of their craft, were allowed to live independently and move from place to place. They could have been the builders of the Pyramids or of the King Solomon's Temple. In fact the King of Tyre, Master Hiram and King Solomon are considered in Masonic rituals the three founding Grand Masters. It was the King of Tyre, who sent Solomon of Israel Master Hiram, architects, workmen and material for the Temple's construction.

In the Middle Ages, unlike the feudal serfs, builders, painters, and stonemasons moved freely across Europe to work on ambitious cathedral and fortress projects, most likely giving the name of today's Freemasons. Their tools - the compass, the square, the hammer, the chisel, the trowel and others, became the base of the symbolic of **Freemasonry**.

The place used by those workmen to rest, eat and sleep was called a lodge, a term currently used to designate not as much the location of the Freemasons' meetings, but rather the basic unit in their organization. While working together for a long time on the huge construction projects, the builders and their families supported and helped fellow members of the group, growing extremely close and fond of each other. To these days this brotherly love is the cornerstone of **Freemasonry**, where members are called brothers and their organizations - Brotherhood or Brethren.

There is also the widely explored possible connection between the Freemasons and the Order of the Knights Templar, founded in 1117 by the first Crusaders to protect Christian pilgrims, and operating from that same Temple of King Solomon. By the 13th century the order grew into an organization known for its power and wealth. In 1307, Philip IV of France, with an eye on their riches, ordered all Knights Templar to be arrested and executed. Those surviving the massacre escaped to Scotland and, according to some historians, began using the then more unassuming name Freemasons to identify themselves.

The transformation of the order of the Knights Templar to the **Freemason** society is just one theory, but there certainly has been a connection between the wealthiest organization at the time, funding the ambitious construction projects in Europe and the workmen actually building castles and cathedrals.

With time, large-scale buildings gradually stopped being erected throughout Europe. Work lodges began losing members and accepting people from all trades and

professions, turning them from craftsmen guilds or operative masons into fraternities - alliances of individuals united around common ideals i.e. speculative masons.

June 24, 1717, when the first Grand Lodge, the Grand Lodge of England, was founded, is often mentioned as the official date of the beginning of **Freemasonry**. Grand Lodges quickly expanded to Ireland, Scotland, France and North America where the first President of the United States, George Washington, became also the first Grand Master.

Today, there are an estimated 5 million Freemasons all over the world. They are organized in lodges, mutually recognizing each other i.e. being in amity. Two main **Freemasonry** branches do, however, exist - the United Grand Lodge of England (UCLÉ) and the one, considered of the European continental tradition - the Grand Orient de France (GODF). Both branches call each other regular and are not in amity. Because of its larger membership, UCLÉ is often referred to as the regular branch.

Freemasons have a strict hierarchic system of degrees – Entering Apprentice, Fellow Craft and Master Mason. Each Lodge also has specific rituals, all, however, based on the symbolic of the medieval mason's tools, mainly the square and the compass, and their architectural use.

According to Nedkov, the degrees have only symbolic meaning and correspond to the level of knowledge of the Initiated. The Grand Master is, for example, just a supreme administrator of the Lodge, responsible for preserving the tradition. A higher degree only means more knowledge of the craft of the Freemasons, Nedkov says.

The Bulgarian **Freemason** expert further points out that the Brotherhood, with its principles and rites, creates the conditions for people to begin thinking about who they are as human beings, and about their role on earth, which, he says, is a very rare opportunity and the key to the biggest wealth a person can acquire in their life.

Freemasons also reject speculations that they are a secret society, surrounded by mystery and conspiracy, and prefer to call themselves esoteric. They state as their main goal “the building of the temple of humanity” where each individual is one single brick striving for perfection. Achieving perfection and brotherly love for others are the cornerstone ideals of the members of the Masonic lodge, while rituals are said to be needed in order for a member to move from the profane world to the one of **freemasonry**.

Nedkov, too, insists that there is nothing from the world of Freemasons that is inaccessible for others and points out libraries, the internet, the movies - everywhere one can read or see everything about the mysterious Masons, their principles, ideals, ways of existence and ritual systems, adding the secrecy for everyone is only to find their own way to decode everything that is happening in the Lodge.

Bulgaria's highest-degree Mason further rejects talk about conspiracy surrounding the Brotherhood and beliefs that **Freemasonry** is a secret force, pulling the strings of business and politics around the world.

“If this was possible, the world would be a much more orderly place, but we witness just the contrary. The Masons are not the fathers of democracy or of dictatorship. The creators of any form of society and government have always been the people with their public leanings during a current historical period. In this sense, the possibilities of **Freemasonry** are much, much weaker than the colossal influence of different religions for example. Yes, if **Freemasonry** is indeed the expression of the values of a

civic society, and if this society is the base of the pyramid of a democratic form of government, then it is the Brotherhood that pulls some strings,” Nedkov says, but explains the negative perceptions are the **Freemasonry**’s own fault over the deep conservativeness of traditions and the way the Lodges function, leading to the alienation young people.

According to the Bulgarian Mason, the Brethren had turned into a global museum, a world library with values and spiritual practices unintelligible for young people.

Nedkov firmly discards speculations about sinister Masonic rituals with the calling of demons and human sacrifice, saying, the staging of rituals, especially apocalyptic ones, in human communication has always been of great interest, this is why people make up these stories about the Brotherhood while the sacrifice we make to our own delusions is what terrifies us and leads to unforeseeable consequences.

Freemasons also like to disprove the common belief that one can become a member of their society only by invitation. In fact, most Lodges discourage direct recruitment of members. Anyone can join by application, which the members of the lodge have a certain period to examine and consider. The candidate must, however, be approved unanimously. Membership requirements include: being a free-born man of a certain age, of good reputation and morals, of healthy mind and body, believing in the Supreme Architect of the Universe, and being able to provide references, often including two from members of the Masonic Lodge.

At initiation, candidates are asked pledge to abide by the rules of the lodge, keep the secrecy of the Masonic rituals and symbols and declare belief to the Supreme Architect or Being without having to interpret what this Being means to him.

Nedkov points out that one can tell immediately if someone is a Mason in life if he had been initiated in **Freemasonry** the right way.

“When someone publicly declares himself a **Freemason**, he does not declare his membership. He only declares publicly the state of his mind and spirit. There has never been a ban to announce one’s belonging to the Brotherhood. But one cannot reveal the belonging of someone else without their personal permission. The practicing of the trade of **Freemasonry** is a personal self-determination and state of mind. Only the individual, who had voluntarily taken this road, can give explanations. Only history has the right, without asking you, to declare you a Mason or not,” the Bulgarian Mason explains.

The tradition to not allow women to join dates from the Middle Ages, when they were not considered free-born individuals. Many contemporary Freemasons, including Bulgaria’s Nedkov, see this as an obsolete mandate, impeding today’s **Freemasonry**. Most Lodges hold discussions about eliminating it as many have eliminated the requirement of healthy body, which in the past stopped disabled people from joining, or the one of being a free-born man in the sense it had in the Middle Age.

Freemasonry in Bulgaria

There is no historic data of the existence of organized Masonry on the territory of the First and Second Bulgarian States (681 - 1396), but many link the roots of **Freemasonry** to Bulgaria’s **Bogomils**. Bearing in mind the proximity to Jerusalem, which was primarily accessible in those days through Bulgarian lands, it is probable that Masonic units existed in Medieval Bulgaria.

Documented **Freemasonry**, however, first appears in Bulgaria in the beginning of the 19th century. Foreigners, initiated in the Brethren, visited Bulgarian towns along the Danube River, and made the first attempts to organize Masonic Lodges and attract mainly Bulgarian merchants dealing with partners from Central and Western Europe. Bulgaria, at the time, was part of the Ottoman Empire where many Turkish high-ranking officers and servants of the Sultan led organized Masonic life, but did not allow Bulgarians to join.

Reports about the first Bulgarian **Freemason** are contradictory, but several researchers name Archimandrite Efrem from the Besarabian (today in Moldova) city of Chisinau. In 1820, Efrem became member of the Masonic Lodge “Ovidius.” Prominent Russian poet Pushkin is said to have been initiated at the same Lodge. Upon his return to Bulgaria, Archimandrite Efrem attempted to found a lodge in the Danube city of Ruse.

Ivan Vedar is, however, considered to be the real founder of the Bulgarian Regular **Freemasonry**. He studied the principles of the **Freemasonry** during his travels across Europe and was initiated in a British Lodge in Istanbul where he reached the highest level in the hierarchy of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite. Vedar was in close contact with the members of the Bulgarian Central Revolutionary Committee (BCRK) in Bucharest, Romania, who were in charge of organizing the fight for political independence in the 1870s.

Vedar introduced to **Freemasonry** many prominent Bulgarian revolutionaries and, after the Liberation, political leaders of Bulgaria. During the Russian-Turkish Liberation War (1877 – 1878), due to established **Freemason** ties between Vedar and a Turkish high-ranking officer, the Bulgarian managed to prevent the destruction of the most European Bulgarian city at the time – Ruse.

Immediately after the Liberation of Bulgaria in 1878, Ivan Vedar began organizing the first Bulgarian Regular Lodge and initiated in **Freemasonry** several fellow citizens from Ruse. When their number became sufficient, the new **Bulgarian Freemasons** requested the establishment of their own **Freemason** society.

In 1880, with a patent of the Great Orient of Portugal, the Light was illuminated at the first Bulgarian Regular Lodge named “Balkanska Zvezda” (Balkan Star), based in Ruse. Soon the activities of the Lodge spread to other Bulgarian towns. “Balkan Star” was also frequented by Prince Alexander Battenberg, the first Prince to take the Bulgarian throne. Before coming to Bulgaria, Battenberg had been a member of an Austrian Lodge. The first Bulgarian Grand Masonic Lodge was founded in the Black Sea city of Varna in 1884, but its existence was short-lived.

The young and inexperienced **Freemasonry** in Bulgaria failed to stay away from the political controversies in the new Bulgarian State. In order to avoid the discrediting of the Bulgarian **Freemasonry**, in 1887, Ivan Vedar put to sleep “Balkan Star” and soon after that the second Bulgaria Lodge “Bratstvo” (Brethren) in the capital Sofia. In the next 25 years many Bulgarians became members of foreign Lodges, mainly French and German, kept their ties, but the idea to create again Bulgarian Lodges reappeared in the beginning of the 20th century.

In 1914, the Lodge “Zaria” (Beam) was founded in Sofia and received acknowledgment for regularity from the Grand Lodge of France. **Bulgarian Freemasons** began researching the possibilities of establishing an independent Grand lodge of Bulgaria. After numerous consultations throughout Europe, in 1917, the Grand Lodge of France

gave its consent to divide “Zaria” into two Lodges – “Zora” (Dawn) and “Svetlina” (Light) so that they can form the Grand Lodge of Bulgaria.

The installment of the Grand Symbolic Lodge of Bulgaria was proclaimed on January 7, 1918 in Sofia. Its first Grand Master became General Alexander Protogerov. The **Bulgarian Freemasons** issued a declaration acknowledging the principles of the International **Freemasonry** and vowed to adhere strictly to them. The motto of the Grand Lodge was “Love, Truth and Labor.”

During the 1918 - 1940 period, the Grand Symbolic Lodge was very active in its National Orient and in International **Freemasonry**. This is generally the time when Tsar Boris III was on the Bulgarian throne (1918 – 1943). These were also times of political and social tensions. In 1920, the leader of the Agrarian Union, Alexander Stamboliyski, won the general elections. He officially acknowledged the Grand Symbolic Lodge, and this recognition was not revoked after his murder in 1923.

Lodges were established in Ruse, Varna, Plovdiv, Burgas, Pleven, Kyustendil, Yambol and Dupnitsa. Over 500 Bulgarian men were initiated as Freemasons. Many of them were prominent personalities with great public importance and recognition in Bulgaria and abroad – scientists, politicians, factory owners, bankers, merchants, diplomats and army officers. 17 Bulgarian Prime Ministers are known Freemasons. The Grand Symbolic Lodge played an important role in all aspects of life in the country.

Freemason activities were aimed at achieving a more humanitarian attitude towards Bulgaria and Bulgarians on the part of the countries winning World War I. Freemasons finally managed to earn the sympathy of the authorities and the public opinion. The Grand Symbolic Lodge was also able to receive the acknowledgment of almost all significant international Brethren; to enter in close contacts with them, and actively participate in the life of International **Freemasonry**. Bulgarian delegates took part in almost all international **Freemason** forums. The Grand Symbolic Lodge of Bulgaria became a founding member of IMA (the International **Freemason** Association) in 1921. In 1939, it also became a member of the Executive Committee. **Bulgarian Freemasons** participated in all meetings of the Convention of the IMA as well as the work of the Administrative and Consultative Committee. The Lodge was actively engaged in translating and publishing works of European authors, presenting **Freemasonry** as a humanitarian society. Bulgaria was visited by several prominent European and American Freemasons while Bulgarians were initiated in the high-degrees of the Regular **Freemasonry** in European Lodges.

In 1936, the **Bulgarian Freemasons** established the Supreme Council of the High Degrees and the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite, conferring degrees numbered from 4° up to 33°. The Grand Lodge, working with the three levels of the Blue **Freemasonry** – Entered Apprentice, Fellow Craft and Grand Master, did not become dependent of the Supreme Council.

The Bulgarian **Freemasonry** began facing some difficult times with the arrival and establishment of the nationalist and fascist ideologies in Europe in the 1930s. Under their influence, Bulgarian media launched mass discrediting of the **Freemasonry**. Despite the efforts of the Grand Lodge, backed by several civic organizations, to defend and maintain the legal existence of the Brethren, the Act for the Defense of the Nation was passed in 1940, banning **Freemason** societies in Bulgaria. The Act also legalized the local genocide of the Jewish population, carried out in pro-fascists European countries.

The Grand Symbolic Lodge of Bulgaria dismissed itself and all other Lodges even before the Act was passed while its documentation and properties were transferred out of the country. Curiously enough, the then Prime Minister, Bogdan Filov, known for his pro-German ideas and policies, Foreign Minister, Petar Gabrovski, one of the initiators of the Act, and Transport Minister, Ivan Goranov, were all known high-degree Freemasons. Bulgaria at the time became the only country where Freemasons and Jewish people were not reached by a common fate of extermination. The Bulgarian Lodges were closed, but Freemasons were not persecuted and the cabinet did not lead an active anti-Masons campaign while renowned Freemasons such as Gabrovski actively collaborated with the Nazis.

The end of World War II marked the arrival of the Communist regime in Bulgaria and placed the country under a strong Soviet dependence. The repressions against intellectuals and all democratically thinking individuals inevitably affected the Freemasons. The so-called Communist “People’s Tribunal” sentenced to death many only because they have belonged to **Freemason** societies before September 9, 1944. Freemasons were publicly declared agents of foreign intelligence services.

During the Cold War, the Communist Security Services were authorized to use all available methods of repression to not allow the resurrection of **Freemasonry** under any form. Some radical intellectuals continued to discuss in secret and in closed circles the principles of **Freemasonry** while there is limited and unconfirmed information that some Bulgarians were still initiated in foreign lodges during trips and stay abroad in the 1960s and 1970s.

The first publication about **Freemasonry** appeared in official media in 1979. Many high-ranking Communist party functionaries were labeled then “enemies with a party membership” and removed from their posts over having knowledge and interest in **Freemasonry** and attempting to democratize the Bulgarian society, which, at the time, was fully isolated from the Western world. Many **Bulgarian Freemasons** defected, but unlike those from Russia, Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic and Romania, failed to get organized in their own, emigration Grand Lodges and became members of foreign Lodges.

The Failed Resurrection of Bulgaria’s Freemasonry in the Transition Years

The process of resurrection of the organized **Freemasonry** in Bulgaria began almost immediately after the fall of the Berlin Wall. Initially, several societies, close to the ideas of the Freemasons appeared, but due to their para-Masonic character failed to lay the foundation of the new Bulgarian Regular **Freemasonry**. The attempts of some totalitarian, Communist forces to become legitimate again through the **Freemason** structures also played a significant role in this delay. These new, emerging **Freemason** societies were quickly overtaken by former high-ranking Communist party members and former Secret Security agents.

In 1992, an attempt to publicly announce the establishment of a Grand Lodge by para Masons fails. None of those bogus **Freemason** organizations actually managed to obtain legitimate status from Masonic Brethren outside Bulgaria. This, however, led to many dignified Bulgarians with high public prestige refusing to become part of these para-Masonic organizations, which had the sole goal to secure privileges for certain people.

The 50-year-long iron curtain, including information blackout regarding the essence of the **Freemasonry** and its role for the progress of democracy and humanity, the ideology of Marxism-Leninism, the imposed atheism, the lack of opportunities to freely express opinions, the lack of media freedom, reflected on the adequate abilities of Bulgarians to understand the complex philosophy of **Freemasonry**.

Bulgarian citizens, who become initiated in May 1992 in the German “Lessing” Lodge, are considered by many the true founders of the Regular **Freemasonry** in Bulgaria after the fall of the Berlin Wall. The highly regarded and respected among German Freemasons Bulgarian emigrant, who has been leaving in Germany since 1932, Dr. Ivan Voynov, with his extreme persistence and active efforts, became the driving force of the revival and recognition of the Bulgarian **Freemasonry**.

Those initiated in the “Lessing” Lodge quickly learned the art of establishing **Freemason** organizations and upon returning in Bulgaria, in 1994, found in Sofia the Lodges “Svetlina (Light), “Zora” (Dawn), and “Serdika.” Two years later, in 1996, the “Zaria “(Beam) Lodge is established again in Sofia along with the first Lodge outside the capital – “Chernomorski Priyateli” (Black Sea Friends) in Varna. Masonic organizations soon appear in the cities of Shumen, Ruse, Dobrich with the intent of growing into full-pledged Lodges. Freemasons in Bulgaria continue to receive help and support from German Freemasons.

On September 20, 1997, the five Sofia Lodges from the Sofia Orient and the Varna Lodge from the Varna Orient proclaim the establishment of the Bulgarian Grand Lodge of the Ancient, Free and Accepted Masons. Ivan Stavrev becomes the first Grand Master and the first issue of the Magazine “Svetlina” is soon published. The establishment of the Bulgarian Grand Lodge is carried out with the agreement and the assistance of the United Grand Lodges of Germany. The special ritual is led by German Freemasons and on September 22, 1997, the United Grand Lodges of Germany distribute to all **Freemason** organizations around the world a memorandum recommending the recognition of the regularity of the Bulgarian Grand Lodge and the establishment of contacts with it.

Soon the Bulgarian Grand Lodge receives recognition and establishes contacts with over 100 Lodges around the world. Bulgarian delegations take part in all significant international meetings and events.

The Grand Lodge also proceeds in founding official Lodges in Shumen, and Ruse. A second Lodge, “Morska Zvezda” (Sea Star) is established in Varna and a new Lodge – “Zvezdata na Sofia” (The Star of Sofia) appears in January 2000. In 2002 they are a total of 17 Lodges in Bulgaria. On January 7 2001, the Supreme Council of the 33rd and highest degree of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite is also installed in Bulgaria.

During the week of June 21-27, 2003, **Bulgarian Freemasons** welcome Ill. Robert W. Woodward, 33°, G.C., Deputy, Scottish Rite Bodies, NATO Bases, as a Brother whose name is engraved with golden letters in the Masonic history of Bulgaria. The visit of Ill. Woodward to Bulgaria elicits several prominent newspaper stories, thus benefiting the positive profile of **Freemasonry** and the Scottish Rite in Bulgaria.

The schism between Bulgaria’s Freemasons, however, occurs in 2000 when the Brethren split into two grand lodges over the fight of who is going to be on the helm, Freemasons say off the record. The two exist until today and are: the United Grand

Lodge of Bulgaria (UGLB) and the Grand Lodge the Ancient, Free and Accepted Masons (GLAFAMB).

In the summer of 2009, GLAFAMB appointed their new Grand Master and new Grand Lodge leadership. Also in 2009, the Conference of Grand Masters of Masons of North America's Commission on Recognition published the following report:

“Little progress has been made in unifying **Freemasonry** in Bulgaria, as it continues to function under two Grand Lodge structures, namely the United Grand Lodge of Bulgaria (UGLB) and the Grand Lodge AF&AM of Bulgaria (GLAFAMB). Last year, the Commission again strongly encouraged the two Grand Lodges to actively meet and work toward the resolution of their differences. The services of several impartial mediators were offered to facilitate the process. These attempts have not been accepted. The UGLB offered to relax the requirements of the “regularization procedure”, but later rescinded the offer. Most members of the GLAFAMB are unwilling to be subjected to the requirements of the procedure as defined. Several options have been offered by the GLAFAMB, but none are seriously being considered.

The UGLB states they believe the GLAFAMB is irregular and they therefore cannot communicate with them. After five years of unsuccessfully urging the two organizations to actively pursue avenues of unification, the Commission will not receive any additional presentations from either Grand Lodge until there is substantive evidence of progress in resolving their differences.”

When commenting on the issue, **Dimitar Nedkov** points out the split is not a schism because **Freemasonry** is not a religion and unification of Bulgaria’s Brethren only as a formal subjugation of the entire Masonic community to one administrative would not lead to a real Masonic society over the need for all Initiated to have a common feeling for the Masonic values.

“**Freemasonry** is a state of mind, aimed at collecting the dispersed differences at one place, at accumulating the positive energy of diversity. The unification of Bulgarian **Freemasonry** will make sense only as a union of all Initiated around the common humanitarian principles of the Brotherhood. Until the issue is only who would be Chief, any effort in this direction is futile,” Nedkov says.

The **Freemason** also firmly rejects rumors of Bulgaria’s **Freemasonry** being reinstated after 1989 by the CIA as having no valid ground and insists that Bulgarian Masonry had been reestablished by Bulgarian citizens. Since the Brotherhood is not a political organization it cannot attract attention of services such as the CIA, he says.

“One of the biggest global speculations regarding **Freemasonry** is the belief it is controlled by the special services. To the contrary, these same services often have problems with their own employees who are vested in the Brotherhood and who refuse to blindly follow orders that would lead to new human tragedies. All over the world, the Masonic Community is maybe the only voluntary union of people, which does not judge its members by the color of their skin, their religious affiliation, political beliefs, wealth, or status in society, Nedkov says, adding speculations about adherence to a Masonic Lodge with the goal of obtaining personal profits are also voiced daily. According to him, in Bulgaria, precisely this lack of knowledge about the true essence of **Freemasonry** leads to the constant travesty scenarios in which the membership is used for personal profiteering.

Nedkov insists **Freemasonry** in Bulgaria, like most everything during the long years of transition after 1989, did not happen the right way. According to him, precisely the endless argument about legitimacy between the different Masonic organizations, which resembles very much all religious and ethnic disputes typical for our part of the world, places **Bulgarian Freemasons** light years away from the principles of the Brotherhood and in the context of **Freemasonry** from two centuries ago.

“The state of **Freemasonry** is a reflection of the state of society. The centuries-old, traditional for Bulgarians interpersonal conflicts are the base for the split of Bulgaria’s **Freemasonry**. The culture of self-promoting, the disregard for the other human being, is still the foundation of the Bulgarian mentality. The lack of real societal elite is the most direct proof for the absence of a real **Freemason** society in certain territory,” Nedkov explains.

The Bulgarian Bogomils, the Rosicrucian, and the Order of Knights Templar

The topic keeps coming up, but there isn’t much profound and complete research over the long-lasting ban to study such historical hypothesis. The apocryphal Bogomil literature, on the other hand side, had been destroyed in Bulgaria while the **Bogomils** themselves and their followers have been chased abroad or massacred. Traces of their teaching can be found in Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia, France, Germany, Spain, the UK and Italy.

There are several versions about who the founder of the teaching is; one of them that he was Boyan Maga, son of Tsar Simeon I. Boyan’s older brother Peter took over the throne after Simeon’s death while Boyan was sent to Constantinople to study at the Magnaura school where he possibly was initiated in a secret Egypt teaching and the ancient knowledge of cosmogony, religion, philosophy, medicine, and extrasensory. Upon returning to Bulgaria, Boyan Maga founded his own school with the goal to reinstate the real Christianity.

His teaching is universal, examining common human issues, summarizing the ancient wisdom and revealing the hidden simplicity of Christianity. The **Bogomils** (in Bulgarian Dear to God) declared themselves against the dogma of the Church, the lavish decorations, the hypocrisy, greed and strive for power of the clergy, the merge between the church and the tsar’s power. The **Bogomils** appealed for bringing back the virtues of real Christianity – kindness, humility, helping others, equal rights and lawfulness, abandon of opulence, admiration for human labor, dignity and high morals.

The **Bogomils** became very popular among Bulgarian people during the 10th century, and this popularity turned into an uprising against the official Church and a threat to the power of the Tsar, who began a manhunt against them – they were burnt as heretics and their literature was eventually destroyed.

The leaders of the movement left Bulgaria and found shelter in several European countries. Bulgarian-born **Bogomils** brought a beam of light to Europeans frozen in the darkness of the Middle Age and their dogmas, fanatics, and cruelty. The **Bogomils**, known in the West under different names, such as Bogres, Albigenes, Cathars, created

their own schools and became founders of the Humanism and Renaissance. The schools taught Bulgarian cosmogony, Christianity and ancient wisdom. These schools were built on the principle of three concentric circles – the consecrated (called the Perfect) in the most inner one, the believers in the middle and the listeners in the outer one.

Some of the elements of the Bogomil teaching are;

Unity of everything – visible and invisible.

Building the human being – spirit, soul, body

The laws of karma and rebirth returning the human to the divine

Thinking and meditation of sacred books

Brotherly sharing of bread and wine

Living in conformity with nature

Leading active public life

Symbolic, not literal interpreting of the scriptures

The **Bogomils** had many public speakers and education centers. They called each other brothers and sisters and treated each other as such. They eliminated the social and origin differences; celebrated brotherly gatherings, went on trips to the mountains seen as symbolic of the real liberation of the Spirit from the mundane worries and problems. The Bogomils valued highly women and their role in society and considered them equal to men.

On the other hand side, it is believed the Order of the Rosicrucian was based on the Bogomil teachings. Its founder is Christian Rosicrucian, a heir of Albigens. Historical research says he was born in a German family, which initiated him in the Bogomil teaching. The family castle was burned down and its inhabitants killed in the 18th century during the mass persecution of the Albigens across Europe.

The 5-year-old Christian was the sole survivor, rescued by a monk, who was employed as teacher by the family. They hid in a monastery where Christian was raised. With 4 supporters, Christian Rosicrucian founded the Order of the Rose and the Cross with the mission to help the best of the human kind to open their eyes to the Spirit, see the Light from above, and began touring Europe in search of followers. Many of the brightest minds in Europe at the time became such – Nicolas Copernicus, Leonardo da Vinci, Isaac Newton, and Giordano Bruno among them.

The Rosicrucian promised their followers access to supreme secrets by following basic steps for the awakening and development of internal forces and through tools such as occult symbolic. Each occult sign had three meanings – exterior, interior or secret that can be explained only through intellect, and the spiritual, which is sensed only through intuition.

The cross, pointing at the four geographical directions, is a symbol of the infinity, while the rose symbolizes the morning light and rebirth of life and of the soul. Together they symbolize immortality achieved through suffering.

In the 17th – 18th century, the Rosicrucianity spread from Germany to England and merged with the **Freemasonry**, according to some researchers, while others believe that the origins of the **Freemasonry** stem from the Albigens in France. In all different versions, however, the ties with the **Bogomils** are obvious.

Bulgarian **Freemasonry** still owes a deeper research and wider publicizing of the **Bogomils**, their teaching and their books, of their role for the spiritual progress of the human kind and their ties with contemporary **Freemasonry**.

In his fiction book “33 **The Menace Dan Brown**” Nedkov writes that proof the **Bogomils** were founders of the Order of Knights Templar and of their connections with **Freemasonry** is dispersed all over the world’s history and the time has come to collect them and bring them together as part of our true Bulgarian history. He tells Novinite.com that he believes in the connection between the Bogomil teaching and the **Freemasonry** because the **Bogomils** are known as the spark of the Western periods of Reformation and Enlightenment and the next keepers of the secret books with the secret teachings that have formed the human self-awareness through ages while organizations such as the Templar found the administrative form of applying this knowledge to real life and after them, the Freemasons assumed this function.

In the book Nedkov also talks about the special role of the church and the monastery in Bulgaria’s western town of Zemen, saying he wants to take American writer and author of the hugely popular novel “The Lost Symbol,” Dan Brown, there if he comes to Bulgaria. The Bulgarian **Freemason** insists that the entire area around Zemen and several other locations on Bulgarian soil have a crucial significance as energy centers of our planet.

“Part of the solution of the notorious computer problem in the eve of the new millennium (2000) is connected to Zemen. The fact that a Bulgarian invented the computer is not just a coincidence maybe? And the fact that until now we did not pay attention to what can be found on Bulgarian soil that has global importance is a problem only of the Bulgarian State. Precisely our centuries-embedded understanding of heresy had turned us into a second-hand people as far as the world historic heritage is concerned. What is most strange, however, is that even the Communist regime did not undermine this significance as the governments in the last 20 years do,” Nedkov points out.

Bulgarians’ Attitude towards Freemasonry

The main problem of the Bulgarian society in 19th century was the achievement of national independence. The times when **Freemasonry** came to Bulgaria coincided with the time when the intellectuals of the Bulgarian Renaissance just became prominent

people; the upper class started gaining importance and helping society move from the patriarchal to liberalism.

Though still not very clear how, the Bulgarian people developed a negative attitude towards the ideas of the Freemasons. Most likely, this attitude was born during the times of the Crimean War (1854 – 1856), the movement for religious independence and national freedom. A subconscious and intuitive psychology lab appears to have been working against **Freemasonry** then. Prominent Bulgarian author, P. R. Slaveykov, says in 1860: “Bulgarians will never become catholic, but the trouble is they are not Christian Orthodox, they are pagans and atheists.”

Bulgarians then, unaffected by aristocratic and royal prejudice, were tolerant towards ethnic and religious differences, but the perceptions about the **Freemasonry** were loaded with negativism because their society bears deep symbolic, esoteric, metaphoric, almost mystical elements, unfamiliar and incomprehensible to the common people. The lack of democratic traditions and of an upper class became an obstacle for the spread of the ideas of the Enlightenment, researchers point out. In Bulgaria, the designation Freemasons became equal to people who eat meat during fast, to dishonest individuals. “Farmasonin” is still an offensive name, meaning someone who is impious, belongs to a sect, and uses any means to achieve his goals.

The very influential and prominent, maybe the most prominent Bulgarian writer of all times, Ivan Vazov, in his poem “Zagorka” compares the Farmasonin with the oppressor, the person without a compassionate heart. On the other hand side, in another one of his classics – the short novel “Chichovtsi” dedicated to the everyday life, the mind and the relations between people in a small Bulgarian town during the 60s of the 19th century, Vazov’s character, Hadzhi Simon, offers his revelation that “everything modern, utilitarian, and humanitarian is American.”

The controversy and the negativism surrounding Freemasons in Bulgaria prove to be lasting ones. In 1934, Archimandrite Nikodim writes: “**Freemasonry** in Bulgaria has a pragmatic nature – some seek in it realization, new practical benefits and personal popularity. Others join it as they would join any regular club.” Not much has changed until today, the Freemasons interviewed for this story say. Due to all historical and psychological complexities, it is obvious the spread of the Freemasons' ideas in Bulgaria faced and faces some particular and much stronger difficulties than in many other countries.

According to Nedkov, the issue stems from the fact that the Bulgarian mentality, as a rule, is wary of anything that pushes man to believe in himself.

“We as Bulgarians often have issues with our freedom – both personal and national because we are used to someone else telling us what is white and what is black and for this reason the only meaning of **Freemasonry** “Know thyself!” is difficult to swallow,” the Masonic expert says.

Nedkov further explains the inadequate state of **Freemasonry** in Bulgaria with the common belief we must practice some American, German, French or “God knows” what Masonry and with the distortions arising from the mechanical transfer of methodologies that work in totally different societies, cultures, and mentalities.

“The true meaning is the adaptation of the values of **Freemasonry** to the cultural environment and the mentality of each separate nation. The meaning is to enrich the global Brotherhood with the uniqueness of our rites, traditions, spiritual practices, and our own understanding of the relation between humans and nature,” the Bulgarian Mason points out.

Some of the most prominent Bulgarians, for whom there is documentation of belonging to the Freemason Brotherhood (in alphabetical order)

Arnaudov, Mihail – Academician (1878 – 1978) – Director of the National Theater (1926), Dean of the Language Department and President of the Sofia University (1935 – 1936), Chair of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences (BAS), Education Minister (1944).

Atanasov, Dimitar – (1894 – 1979). Graduates from the Agriculture College in East Lansing, US, has a PhD in Plant Pathology from the University of Wisconsin, Professor at the Sofia University (1928), Agriculture Minister and Director of the Institute for Plant Protection. (1935 - 1941). Persecuted by the Communist regime between 1944 and 1956. From 1956 to 1964, when he retires, Atanasov is finally allowed to work at the same Institute.

Balabanov, Alexander – (1879 – 1955). Studies antique languages in Leipzig, Germany and obtains a PhD in Erlangen. Since 1917, he is a Professor of Classical Languages and Literature and Chair of the same department at the Sofia University. Founder and editor of several magazines, renowned translator and literary critic. Author of 2 books. Balabanov collaborates in several Masonic publications.

Balan, Alexander – (1858 – 1958) Studies Slavic languages in Prague and Leipzig. Has a PhD in Philosophy from the Prague University. Founder and first President of the Sofia University, member of BAS since 1884, Doctor Honoris Causa of the Sofia University. Balan has authored more than 900 titles.

Battenberg, Alexander – (1857 – 1893) First Prince of Bulgaria after the Russian – Turkish Liberation War, in which he took part. Head of State during the 1885 Union of the Principality of Bulgaria and Eastern Rumelia and the Serbian –Bulgarian War.

Boboshevski, Tsviatko (1884 – 1952). Receives a Law Degree in Paris. Commerce Minister and then Justice Minister in the cabinet of Prof. Alexander Tsankov (1923 – 1926). Commerce Minister in the cabinet of Andrei Lyapchev (1926 – 1931). President of the Bulgarian Mortgage Bank (1934 – 1935). Regent (1944 – 1946)

Burov, Atanas (1875 – 1954). Prominent Bulgarian businessman from the wealthy Burov family. Studies law and economy in Paris. Between 191-1934 Burov is Member of the Parliament and minister in four governments: Minister of Commerce, 1913; Minister of Commerce, Industry and Labor, 1919-1920; Minister of Foreign Affairs, 1926-1931; Minister without Portfolio, 09.2 - 9.09.1944. After September 1944, Burov is sentenced to one year prison by the so-called People's Tribunal. In 1948, he is exiled to the town of Dryanovo. Arrested again in 1950, at the age of 77 he is sentenced to 20-year prison. In 1954 Burov dies in prison in Pazardzhik.

Chilingirov, Stilyan (1881 – 1962) Bulgarian writer, historian, politician. One of the founders of the Union of Bulgarian Writers and its President (1941 – 1944), known as the last Bulgarian “Renaissance man.”

Works as a teacher after graduating from the Teachers’ College in his native town of Shumen and as a magazine editor. Graduates with a Degree in Pedagogy from the Sofia University and specializes History of Literature in Berlin and Leipzig. After that teaches German and Bulgarian at the Sofia Boys High School and works as a magazine and newspaper editor. Director of the National Library (1919 – 1922). Since 1923, Chilingirov is appointed Director of the National Ethnographic Museum. President of the Union of Bulgarian Writers (1941 – 1944). Chilingirov is also active in politics and is elected Member of the Parliament (1911 – 1913). Secretary of the Progressive Liberal Party, which he leaves in 1913. After 1944, Chilingirov is consigned to oblivion over his political past and his literary works are taken out of school books and declared “mediocre.”

Dustabanov, Tsanko (1844 – 1876) Bulgarian revolutionary, born in a wealthy family – son of a tax collector and nephew of the prominent Bulgarian educator and intellectual, Vasil Aprilov. Plays important role during the April Uprising against the Ottoman rule in 1876 where he leads several battles. He is caught and hung on June 15, the same year.

Eparch Stefan I (Stoyan Shokov) (1878 – 1957) Graduates from the Theology Academy in Kiev; Secretary of the Bulgarian Eparchy in Istanbul. Receives a PhD in Switzerland. From 1922 to 1945 he is the Metropolitan of Sofia and the Eparch of the Bulgarian Church until 1948. Prominent member of the International Church Union for Protection of Solidarity and Peace. Takes crucial part in the fight to save Bulgarian Jews in World War II. He triggers the hate of the Communist regime by defending the independence of the Church as Eparch, is removed and sent to exile where he lives in deprivation for 9 years. Eparch Stefan is buried in the Bachkovo Monastery. He was a member of the London Freemasons Lodge.

Filov, Bogdan (1883 – 1945) Bulgarian archaeologist, art historian and politician; Prime Minister of Bulgaria during World War II. During his term, Bulgaria became the seventh nation to join the Axis Powers.

Born in Stara Zagora, Filov studies in Leipzig, Freiburg, and Würzburg. His Ph.D. thesis from Freiburg was published as a book supplement to the prestigious German magazine *Klio*. From 1906, he works in the National Archaeological Museum in Sofia and in 1907 – 1909 studies archeology and numismatics in Bonn, Paris and Rome to become the indisputable authority of "antique" (pre-classical) archaeology in Bulgaria. In 1918 Filov discovers Trebenishta, a necropolis of Peresadyes, rich with gold and iron artifacts. Between 1910 and 1920 Filov is the Director of the National Archaeological Museum. He conducts the first studies of the ancient city of Kabile, near Yambol, in 1912. In 1920 Filov becomes a Professor of archeology, and of art history, at the Sofia University and later, Head of the Archaeology Department. In 1937, Filov is elected President of BAS (the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences). In February 1940, following the resignation of Georgi Kioseivanov, Filov, an ally of Tsar Boris III, is appointed Prime Minister. At that time, Bulgaria signs a non-aggression pact with the Axis Powers and on March 1 joins the Tripartite Pact. On Bulgaria's Independence Day, March 3, German troops cross into Bulgaria on the way to invade the Kingdom of Yugoslavia and the Greece. Though a titular member of the Axis, Bulgaria stays out of the war as much as possible. After the death of Boris in 1943, Filov becomes a member of the Regency Council, which was established because the new Tsar, Simeon II, was a minor.

Filov is also known for the Law for Preservation of the Nation, proposed by his cabinet in November 1940 and voted in December 1940 in the Parliament. This law was equivalent to the Nuremberg Laws of the Third Reich and deprived the Jews from civil rights. According to a government decision in March 1943 over 11 000 Jews from the new annexed territories, which weren't Bulgarian citizens, are deported by the Bulgarian authorities to Death camps of Nazi Germany. However, the Nazi-allied cabinet, under the pressure of intellectuals, the Bulgarian Orthodox Church, and the Parliament, did not deport its 50,000 Jews, Bulgarian citizens, from the Old lands. In 1944, with the arrival of the Communist regime, the Regency Council members are arrested. Filov and 92 other public officials are sentenced to death by the "People's Tribunal" They are executed in February 1945 by a firing squad in Sofia's cemetery and buried in a mass grave. All of Filov's property is confiscated. The sentence is revoked by the Bulgarian Supreme Court in 1996.

Gabrovski, Petar (1898 – 1945) takes part in World War I as a platoon commander. After the war, he graduates from the Sofia University with a law degree (1923) and begins law practice in Sofia. Gabrovski is the founder of the nationalist organization (1936) known as *Ratnik* – (Championing for the Progress of Everything Bulgarian). Gabrovski had been a Minister of the Railroads, Posts, and Telegraphs in the cabinet of Georgi Kioseivanov 1939 – 1940) and Minister of the Interior and Health Minister in the cabinet of Bogdan Filov (1940 – 1943). After the arrival of the Communism,

Gabrovski is tried by the “People’s Tribunal,” sentenced to death and executed in 1945. His sentence is revoked by Bulgaria’s Supreme Court in 1996.

Georgiev, Kimon (1882 - 1969) is a Bulgarian general and Prime Minister. In the 1930s he is a member of the right-wing military Zveno ('Link') movement. Together with fellow officers he commits a coup d'état in June 1934 and becomes Prime Minister, after which he abolishes all political parties and labor unions. Influenced by the Italian dictator Benito Mussolini, Georgiev introduces a corporative economic system. In 1935, Tsar Boris III, an enemy of Zveno politics (because of their republicanism) commits a coup and Georgiev goes into exile. He returns to Bulgaria only to be arrested and put in jail. Later he is released. During World War II, when Bulgaria is fighting on the side of the Axis, he joins the anti-Axis Fatherland Front (FF). In September 1944, the FF commits another coup d'état and Georgiev becomes again Prime Minister (until 1946). In 1946, he is succeeded by the communist leader Georgi Dimitrov and becomes Deputy PM, and Foreign Minister. Though Zveno is disbanded in 1949, Georgiev continues holding ministerial posts in all the cabinets until 1962. From 1962 until his death in 1969 he is a member of the Parliament's presidium. Georgiev is twice awarded the title Hero of Socialist Labor. He is known as “the old coup-maker” in Bulgaria for taking part in 3 coups in 1923, 1935 and 1944.

Ikonomov, Todor (1835 – 1892) Bulgarian educator and politician; one of the most prominent teachers during the Bulgarian Renaissance; takes active part of the fight for independent Bulgarian Eparchy, and is one of the leaders of the Conservative party after the Liberation from Ottoman Rule. Graduates from the Theology Academy in Kiev in 1865. Upon returning to Bulgaria he becomes a teacher in Shumen and later Secretary of the Eparchy Council in Toulcha. After the Liberation, as one of the conservative leaders, Ikonomov is a Member of the Parliament, Regional Governor in Sliven and Burgas, Interior Minister (1880) Mayor of Sofia, Deputy Parliament Speaker (1881) and Chair of the newly established State Council (1882). After becoming close to the moderates in the Liberal party, Ikonomov is a member of the second and third cabinet of Dragan Tsankov, He is persecuted by the cabinet of Stefan Stambolov and moves to Shumen. He dies from natural causes in 1892, after a failed suicide attempt.

Kanchev, Angel (1850 – 1872) Bulgarian revolutionary. Graduates from the Belgrade Military School and the Agriculture and Industrial School in the Czech town of Tabor. Kanchev is known as one of the most active participants in the movement to liberate Bulgaria from Ottoman rule and one of the closest people to Vasil Levski. The latter assigned Kanchev to organize and spread the movement in northern Bulgaria. In a short time he manages to create a large network of the movement. In 1872, while attempting to secretly cross the Bulgarian-Romanian border in Ruse, Kanchev is surrounded by the police and commits suicide in order to not be caught alive.

Kardzhiev, Toma (1850 – 1887) Bulgarian teacher and revolutionary. One of the founders of the Revolutionary Committee in Ruse (1871); leader of the Stara Zagora Uprising during which he is arrested. Kardzhiev takes part in the Serbian-Turkish War

(1876) and the Russian – Turkish War (1877 – 1878) After Bulgaria's Liberation, he returns to Ruse, takes part in the Ruse Uprising (1887) for which he is sentenced to death and executed the same year.

Kazasov, Dimo (1886 – 1980) Bulgarian politician, first from the Bulgarian Workers Social –Democrat party (BRSDP), member of the cabinet after the June 9 and September 9 coups, Member of the Parliament in several General Assemblies and the Great Assembly of 1946 -1949, journalists. Graduates in 1918 from the Sofia University with a law degree. After the June 9, 1923, coup, Kazasov is Minister of Railroads, Posts, and Telegraphs, and Chair the Union of Bulgarian Journalists between 1924 and 1928. He is expelled from BRDSP in 1926, briefly founds his own Social-Democrat movement before joining the right-wing military Zveno ('Link') movement and is a member until 1934 when he joins the People Social Movement of Alexander Tsvetkov. Ambassador to Yugoslavia (1935 – 1936). In 1943, Kazasov joins the Fatherland Front and after the Communists come to power in 1944, he becomes Minister of Propaganda. Remains member of the cabinet until 1947, holds different political posts until 1953 when he withdraws from active politics and focuses on writing several memoirs.

Kioseivanov, Georgi (1884 – 1960) Bulgarian politician and diplomat. Receives a law degree in Paris (1905) and later (1912 – 1925) works at Bulgarian Embassies in Rome, Istanbul, Bern, Berlin, Paris and Bucharest. He is Ambassador to Greece, Romania and Yugoslavia (1926 – 1934). For several months in 1934 – 1935, Kioseivanov is Chief of Staff of Tsar Boris III, then Foreign Minister in Andrei Lyapchev's cabinet and Prime Minister between 1935 and 1940. At the end the term, Kioseivanov is appointed Ambassador to Switzerland, and stays in the country after the Communist regime comes into power until his death in 1960.

Konstantinov, Aleko (1863 - 1897) Prominent Bulgarian writer, best known for his character Bay Ganyo, one of the most popular characters in Bulgarian fiction. Born to an affluent trader in the Danube River town of Svishtov, he attends the Faculty of Law of the University of Odessa, graduating in 1885. He works as a lawyer in Sofia before embarking on a writing career. His first novel (in fact, a collection of relatively independent short stories), Bay Ganyo ("Uncle Ganyo"), describes the travels through Western Europe of an itinerant peddler of rose oil and rugs. At the beginning of the novel Bay Ganyo is seen mainly as trading rose oil while at the end he is portrayed as a political man. Konstantinov, a cosmopolitan traveler, was the first Bulgarian to write about his trips to Western Europe and America. His visits to the World Exhibitions in Paris in 1889, Prague in 1891 and Chicago in 1893 provide Bulgarian readers, who had recently gained independence from nearly 500 years of Ottoman rule, with a portrait of the developed world. To Chicago and Back, his travel notes from his American trip, spurred a lasting interest in Chicago, which today is home of the largest concentration of Bulgarian immigrants in the United States. A bust of the writer is displayed in the University of Chicago's Regenstein Library. Konstantinov is assassinated in 1897, near Radilovo, most likely by mistake with the intended target being his friend (a local politician), with whom he had changed places in their coach shortly before the fatal

shot. However, there exists also a version that his essays, exposing the hidden insidious intentions of the rulers of his day, led to his assassination. Aleko Konstantinov is also the founder of the tourist movement in Bulgaria.

Kulishev, Georgi (1904 – 1974) Prominent Bulgarian politician and journalist, close to the right-wing military Zveno ('Link') movement. Foreign Minister in the 3rd cabinet of Kimon Georgiev (1946). Born in Macedonia, active participant in the liberation movement there (VMRO), arrested in Thessaloniki, and later freed. He graduates with a law degree from the University of Sofia after the Balkan Wars (1914) and begins writing for two newspapers; continues to be active in VMRO. Between 1929 and 1930, Kulishev is editor-in-chief of several newspapers. Joins Zveno in 1935 and the Fatherland Front in 1943. After September 9, 1944, he is Chief Secretary of the Council of Ministers and Interior Minister since March 1946. Kulishev is Member of several Parliaments after 1944 until 1974. Awarded with several orders by the Communist regime.

Lukov, Hristo (1888 – 1943) Graduate of the Military Naval Academy in Varna (1907) and participant in the Wars between 1912 and 1918, after which he holds several high-ranking military commander posts. From 1935 until 1938, already a General, Lukov is Minister of War in the Kioseivanov cabinet. After Bulgaria becomes officially an ally of Hitler's Germany, he insists the Bulgarian laws are not anti-Semitic enough and fights to have a legislature close to the Nazi one. Since 1938, he is promoted to General-Lieutenant and moved to the reserves. Leads the Union of Bulgaria's National Legions, considered by many the only true fascist organization in Bulgaria and a right-wing opposition to the cabinet. Lukov is gunned down in the winter of 1943 in front of his house by an illegal militant group of the Bulgarian Communist Party. Lukov has authored several publications on military topics.

Midilev, Petar (1875 – 1939) Military officer and politician. Graduate of the Sofia Military Academy and later the Military Academy in Sankt Petersburg. Participates as an officer in the Balkan Wars, World War I, after which he is promoted Head of the Sofia Military School, later Army Chief of Staff, before going in the reserves. Midilev is an active member of the Union of the Bulgarian Reserve Officers and takes part in the preparation of the May 19, 1934 coup. After the coup he becomes Interior Minister in Kimon Georgiev's cabinet.

Miletich, Lyubomir, Prof. (1863 – 1937) One of the most prominent Bulgarian scientists and intellectuals for his time in the areas of language, history and ethnography. Born in Macedonia, he moves to Sofia in the 70s of the 19th century. During the Serbian-Turkish War, Miletich joined Panayot Hitov's liberation detachment (cheta). Later studies Slavic languages in Zagreb and Prague. Upon returning to Sofia, he becomes a teacher at the Sofia Classical High School and later a lecturer at the Sofia University. In 1898, Miletich becomes a member of the Bulgarian Scholar Society and its President in 1926, when the Society is already transformed in the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. Miletich keeps the post until his death; during his tenure founds

the Macedonian Science Institute and is its Chair between 1928 and 1937. Cape Miletich on the Greenwich Island is named after Prof. Miletich.

Moshanov, Stoycho (1892 – 1975) Bulgarian politician. Studies law in France. Takes part in the Balkan Wars. Since 1919, Moshanov is a member of the leadership of the Democratic party. Speaker of the Parliament (1938 – 1939). During World War II Moshanov is on the side of the official opposition, but distances himself from the Fatherland Front. He has been Minister of Finances for 8 days only in Andrei Toshev's cabinet. Nedev, Nikola (1886 – 1970) Bulgarian general, politician and army historian. Graduate of the Sofia Military School, attends the Military Academy in Brussels, but cuts his studies short to join the Bulgarian army during the Balkan Wars. Takes part in World War I too, and after its end is promoted to a series of high-ranking military posts. Serves as Military Attaché in Rome, Athens and Ankara between 1931 and 1932. Becomes General in 1935. Joins the reserves in 1936. In 1938 becomes Interior Minister and Health Minister in the third and fourth cabinet of Georgi Kioseivanov. Persecuted by the Communist regime after 1944. Sent to the Belene concentration camp in 1951 and remains there for the next 3 years. Dies in Sofia.

Nemirov, Dobri (1882-1945) Bulgarian writer whose real name was Dobri Zaratov. Nemirov is the President of the Union of Bulgarian Writers between 1937 – 1940. Begins publishing short stories in 1902 while his short stories book comes out in 1904, bringing Nemirov recognition as a talented author. During World War I works as a war correspondent for 2 magazines and publishes two books with short fiction stories about the war. In the 1930s, the writer visits South Dobrudzha, Bulgaria's northeastern region, which was then under Romanian domination and becomes Bulgaria's Culture Ambassador there. Dies in 1945 in Sofia.

Obretenov, Nikola (1849 – 1939) Bulgarian revolutionary, one of the combatants for the liberation of Bulgaria, and a participant in the preparation and outburst of the Stara Zagora uprising and the April uprising. Born in Ruse, in the family of Tiho Obretenov — a wealthy and educated Bulgarian and Tonka Obretenova better known as Baba Tonka. In 1871, Obretenov travels to Bucharest to present his references to the chairman of the Bulgarian Central Revolutionary Committee (BRCK), Lyuben Karavelov. After being approved by Karavelov, Obretenov develops an illegal channel for transferring mail, printed materials, and weapons between Bucharest-Giurgiu and Ruse. In August 1874 Nikola Obretenov takes part in BRCK's session in Bucharest, which reelects Karavelov as a chairman of the committee, elects Hristo Botev as secretary, and confirms Stefan Stambolov as a Chief Apostle in Bulgaria and Deputy of Vasil Levski. In 1875, takes active part in the preparation of the Stara Zagora Uprising. In May 1876, Obretenov, with the detachment (cheta) lead by Hristo Botev, comes ashore from the Radetzky ship at the town of Kozloduy, where the rebels, kiss their native soil, and take their oaths under the flag, crafted by his sister Petrana Obretenova. Obretenov fights in all of the detachment's battles and was with Hristo Botev when he died. A month later, Obretenov along with several fellow Botev detachment members, including Stoyan Zaimov, are betrayed, captured by the Turkish authorities, and

sentenced to death by two courts in Veliko Tarnovo and Ruse, but by the Sultan's order, the sentence is replaced with an exile for life in Asia. Nikola Obretenov returns to his liberated homeland in 1878 and participates eagerly in the construction of modern Bulgaria as a member of the Liberal Party, and later of the People's Liberal Party, continuing his cooperation with Stefan Stambolov. Obretenov serves as a Governor of Tutrakan, and in May 1907, he is elected Member of the Parliament, and Mayor of Ruse. Dies at the age of 90, only days before the official celebration of his anniversary. Nikola Obretenov is the author of many articles and the book "Memories about Bulgarian Uprisings", published after his death, with Academician Mihail Arnaudov as its editor.

Passy, Solomon (1888 – 1959) Prominent lawyer in Plovdiv and honorary Consular of several countries. Father of Isaac Passy - renown Bulgarian philosopher and specialist in aesthetics who has written works such as *The Tragic* and *The Comic*. Grandfather of former Foreign Minister and prominent politician Solomon Passy.

Petkov, Nikola (1893 - 1947) Bulgarian politician, one of the leaders of the Bulgarian Agrarian National Union (BZNS). He is a son of politician Dimitar Petkov, Prime Minister of Bulgaria and Mayor of Sofia. His brother Petko Petkov was shot dead by a killer in 1924. Studies law and politics at the Sorbonne, Paris. Returns to Bulgaria to participate in the Balkan Wars (1912-1913). After World War I, Petkov continues his studies in Paris. Works in the Bulgarian Embassy in Paris. After the June 9, 1923, coup, when the BZNS government under Aleksander Stamboliyski is removed from office, Petkov resigns and stays in France where he works as a journalist. In 1929, he returns to Bulgaria and becomes editor of the newspapers "Zemya" (1931-1932) and "Zemedelsko zname" – a publication of Bulgarian Agrarian People's Union (1932-1933). Petkov also prepares and publishes a book on Aleksander Stamboliyski. After the May 19, 1934, coup, Petkov cooperates with democratic parties including the Labors' Party - the legal organization of the banned Bulgarian Communist Party. He is elected Member of the Parliament (1938-1939), but the election is invalidated due to his anti-fascist activity and Petkov is sent in exile. Takes the BZNS leadership in 1941. One of the founders of the Fatherland Front and BZNS representative in the National Council of the FF. In 1943 Nikola Petkov is exiled again. From September 9 1944, to August 26, 1945, he is a Minister without Portfolio in the first government of the FF. In 1945, Petkov becomes a leader of the anti-communist United Opposition. MP in the 6th Great National Assembly in 1946. Petkov's struggle to preserve parliamentary democracy is viewed by the Communists as a form of counter-revolutionary activity. Petkov's parliamentary immunity is lifted in June 1947 and he is arrested. After a show trial Petkov is found guilty of espionage and sentenced to death. Despite insisting he is innocent and the protests of Western nations, Nikola Petkov is hanged in September 1947 and buried in an unknown grave.

Polyanov, Vladimir (1899 - 1988). Real name Vladimir Todorov. Graduate of the medical department of the Sofia University, studies medicine in Austria and Germany, later also graduates from the diplomatic and foreign relations department of the Sofia

University and studies directing in Warsaw. Polyanov holds several high-ranking positions at the National Library in Sofia (1924), Secretary of the Main Directorate of the Railroads (1924 – 1934), at the Education Ministry (1937, 1939 – 1941), Director of the National Theater (1941 – 1944) and of the National Theatrical School (1942 – 1945). Polyanov also takes part in World War II as volunteer. After the Communists seize power, he works as Director of the theaters in Burgas, Ruse, the National Youth Theater in Sofia, Plovdiv, Pernik, Smolyan, Razgrad. Polyanov is also known as the founder of the Bulgarian PEN Club.

Protogerov, Alexander (1868 - 1928,) Bulgarian general, politician and revolutionary as well as a member of the revolutionary movement in Macedonia and one of the leaders of the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization (VMRO). Born in Macedonia, Protogerov volunteers in the Serbian-Bulgarian War. Takes part in the Gorna Dzhumaya uprising in 1902 and in the Ilinden-Preobrazhenie Uprising. In the Balkan Wars, Protogerov is one of the organizers of the Macedonian-Adrianopolitan Volunteer Corps. During World War I, he commands the Third Infantry's Brigade of 11th Macedonian division and then becomes commandant of the Bulgarian troops in Serbia's occupied region of Pomoravlje. After the War, Protogerov is elected one of the leaders of VMRO. In 1924, VMRO enters negotiations with the Comintern about the creation of a united Macedonian movement. Protogerov and Petar Chaulev are believed to be the people who signed the so-called May Manifesto about forming a Balkan Communist Federation and cooperation with the Soviet Union in Vienna. Later, Protogerov denies through the Bulgarian media the signing and insists it was a communist forgery. He is killed in Sofia as VMRO is shaken by internal fighting and several high-profile murders.

Radev, Simeon (1879 – 1967) Bulgarian writer, journalist, diplomat and historian most famous for his two-volume book *The Builders of Modern Bulgaria*.

Radev was born in Macedonia. He studies at the French Lycée de Galatasaray in Istanbul and graduates with a law degree from the University of Geneva. Radev is a regular contributor to the Evening Mail newspaper from 1901 and later its editor and editor-in-chief. In 1905, he starts publishing the Artist magazine. In 1908, Radev participates in the foundation of the Union of the Bulgarian Constitutional Clubs. He also establishes the daily newspaper Will and is active in its publication. Around this time he publishes his book *The Builders of Modern Bulgaria*, one of the largest original historiography studies of Bulgaria. In 1913, Radev participates in the conference which led to the signing of the Treaty of Bucharest; he remains a Bulgarian Minister Plenipotentiary in Bucharest until 1916. After Romania's joining of World War I, he is moved to Berne, Switzerland. In 1917, he resigns, leaves Switzerland and joins the Bulgarian Army as a soldier of the Macedonian-Adrianopolitan Volunteer Corps. Towards the end of the war Radev is one of the Bulgarian representatives who sign the Thessaloniki Armistice. After the war, Radev is Bulgarian Minister Plenipotentiary in The Hague, Ankara, Washington, D.C., London and Brussels. He is also the first Bulgarian delegate to the League of Nations in Geneva. In 1918, Radev publishes his

book *Macedonia and the Bulgarian Revival in the 19th Century* in French; it was translated to Bulgarian in 1927. He is a member of the Macedonian Scientific Institute. Radev also takes an active part in Bulgaria's literary and artistic life. He dies in Sofia, only several days after his last book *Early Memories* is ready for printing. Reportedly, his last words were "Did I give anything to Bulgaria?"

Raynov, Nikolay (1889 – 1954) Bulgarian writer, scientist and painter. He is the brother of painter, Stoyan Raynov, and the father of sculptor, Boyan Raynov and of writer, Bogomil Raynov. Graduate of the Philosophy Department at the Sofia University. Takes part in World War I as a war correspondent. Later studies and graduates from the State Industrial Art College in Sofia (1919). Raynov is the editor-in-chief of several magazines and newspapers and author of several books, 30 collections of fairy tales, studies on literature, folklore and arts. The Christian Orthodox Church excommunicates him over the novel "Between the Desert and Life" dedicated to the life of Christ. Raynov also writes poems, articles and translates books. Between 1927 and 1950, he is an Arts Professor at Sofia University. He is also the first Director of the Institute for Literature at BAS (1948 – 1949).

Rakovski, Georgi Stoykov (1821 – 1867), known also by his Greek surname Georgi Sava Rakovski, born Sabi Stoykov Popovich. A 19th-century Bulgarian revolutionary, one of the creators of the Bulgarian revolutionary movement, poet, writer, journalist, and an important figure of the Bulgarian National Revival and the resistance against Ottoman rule.

Born in Kotel to a wealthy and patriotic family; studies in the Greek Orthodox College in Istanbul. In 1841, he is sentenced to death for involvement in revolutionary plans against the Turks, but thanks to a Greek friend, manages to escape to France. A year and a half later, he returns to Kotel, only to be arrested again in 1845 and sent to Istanbul for seven years of solitary confinement; he is released in May 1848. He decides to remain in Istanbul, where he works as a lawyer and tradesman, and takes part in campaigns for a Bulgarian national church. Rakovski is soon arrested once more, this time due to his creation of a secret society of Bulgarians to assist the Russians in the Crimean War. While being deported to Istanbul, he escapes, and gathers together a group of rebels. In June 1854, he is transferred to Bulgaria. He writes his best-known work, *Gorski Patnik* (Forest Wanderer), during the Crimean War (1853-56) while hiding from Turkish authorities near Kotel. 1861 sees him in Belgrade, organizing a Bulgarian legion, and traveling through Europe recruiting support for his country's cause. During the same year he also writes his *Plan for the Liberation of Bulgaria*. Many young people rallied under his flag to fight the Ottomans alongside the Serbs, but the Legion is dissolved soon - after the conflict between Serbia and the Ottoman Empire is resolved. Rakovski moves to Bucharest where he continues his journalistic activities and begins organizing small groups of revolutionary fighters, (cheti) with the aim of instigating unrest in Bulgaria. Rakovski and his followers also found the Bulgarian Revolutionary Central Committee (BRCK). In 1867, the Committee sends two cheti, led by Panayot Hitov and Filip Totyu to Bulgaria. They fight battles with the Ottoman forces, but do not manage

to fulfill their goals. Two more, led by Hadzhi Dimitar and Stefan Karadzha, enter Bulgaria in 1868 and fight their way to Stara Planina before being surrounded by the Ottomans. Many, including, are killed, wounded, or captured and later executed. Rakovski dies of tuberculosis in Bucharest on October 9, 1867.

Staynov, Petko (1890 - 1972) Bulgarian lawyer, long-time Professor of Administrative Law, member of the “Andrei Lyapchev” cabinet (1930 – 1931); Interior Minister at the second “Kimon Georgiev” cabinet (1944 – 1946) Member of 6 Parliaments before September 9, 1944 and in 6 after 1950.

Studies Law in Grenoble and Paris, specializes in Leipzig. At the end of his life he admits having ties with the Soviet intelligence, which explains his appointment as Interior Minister after 1944. He is Minister of the Railroads, Posts, and Telegraph in the “Lyapchev” cabinet, then Ambassador to Belgium and France. Leaves in 1935 and sides with the opposition of the Tsar’s regime and remains one of his strongest critics until 1944. In 1946, he is pushed to resign as Interior Minister under pressure coming from the Soviet Union over fears of his independent behavior and critics of the Soviet policies. After withdrawing from the political scene, Staynov is the Head of the Administrative Law Department at the Sofia University (until 1963), but is constantly spied on and harassed by the Secret Services.

Stoilov, Konstantin (1853 – 1901) Bulgarian politician, one of the leaders of the Conservative Party and later of the People’s Party, he founds. Twice Prime Minister of Bulgaria.

Studies at Robert College in Istanbul and Law in Heidelberg. While at Robert College he amazes many guests of the school year opening ceremony, including foreign ambassadors, with his brilliant speech “The Silence of History about the Destiny of the Bulgarian People.” After Heidelberg, Stoilov works as a judge in Plovdiv. In 1879 – 1880 is Chief of staff of Alexander I and as an active Conservative, he holds several ministerial posts. Takes part in the Serbian-Bulgarian War as a platoon commander. After the abdication of Alexander I, Stoilov helps Stefan Stambolov in his effort to stabilize the country and takes part in the temporary cabinet of Petko Karavelov and Vasil Radoslavov, even becomes briefly Prime Minister (1886 – 1888), to be later appointed Justice Minister in the Stambolov cabinet, working on boosting construction infrastructure as base of national security and economic prosperity. Since 1888, Stoilov is in opposition of Stambolov and after the latter’s ousting from power leads the temporary cabinet in 1894. Founds the People’s Party; wins the elections and is Prime Minister from 1894 until 1899. His term is known for the continuing economic boom, started by Stambolov and the passing of the 1st Act for Protection of Local Industry.

Stoyanov, Zahari (1850 – 1889), born Dzhendo Stoyanov Dzhedev. Bulgarian revolutionary, writer, and historian. A participant in the April Uprising of 1876, he becomes its best historiographer with his book Notes from the Bulgarian Uprisings. Stoyanov directs the Unification of Bulgaria and Eastern Rumelia in 1885, and is one of the leaders of the People's Liberal Party until the end of his life.

Zahari Stoyanov was born in the family of a shepherd in the village of Medven close to Sliven. He attends school in his native village and becomes a shepherd too and later a tailor apprentice in Ruse where he joins the Ruse Revolutionary Committee. Stoyanov takes part in the Stara Zagora Uprising of 1875 and is one of the "apostles" of the Plovdiv revolutionary district during the time of the April Uprising in 1876. After the uprisings' suppression he is arrested and exiled to Medven, but moves illegally to the newly-liberated Veliko Tarnovo in 1877. After the Liberation of Bulgaria in the Russian-Turkish War of 1877-78, Stoyanov is a member of the Tarnovo Regional Court. In 1881 he is a secretary of the Court of Appeals and a forensic examining magistrate in Ruse, and an employee of the Office of Justice of Eastern Rumelia in 1882–1885. Stoyanov heads the Bulgarian Secret Central Revolutionary Committee (BSCRC) which organized the Unification of Bulgaria and Eastern Rumelia in 1885 and lives in Sofia since 1886, where he actively participates in the activities of the People's Liberal Party. Elected Member of the Parliament in 1886, he becomes Deputy Speaker in 1887 and Speaker in 1888–1889. Dies in Paris in 1889. Stoyanov is the author of a number of articles and several memoirs and biographies, describing the April Uprising, the lives of Vasil Levski, Hristo Botev, and other important Bulgarian revolutionary leaders. His Notes of the Bulgarian Uprisings. Eyewitness Reports. 1870–1876 is universally accepted as his best work, the product of many years of labor, and facts collection. Zahari Point on Robert Island, South Shetland Islands, Antarctica is named for Zahari Stoyanov.

Stoyanov, Petko (1879 -1973) Bulgarian finance expert, academician and politician from the Radical-Democrats party.

Studies law in Sankt Petersburg and economy and finances in Munich. Professor of Finances at the Sofia University, member of BAS. Stoyanov is Finance Minister in 1944 – 1945.

Tomalevski, Naum (1882 – 1930) Bulgarian revolutionary, member of VMRO. Brother of writer Georgi Tomalevski and father of architect Bogdan Tomalevski.

Born in Macedonia. The family flees to Sofia after the Ilinden-Preobrazhenie Uprising. He becomes a VMRO member as a student in Skopje. Teaches in Kozloduy and studies social sciences in Geneva. During World War I graduates from the School of Military Reserve Officers and becomes Mayor of the village of Krushevo. One of the founders of the Macedonian Science Institute. Killed during the fraction wars at VMRO in 1930.

Tsankov, Aleksander (1879 – 1959) leading Bulgarian right-wing politician between the two World Wars, economist, and Speaker of the Parliament.

A Professor of Political Economy at the Sofia University since 1910, Tsankov takes a leading role in the overthrow of the government of agrarian leader Aleksander Stamboliyski in 1923 and is chosen to head the coalition that succeeded the deposed Prime Minister. Tsankov becomes Prime Minister of Bulgaria on June 9 that same year and remains at the post until 1926. His term is marked by deep internal struggles with

the Bulgarian Communist Party, which Tsankov represses mercilessly, declaring martial law (the Law for the Defense of the State, 1924) and outlawing the Communists in 1925 following an attempt on Tsar Boris's life and a bomb attack on the St Nedelya Cathedral. His actions led to the Comintern denouncing his government as a "victorious Bulgarian fascist clique." Tsankov is also known as a persecutor of the Agrarian Peoples Union. A brief Greek invasion leaves Bulgaria crippled by debt and Tsankov is removed from office after failing to secure a loan for the country. After being ousted from the political mainstream, Tsankov begins to develop an admiration for Fascism and soon becomes a supporter of Adolf Hitler. In 1932, he sets up his own National Social Movement largely an imitation of the Nazi Party. The movement proves fairly unimportant (although it did represent a further fragmentation of the governing coalition), lacking the support of Zveno and failing to secure Nazi approval, which was largely reserved for the Union of Bulgarian National Legions. Nonetheless, Tsankov is appointed by the Nazis in 1944 as Prime Minister of the Bulgarian Government in Exile set up in Germany in response to Kimon Georgiev's Fatherland Front government. After World War II, Tsankov flees to Argentina and dies in Belgrano, Buenos Aires in 1959.

Vedar, Ivan (1927 -), born Danail Nikolov, in the town of Razgrad. He is often referred to as the founder of **Freemasonry** in Bulgaria.

During Danail's early years, his father, the architect Karastoyan, is asked to build a house for a local, high-ranking Turk, who later refuses to pay. A row flares up, and, in order to save his father, Danail kills the Turk. He changes his name and goes undercover to study in a college in Malta, where learns many languages. After that Vedar works as a sailor on an English ship, as interpreter in Turkish institutions in Istanbul, as language teacher in Izmir to the sons of Turkish notables, including Midhat Pasha. During the Crimean War, he travels over Black Sea harbors, possibly as a Russian spy. He continues his studies in the medical school in Bucharest, where he gets his nickname Vedriy or Vedar (meaning cheerful) from his professors because of his easy-going temper. In 1863, in the Istanbul branch of Oriental Lodge, he is initiated into masonry and reaches the 33rd degree, the last one, according the Old and Accepted Scottish Rite. During his long and exciting career, Vedar works on the first Bulgarian railroad Ruse–Varna, then as a trade representative in Manchester, marries the daughter of a respected architect from Ruse, teaches at Robert College, becomes correspondent for different European newspapers. Midhat Pasha appoints him "secretary of the external correspondence", which lets him frequently keep in touch with foreign diplomats. He provides financial aid to some uprisings and the revolutionary movement in Ruse, and is friendly with several of its members. Vedar intercedes for Zahari Stoyanov to become a librarian in the Zora cultural club while his lobbying lifts off the decision of Delaver Pasha to massacre a great part of the population in Ruse in 1877.

After the Liberation of Bulgaria, Ivan Vedar installs the first Bulgarian regular Masonic lodge Balkan Star in Ruse in 1880, with Nikola Obretenov, Zahari Stoyanov, Toma Kardzhiev as members, and which is visited incognito by Alexander Battenberg. Later lodges are founded in Varna, Sofia, and some other cities, but in 1887 Vedar is forced to

"put asleep" all lodges, because of the danger that their activity gets blemished by political and interpersonal struggles, so common in Bulgaria. In the end of his life, he assigns all of his property to the state, saying he had given enough to his children — education and upbringing. The bones of Ivan Vedar were moved to the Pantheon of National Revival Heroes, and a monument in his honor was put nearby. Modern Masonic organizations in Bulgaria issue a medal with his name.

Velchev, Damyan (1883 – 1954) Politician and military man. After the June 9 coup he is appointed Commandant of the Military School in Sofia (1923 – 1928) of which he was a graduate. In 1927, he is sent to specialize in Paris. Upon returning to Bulgaria, Velchev enters into a conflict with then Defense Minister Gen. Valkov and is dismissed from the army. He later takes major part in 3 coups: 1923, 1934, and 1944. In 1930, Velchev becomes a member of the right-wing Zveno group. In 1934, he is the leader of the Zveno coup, but does not become a minister and stays in the background. After the counter-coup in 1935, Velchev flees abroad, but later slips back into the country and is arrested. He is sentenced to death in 1936, but his life is spared by Tsar Boris III. In 1943, he joins the Fatherland Front, a pro-communist, anti-Axis resistance movement. In 1944, the Fatherland Front seizes power and Velchev becomes Minister of Defense. He resigns in 1946 because of purges within the army. Later, he becomes ambassador to Switzerland, but after a while resigns and asks for political asylum. He stays in Switzerland until his death.

Velichkov, Konstantin (1855 -1907) Studies at the “Galatasaray” College in Istanbul. Active in the plotting of the uprising against the Ottoman Rule, the so-called Great Uprising of April (1876). After the uprising he is arrested and sent to prison. Translator for the Russian officers during the Russian – Turkish Liberation War. Member of the Parliament and Minister in the Principality of Bulgaria and Eastern Rumelia. After the Union with Bulgaria, moves to Sofia and later emigrates abroad – Italy and Turkey. Returns to become Education Minister (1894 – 1897) and Minister of Commerce and Agriculture (1897 – 1898). Initiates the opening of a fine arts school in Bulgaria, editor of many newspapers and magazines, author of fiction and memoirs. Dies in France.

Zagorov, Slavcho (1898 – 1965) Studies law in Bern, Sofia and Innsbruck, then political science in Leipzig. Professor of Statistics at the Sofia University. Economy Minister in the Georgi Kioseivanov and Bogdan Filov’s cabinets. Ambassador to Berlin – 1942 – 1944. Sentenced by the Communist “People’s Tribunal.”
Zahariev, Nikola (1898 – 1945) Studies Agriculture Sciences in Prague. Active member of the Bulgarian Agrarian Union. Member of the Parliament and Deputy Speaker (1940 -1944). Minister of Roads, Public Works, Transport and Communications between 1934 until 1935; Economy Minister from 1945 to 1943. Sentenced to death by the Communist “People’s Tribunal” and killed in 1945.

Zlatarov, Asen (1885 -1936) Professor, Bulgarian scientist, public figure, writer and founder of biochemistry in Bulgaria. Studies chemistry in Geneva and 1908 becomes PhD in Chemistry and Physics at the University of Grenoble. Works as a teacher in

Plovdiv. Specializes in Munich (1909 – 1910) and since 1924 is a Professor at the Sofia University, editor of several scientific magazines, author of many literary articles, poems, fiction short stories and one novel.