



Sofia SKY MUSEUM LOOK UP

Проект „Небесен музей“ се изпълнява с финансовата подкрепа на Столична община, Програма „Европа“ 2023 от Сдружение „Институт за граждански инициативи - ЛОРА“.



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SOFIA CENTRAL MARKET HALL

The building is a cultural monument of national importance. The Central Market Hall is a commercial complex in the center of Sofia located on Maria Luiza Blvd. It is one of the oldest shopping complexes.

The Sofia Central Market Hall, or the Sofia Covered Market as it was known by the citizens of the capital upon its opening, is testimony to the Europe-





anization of Sofia at the beginning of the 20th century. The construction of the building, which extends over more than 3,200 m², began in 1909, after the design of architect Naum Torbov was selected in 1907, and took two years. The building was made on the site of an extensive wooden construction in which theater and circus performances were held after the Liberation.

By the end of the 1940s, the Metropolitan Municipality leased about 170 shops and stalls in the Market. Rents and product quality were strictly regulated. In 1955, the building was declared a cultural monument of national importance, falling within the boundaries of the archaeological reserve "Ancient Serdika and Medieval Sredets". The interior of the building was significantly altered after the 1950s and the complex was closed in 1988 to be reconstructed, modernized and re-opened at Easter 2000.

By July 2022, the Central Market Hall employs over 1,000 people, on three floors. The complex has food stalls, shops for clothes, accessories and jewelry and others.

The style of the building, which is considered Torbov's best work, is Neo-Renais-

sance, also including elements of Neo-Byzantine architecture and Neo-Baroque, but elements inherent in medieval Bulgarian construction art also stand out. The exterior decoration is impressive and picturesque, but not obtrusive and cluttered. A consistent alternation of horizontal rows of stone and bricks was used. Emphasis is placed on the main entrance, above the arch in the upper part of which there are a triple window and an image of the capital coat of arms, created by the artist Haralampi Tachev. The famous small clock tower is at the top of the building. The building was originally built with four entrances, but not all are in use today.

THE BANK BUILDING OF ARCH. NIKOLA LAZAROV

Nikola Lazarov was born in Karlovo in 1870. His buildings adorn cities all over Bulgaria. Lazarov graduated in architecture in Paris with a scholarship provided by Prince Ferdinand, after which he began his career in the Principality of Bulgaria as an architect for the maintenance of state buildings. Later he opened his own private architectural office in Sofia. He remains in history as a master of Secession. In addition to the French Secession,





in his buildings we can find notes of the French Baroque, as well as the touches of the French architect Hector Guimard.

The building at 1 Ivan Vazov Street in Sofia has always been a classic architectural example and a symbol of economic power. It was completed in 1912 for the Central Cooperative Bank, designed by architect Nikola Lazarov. Decades later, in issue 40 of the „State Gazette“ from 1978, it was declared an architectural and artistic cultural monument of national importance.

The highlight of the beautiful building is Lyuben Dimitrov’s sculptural group of three human figures supporting a globe. The composition symbolizes the cooperative movement.

Over the years, many repairs and partial interior alterations have been made, but they have been carried out in a way that aims to preserve the elements of the interior of the building with architectural and artistic value, while at the same time it continues to be fully used as a bank branch.

Initially, the building was built on 3 floors. At the beginning of the 20s of the 20th century, its upgrading began, which was realized by the „Nichev & Fingov

& Apostolov“ architectural office. In 1925-1928, after a competition, arch. Georgi Fingov and arch. Dimo Nichev expanded the building towards the corner of „Iv. Vazov“ and „G.S. Rakovski“ streets, upgraded it with two floors and crowned it with a new dome. Then the sculptural group was created.

But the building remains impressive not only from the outside, but also from the inside. A real work of art is the carved desk in the Principal office, on which the famous Bulgarian banker Atanas Burov also worked. The richly ornamented ceilings are among the most valuable elements of the building. According to documents stored in the National Institute of Cultural Monuments, the rooms on the second floor, which in the past were a meeting room and a round office, are interesting part of the building. In them, the ornaments on the ceilings and the paneling have been preserved to this day. In the corridors, the sculptural elements around the main staircase and the plaster ceilings are interesting.



NATIONAL THEATER “IVAN VAZOV”

The Ivan Vazov National Theater is a National Cultural Institute. Besides an architectural masterpiece, it is a symbol of high theatrical art.

The theater was built according to the project of the famous Viennese architects Ferdinand Fellner and Hermann Helmer, who are already the authors of numerous



theater buildings in Vienna, Odessa, Zagreb, Prague, Wiesbaden, Bratislava and other European cities that have become landmarks. The foundations were laid on June 4, 1904, on the site of the wooden theater "Osnova", where the troupe previously played its shows, and at the end of 1906 the building was completed and cost 1,500,000 BGN. The hall then collected 900 spectators. The interest in the opening of the theater was extremely high.

The National Theater opened its doors on January 3, 1907 with a special performance. Before the grand opening, many students booed Prince Ferdinand I and he decided by decree to close Sofia University for six months.

In February 1923, during the performance of "Princess Raina", the scenery on the stage suddenly burst into flames. Although the actors, staff and audience threw themselves selflessly into extinguishing the fire, the fire burned both the stage and the saloon to ashes. The restoration of the theater lasted until 1929, according to the project of the Dresden professor Martin Dülfer, who erected a completely new, modern stage and designed the theater in the style of neoclassicism.

The last major reconstruction of the National Theater was from 1972 to 1976. The

main task of the project under the leadership of arch. Ivan Tonev and Prof. Eng. Venelin Venkov was to restore the original appearance of the building. At the same time, a special Chamber Stage was being built. The overall artistic layout is work of the artists Dechko Uzunov, Georgi Chapkenov and Ivan Kirkov, who is also the author of the curtain of the theater - the Phoenix.

In different years, directors invited from abroad performed on the stage of the National Theater: Rasha Plaovich and Arsa Jovanovich, Boris Babochkin, Takis Mouzenidis, Jacek Voscherovich, Boris Livanov and Boris Zahava, Clifford Williams, Andrey Goncharov, Oleg Efremov and Georgy Tovstonogov, Brako Plesha.

THE BUILDING AT 19 MOSKOVSKA STREET

The building at 19 Moskovska Street was made in 1914. It is a masterpiece of the Secession in Bulgarian architecture, the work of the great Bulgarian architects Georgi Fingov, Dimo Nichev and Nikola Yurukov in the period 1912-1914, designed for the needs of the Sofia Bank. The building was declared an architectural and artistic monument of culture in 1978, and eight years later - an essential element of the group monument of culture called "Zone of the historically developed public





urban center". The figure of the God Mercury - the God of trade, exchange and communications - is impressive, and its author is Marin Vassilev, one of the founders of the Bulgarian new sculpture and the first to decorate a public building. Two eagles "guard" the entrance to the building. Medusa masks on the ground floor windows catch the eye of passers-by.

On the facades of this building, we can easily read the fine architectural handwriting of Secession. Through them we can see something more - the great mission of architecture to create beauty and to cultivate respect for the beautiful throughout all eras. Today the building is impeccably renovated and continues to be a bank (it houses the central office of one of the largest banks in Bulgaria). But not only banking is recorded in the history of the building, which in the 1930s was intertwined with the creation of the Bulgarian radio. For almost the entire decade, the secessionist masterpiece was home to "Rodno Radio", succeeded in 1935 by "Radio Sofia", which in those years was led by the writer and artist Panayot Hristov - Sirak Skitnik.

Even looking at just one Sofia building, we can find so many touches from the history of the capital and Bulgaria. And to continue the intriguing discovery of

the past we return to the year 1913 when the building was designed. At the same time, Bulgaria was at war. The end of the conflict between the Balkan Union and the Ottoman Empire was the beginning of increasingly sharp contradictions between the ambitious allies Bulgaria, Serbia and Greece. In June, Bulgaria was doomed to lose the rapid Inter-Allied War alone against five countries, but despite the desperate situation, the last battles against the Serbs and Greeks ended in unshakable resistance and victories. The beautiful old bank is from a time of triumph, quickly replaced by a national tragedy with a total of 166 thousand killed and wounded. And despite these turbulent times, the desire of Bulgarians to be part of the European world continues to lead talented architects and visionary entrepreneurs to the construction of buildings that preserve the spirit of Sofia even 100 years later.

THE BUILDING OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

It is the main building, the headquarters of the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party. From September 2020 to March 2021, it houses the National Assembly. From September 1, 2023, the National Assembly is once again housed in the building.

At the time of the National Republic of Bulgaria, in each district city there was a representative building for the respective regional leadership of the Bulgarian Communist Party, also called „Party House“. The term is also used for smaller towns.

The building is located in the center of Sofia, between 3 squares and 2 boulevards,

with the main entrance at „Knyaz Alexander I“ square. The most impressive view, with the highest part and the pylon with the national flag is from Nezavisimost Square, where the entrance to Sofia Hall is.

The building was constructed according to the project of a team led by arch. Peco Zlatev. The construction lasted for 6 years and was finally completed in 1954. The building covers about 40,000 square meters of built-up area.

It was designed in a neoclassical style with monumental character, marking and glorifying the role of the Bulgarian Communist Party in the governance of the country. The external representativeness is achieved by the strictly symmetrical facades and large Corinthian order forms.

Its corridors are about 3 kilometers long. On the first floor there are 2 large halls: „Sveta Sofia“ (with 900 seats) and “Gerbova Hall”.

The building was renovated in 1999 for the sum of 410 million BGN. In 2020, it was also renovated to move the plenary sessions of the National Assembly there.





At the top of the building, on the pylon on which the national flag of Bulgaria is put today, from 1954 to October 4, 1990, an imposing red pentacle towered, an important symbol of communist ideology. First, back in the 1930s, a similar five-pointed star was erected on the Moscow Kremlin, which is why the symbol is often associated with the USSR.

Today, the original red Star can be seen in the Museum of Socialist Art.

Ornaments in the shape of corn cobs are present on the facades, due to Nikita Khrushchev's campaign launched during the construction for the massive sowing of American corn hybrids.

Remains of three late antique churches were found on the site of the building.

The building is in an emblematic place in the capital, in the space around the Royal Palace, used as a central city square. During the construction activities in the early 1950s, several buildings damaged during the bombing of Sofia (1943-1944) were destroyed - the „Balkan“ insurance company, which existed in the 1930s and 1940s, and the „Union Palace“ hotel.

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Immediately after the completion of the building in 1954, it housed the Council of Ministers. The reason for this is that at that time Valko Chervenkov left most of his party positions, but remained Prime Minister. Later, the building was handed over to the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party.

August 26, 1990 remains forever in the history of Bulgaria with the burning of this symbol of power in the country. In the summer of 1990, the parliament decided to remove all socialist symbols from public buildings. Among them is the ruby pentagram that adorns the pylon above the headquarters of the Bulgarian Communist Party. Members from the Bulgarian Socialist Party agree that the symbol should be removed, but are in no hurry to implement the decision. It was this reluctance that brought the angry mob to the front of the building.



NATIONAL ART GALLERY

The former Royal Palace and current complex of national museums in Sofia is located at Prince Alexander I Square No. 1 in the center of the Bulgarian capital. It has been a monument of culture since 1978.

The first museum building in which the National Gallery is located is the Palace. Today, temporary exhibitions of Bulgarian and foreign art are shown in its halls.

The palace was built immediately after the liberation of Bulgaria from Ottoman rule (1878) and the election of Sofia as the capital (1879).

The first Bulgarian prince Alexander I Battenberg (1879-1886) commissioned the Viennese architect Viktor Rumpelmeier (1830-1885) to rebuild the former Turkish inn. On December 26, 1882, the palace was officially opened. The stone foundations and part of the main facade had been preserved from the previous building. The new look included a variety of architectural elements in the spirit of the time-honored mix of neo-styles. A new wing was being added on the northwest side.

On the second floor there were the throne room, ballrooms, reception rooms, dining room and winter garden. On the lower floor were the offices of the palace services. According to contemporaries, the building acquired the charm of French palaces from the time of the Enlightenment. Today, the National Gallery is located in the central building and in this wing.

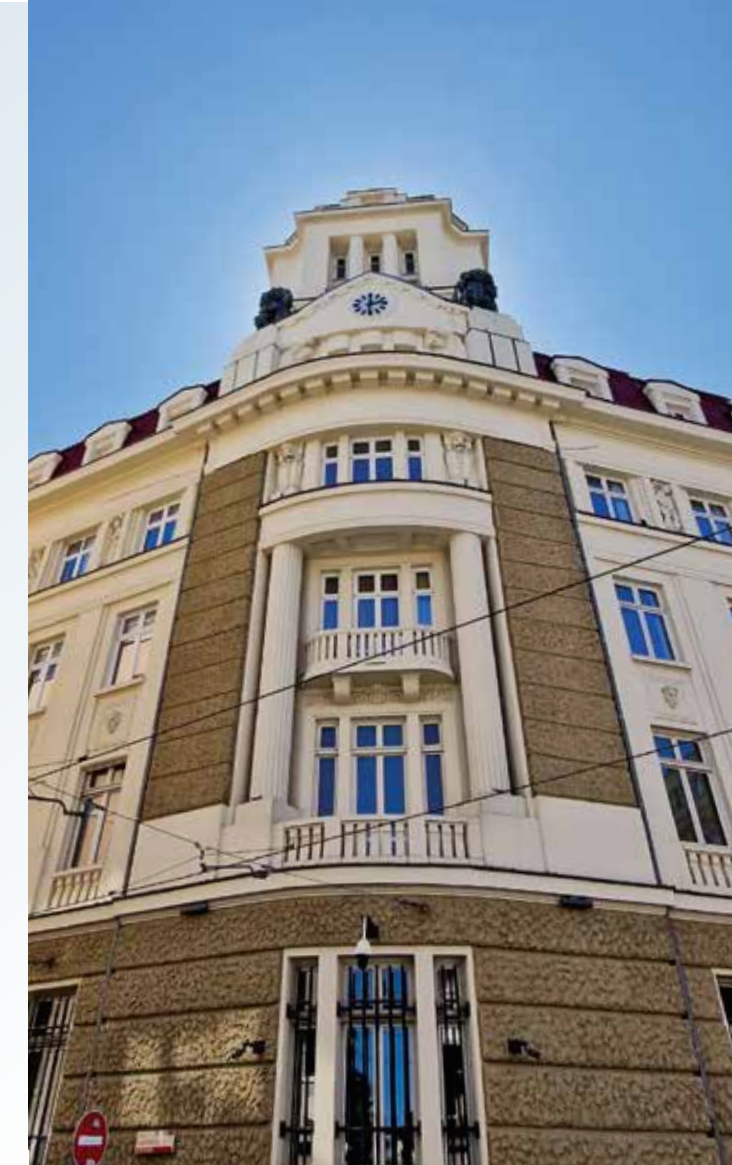
The second stage of construction was during the time of Prince Ferdinand I of Saxe-Coburg Gotha (1887-1918). According to a project by the Austrian architect Friedrich Grünanger (1856-1929), in 1894-1896, the three-story northeast building intended for the apartments of the princely family was built, with a library, study rooms, play and entertainment rooms, a dining room and a reception room, a covered entrance for carriages and two conservatories, guest apartments, staff quarters, elevator. This wing houses the National Ethnographic Museum.

After September 9, 1944, this most representative building in the capital became the seat of the Council of Ministers. In 1953, the state provided the former palace to the National Art Gallery and the National Ethnographic Museum.

THE COOPERATIVE COMMERCIAL BANK BUILDING ON GARIBALDI SQUARE

The building is a cultural monument and is one of the most representative bank buildings in the capital - with an impressive appearance and a long history.

It was designed by the architectural bureau of Georgi Fingov, Dimo Nichev and Nikola Yurukov in the early 1920s for the headquarters of the Bulgarian Commercial Bank.





It was erected on the site of the old Sofia Post Office on Garibaldi Square, and the construction was completed in 1925.

The Bulgarian Commercial Bank was founded in 1895 in Ruse. By 1926, the headquarters was already in the capital, with the bank having branches in the „Yuch Bunar“ district and in the cities of Plovdiv, Varna, Burgas, Ruse, Tarnovo, Gabrovo, Lom, Tarnovo, Stara Zagora, Haskovo, Popovo, Tryavna and Sliven.

Before September 9, 1944, the imposing building on Garibaldi Square was called the bank of Atanas Burov. However, the owner of the bank is Georgi Gubidelnikov, and Burov was only its manager.

The banker Gubidelnikov was a very influential person. A French graduate of the Sorbonne in law, he was also a member of the National Party and was elected for member of the parliament six times.

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THE BUILDING OF THE FORMER
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND
INDUSTRY

The building is a cultural monument of national importance. It stands at 2 Slavyanska Str. as one of the most representative historical buildings in the heart of Sofia. It was built more than a century ago as the Sofia Chamber of Commerce and Industry own building. The richly ornamented facade, elegant dome and rich interior make this work of architectural art a worthy neighbor of the imposing National Theatre.





The history of the Chambers of Commerce and Industry in Bulgaria begins in 1895, when the first four regional chambers were established with headquarters in Sofia, Plovdiv, Ruse and Varna. They set themselves the goal of promoting Bulgarian trade, crafts and production, improving professional education and strengthening the international ties of the native industry. Over time, the question of acquiring own buildings for the needs of the chambers matured. The construction of the building of the Sofia Chamber of Commerce and Industry is carried out after a competition. The winning project, realized in the period 1911-1914, is the work of the established Fingov-Nichev-Yurukov architectural office. There are 14 projects participating in the competition, of which the proposal of architect Nikola Lazarov, author of the exquisite building of the Chamber in Ruse, was ranked second.

Nikola Yurukov was born in 1880 in the village of Lobanitsa. He received his high school education in Plovdiv. In 1901 he graduated in architecture at the Technical University in Vienna. Together with Georgi Fingov and Dimo Nichev, he founded the „Fingov-Nichev-Yurukov“ architectural office, which in 1911-1912 won numerous competitions for the design and construction of school and administrative buildings in Sofia and Plovdiv.

The building was finally completed after the First World War and consecrated on April 6, 1920 in the presence of Tsar Boris III. The value of the plot, the building and the furniture amounted to 325 thousand BGN at that time.

In 1948, the building was rebuilt and upgraded, losing its attic floor and the distinctive sculptural group on Slavyanska Street. After the termination of the activity of the chambers of commerce and industry, the building is used by the state company Despred, the Ministry of Mechanical Engineering and others.

THE „CLERK INSURANCE COMPANY“ BUILDING

Many Sofia residents and guests of the capital, walking along Tsar Osvoboditel Blvd. or visiting the Russian Church of St. Nicholas the Wonderworker, are strongly impressed by a building on the corner of Benkovski Str. and Tsar Osvoboditel Blvd. The imposing corner building was erected way back in 1926. At the time, it housed the Clerk's Insurance Company.

The six-story building ends with an eight-sided dome. It is undoubtedly the peak of the architectural composition. The plot of the monument corresponds to the purpose of the building. The sculptural image of a healthy Bulgarian woman with two children symbolizes the labor of the people and their concern for the future. The composition is made of white Vratsa marble and rises as a logical conclusion to the narrow angular facade. It is one of the first synthesis between a building



and an artistic figure in a new way. Ten years after the construction of the building, its facade on Tsar Osvoboditel Blvd. was cleaned of decoration in order to harmonize and obtain a unified character with the „Bulgaria“ hotel complex. The external and internal architecture of the building was assigned to the architectural office of Georgi Fingov, Dimo Nichev and Nikola Yurukov. All the decorative details of the facade and its overall appearance are decided in the late Secession style under the influence of the modern classics typical for public buildings. The main promoter of this style in our country is arch. Fingov. In the past, the tower, 45.5 meters high, held the championship in height. The design of the entrances, the mansard floor, the arched windows, the balustrades and the main cornice is presentable and solemn.

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THE RUSSIAN CHURCH „ST. NICHOLAS“

Its construction began at the end of the 19th century, and it was consecrated in 1914 on the eve of the First World War. The building was built on a plot of the Russian Embassy according to a project by Mikhail Preobrazhensky specifically for the needs of Russian immigrants in the capital. The foundation stone of the temple was laid by Kniaz Vladimir Alexandrovich (son of Emperor Alexander II), who arrived in Sofia especially for this purpose together with his wife Kniazginiya Maria Pavlovna and his son Kniaz Andrey Vladimirovich. On August 30, 1907, the distinguished guests took part in the solemn consecration of the monument of Tsar Osvoboditel, a wonderful creation of the Italian sculptor Arnaldo Zocchi, and on September 2/15, 1907, the ceremony of laying the foundations of the ambassador temple took place. At the corners of the future foundations of the building, four marble stones were put, on which the initials of the Kniaz Vladimir Alexandrovich, his wife, his son, and Prince Boris, the future king of Bulgaria, were written in golden letters.



Originally conceived as a chapel for the Russian embassy in Bulgaria, the church almost immediately lost its role after 1917. After the Second Russian Revolution, priests and bishops from the so-called „Russian Abroad Church“ began to serve in it, and the already separate church became the center of numerous Russian immigration to the country. In 1936, at the insistence of the Soviet authorities, the temple was handed over to the Bulgarian Orthodox Church, and the Russian parish headed by Bishop Seraphim Sobolev was expelled from there. Metropolitan Stefan of Sofia moved the Russian community to the small church „St. Nicholas“ on Kaloyan Street, opposite the building of the Sofia Metropolis. After 1947, the temple was handed over to the Moscow Patriarchate, which manages it to this day. (It is considered a courtyard or stauropygium of this patriarchate).

Architecturally, the temple was built in the traditions of Russian church architecture from the 19th century - with preserved ancient Russian elements - the so-called „bulbs“ (cubes), combined with traditional old Russian mosaics and wood carvings, it also bears the marks of more modern architecture and painting.

In September 2023, the temple became part of an espionage scandal after three of its priests were expelled from the country on charges of espionage for the Russian Federation.

SOURCES:

spasisofia.org, www.wikipedia.org, www.isofia.bg, momichetata.com, www.bta.bg, nationaltheatre.bg, frognews.bg, trafficnews.bg, dskbank.bg, historicalroutes.bg, bnr.bg, nationalgallery.bg, www.168chasa.bg, offnews.bg, stara-sofia.blogspot.com, vestnikstroitel.bg, podvorie-sofia.bg



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