

Erstpublikation

1. Introduction

¹ The current paper is part of my research on monuments and representations of the dead after 1945 in Bulgaria and Eastern Europe in general. The main points raised in the paper are discussed in detail in several of my publications. Cf.: Vukov, Nikolai: *Refigured Memories, Unchained Representations. Post-Socialist Monumental Discourse in Bulgaria*. In: *Zwischen Nostalgie, Amnesie und Allergie: Erinnerung an den Kommunismus in Südosteuropa*. Berlin 2007 (forthcoming); *ibid.*: *Town Squares and Socialist Heritage. The Reworking of Memorial Landscapes in Post-socialist Bulgaria* (co-authored by Svetlana Toncheva). In: Schröder-Esch/Ulbricht (ed.): *The Politics of Heritage and Regional Development Strategies. Actors, Interests, Conflicts*, Hermes publications 2 (2007) (forthcoming); *ibid.*: *Public Monuments as Visualisations of Death in Socialist Bulgaria between 1944 and 1989*. In: *Centropa. A Journal of Central European Architecture and Related Arts* 6 (2006), pp. 215-227; *ibid.*: *«Brotherly Help» Representations or «Imperial» Legacy: Monuments to the Soviet Army in Bulgaria before and after 1989*. *Ab Imperio* 1(2006), pp. 267-292; *ibid.*: *Les monuments socialistes et le discours sur la mort en Bulgarie après 1945*. In: *La Nouvelle Alternative* (20) 2005, revue spécialisée sur l'Europe Centrale et du sud-est postcommuniste. Numéro special *«Politiques symboliques en Europe Centrale»*, pp. 63-79; *ibid.*: *Monuments beyond the Representations of Power: Monuments of the Socialist Past in post-1989 Bulgaria*. In: Bartetzky, Arnold (ed.) *Neue Staaten - neue Bilder? Visuelle Kultur im Dienst staatlicher Selbstdarstellung in Zentral- und Osteuropa seit 1918*, Köln: Böhlau 2005, pp. 211-219; *ibid.*: *Representing the Nation's Past: National History Monuments in Socialist and Post-Socialist Bulgaria*. In: *Kokkalis Graduate Student Workshop Proceedings*, Harvard, http://www.ksg.harvard.edu/kokkalis/GSW7/Nikolai%20Voukov%20_paper_.pdf *ibid.*: *Death and Desecration: Monuments of the Socialist Past in Bulgaria after 1989*. *Anthropology of Eastern Europe Review* 21 (2003), pp. 49-55; *ibid.*: *Death and Vitality in the Monuments of the Socialist Past in Eastern Europe*. In: *New Europe College Regional Program Yearbook*. Bucharest: Editie 2002;

The period that preceded the political changes of 1989 in Bulgaria was marked with prompt attempts to embrace new modes of self-representation and with emergent appeals for taking an estranged stance towards the socialist period. Among the most direct targets of these attempts and calls for a change were the monuments inherited from the socialist epoch, which occupied the central points of the public landscapes and had served for years as major expressions of the ideology's discourse of self-legitimation. Very much in parallel to cases of toppling monuments in other post-socialist countries, the process of reworking the memorial landscapes in Bulgaria gained outlined dimensions, and served as a major issue in the public debates for at least a decade after 1989. The protest meetings against the standing of the former socialist «idols», the numerous fights between political groups around memorial sites, the multifarious cases of destruction, reshaping, substitution, or reinstallation – all these made monuments emblematic for post-socialist processes in Bulgaria and for the critical attempts for self-identification. The unrestrained associations to the previous regime that the former monuments engendered and their firm link with the ideological discourse that previously surrounded them with legitimation posed these objects into a position where their presence was put on stake, when it needed to be discussed and contested in strikes and protests, political fights and physical assaults.

In all of these cases, monuments were not merely occasions for reworking the symbolic embodiments of the previous ideology, but also points where the new modes of representation and self-representation were decided. Aside from being an opportunity to assert political messages that opposed the former ideology, the various acts of monuments' reshaping expressed the efforts to negotiate and coin in a new way the post-socialist identities – both of these objects and of the communities around them. The urgent reworking of the monumental landscape in Bulgaria after 1989 revealed a new trajectory of self-representation – one that constituted itself through the adopted distance to the preceding period and through the new horizons that were opened to the post-socialist imagination.

By focusing on the various ways socialist monuments were treated in Bulgaria after 1989, the current paper will discuss the problem of the urgent reinscriptions and emergent notions of self-representation that evolved in the post-socialist context. The goal is to outline the main trajectories of self-representation that were manifested by the new forms and meanings of memorial sites, and to analyze the emergent changes of identities that they evoked. The focus will be on group-based forms of self-representation, ones that found projections on local, regional, and national level, and that put historical events, figures, and symbolic forms into dynamic interplay and urgent transformation.

2. Cases and Modalities of Self-representation

To understand more clearly the parameters of self-representation in the monumental discourse after 1989 in Bulgaria, a brief overview of the dynamics of monumental reshaping and of the most representative cases in this process is no doubt necessary. Initiated almost immediately after 1989, the transformation of the previous regime's visual representations reached dimensions that did not leave untouched almost any of the already existing monuments and memorial forms. Targeting immediately the monuments with the most expressive ideological content and most propaganda related functions, it soon succeeded to involve both monuments to communist leaders, and those to national history figures, both those to the Soviet army and those to the soldiers who died in the Russian-Turkish War of 1877-1878, both those to communist tribunes and those to the antifascist resistance. Marking a peak in the first years after 1989, the sharpened attention to purge the monumental landscape from all visible and supposed traces of the former ideology brought to an urgent change in many monumental sites, to rigorous debates and to acute dissonances on the issue of collective self-representations.

Vukov, Nikolai: The Destruction of Georgi Dimitrov's Mausoleum in Sofia. The »Incoincidence« between Memory and Its Referents. In: Ioan, Augusting: Places of Memory, special issue of Octogon 10 (2003).

2 Within the first two years of the regime all of the monuments to Lenin that existed in all larger towns of Bulgaria were destroyed and only their pedestals remained to remind about the former ideological signs.

Already in 1990, for example, the monument of Lenin in Sliven was covered with red paint and demands were raised for its dismantlement (*Bjuletin Vytreshna Informacia*, BTA - Bulgarian Telegraph Agency, 237, 25.08.1990.) In the same year, a huge monument to Lenin in Russe provoked vehement protests on behalf of opposition groups and was toppled leaving only its pedestal to serve as a »billboard« for advertisements and political slogans. In 1991 the municipality council in General Toshevo decided to dismantle the 3,5 ton monument to Lenin. Out of fear that they might be stolen, the municipality hosted the monument remains and in 2000 approved a project for their reshaping into a sculpture of a white swallow as a symbol of hope (*Bjuletin Vytreshna Informacia*, BTA, 13.09.2000).

3 In many towns, bas-reliefs and memorial plaques to the founder of the socialist party in Bulgaria, Dimitar Blagoev, were assaulted and removed, and few of them (mostly memorial plaques on houses related to Blagoev's activity) have survived until nowadays. More problematic was the case of his monument in the town of Blagoevgrad. It was dismantled in 1992 in spite of the living chains and the protests of the antifascists in the town. In 1996, the Municipality Council of the town voted for the returning of the monument back to its previous place, to preserve in such a way the synchrony between the name of the town and the monumental representation of its patron (*Trud*, 134, 18.05.1996; *Duma*, 116, 17.05.1996). In 1992 in the central square of Dimitrovgrad, the monument to Dimitrov was dismantled and together with its pedestal was removed to the park »Maritsa« (*Bjuletin Vytreshna Informacia*, BTA, 21, 21.01.1992). In 1997, as if out of »fears« that the town might lose its identity without a monument to its emblematic founder, the monument was reinstalled. In a similar way, the monument of G. Dimitrov in Pavel banya was dismantled in 1993 and after being removed to the municipality basement, it was reinstalled in 1996 (*Trud*, p.133, 17.05.1996).

A brief glance on the dynamics of socialist monuments' reshaping after 1989 shows that, although each of the main monumental types followed a logic of its own, they ordinarily exercised impact on each other and functioned as self-dependent within a compact and imperative public discourse. Each one of the monumental types – those to prominent figures of the socialist ideology, to antifascist resistance, to the Soviet army, to national history heroes, etc. – called forth policies of physical transformation and reinterpretation, which reflected upon and influenced themselves through mutually triggered ideas. The most immediate focus of attention in the first appeals for destruction were the monuments to the »founding fathers« of the communist regime and to the outlined contributors for its establishment in Bulgaria, such as Lenin, Marx, Dimitar Blagoev, and Georgi Dimitrov. Although not without opposition on behalf of orthodox communists and socialist party adherents, most of these monuments fell down from their pedestals within the first five years after 1989. While those to Lenin were virtually destroyed and taken away to landfills or municipal basements,² those to Blagoev and Dimitrov were replaced to distant locations in the outskirts, preserved, or reinstalled after changes in local governance in the following years.³

Some of the empty pedestals remained unoccupied by new memorial forms, but there were many cases (especially those in central town squares) that were substituted by new representations. The choice about what new monumental forms will be chosen in their stead was of crucial significance and there were often involved ardent debates among the local communities on this issue. The proposals spanned from national history figures of more firmly established standing in the national pantheon (medieval kings, enlighteners, national liberation fighters), to symbolic representations (saints, birds, rockets, etc.) Of special significance, however, was the very attempt of the communities to embrace a new identity and to self-represent themselves already through forms, which were principally different from the ones that had surrounded them for decades. In this respect, especially notable is the appearance of these new self-representations, coupled with the emergent responses from people who resisted any change in the monumental landscapes. In the protest meetings and live chains that were mobilized in such occasions, in the physical assaults on some monuments and in the bodily clashes between supporters and opponents to destruction, one can observe the critical points that the emergent need to reinscribe self-identity brought in the first post-socialist years.

The ruptures within the local communities on the issues of post-socialist memorial representations were especially sharp around the cases of monuments raised to figures of the antifascist resistance. In the first years after 1989 when monuments' associations to the socialist ideology were especially disturbing, plenty of monuments dedicated to individual figures connected with the regime (partisans, antifascist fighters, poets, etc.) or collective monuments to the partisan and antifascist movement were attacked and desecrated. They were covered with paint, had their red stars smashed, »acquired« a denigrating inscription, or were partially broken. While some of the smaller and less conspicuous monuments were destroyed or removed, many larger ones did remain intact. Due largely to the protests on behalf of the socialist party and related organizations, the protest against their destruction involved local communities as well, for whom the attempts for destruction had the meaning of a desecration act and an embracement of the ideas, with which anti-fascists fought against. In fact, until today, neither Bulgarian historiography, nor the public discourse in general, have reached a consensus on how to interpret the memory of these figures, and there is general unease with touching upon this sensitive issue. The death of the people who took part in the anti-fascist resistance had been appropriated so heavily by the communist regime that the interpretation of their death as separated from the ideological discourse was truly difficult in the period after the changes.

Beyond the first wave of destruction and symbolic assaults, the fate of the monuments to partisans and antifascists depended largely on the policies applied on each of the municipalities of towns and villages, and was in relation to the decisions of local governments. Frequently, the preservation or destruction of the antifascist monuments depended almost entirely on the political affiliation of the local authorities.⁴ While in some towns, the attacks on antifascist monuments swept around the entire cityscape, in others, many of the monumental references to the socialist times succeeded to survive. The presence of these monuments, the standing of the commemorative plaques and the municipal decisions around former memorial sites prompted of the towns' political affiliation and of the extent to which they had

4 Thus, for example, in 1993, more than 20 monuments were proposed for destruction in Pazardzhik, and most were swiftly destroyed (*Trud*, 132, 10.06.1993). In 1992, close to the anniversary of victory in the Second World War, the Municipality Council in Dupnitsa took a decision for dismantling its monuments and memorial plaques dedicated to several prominent antifascists from the town. In spite of the Bulgarian Socialist Party demands for a referendum on the fate of these monuments, the decision was imposed by the representatives of the ruling coalition and was swiftly enacted (*Duma*, 111, 09.05.1992).

5 Notable in this respect is the case with the removal and the reinstallation of the monument to the first partisan in Bulgaria the monument of N. Parapunov in Razlog. Cf. *Duma*, 102, 30.06.1996; *Trud*, 117, 30.04.1996.

6 *Demokratsia*, 74, 31.03.1993.

succeeded to distance themselves from the recent past. The attempts to reinstall some of the already removed monuments were for example met with protest declarations condemning »the process of re-communization in the region.«⁵ The profile of many towns in the first post-socialist years depended largely on their ability or inability to acquire a proper distance to the past, i.e. on the implementation of strategies of dismantlement and reshaping, or on a position to preserve the legacy of the past, withstanding thus all possible changes.

The practice of reshaping the landscapes where the ideology's special dead were permanently located was closely related to the cases of renaming villages, towns, schools, factories, and institutions that were previously named after prominent figures of the partisan and resistance movement. Until the mid-1990s, most of the institutions bearing the names of the former special dead of the regime were changed. Those of the previous heroes seemed already irrelevant in the new political and cultural atmosphere, and this found projection in the several changes of towns' names after 1989. Tolbuhin, Michurin, and Mihailovgrad for example changed back to Dobritch, Tsarevo, and Montana. Still, many towns and villages bearing the names of socialist heroes preserved their names in a manifested intention to preserve the identity with which these places have remained on maps and memories for decades. Beyond the preserved name, few other things remained to sustain the previous identity. The former references to the activities of party activists who had worked and died in towns, were not active any more – the tourist brochures stopped mentioning them as sites appealing for tourists, and it was usually the memory of the ancient parts of towns and regions that came forth. The changes reflected clearly on the various ways in which cities started to advertise themselves no longer through the monuments raised in the period of socialism and through their ›revolutionary history‹, but rather sought to develop alternative models of references to the past.

The issue of reinscribing local identities through the changes in the monumental landscapes was especially well outlined in the case of the monuments to the Soviet army, which had been built from 1940s through 1980s in most large towns in Bulgaria. Almost immediately after 1989 these monuments were foci of vehement insistence against the presence of such monuments in the cityscapes. A major issue that was addressed in these meetings concerned the profile of the Soviet army and its role in the history of Bulgaria in the end of the Second World War. The changed political atmosphere after 1989 permitted viewing it as an occupier and declared the public meetings in defense of its monuments as »meetings of shame.«⁶ With their enormous size and imposing structure they were justifiably considered as symbols of the cultural colonialism in the Stalinist period. These aesthetic reasons blended with those associated with the preservation of the historical truth and the national dignity, and were yet another strong argument in the debates for clearing the public space from ideological references. The core of the debates lied in the problem of what these monuments actually represented, and how would the communities around them embrace this as a self-representation. Were they memorial signs to the war dead, or rather - symbols of political subordination throughout the years of socialism; were they to be considered as elements of the recent history that did not have powerful meanings any more, or – rather, testimonies of the socialist past that exerted a strong impact on the present? What were the communities to do in case they undertook destruction of these memorial complexes: were they going to substitute them with ›more legitimate‹ representations (churches, monuments to medieval rulers or national heroes, or public buildings, such as ›museums of totalitarianism‹, etc.), or they would leave them unchanged – as reminders about the recent historical period? Were they going to keep them as ›state property‹, and thus under state protection, or, they would rather accept the proposals for selling these sites to private investors?

Facing both the necessity to undertake a change and the impossibility to decide what kind of change exactly to undertake, monuments to the Soviet army turned into central points of political activities and symbolic fights, violent attacks and live chains, organized acts of desecration and wide campaigns for their cleaning on special days. The fate of these monuments in the different Bulgarian towns varied throughout the years, but they all passed through a public debate concerning their possible destruction, through signs of protest and youth culture activities, and in the end they were either adapted gradually within the new city environment, or were turned into sites of desolation and forgetting. The physical survival of these memorial signs was largely due to the Bulgarian Socialist Party and related antifascist organizations, which organized many protest meetings and issued a series of protest de-

7 Bjuletin Vytreshna Informacia, BTA,
102, 12.04.1993.

clarations denouncing the attempts for history's revisionist readings. Receiving support of other social, political, and cultural organizations as well, these protest declarations stated that the destruction might deprive the country from national memory and that the appeals for them aimed to »rehabilitate fascism and to deny the antifascist struggle.«⁷ In spite of the threat of complete destruction that was faced by all the monuments of the Soviet army in Bulgaria, few of them encountered anything more than a partial dismantlement. While for the monument to the Soviet soldier in Russe it was decided already in the early 1990s to preserve it intact in the cityscape, those in Varna and Vidin were left unsustainable and in wretched condition, and those in Plovdiv and Sofia occupied the public attention until late 1990s.

The issue of the emergent reinscription of the monumental objects and the new policies of self-representation around them gains outlined significance in the case of the mausoleum to the first head of state in communist Bulgaria, Georgi Dimitrov. Created in the centre of the capital in 1949, the mausoleum preserved the embalmed body of Dimitrov and was a focal point of pilgrimage and veneration until 1989. As one of the grandest symbols of the communist epoch, the mausoleum was a target of systematic assaults, protests, and demands for destruction, which continued well beyond the burial of Dimitrov's body in 1990, and which finally brought to the bombing of the empty sepulchre in 1999. Over an entire decade, the mausoleum passed through various changes in function and outlook, in the course of which the public invested its form with new attitudes and visual interpretations. Religious sanctifications of the square before the mausoleum were made; trash was piled in front as a protest against the building's preservation; and numerous projects that were developed for its political and artistic utilizations (ranging from its hosting various state institutions, to its becoming a disco club, or a stage for opera performances). The diverse projects that developed in the 1990s had as the effect the danger to ›forget‹ about its previous functions and to marginalize its association with the former past.

Largely in response to such suppositions, in the summer of 1999, the government of the Union of Democratic Forces announced that the mausoleum would be destroyed and almost immediately started the destruction. The public had hardly any time to react, and most of the protests against the governmental decision took place while the actions for dismantling the sepulcher had already started. The initial intention of destroying the mausoleum »at once« encountered, however, the obstacle that a stronger explosion might threaten the buildings around. The first three attempts to blow up the mausoleum succeeded only in tilting it, and it was only after the fourth explosion when the roof and the walls were destroyed. Expectedly, the difficulty to ruin the monument was interpreted by the public as the »resistance« of the former ideology to clear up the space it had previously occupied. Taking place almost ten years after the fall of socialism as state ideology in Bulgaria, the ›urgent‹ destruction of the mausoleum was actually both late and untimely. The destruction came after years of public debates and demands for destruction, but the decision for it was actually not a result, nor a response to these debates. Having overstepped by several years the rise of public pressure for removing this communist symbol from the center of Sofia, the destruction failed to meet the boiling point of purging energies, and did not succeed to consolidate around a publicly accepted self-representation. Neither the fact of annihilating one of the most visible forms inherited from the socialist epoch, nor the former royal garden that was recovered in the stead of the empty terrain managed to convince the public about the justification and usefulness of this destruction.

The proper self-representation in the post-socialist period demanded a novel positions on what would be the meaning of ›national history‹ monuments after 1989. While previously the latter included those of clear ideological meaning and claimed for them the highest status as creative embodiments of the nation, after 1989 there was necessary both time and effort to construe a discourse on national history independent from ideological considerations. The very idea of the ›national‹ with respect to monuments was critically reshaped and together with the figures of more overt ideological relation, many others, whom the ideology had sought to appropriate, were no longer considered convenient for representation. On the other hand, there was a clear tendency in the post-1989 period to regard national history (notably, the one that preceded the communist rule) as offering an alternative view to the previous ideological horizon. The double-bound approach to the national history – as undergoing a ›purge‹ from the ideological interventions and as providing a stance of opposition to the previous historiographic framework – influenced substantially the monumental discourse

8 Dedicated to the heroes of the nineteenth-century Bulgarian revival, the Pantheon in Russe, for example, was unavoidably considered as a grand attempt of socialist ideology to sacralize itself through the resources provided by national history. Almost immediately after the changes those of the statues and images in the Pantheon related to the socialist period were smashed and removed and the interior concentrated exclusively on its initial purpose – the commemoration of the dead for national liberation. However, the continuing discussions about the interior's shape and the difficulties to receive funding for sustenance and maintenance brought the closing of the monument in 1992, leaving it unguarded and turning it into a target of assault and plunder. Being several times closed and opened anew, in 2003 it was turned back into the church that had once stood in its place.

9 Such a monument uniting all the dead from a given region was unveiled for example in Razgrad. As it was recalled in the press, the idea of building the monument to all the soldiers from Razgrad dated back to the 1940s, but because of ideological considerations, its realization was possible only in the 1990s. The memorial commemorated Bulgarians, Muslims, Jews and Armenians, who had fallen in the wars, and represented the sculpture of St. George, two arches, and an honor cross (*Bjuletin Vytreshna Informacia*, BTA, 5.05.1995; *Bjuletin Vytreshna Informacia*, BTA, 125, 6.05.1995).

10 With the purpose to remind the living about their common duty to Bulgaria, monuments to the dead in the Balkan wars, the First World War and the Fatherland were unveiled in 1996 in Nikyup and Tsurvenyano (*Duma*, 105, 4.05.1996; *Duma*, 220, 17.09.1996). A similar monument for eternalizing the memory of all the fallen in the wars from 1885 through 1945 was unveiled in Tryavna (*Bjuletin Vytreshna Informacia*, BTA, 129, 9.05.1997).

11 Cf. *Demokratsia*, 305, 10.11.1997; *Demokratsia*, 243, 21.09.2000; *Standard News*, 2636, 27.03.2000; *Demokratsia*, 323, 27.12.2000.

of the post-1989 period. Many of the ›national history‹ monuments that were built in the socialist times (even those to medieval Bulgarian kingdoms, nineteenth-century liberation movements, and to 1300 years after the creation of the Bulgarian State) underwent a critical reevaluation, as they evoked unwarranted associations with the ideology's attempts for self-legitimation. Several of these monuments were listed among the most representative cases of the totalitarian rule in Bulgaria, and, no matter their purpose as glorifying events of the ›national history‹, became targets of assaults and partial dismantlement.⁸

Yet, on the other hand, by building monuments to figures that were spared symbolic appropriation in the socialist times, or by creating commemorative forms to all the dead of a given region⁹ or to »all the dead for Bulgaria« (instead of the previous »all the dead in the antifascist struggle«),¹⁰ the Bulgarian society after 1989 sought to disentangle the continuities created during the socialist period, and to establish a different mode of historical self-representation. The post-socialist period witnessed various other attempts to ›regain‹ through monumental terms the historical memory that the socialist epoch had neglected or suppressed. The previously neglected remembrance of figures, signs and events (the fallen soldiers in the First World War, the salvation of the Bulgarian Jews from the Holocaust, twentieth-century Bulgarian kings, crowns, royal emblems, etc.) reemerged for public attention. In a manifested posture of a distance from a socialist interpretative framework, many rituals and symbolic practices at memorial sites on national holidays and anniversaries also underwent changes and sought to reestablish patterns from the pre-socialist period.

The disrupted historical continuities with the fall of the regime opened a commemorative gap that needed to be urgently filled in with new realms of commemorative attention. Among the most expressive phenomena in this respect were the so called ›antitotalitarian‹ monuments that were built after 1989, dedicated to the victims of the repressive regime. Appeals to commemorate these victims were raised immediately after 1989 and monuments to them promptly emerged in many towns of the country. The memory of the repressed by the People Court, of the Stalinization process and the purges, of dead in the labor camps and the political prisons, were among the main realms of commemorative sensitivity. The primary impetus for raising such monuments after 1989 came from the cases of violent renaming of the Bulgarian Muslims of the 1980s. Until mid-1990s monuments to the people who died in these events were raised in most towns where repressions took place, and they were soon followed by monuments to the victims of the labor camps, by commemorative signs to the terror of the 1940s and 1950s, and by memorial plaques to prominent individuals persecuted by the regime. Until the end of the 1990s collective monuments to the victims of the communist repressions were built in most large towns in Bulgaria.¹¹ With the creation of these monuments, Bulgarian society not only commemorated the memory of the people, who were previously denied public recognition, but also manifested a turn in its self-representation as exercising a moral and ethical distance to the socialist period.

3. Conclusion

The various cases to which I paid attention so far revealed that Bulgaria's post-socialist coming to terms with the past was not only problematic and uneasy, but also critically urgent in the first years after 1989. Whether including a total demolition, or only a partial ruining, the changes in monuments of the socialist past sought to ›cleanse‹ the public space from the traces of the former ideology and to embrace a new ›post-socialist‹ identity. The transformation of the former precious ideological objects was frequently done in a swift and energetic way, or was undertaken as an urgent case where the new self-representation would be reaffirmed. To reinscribe the space from the ideological imprints was perceived as a pressing need, an act of emergence that would help exterminate ›uncleanness‹ and would catalyze the ›proper‹ visions about the past. Beyond doubt, this newly adopted trend for self-representations was not a smooth process, but customarily included distinguished sides and conflicting positions. In the majority of the cases, the attempts for reinscribing monuments with new meanings provoked passions and rigorous fights between representatives of political parties and groups. In the course of these various debates and symbolic fights, the notion of the political itself underwent a substantial transformation. The span of reactions, opinions and positions taken in the discussions about monuments played a tremendous role in sharpening the civic sensi-



tivities, in fostering the assertion of political attitudes, and in elaborating the key mechanisms of civic behavior in the first years after the changes.

Monuments' fates after 1989 are an example of how the Bulgarian society manifested itself as pertaining power of its own to appoint new objects of commemoration and to arrange the past in a way different from the ideology of the past. The destruction and reshaping of memorial sites was an opportunity to see how the representations of power may be refigured and to observe the already routinized in an entirely new mode. The increased sensitivity to the symbolic value of memorial signs after 1989 testified overtly to the role of these objects for the public consciousness and for the high symbolic value that was attributed to their preservation or transformation. A minor change in a monument's appearance was ›telling‹ to grand changes in the interpretation of history and in the representation of the past. Monuments appeared thus as loci where ›history was inscribed‹ – however already not in the permanence and durability of pre-given postulates, but in the openness to reshaping and reinscription, and in the constantly attached new interpretations and meanings. As catalyzing the key points in the interpretation of history, and as facilitating the working out of political and ethical positions to the recent past, monumental representations and their emergent reshaping logically turned into one of the symbols of the post-socialist period.



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