



Contribution to the architecture of Bulgaria between the two world wars

Selected etudes by Vasilyov-Tsolov

ABSTRACT

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Introduction

**"Architecture is art,
which combines the useful with the exquisite."**

Arch. Dimitar Tsolov
(Дандолова, 1987, стр. 51)

This is the expression with which arch. Tsolov always started his first lecture to the students. The useful and the beautiful are the two indispensable components of architecture, just as the two artists are the two parts of the tandem that leaves significant traces in the Bulgarian architectural culture.

The architecture in Bulgaria from the period between the two world wars has not yet been studied thoroughly, but it is a subject of interest by specialists from different fields of science and art. The lack of research is largely due to the relative proximity of the period to our time and to the different socio-economic conditions in the country before November 10, 1989. Before the changes the architecture of that period has not been a particular object of discussions and works on it are found mainly in general textbooks about the overall characteristics of the period. The training of students in architecture, and hence of the narrow specialists in this field, is established only after the changes of 1989, and to date in all universities preparing future professionals in the specialty of Architecture is reduced to several lectures on history and theory of architecture and there is no in-depth study of the matter. There are also no basic philosophical interpretations of the importance of the cultural and time period, which is part of the object of study of the current work.

Probably, in the future, theoretical works and collections dedicated to this embryonic stage of modern Bulgarian architecture will increasingly appear. The architecture of this era ¹ can be distinguished by a specific sophistication of expression, which proves difficult to perceive and required certain knowledge and intellectual taste. By analyzing certain examples of the architectural bureau Vasilyov - Tsolov, this work aims to contribute to the study of architecture of the Third Bulgarian Kingdom between the two world wars. The study also sets itself some other important tasks, such as to determine the characteristics of the architecture of the two authors, as well as to situate it in the time frame of the period. So far, research into the work of the bureau has been reduced to two main

¹ In this work, the architecture between the two world wars will be called "modern movements between the two world wars". This expression aims to include the architecture of modernism with its deviations from dogma, as well as its close and accompanying styles.



aspects: one is purely biographical (descriptive of their lives), and the other is an analysis of their individual buildings and design techniques. There is no in-depth work that examines their line of work precisely in the context of the modern movements between the two world wars, in particular, by examining simultaneously the culture of the period, the geographical area, the heritage in the Bulgarian territory and the personalities of the architects themselves.

The task is to answer the abovementioned objectives through selected key works from their portfolio. In modern architectural theory, the phenomena of research should be considered as a general architectural process² but also as an singular one, of the object itself. Nowadays, in architectural theory, it is becoming less and less common for authors to work in both directions of problematisation, purely architectural and juxtaposed as part of the overall architectural process.

1. Object, subject, aim, tasks and scope of the study

1.1 Object of the study

In this work, public and state buildings designed in the spirit of the "renewed classics" by the architectural bureau Vasilyov - Tsolov are selected as the object of research.³ They represent certain peaks in their practice of realised public buildings. Since public buildings are distinguished not only by their utilitarian function, which they should perform flawlessly, but are also buildings with a certain semiotic orientation – symbols, they are of interest for the theory and history of architectural studies. Modern movements between the two world wars have not yet established themselves as an official "state" style in any country, no matter how democratic its leaders may had been. This became possible only at a later stage with the conquests of post-war modernism. Nevertheless, modern movements make their way into the classics and "renew" it in one way or another.

1.2 Subject of the study

- Analysis of functional schemes, style and urban planning in solving architectural problems by the tandem, carried out with the understanding of culture as a network of connections, taking into account the historical, geographical and cultural features of the period.

1.3 Aims of the study

² The concept of GENERAL ARCHITECTURAL PROCESS will be clarified in Chapter I of this work.

³ The phrase "renewed classics" will be discussed at a later stage of this work, compared with other similar expressions in order to shed more clarity on the terminology.



- study of some key peaks in the works of the architectural bureau Vasilyov – Tsolov, taking into account the combination of the different humanitarian factors⁴ informing their architectural projects
- analyzing the degree of influence of modern trends on the Bulgarian public classical architecture created by them.

1.4 Tasks

This work sets the following tasks:

- To find the necessary source information for the selected public buildings of the tandem;
- To find as many sources as possible focused on the personality of the two architects;
- To analyse the inherited cultural context of the period between the two world wars within the geographical cultural area;
- To clarify the leading schemes and principles of design for each of the sites;
- To formulate generally valid conclusions on the basis of the analysis;
- To formulate the author's thesis on the meaning, manner and techniques of design of the two architects;
- To determine to the greatest possible extent the contribution of each of the two to each of the specific projects.

1.5 Scope of the study

The study examines selected examples of public buildings of the architectural bureau "Vasilyov - Tsolov". The study is limited to selected examples that are generally accepted by the architectural guild as peaks in the work of the tandem Vasilyov – Tsolov by comparing them with the inherited culture in the geographical cultural area of today's territory of Bulgaria. It explores the links that formed between the late Revival and post-liberation layers and the influence of the region around Germany.

For most public buildings, individual articles and materials can be found, which the author has fully studied. Included is a completely unexplored example of their work, namely one of their first most significant works, the community center in their hometown, Oryahovo. As the thesis will show, it has an important place in the artistic development of the tandem. The author has studied and compared all other examples mentioned, for which no complete study made on the basis of architectural culture viewed through the lens of spatio-cultural ties has been found.

2. Thesis structure

This work does not claim linguistic and stylistic perfection, nor complete comprehensiveness, but rather an attempt to shed more light on the architecture of the

⁴ By the expression "humanitarian factors" the author understands the network of cultural connections in diachronic and synchronous terms.



particular historical period. It adopts the characteristic understanding of the Old Continent for what constitutes a scientific work, based on the richness of its multilayeredness, which is different from the Anglo-Saxon understanding, which puts forward a hypothesis and studies it in a unified direction. The continental model adopted in Bulgaria as a method of education, much more adequately corresponds to the geographical area, known for its cross-links and various cultural layers. With this method, it is possible to better reveal the nature of the connections in different directions for the purposes of the study, thus respecting the already established tradition in Bulgaria for the construction of the structure of such academic works. The thesis is structured in two chapters, the first of which is entitled "General theoretical framework" and the second - "Analysis of selected works by the architectural bureau Vasilyov - Tsolov". The first includes general theoretical framework, ways of analysis and a different view of common processes aimed at systematising and bringing out knowledge, including a brief overview of the architectural history of our territory. The second chapter, in turn, covers the culture of the period, the presentation of the authors forming the tandem and the analysis of their selected works. After the two main chapters, the conclusions of the dissertation are formulated and a conclusion is made.

3. Approach and methodology

Scientific research can be approached in several different ways. Typically, scientific works contain source material accumulated at the beginning of the study, an analytical part and a summary part. It is important that in this approach, the work does not become just a "collection" of well-ordered information. In his book *The Meaning and Significance of Fine Arts*, Erwin Panofsky claims that the study of art is divided into "graphos" and "logos", the former being the descriptive side of research that accumulates information and is sometimes considered research (Panofsky, 1986). More interesting is the second part, namely the "logos", science itself, when from well-ordered information logic, knowledge and the system of study is born. There are many big volumes of scientific works that cover the first condition of descriptive science, and which are wonderful collections, so the volume of a given work does not always mean completeness and a step forward in science. Much more valuable is precisely the approach in which the relevant conclusions are drawn from the good collection, even if not complete, all factors contributing to the influence on the work, such as socio-economic, cultural, temporal, spatial and others, are taken into account. In the modern age, long gone is the time when science was created for science's sake. The modern approach in the formation of scientific work should take into account all complex factors that necessarily affect the research, which is especially true for the professions in the arts, architecture and music. The culture of a period is related to the personalities in it, whether large or small, and it is this variety of influences that is transformed into the works of art. The methodology uses as a foundation the experiments and productions developed from the theory of architectural history.



3.1 System Structural Analysis

In the theory of architecture, there are different methods of analysing an object, some of which consider an architectural work on its own, often within a framework that distinguishes it from the surrounding world, other methods emphasise the personality of the architect in the analysis, which is undoubtedly a key element; other focus on situating the architectural work, avoiding some important facts that are important for any scientific work. The objectivity of the analysis of an architectural object should include:

- analysis of the culture of the given period, its hereditary relationships, network of culture, combined with the time range, the cultural heritage reflected in the work, be it indirect or direct
- analysis of the functional structure of the building, patterns in the architectural projects of the given architect, functional schemes, spatial connections / axial lines, relations, etc. /
- Analysis of the compositional and urban planning concept of the work
- Analysis of the symbolic meaning of the given object
- Analysis of the personality of the architect, childhood, place of study, creative path and humanitarian connections.

In the analysis of the thesis, a network of various factors is formed to give a relatively more complete picture of the architectural works from the point of view of theory. Chapter I of this work traces the hereditary links of previous periods in the analysis of "The Bulgarian lands – the bordering cultural area. A basic outline of the time frame concerning the topic". This chapter includes "Academic Thinking and Practice" as well as "Classic, Tradition and Innovation", which have an indirect bearing on the topic. Chapter II traces the culture of the period, as well as the personalities of the architects, which are discussed in detail in separate subchapters, summarising the processes that are relevant to their formation as individuals. The rest of Chapter II is devoted to selected works of the architectural bureau, and their analysis is made with summaries and conclusions.



Chapter I

General Theoretical framework

**"In every one of my architectural works,
I never abandoned the classical."**

Arch. Ivan Vasilyov

Autobiography of Arch. Vasilyov 1954 YES "Archives", Fund 58A

Architectural training around the world is mostly carried out in one of three directions. The first is architecture to be studied at a polytechnic university, in close contact with other technical and engineering specialties, thus creating synchronisation and training of students in this direction, the purely technical. The discipline and hierarchy of this kind of university education has its positive features, as long as it is not reach the point of dogmatism. The second direction is the study of the specialty at the Academy of Arts, in which architecture is approached from another, purely artistic angle. This kind of education relies heavily on the artistic and plastic. In the third case, architecture is studied at a university of architecture where the emphasis on the profession is clearly expressed and the focus is on architecture in its purest form. The separation of architecture as a faculty makes its existence to some extent self-sufficient. But there is another direction in the study of architecture, and that is architecture in a humanitarian university. This is the greatest synthesis of architecture with the other human sciences, with other aspects of human life, when students of architecture are in contact with the culture and way of thinking of all other spheres of society. The latter direction relates architecture with the people themselves, with their humanities, because the main goal of architecture is the organisation of human life in a utilitarian, semiotic and philosophical sense. Then it is done by people for people. Such a professional approach aims at the emerging relations in the academic community with other specialties. The students who have gone through humanitarian training possess an active position and open-mindedness, or as prof. Bogdan Bogdanov says "Humanitarianism today means interdisciplinarity and hence activeness and independence." (Богданов, Университетът - особен свят на свободата, 2006, стр. 36)

When we talk about a university, we often understand just that – a classical humanities university, the descendant of the medieval achetype. The so-called polytechnic (the first direction) emerged after the Industrial Revolution and the origin of its technically-oriented education comes mainly from the German lands,⁵ from where the model spread

⁵ With the expression "German lands" the author means the German-speaking cultural territory of the Old Continent and in particular the lands of today's Germany, Austria, parts of the Czech Republic and Poland.



to Central and Eastern Europe. Increasingly, in the modern age, no research can be done which exists in isolation, only for itself, as already mentioned. Thus, completely within the humanitarian framework, it is possible to consider the problems in architecture in a different way, interconnected in a network.

"Architecture, belonging to the domain of aesthetic expression, is like other art models in the form of the activity but not entirely like them in its content. Architecture as an art mode, sits rather strategically between the abstractness of cultural structure and the concreteness of social structure."/> (Douglas, 1981, стр. 21)

The cultural network is something abstract that is increasingly important in today's society, defining itself as multicultural. But still, each culture depends on the specific structure of society. Thus, we are increasingly talk about a cultural multi-layeredness, in which the whole culture predetermined by heritage and interacting spatially and temporally in its epoch participates. In this context, more and more the detached theories on architecture seem ineffective, though that does not necessarily make them useless. In modern society, there is a growing awareness of the important role of culture and its diversity. For a long period of time, research in Bulgaria (including architecture) had a purely pragmatic, applied character, especially in the period of socialism, when it was necessary to have a so-called 'applied science', whose knowledge would have a purely technical and practical application. Very little attention has been paid precisely to the humanitarian, and hence to the universal and philosophical aspects.

1.1 The concepts of "architectural system" and "general architectural process"

"Architectural system" and "general architectural process" are concepts that will be used in the present work. The term "general architectural process" standing for "world architectural process", allows to trace the links that form the architectural process, the common regularities that have given rise to a certain way of thinking in the process of the development of civilisations.

The European culture has been renewed with influences and has evolved within the borders of its megasystem. The common architectural process is precisely this line of development of culture, which connects the different epochs into something bigger and more unified. The architectural system is its separate spatial unit, bearing its connections, for example, the European architectural system differs from that of the Far East as well as that of Latin America, but all of them are in a common architectural process.

2 Bulgarian lands – bordering cultural area.

General characteristics

The brief overview of the history of our territory in the context of a bordering cultural area and the events before the Liberation does not claim to be exhaustive, but on the



contrary. Historical memory is an important factor in the formation of the civilized culture of a society.⁶ The study of architecture, and hence of culture as a social phenomenon, is a major part in the development of societies in the 21st century. Due to its location in the Balkans, as the main route between the centrality of Europe and Asia Minor, and hence the path of different peoples and civilisations, it is a zone of intertwining of many cultures, from antiquity to the present day. Their diversity, influence and interactions are a valuable legacy and seem to shape the future developments. From transformations in its entirety to single isolated phenomena, the interaction of individual elements yields a homogeneous whole.

Today it is becoming increasingly clear that the study of architectural history goes hand in hand with the humanitarian and the cultural one, and it cannot become isolated in its own "detached" world. In modern times, such a study and search for the position of architecture and its place is carried out by studying its accompanying relations – cultural, economic, social, etc. This gives a completeness of the study, which is then used by architectural theory. The connection of all these factors in a single network of culture in a given geographical area is done by clarifying the paths of cultural influences and the legacy left on its territory. "Through the discoveries made by the modern theory of cultures, the idea of a megasystem of cultures, vast and very complex, the individual elements of which are cultural values of different scope in time and space, but existing in continuous interconnection and bound together in complex interactions, is increasingly emerging." (Коева, Дисертационен труд на тема: Метод за системно изучаване на архитектурното наследство, 1985, стр. 21)⁷ From this follows the understanding of architecture as complementary to the understanding of culture and as part of a common process of interconnections in the megasystem, in this case the border space of the European megasystem, uniting different cultures that inherit each other in time but interact spatially. In his book *The Decline of the West*, Oswald Spengler addresses the birth, development and decline of cultures, pointing out that their lifespan lasts approximately 10 centuries. Thus, the European culture that emerged in the 20th century is in a period of decline. "Cultures are organisms. World history is their common biography." (Шпенглер, 1995, стр. 174) Spengler considers as the main tool of culture its "archisymbol", the fundamental spatial element on which it rests. According to Spengler, culture gave birth to civilisation in its final stage, with civilisation marking its decadent end. "By dying, culture becomes a civilisation." The author distances himself from such division and perceives culture as the humanitarian product of all human activity, and with

⁶ The term "culture" in this work is used to denote in the broadest sense civilisational human activity, including the spiritual and material actions of societies, relationships, and accompanying processes. Speaking of culture in particular, we are also talking about architecture as its branch. Culture is a manifestation of intelligence on the part of a person who aims to respond adequately to the environment, to adapt through modifications of himself or her. Culture is directly related to all spheres of life and is the main activity of conscious human beings. Human activity in all its aspects is also a culture.

⁷ Citations and parts thereof are authorised by the author.



the concept of civilisation he denotes the form and the different epochs in which a given culture exists.

The Balkans, which are a border crossroads between Europe and the Middle East, it is more than imperative to consider this multi-layeredness and any other attempt at research would lead to wrong results. The geographical location of the border area associated with the crossroads – cultural, economic, social and ethnic, determine today's characteristics of the region.

Over the centuries, Bulgaria has existed in three countries, the rest of the time the Bulgarian lands are part of one or another country, part of one or another culture. Throughout the centuries, every culture that has been in contact with the local has left one or another trace and has informed a certain genotype in architecture. Thus, for researchers, there is a direction for search for the individual parts that make up this great whole.

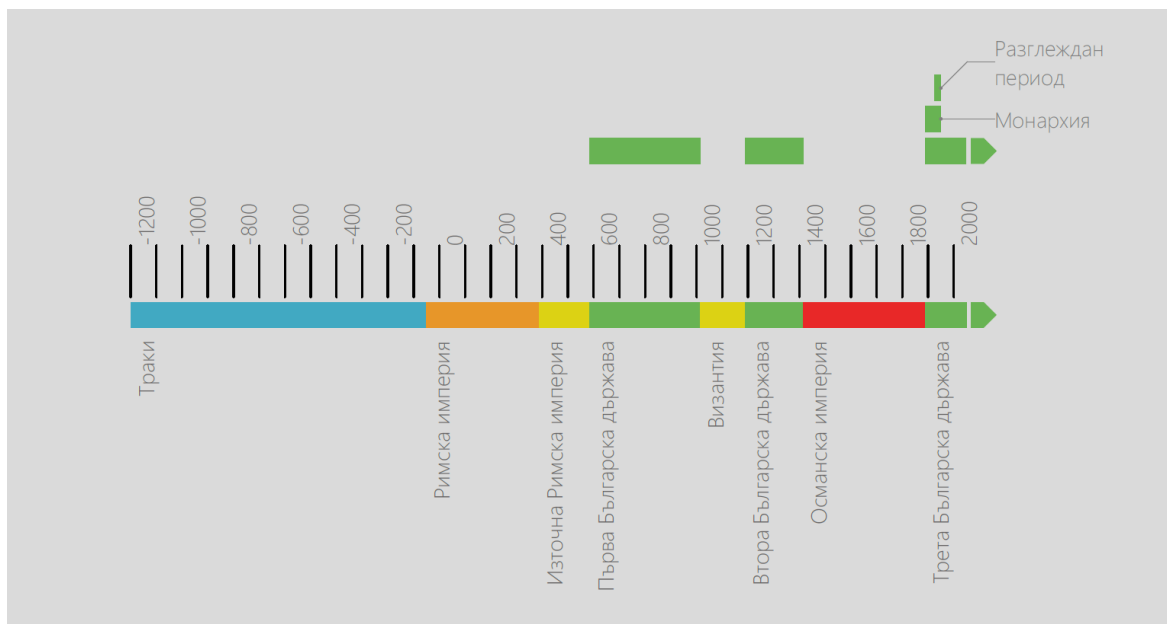


Figure 1 Diagram of the time periods of the existing countries on the today's Bulgarian country territory.

Figure No 1 represents the time axis in which the respective periods and state formations of which the Bulgarian territory has been part of over the centuries are mapped. As we can see, the three Bulgarian states are mapped with green, whose combined time period is equal to the period of the Roman (including the accepted term Byzantine) Empire in our lands. In view of the modern treatment of cultural heritage, such multi-layeredness definitely becomes a value. Above the timeline the periods of the three Bulgarian countries are subtracted, focusing on the third, namely - the end of the monarchy.

It should be noted that the period under consideration is probably the strongest time in which heritage was not denied, but on the contrary it is considered, accepted and



embedded in its contemporaneity. This became possible only on the basis of high development through systematic evolution from the Renaissance, which had its peak in the 1930s. Then the educated in the West graduates in different spheres will return to their homeland bringing with them the theoretical concepts from abroad, with which to compare the local and realise this logical peak in the culture of the era.

This analysis will show us something else, although not in detail, but something more general. Architecture and culture in Bulgaria since the time of the Roman Empire quite often were "imported".⁸ Bulgarian architecture in the Middle Ages was aligned with the Byzantine⁹ and was part of it, not only during the period of the Eastern Roman Empire, but also of the Bulgarian kingdoms, especially in the Second with the manifestation of the Tarnovo-Nessebar decorative style and not so much in the monumental architecture of the First Bulgarian Kingdom. The Ottoman Empire, which successively adopts the Byzantine culture, quite skillfully captured the Byzantine heritage and only brought its own motives.

The Balkans due to their position as a border zone in relation to Western European culture are interesting as a bridge between the different cultural spheres of influence and interactions. Thus, the contact zone in the Balkans stands out for its existence - a kind of a "periphery" where individual centricities come into contact. The crossing of cultures leaves its mark in this border space, here it is the strict "canons" of Western European styles that are broken, into separate themes, each of which is bound and influenced by another cultural sphere, from which a culture with a special flavor of this border space, relying on its multi-layeredness, was born.

Today's Bulgarian territory was formed on the basis of a huge heritage, namely: Thracians, Hellenic colonies, the Roman Empire, the Byzantine Empire, the First Bulgarian Kingdom, the Byzantine Empire again, the Second Bulgarian Kingdom, the Ottoman Empire, the Third Bulgarian State (ideologically divided into three periods: the first – after the Liberation, the second – as part of the Eastern Bloc and the newest – after the changes in 1989). This burdens the inhabitants of these latitudes with a large number of unconscious meanings and symbols left in their subconsciousness as a civilisational marker of bygone periods.

In this work, the period before and after the period under consideration is of particular importance, i.e. from the Renaissance to the global situation after the Second World War. The Revival, although not directly related and being followed by post-liberation architecture carried out by foreign architects before the First World War, influenced the lifestyle of the population and the cultural relations during the period.

⁸ With the word "imported" the author means the inextricable connection of the architecture of the First and Second Bulgarian Kingdoms with the Eastern Roman Empire. The architecture of these periods is often almost identical, with some provincial fluctuations.

⁹ With the term "Byzantine" the author names the characteristic features of the architecture of the Eastern Roman Empire / Byzantium / and its characteristic features and derivatives. Byzantine style



For the period of the Bulgarian Revival as part of the general Balkan one many scientific works have been written over the years, which is why in this one the author will limit himself only to its importance for the interrelationship between architectural systems. In his book *Bulgarian Baroque* prof. Milko Bichev describes in detail these complex political and economic relations in Chapter 1 "Relations with the West during the Renaissance", discussing the influence of the West and in particular of the German lands on Bulgaria. Until the 18th century, Bulgaria directed its hopes for liberation to Catholic Austria. The change in popular attitudes came after the Peace Treaty of Küçük in 1774, which won two important things that determined the future nature of relations between Russia and the Balkan Peninsula and strengthened Russian influence in the region.

Prof. Bichev also emphasised something else that is very important – that the commercial relations are a key factor for the spread of art and culture, and it should be borne in mind that "the transmitter and receiver must be tuned on the same wavelength in order to be able to establish the connection. In other words, it is necessary to have similar conditions of an economic, social, cultural and other nature" (Бичев, Български барок, 1955, стр. 15). This also proves the similarities in the easy communication between Bulgaria and the German lands. Bulgaria has always been part of the culture of the Western world and participates in the megasystem of cultural genes of Europe, with its geographical range of

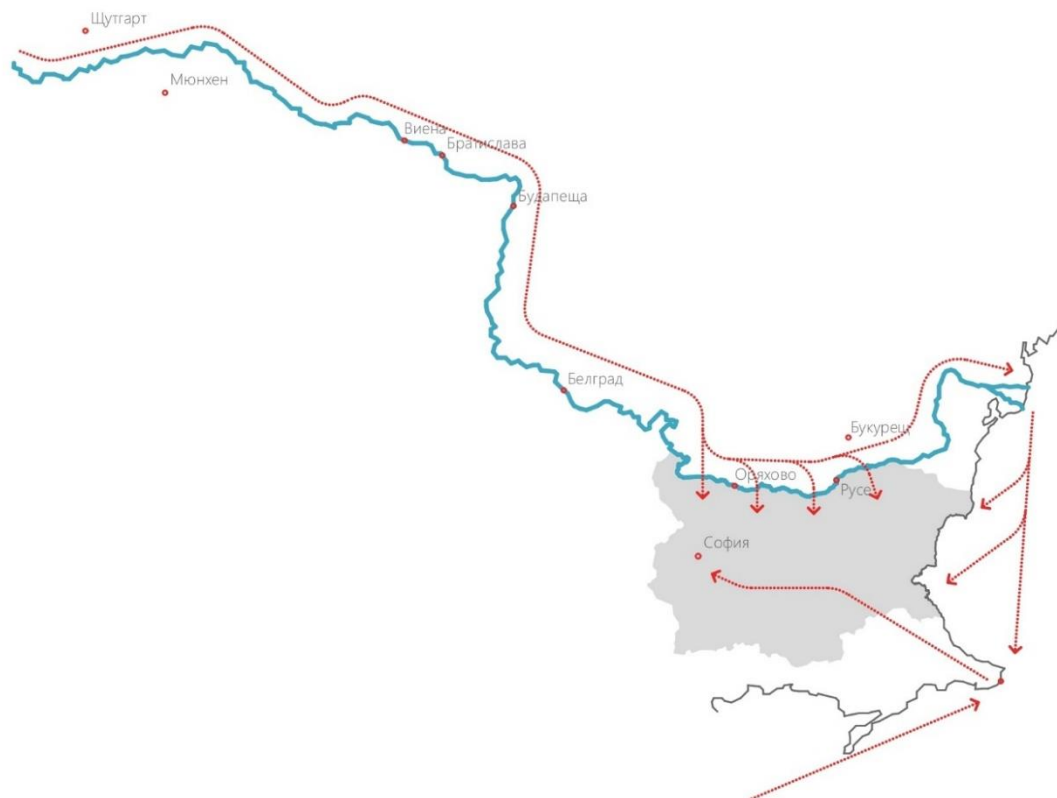


Figure 2 Diagram of the cultural influences, flowing along the Danube river through the years of the Revival and immediately after the Liberation. The Bulgarian territory is marked with its present day borders to give idea of the scale.



the cultural corridor between Europe and Asia Minor. Professor Bichev's analyses are focused on the cultural, educational and civil affairs, the formation of cities and the preceding urban culture. According to Isaac Passy, German culture in the period of the second half of the 18th century and the first third of the 19th century experienced not only a peak moment, but a peak period (Паси, 1985, стр. 3). Another fundamental hypothesis in Bichev's reasoning is that cultural influences flow along rivers, as at that time they were carriers of capital, culture and flows of people. For this reason, during the Renaissance, cultural relations extended mainly along the Danube, which gave economic and cultural progress to the Danube cities, and through them the entire Danube plain to the Balkan Mountains. At that time, the cultural influence of Western Europe for the southern part of the country was transferred from Constantinople, which it received along the Black Sea (across the Danube) or through the Mediterranean territories. This is the root of the difference between the north and the south in Bulgaria, namely in the two main directions of the dominant cultural corridors. The southern axis of development of the cultural corridor, from Constantinople, was loaded on the one hand, with Western influence, but already refracted through the prism of the Ottoman Empire, and on the other – with the powerful influence of Asia Minor (Figure No. 2). This will lead to differences that are reflected not so much in the desire for national liberation, but rather in the culture and the meaning of its interpretation. In the following periods, we can express these two differences mainly in the formation of the Principality of Bulgaria and Eastern Rumelia.

After the Liberation, the foreign architects who arrived in the country left behind exactly what was expected and what could be read as a desire to "catch up" with the missed out while Bulgaria was within the borders of the Ottoman Empire. This continued until the first generation of Bulgarians who studied architecture in Western Europe and returned. After their return, as certified architects, the culture of creative workshops as 'architectural ateliers' was formed, as they applied the best of what they learned in higher education institutions evident from the architectural heritage from that period in the larger cities. Of all those who went to study abroad, the largest share received their education in the German lands, as is the case with arch. Vasilyov and arch. Tsolov. German lands with their southern cities such as Vienna, Munich, Stuttgart, Karlsruhe and others prove to be key in the development of the young Bulgarian state. Vasilyov and Tsolov are also a product of this cultural corridor, Tsolov, passing through Vienna to reach Munich, and Vasilyov, starting from Munich and reaching Karlsruhe. These cities are preferred mainly for economic reasons. (Дандолова, 1987, стр. 230)

With the creation of the first ateliers of this period, the maturing of Bulgarian architecture began, the most valuable of it being that it developed in parallel with the processes in the Old Continent. For the first time, probably in the history of the three Bulgarian countries, the process will reach another level, while maintaining its geographical character and will stand adequately in its place. The transformation of architecture and its awareness come



on the basis of comprehension, knowledge, systematisation and, above all, analysis, in other words – the combination of theory and practice. This architecture fully corresponds to modern trends and innovations in architecture and at the same time is fully adequate for our latitudes. Such a transformation in culture and thinking becomes possible because of the period in which it took place, because then there was the necessary intellect, culture and freedom, which gave ground for such development.

3 Academic thinking and practice

Academic thinking, generally speaking, is the whole spectrum of theoretical knowledge that a person acquires when studying a profession. In any field of study, you always start with theory, followed by practice. These are actually two equal parts, we could say a kind of a tandem. The separation of the two concepts is most often done superficially and "for ease". The complex product of them is precisely the true professionalism with the use of knowledge accumulated, systematized and analysed through theoretical studies and applied in practice.

In fact, theory and practice are inextricably linked, like the two sides of a coin. Even Vitruvius, in his Book 1 on Architecture, has described this opposition, giving it significance in the first paragraph of chapter one:

" Practice is the continuous and regular exercise of employment where manual work is done with any necessary material according to the design of a drawing. Theory, on the other hand, is the ability to demonstrate and explain the productions of dexterity on the principles of proportion."
(Витрувий, 2021, стр. 48)

Thus, we see the understanding of balance between theory and practice since Antiquity. Vitruvius adds, "But those who have a thorough knowledge of both, like men armed at all points, have the sooner attained their object and carried authority with them."
(Витрувий, 2021, стр. 48)

If we have to compare this with the architectural tandem Vasilyov – Tsolov under investigation and delve deeper, we will notice that for each project they have studied in detail similar architectural precedents from the past, as well as modern ones, for example, in the design of the National Library; Vasilyov himself mentions in his article on the construction of the library in the magazine Architecture - Book 1 , that in proportioning it they took into account many Italian precedents and studied their proportions (Васильов, 1974). Nedelcho Paskalev will mention the following about Vasilyov:

"The whole conscious life of Ivan Vasilyov took place under intense and dedicated creative work, elated by the endless love of beauty. His preparation as a specialist is comprehensive. He is a good connoisseur of the Renaissance,



Byzantine architecture, of our architectural heritage." (Паскалев, 1978, стр. 56)

The theoretical knowledge of every artist, of course, can not make him a good architect, but it is a good basis for his development, and he must develop his theoretical abilities in parallel with his design skills. It is in these two simultaneous approaches that the true intellect of the architecture is rooted. "In some of these works, the influence of the Renaissance and Baroque, which Vasilyov had extensive knowledge of, is particularly strongly felt. This is another proof that Vasilyov was not just a "builder" or a "bricklayer", but a true professional in architectural science. (Паскалев, 1978, стр. 15) (Разказ за архитект Васильов, 1998)

"Dimitar Tsolov was also a great admirer of the architecture of the Renaissance both in the world and in the Bulgarian models." (Дандолова, 1987, стр. 52)

4 The Classical, the traditional and the innovative

Countless works have been written with reflections on the classics and the classical form, the present one does not claim to be exhaustive on the topic. However, we need to clarify the relations between the two opposites, which will eventually turn out to be a whole, namely tradition and innovation. With the leaving of the caves many eras ago, the first act took place, which marked the beginning of the history of architecture, when the placement of two vertical supports and one horizontal on top created the first and most enduring classical form in architecture – that of the post and beam system. According to semiotics, architecture is built not only to create shelter, but to attach meaning, and it is the meaning-making in an architectural work that proves to be the most difficult aspect of creativity. Classical forms have always been related to the human body and have undergone many variations in ornamentation and proportions through the different periods, but have always been revived, maintaining staticity and strive for "purity". Since then, it has been an undeniable unconscious collective paradigm that instills timelessness, eternity and comprehensiveness.

Another factor occurring around the same time is the so-called "axis", standing for a direction of movement, view and functional connection in architecture and urban planning. This component we can call the basis of classical thinking through geometric logic in architecture.



Chapter II

Analysis of selected works by the architectural bureau Vasilyov – Tsolov

"The detail dresses up the building!"

Arch. Dimitar Tsolov
(Дандолова, 1987, стр. 86)

1 Cultural context of the period

The understanding of culture as an open system of signs is a fundamental aspect of scientific theory, based on a very rich historical and cultural material and allowing to relate and unite different fields of humanitarian knowledge.

Culture is a set of spiritual and material values created by humanity during its historical past. In fact, when we talk about architecture, we are most often talking about the culture of a given period, because the aspirations of the given generation, its heritage from previous epochs and the ideals it professes are ultimately intertwined and expressed in architecture. The individuals of a certain period are the creators of culture, they carry it within themselves. What they built as a material environment remains after them and is passed on to the next generations. Thus, culture does not completely die with them, Europe has proven that it has the ability to "generate" culture in a special way, by "irradiating" subsequent generations who further develop it on another level and with another expression. The European area bears the marks of ancient heritage, and even when the ancient world seemingly perished in the Middle Ages, it did not die literally, not only did Byzantine culture preserve the heritage of Antiquity, so did Charlemagne. (Бичев, Архитектура на ренесанса, 1954, стр. 9) When it comes to the architecture of the modern movements between the two world wars, one should understand the whole path of European culture up to this point with its layerings over time.

In architecture, the introduction of reinforced concrete led to the unified structural system characterising the period, just as the Greeks had the order, the Romans with the arch, the Gothic with the skeletal structure of stone. According to arch. Petar Karasimeonov "The great periods in the development of architecture are great because they pursued mainly one central constructive idea" (Карасимеонов, 1945, стр. 1). Similarly, the modern movements of that period had mainly one constructive idea – the



skeletal construction of reinforced concrete, which elevated Modernism as a period in the general architectural history and theory and brought it closer to the "great ages". The classical forms, in turn, embraced the reinforced concrete structure quite well and used it as a tool. Quite logically, the structure was placed in the load-bearing walls of the buildings, made in a classic manner and became their internal hidden structure, while skillfully performing its functions.

It was after the First World War that the world had the desire to "give birth" to something new and different from the already known. These prerequisites made it possible to develop a new way of thinking, formed on the basis, as already mentioned, of European culture and the desire for a new better world. A logical response of this thinking is the revolutionary movements aimed at "turning around" the world of the 1920s and building a new one; in political terms, it was the famous "manifesto" that proclaims freedom and equality, as well as the power to go to the common people, in architecture it became the same – a revolution called Modernism, also proclaimed with the word "manifesto" by Le Corbusier with his famous five points of modern architecture; this was also the time when the Bauhaus in Germany and Vkhutemas in the USSR emerged as an echo of the new modern thinking. The response in other arts was no less prominent, in literature, music and fine arts there was also a "break" from the classical model and stereotype, and there artists were looking for these new paths outlined by modern times.

The main exporters of culture, and in particular of architecture of that period, were the countries of Western Europe, especially Germany, Italy and France. As for the United States, they had a limited and indirect influence on the culture of the period, mainly carried through France and Germany and through the help of mass production of gramophone records (the introduction of jazz in the 1930s). Until then, American culture from the point of view of Europe was considered provincial, but Roosevelt's New Deal created economic progress, and to a large extent it gave a boost to the spread of American culture and changed that attitude. This is the moment when culture and architecture experienced a real upsurge in the United States. Architecturally, the Art Deco style dominated¹⁰ with its subvarieties. Along with it almost imperceptibly the International style of the United States entered, born from the exhibition of the same name from 1932 at the Museum of Modern Art, and this style existed as one of the many parallel movements with Art Deco. This style will take on greater importance only after the first wave of students was trained by the leading professors expelled from the Nazi regime, after the closure of the Bauhaus, in 1933. "International" was actually the new name to the evolving architecture of Modernism, a name that fit the idea of an American nation and which captured the political spirit at the time. In fact, the first instance of direct influence of American architecture in Bulgaria was the construction of the Bulgarian National Bank when arch. Dimitar Tsolov visited within a year all American

¹⁰ Some authors describe Art Deco as "commercial modernism"



modern banks to carry out research and "take the best" from their design knowledge and experience.¹¹

Throughout the period between the two world wars, there were two distinct parallels of architecture, and culture in particular, even politics. On the one hand, there were the models of the modernist movements of the period, while on the other, there was realism, classics and monumentality with emphasis on the "eternal" themes in the culture of Europe, aimed at instilling eternity, power, historicity and to assert as if by force the legacy of classical Europe. This way one can describe the two extremes of this period. Pragmatic architecture was largely replaced by an architecture of power, an architecture of parades. These two directions coexisted, as if exemplifying, on the one hand, the struggle between democracy and totalitarianism and the new time with the new architecture intended for the new man, and on the other hand, the "eternal" classic.

During this period, the music school in Bulgaria also progressed - different modern and traditional directions developed, each of which claimed to correspond most adequately to the place and time. Of all the authors, we should note those who are closest in structural and semiotic level to the topic of this work, and Pancho Vladigerov and Diko Iliev, whose works reflect the spirit of their times, basing their works on an European model, accompanied by traditional motifs. Diko Iliev, whose life is connected with the town of Oryahovo and who is trained under the guidance of Alexander Weinar, wrote many hora, ruchenitsi, marches and more. His work is accompanied by brass bands and has folk motifs but at the same time has a huge influence on the culture of Western Europe particularly in Vienna. His works are pure in the spirit of the time, without unnecessary and complex ornamentation, while the classical sound is preserved, and the traditional motifs do not sound eclectic, in the bad sense of the word. Of all the works, perhaps the most famous is the so-called "Danube Horo", written in 1937 and performed for the first time in the square of Oryahovo in front of another, already completed work of art, which will later be discussed in this work. In literature, modernist movement developed with the works of authors such as Geo Milev, Nikola Vaptsarov, Hristo Smirnenski, Atanas Dalchev, Svetoslav Minkov, the architect Chavdar Mutafov and others.

The period between the two world wars in Bulgaria was a period of cultivation of the first generations of Bulgarian architects educated abroad, mainly in the German lands, and who returned to Bulgaria, the prerequisites for which were the already mentioned cooperation due to the foreign policy, as well as the factors listed in the brief summary of Bulgarian history and the processes of influence. Another factor of cultural importance was the openness of the German culture to foreigners at that time, although the high circles of society remained closed. The students very quickly absorbed the German culture – the bridging and cultural exchange was easy and logical. Many of them even got wives of German origin, who then came to Bulgaria.

¹¹ Arch. Ivan Vasilyov at the same time is on a tour of all modern European banks with the same goal.



Architectural bureaus were widespread at that time in the country, which consisted of only two architects. Examples of this are Ivan Vasilyov – Dimitar Tsolov, Stancho Belkovski – Ivan Danchov, Georgi Fingov – Dimo Nichev, Yordan Yordanov – Sava Ovcharov, Asen Mihaylovski – Georgi Apostolov, Todor Zlatev – Dimitar Koev and others, as the architects share equally the rights and obligations. Such a form of cooperation turned out to be successful, judging by what they have built, as it united architects with similar understandings of architecture, and in this tandem the designers complement each other.

The ideas of the "renewed" and "modernised" classics

The so-called "renewed" or "modernised" classics (architecture of Paul Troost, then succeeded by Speer) is a movement defined as a kind of late classicism carried out within the framework of opposition to the avant-garde and modern movements from the period of Secession to the end of World War II. The German understanding of classics dates since the time of Schinkel (the New Museum in Berlin). The main features of this type of architecture are: classical functional scheme, adherence to the rhythm of the facades, loyalty to the order in its simplified form and reducing the detail to symbolism / no more than necessary /. For example, in the "The Brief History of Bulgarian Architecture" for the BNB building, the expression "new classics" is used (Колектив, Кратка история на българската архитектура, 1965, стр. 527), the same is applied for the War Ministry (reconstructed by architect Dimitar Tsolov, independently, in 1938), which is another form of definition of this kind of late classical architecture, influenced by modern trends. (Колектив, Кратка история на българската архитектура, 1965, стр. 496)

2 The tandem – one whole in two parts

Arch. Ivan Vasilyov and arch. Dimitar Tsolov are personalities who fully embody and meet the criteria of prestige and elitism carried on from the time of the golden age of Bulgarian architecture, namely the 20s, 30s and 40s, an era that no longer exists. Their history begins in a purely human and somewhat similar way starting from the small town of Oryahovo (then Rahovo) on the banks of the Danube, then their departure to Germany to study painting, transfer to a specialty in architecture until their return to Bulgaria. Over the years, single partial studies of the work and life of arch. Vasilyov and arch. Tsolov, among which, in addition to small articles in specialized publications, we should take into account the three larger studies, the book of Iskra Dandolova, titled "Dimitar Tsolov" /State Publishing House "Tehnika", 1987, Sofia/, shedding light on the personality and work of arch. Tsolov, but not fully reflecting the influence of arch. Vasilyov. The other main source is the film of BNT – "Story about architect Vasilyov" from 1998, where the name of arch. Tsolov is mentioned only once. As well as the published book entitled "Ivan Vasilyov" /author Nedelcho Paskalev, State Publishing House "Tehnika", 1978, Sofia/. It is also written about them briefly in "A Brief History of Bulgarian Architecture", collective, "BAS", 1965.

The common statement that the big ideas and massing are created by Vasilyov, and Tsolov is the master of detail, is both true and not quite so.



2.1 Arch. Ivan Vasilyov

Ivan Tsokov Vasilyov was born on 26.02.1893. in Oryahovo; his father, Tsoko Vasilyov, was a tailor in his youth, and then engaged in the sale of manufactured goods; his mother is a housewife. Due to the difficult financial situation of the family from the age of 10, he was sent to Sofia to his father's brother, Toma Vasilyov, a clerk in the capital at that time. He graduated from high school in Sofia in 1911. And then it occurred to him that he wants to be an artist. In the same year he went to Munich where, despite the alleged disapproval of his relatives, he applied and enrolled in the art academy, where he spent two years realising that his inclination to the artistic could be fully satisfied by architecture, and during this time he became acquainted with the works of great architects and came to the conviction that he wanted to become an architect.

The year is already 1913 and Ivan Vasilyov transferred to the Higher Technical School in Karlsruhe, Germany (at that time the city had many Bulgarians living in it, there is still a Bulgarian society and various cultural events are organized). According to Nedelcho Paskalev, two of the professors had a strong influence on him – prof. Max Loiger and prof. Friedrich Ostendorff.

"However, it is not easy for him to break with painting and at first he does not attend classes. From this difficult situation he was led by one of his future lecturers – prof. Max Leuger, a ceramist painter with a notorious name at the time, who headed the Department of Interior Architecture and Garden Art. A real friendship develops between professor and student, which played a big role in instilling and building artistic taste and understanding in the young student. He later graduated, stayed at Max Lloyger's bureau and worked there for two years." (Паскалев, 1978, стр. 6)

The other teacher, Ostendorf, also contributed to the formation of the classical principles and understandings of the student, it was from him that he learned those principles, the attitude of the building to the surrounding space, the understanding of scale, articulation of form and balance of composition through the principles of simplified classical architecture. Prof. Ostendorf is the author of several books that are of interest, namely: "Sechs Büchen vom bauen", "Haus und Garten" and others. In many of his publications he touched upon the topic of design in a classical manner, firmly opposing modern movements.

"Ivan Vasilyov owes his formation as an architect to prof. Friedrich Ostendorf, who had a strong understanding of architecture and played a leading role, opposed and fought the "jugendstil" fashion movement. He believes in the principles of a simplified modernised classic. Thus, solid teachers affirm in the student an understanding that architecture is not a phenomenon of transient aesthetic views, but must be a lasting art – the fruit of creative thought and activity. (Паскалев, 1978, стр. 7)



As he himself wrote after accidentally going to Prof. Arch. Ostendorf, author of numerous books on design theory, where, in the words of Vasilyov, even then he made efforts to master "the deadlock and tastelessness of extreme modernism by exploring the enormous and inexhaustible possibilities of design in a classical spirit" (Vasilyov's autobiography, Archives State Agency), then added that he had never departed from the classics in his works. In 1917 he graduated with honors in Karlsruhe /in his autobiography, but the diploma was issued on 24.01.1918, probably due to the date of printing/.

He returned to Bulgaria and became a soldier, and after the First World War he was demobilised with the rank of private. His first place of work was briefly at the Ministry of Public Buildings, Roads and Public Works. The year was 1920, when Vasilyov left the ministry and established his private practice. In 1922-1923 he worked collectively with Arch. Stancho Belkovski. Then, apparently, the different characters and views on architecture of the two turned out to be not compatible perhaps, after which Vasilyov joined in 1927 arch. Dimitar Tsolov to open the architectural bureau Vasilyov – Tsolov, in which they shared equal rights and obligations.

In 1948 during the creation of the new state design institutions in the country, Vasilyov joined Glavproekt as a manager of an atelier and spent about 4 years there. During this period he participated in the completion of the National Library in Sofia, as well as in all major competitions at that time, as well as as a consultant on architectural issues in other design organisations. In 1953 he was an advisor on architectural issues for the construction of the Danube Bridge and a consultant with the team that developed the conceptual plans. He was a member of BIAD and the Chamber of Architects.

In 1940 he was awarded the "Commander's Cross" for civil merit by Tsar Boris III, and in 1953 received the "Order of Civil Merit" III degree for the completion of the BNB, as well as the "Dimitrov Award".

His house in Sofia is located at Pascal Todorov 10. To date, it falls into the Ovcha Kupel district – the old part.

About the character of Vasilyov it is interesting to mention that above all he exuded "nobility", in the words of prof. Lyuben Dimitrov (Разказ за архитект Васильов, 1998). "Nobility" is indeed the most appropriate word to describe Vasilyov, with his fascination with the Middle Ages and the age of chivalry. Of course, his aristocratic stance was also noted by Nedelcho Paskalev, as:

"A person with a complex spiritual constitution is 'difficult.' His nervous nature makes him dangerous to argue, his self-esteem about knowledge and ability - proud, and his honesty - principled. All this separated him from the wide architectural environment, some considered him inaccessible. He didn't make friends easily, but he wasn't lonely either." and adds more "Often after a busy working day he spent in company with friends in the café "Tsar Osvoboditel" –



the corner between Tsar Osvoboditel Blvd. Russian"¹² and ul. "Rakovski", or in the then garden restaurant "Balabanov" (on the site of the current hotel "Slavyanska beseda"). Then he became witty, playful, even fiery." (Паскалев, 1978, стр. 9)

Arch. Ivan Vasilyov remained single until the end of his days. He died on April 6, 1979 in Sofia.

2.2 Prof. Arch. Dimitar Tsolov

Dimitar Tsolov Marinov was born on 28.07.1896. in a lumber merchant's family. He completed his high school education in Pleven in 1915, after which he did his military service. He graduated from the School of Reserve Officers and participated in the First World War.

After his demobilisation, he was appointed clerk of the National Bank in his hometown of Oryahovo and served from 1918 to 1920. In 1921 he married Nadezhda Hristova Tomova, daughter of the local priest in Oryahovo – Hristo Tomov. After the wedding, they went abroad, where she studied music. At the post in the Bank he had the opportunity to receive a substantial salary – two hundred golden leva, and with the money saved he went to Vienna to study at the Higher School of Painting – specialising in self-portrait, but after a year he transferred to the Higher Polytechnic School in Munich - Germany to study architecture. He graduated in 1925 under prof. Bestelmeier with distinction and was honorably invited as an assistant an honor hardly given to any other foreigner during that time, but he refused and returned to his homeland.

Upon returning to Bulgaria, he founded the architectural bureau Vasilyov – Tsolov together with arch. Ivan Vasilyov. Unifying for the two is the fact that they complement each other in the design, as well as their common hometown – Oryahovo. Because of his excellent diploma and professional attestation, Tsolov exceptionally received a permit for independent work. "With it, in fact, he is recognised as a full-fledged architect with the ability to open his own architectural bureau" (Дандолова, 1987, стр. 36). At the beginning of their activities, they were worried about the post-war years and the crisis that raged during this period, but nevertheless during these years they won and implemented quite a few projects.

In 1929 Tsolov was elected for secretary of the Society of Bulgarian Architects and held this position for two years. He was a member of the company and represented it in the committees of Sofia Municipality and in a number of other activities. After an intense design period, he later became a member of a number of competitions, in judging the participants, and until the end remained true to his principles regarding the resolution of architecture, its volumes, details, aesthetics and sustainability.

¹² During the years of socialism, today's bul. "Tsar Liberator" bears the name "Russian".



After 1948 Tsolov as well as Vasilyov were the head of a workshop in the Central Architectural and Design Organisation (CADO), the base for the creation of Glavproekt. That same year, Arch. Tsolov was elected a regular associate professor at the State Polytechnic in Sofia. In 1949 he collaborated with the newly established Institute of Urban Planning and Architecture at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences.

In 1948 he was invited to lead the newly formed Department of Residential Buildings, and in 1952 he was elected full-time professor at the Department of Residential Buildings at the Faculty of Architecture, and in this post he welcomed his retirement among the future architects of the country in 1965. He had been teaching for 20 years. It is believed that he trained nearly 450 students, who obtained knowledge about "the profession, and more about culture about everyday life, about life in general." (Дандолова, 1987, стр. 83)

In the years between 1952 and 1955 he led the team that created Hotel Balkan and today's building of the Ministry of Education and the Presidency (then the Ministry of Electrification, later the Council of Ministers). In 1961 he was elected a corresponding member of BAS. He is also the author of scientific developments and publications. It left an unforgettable impression on his students in developing facades and their corresponding details.

He was awarded with high commendations and awards: Order of St. Alexander IV and V class, Order of Cyril and Methodius I class, Order of the Red Banner of Labour I degree, Laureate of the Dimitrov Prize – 1953

He died on March 6, 1970 after a serious illness in Sofia.

2.3 The Tandem Vasilyov – Tsolov

We see that the two architects of this tandem have a similar fate: they were born in the same place, in families of similar wealth, first studied fine art, then switched to architecture as a profession. Quite a few researchers consider the decisive role in their development namely their hometown of Oryahovo and its picturesque landscape, the tranquility there and the key location near the Danube.

From a purely artistic point of view, there is a successful division of creative tasks in the work of the tandem, such as arch. Tsolov as the "master of detail" and arch. Vasilyov – of space. Vasilyov possessed the spatial vision and ability to make analyses and schemes, to solve problems on a large scale, to determine proportions and ratios of large volumes, acting as a single spatial organism with their surrounding urban environment, while arch. Tsolov dealt with the detail, its impact, its appropriate proportional shape and its position in relation to the main cornice, to the smallest detail on doors, windows, and small architectural forms. In fact, Tsolov gave Vasilyov's strict architecture the subtle artistic elegance that turned their great art into a single synthesis of space and detail. What is remarkable in their works is finding the right scale, detail, articulation, materials, way of



making and last but not least the Bulgarian "gene" in this modern German refined architecture.

Purely personal events that happen as indirect influences that shape their lives and work are also important to consider. Vasliov preferred to live far away from the capital, from the city noise, building his house in today's Ovcha Kupel district, and Tsolov preferred the neighborhood behind the "Doctor's Garden", famous for its middle class and intellectual environment. The two were brought together by their hometown Oryahovo after Tsolov's return from Munich in 1925. Even Tsolov himself had no ambitions to work in the capital and was initially headed to become an architect in Oryahovo. "The relatives decided for him to start working in Pleven. They were already making some preparations. However, other suggestions were also considered – if he is as good an architect, a graduate with honors, a specialist with a great future, as the German architect professors claim, why not try his luck directly in the capital?" (Дандолова, 1987, стр. 34) Thus, it was decided that Tsolov would go to the capital and meet with arch. Ivan Vasilyov. Vasilyov already had a job in the administration, as well as a finished partnership with arch. Stancho Belkovski. He had taken the necessary steps to open his own bureau, he had already established relationships with influential people. Thus, at the end of 1925 the beginning of the great tandem was laid.

The two had the good fortune to come across investors who were looking for valuable architecture, not just satisfying utilitarian needs. An architecture that gives meaning, meaning to a new class of personalities. This, of course, is in itself a solid foundation on which they can deploy their professional knowledge, but it is not the only precondition for success. At that time (1925) both had their own experience Tsolov was 29 years old, having life and social experience, Vasilyov 32 years old with life and obviously more professional experience. Vasilyov's experience proved to be key in finding plots for construction, making arrangements with the right investors, and using his connections for design purposes.

The architectural bureau managed to become one of the leaders in the country in just a few years. The atmosphere created around it attracted professionals from different fields – craftsmen, painters, sculptors, who formed a certain high professional circle. In the field of arts, lasting friendships have been made with Dechko Uzunov, Yordan Krachmarov, Andrey Nikolov (ever since Vasilyov independently designed his atelier house – the red house), Ivan Penkov, Lyuben Dimitrov and others. The friendship of Dechko Uzunov dates back to the student years of arch. Dimitar Tsolov, when they both studied in Germany.

"The rigor of the architects from the Vasilyov – Tsolov bureau is proverbial. Tsolov is adamant even for the imperceptible by other specialists subtle change in the project, detail or instructions. His eye is vigilant and sharp, he sees even the "invisible" in the construction performance. In the construction there are no main and secondary elements of architecture, there are no



essential, parade and non-essential, inferior parts of the building, i.e. those that do not deserve good realization." (Дандолова, 1987, стр. 45)

Arch. Vasilyov is the same, when he had to assess the articulation and details of the buildings and make last adjustments. "For example, when the structure of the Bulgarian National Bank was completed, he ordered the corner of the building to the City Garden and the square to be plastered along one axis with all the profiles of the ground, the windows, the main cornice and the attica with balusters – for final corrections." (Паскалев, 1978, стр. 8-9)

The two architects had personal connections with the palace. In the film "Story about Architect Vasilyov", 1998, BNT, prof. Lyuben Dimitrov narrates, as an eyewitness, about the meeting of arch. Vaslev with Tsar Boris III, at the reception of the building of today's Sofia Municipality (then an intendancy at the palace) and Vasilyov's satisfaction with the high appreciation of the tsar for the work done. Vasilyov had a car, a gift from Prince Kiril. After 1944 Vasilyov's house was nationalised and he lived in the garage attached to it. Both were heads of workshops in the newly established TSAPO, but soon Vasilyov left. Tsolov became a professor and headed the Residential Buildings department in the newly created polytechnic, marking the beginning of the study of artistic detail there. In the state archive the author opened an Application by Ivan Tsokov Vasilyov to the Rector of the Engineering and Construction Institute Sofia for participation in the competition for Associate Professor in "Introduction and Architectural Design" from 1954. Why he was not appointed as a teacher there is no information to this day.

Also interesting are the memories of older architects who had contact with both of them. For example, Prof. arch. Plama Nikolova¹³, a pre-war intern at the architectural bureau Vasilyov – Tsolov, remembers how it was then located on today's Saborna Street in the building glued to the Balkan Hotel. There the atelier was in two rooms: in one were the two leading designers, and in the rest – the assistant architects and she as an intern. Her desire was to study architecture in Germany, but this did not happen because of the onset of the war and the changed situation after it. Another thing she remembers that is probably interesting about the creative activity there is that in solving a specific task, the two often argued quite amicably until they came to the optimal solution of the problem. Prof. Arch. Margarita Koeva, taught by prof. Arch. Tsolov, remembers his elegance, good posture, mannerisms and way of speaking to the audience. Also in her memories remains his wife Nadezhda (Mrs. Tsoleva, as everyone called her), who sometimes came during a lecture and how all students looked at her exquisite classic clothes, always matching her well-groomed posture, despite her already white hair. Koeva says: "Tsoleva's outfit was classic and clean, with only a small detail, most times a brooch on the lapel, just as they did their works, as if her clothing reflected their architecture."¹⁴ For them, the overall existence and radiance of the personality is important, from the cultural environment,

¹³ The conversation with her personally was held by the author.

¹⁴ The quote was shared in conversation with the author.



through clothing, manners, the way of expression to the reaction of the surrounding world. A perfectly complete image, destined for generations of architects since the era of Vitruvius.

In this way Figure 4 traces the purely human moments along the professional ones. The upper part shows the first years of their development as designers of emblematic buildings for the tandem that are part of the current study, and the lower part shows the personal moments of what is happening with each of them during the period under review. This is done so, because in life a person makes choices that predetermine his future, and hence professional development. For example, we cannot overlook the marriage of Tsolov and Nadezhda, because it is from this partnership that the couple's desire to go to Germany was born, for him to study painting and for her to study music. Now it's probably easy to imagine the full logical picture of things, but what if the marriage had not taken place? We can only guess, since there is one rule in history, and that is that the word "if it had happened" does not exist.

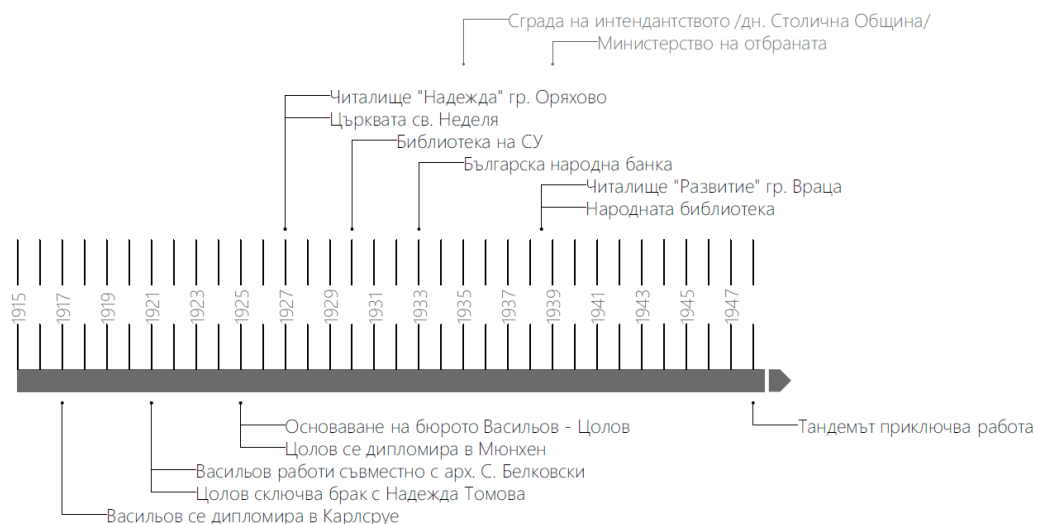


Figure 4 Diagram of the significant events of the life and work of arch. Ivan Vasilyov and arch. Dimitar Tsolov. The upper part indicates key works part of the research, the lower part – important moments in their lives.

3 Selected works of the tandem Vasilyov – Tsolov. Analyses

The tandem creates mainly two types of buildings – public and residential. Their main interest is public buildings, because in addition to their utilitarian function, which they should flawlessly perform, they embody another much higher degree of architectural expression, namely they are disseminate themes and meanings in the recipients of



architecture. It is especially important for a public building to convey in clear language for its users the architectural and philosophical idea. For this reason, this work examines some public buildings of tandem, which represent major peaks and themes in their work. Each of them is valuable as a stage in their development and marks the tandem's experience in manipulating the possibilities of classical architecture. In order to conduct a joint consideration, they are placed in a timeline but are also viewed separately in an independent scheme of development, so that it is possible to trace the processes of creative development of the architectural bureau. Figure No. 5 shows the works under consideration compared with significant works by other authors from the period.

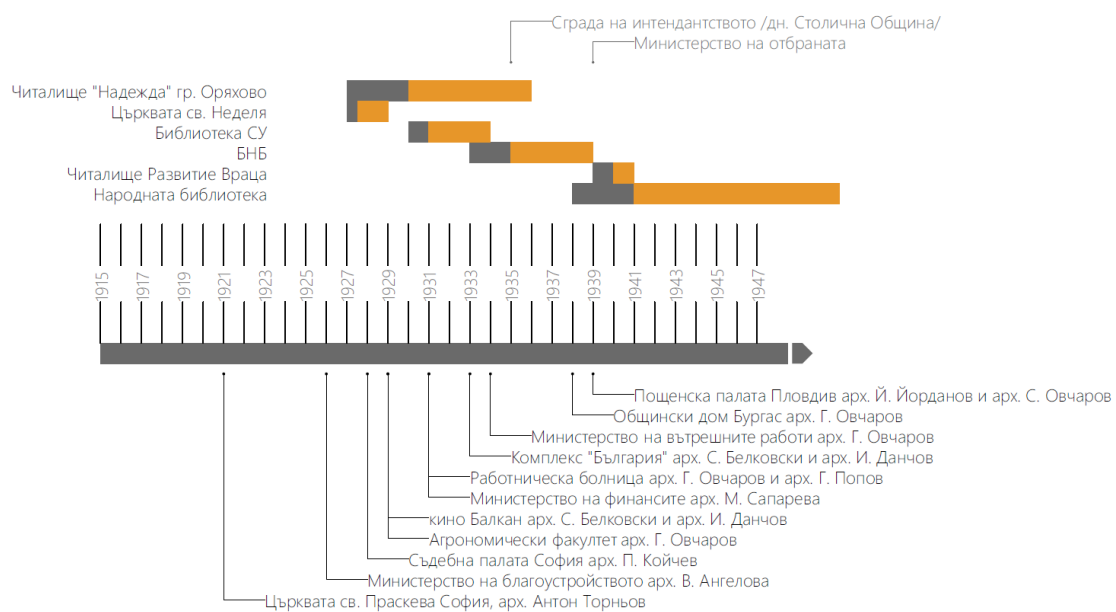


Figure 5 Timeline of the works under consideration in this paper juxtaposed with other significant works from that period. The construction period is marked in orange and the design period – in grey.

"What is evident in the initial stages of their activity shows that Ivan Vasilyov is a mature designer and contractor. There are no traces of passion for originality and self-promotion, so typical of the early development of every novice artist. On the contrary, no wanderings can be detected. In these first buildings¹⁵ some of the most important features of his work, later consciously developed and brought to perfection, are visible: wide scope and simplicity of the decision; attention to the ensemble and the environment; a subtle artistic flair with which he discovers the secret of playing with the proportions of the three dimensions; exquisite aesthetic taste in harmonising architectural

¹⁵ Nedelcho Paskalev has in mind the first buildings at the beginning of Vasilyov's work even before the church "St. Nedelya Church".



elements; achieving emotional impact and Bulgarian sound" (Паскалев, 1978, стр. 14,15)

Therefore, from the very beginning, both Vasilyov and Tsolov began their careers in a clear line without wandering and hesitant creative pursuits and kept this direction until the end. They remained true to the "eternal" themes of architecture. For the mastery and quality of the projects developed by the tandem, we can also judge from the number of recognitions and awards that the two architects won by participating in various competitions around the country. They took part either with a project proposal or as part of the jury in the most important architectural competitions for the construction of some of the landmarks of the period. From the reference that could be found in the annexes to this work it becomes clear that the bureau actively participated and advocated its professional convictions for the production of the city image in each of the cities for which competitions were held. If we also consider their buildings designed by direct appointment, we obtain a large set of architectural works that have not only quantitative but also qualitative value. According to Iskra Dandolova, the works of Vasilyov – Tsolov are estimated to about 400 if we consider for each year around 10 works and roughly 40 years of creative activity. (Дандолова, 1987, стр. 50) It is possible that there are much more given the status of the two architects, all their connections in society and the established name. The active years of the bureau should be determined starting from 1929 with the first important competition for them - the restoration of the St. Nedelya Church in Sofia; until the early 1940s. Their last big projects were for two competitions in 1942 - for the Municipal House Sofia and in the international competition for a new railway station in Sofia. The climax of their work is in 1935 with their direct appointment for the Bulgarian National Bank, for which no competition was held.

From the reference for the participation of Vasilyov - Tsolov in the competitions mentioned, it is clear that their strong projects and energy were thrown mainly in socially significant buildings, which to some extent have become symbols of the urban culture mostly in Sofia. To a large extent, these are sites of extreme importance not only for the cultural context of the period, but also for the creation of the image of the Third Bulgarian State. Let us start with the St. Nedelya Church as the first significant competition they won. It was a heavy task of incredible importance and meaning for the "reconstruction" of a temple where an attempt was made to overthrow the state regime, and the embodiment in the future of this edifice historical value, a clear semiotic orientation and all this modernised in the spirit of the era. Passing through the building of the Library of Sofia University and the building of the National Library as symbols of the production of new knowledge, then the discussion reaches their most significant work, namely the Bulgarian National Bank, loaded with meanings, context and significance, which every bank of a European country should carry and induce in visitors.

In the context of the abovementioned, there are two even more significant buildings that will be briefly discussed, but they will not be given a full analysis. These are the Ministry



of War and the Intendantship of the Palace /today's Municipality of Sofia/. The authorship of the building of the Intendantship to the Palace belongs solely to arch. Ivan Vasilyov, while the reconstruction of the War Ministry, with a significant part of the horizontal planning preserved, belongs to arch. Dimitar Tsolov.

3.1 The St. Nedelya Church

Sacred architecture is a specific part of architectural creativity, in which it is especially important that the created material world is tied to the specific religion and becomes the embodiment of the specific meanings and ideas that it preaches. This makes mastering this type of architecture difficult. In the spaces of the temples there are distinct expressions of all movements of interest to the societies in the Balkans.

After the conquest of the Balkans by the Ottomans, another religious layer was added to everything said so far. The recognition as "theirs" of the form of the most important Christian temple for the Eastern Roman Empire, namely Hagia Sophia in Constantinople not only confirms the shape of its dome as "eternal" and "timeless" but also speaks of an eternity in culture between the Byzantine and Ottoman empires. The Ottomans "infiltrate" themselves in the culture of Byzantium to a large extent, preserving much of its governing structure. The Eastern world is forever changed. The mixing of the Ottoman culture with the Byzantine and then with the Bulgarian predetermined the future 5 centuries of development in our lands. In a later period, the Revival School had its branches and types, which were given a solid number of scientific research, and the processes in the school were related to the establishment of the ecclesiastical struggles for independence and the recognition of the Orthodox Church again in the geographical area.

In conclusion, the dome as a symbol, together with the basilica, are one of the main persistent forms as far as church construction in Bulgaria is concerned. Later to these forms the bell tower will be added as a vertical symbol of the Renaissance period, which seems to speak of an "elevation" and "connection with the superior" of the already established Bulgarian church. "The history of sacred architecture in the Balkans is a vivid proof that along with the development of the human spirit, the forms of temples have continuously changed and perfected." (Коева, Олтарите на България, 2011, стр. 13)

The presently standing St. Nedelya Church was built on the site of several successively destroyed antique, medieval and late medieval churches. The latter of which were probably built before the 10th century, like most others in Sofia, with stone foundations and wooden structure and existed until the middle of the 19th century. In the 1850s it was decided to build a new metropolitan church in Sofia. On May 7, 1856 the construction of the new three-nave basilica with a length of 35.5 meters and a width of 19 meters began, the work of Ivan Boyanin, a representative of the Bratsigovo Revival School. After the Liberation, in connection with the idea of giving a European image to the capital and regulating the streets and square spaces, a change in the level of the square was necessary, which in turn presupposed the need for a large-scale reconstruction of the



cathedral. In 1898 the task was assigned to arch. Nikola Lazarov, who due to the lowering of the terrain around the temple made the following decisions: the installation of a terrace with powerful representative staircases, the construction of a new bell tower from the west, the replacement of the roof structure, the reconstruction of the cathedral from a three-domed to a five-domed one, as well as cladding of the church with brickwork.

The bombing of April 16, 1925, carried out on the funeral service of General Konstantin Georgiev, conducted by left-wing associates, not only led to a huge number of human casualties – 193 people (about 500 were injured), but also caused serious damage to the building. This led to the announcement of a competition in 1927 for the construction of a new cathedral.

First, second and third prizes were awarded at the competition; respectively the tandem Vasilyov – Tsolov received first, participating with the motto "East", the second received arch. P. Tsvetkov with the motto "Cathedral" and the third arch. Stancho Belkovski with the motto "Cross". The jury finds it appropriate and recommends to the church board to buy with the first purchase the project of arch. Georgi Ovcharov with the motto "Temple" and a second purchase for arch. St. Hainadzhiev and arch. Pencho Koychev, participating with the motto "Bulgarian Orthodox faith ". The composition of the jury is as follows: the chairman of the church board, Archpriest Rafail Alexiev for chairman, and members: architect Yurdan Milanov¹⁶ – representative of St. Sofia Bishopric, architect Sava Ovcharov – representative of the Association of Bulgarian Architects, architect-inspector V. Yankov – representative of the Ministry of Public Works, and church trustees at the Cathedral: Gavril Lyubichev and Trayko D. H. Kotsev.

As we can see, the race to build the new cathedral was led by the "great ones of the day" of that period.

The competition was won by the tandem Vasilyov – Tsolov, and the minutes of the commission contain the following:

"The layout, in full compliance with the program, is appropriate and rational in all respects. The entrances are well located and grouped in the western part of the building, with well-dimensioned vestibules, between which are placed candle salesmen. The mausoleum is also good. The three altars and the armor behind them are of good size. The corpus of the old church is preserved by building 4 new columns that carry the large central dome. The small columns to the altar and the western part bring some variety to the inner space without interfering. The latter is well lit by the dome and high side windows.

The exterior architecture is peaceful with simple, characteristic and typical purely Byzantine forms, skillfully mixed here and there with local ones.

¹⁶ Milanov also participated in the management of the construction of the St. Alexander Nevsky Cathedral.



The side arcades work well. In general, the appearance is calm, powerful and monumental. The view of the altar is successful. In detail, the work is well studied." (Архитект бр.3, 1927)

Urban and compositional solution:

The planning of the surrounding of the cathedral is predetermined by the project brief, as the existing measures of the cathedral prior to undergoing the attack must be maintained. For this reason, the authors had the opportunity to study the volumes in height relative to the existing boundaries of the square. The cathedral is situated at the crossroads of important boulevards in Sofia and is important as an indisputable urban landmark and accent. An important aspect is the relationship between inside and outside of the cathedral, as well as the circulation flow. All this led to the decision for a central dome and a bell tower that does not rise too much. When preparing the final plans, the Holy Synod insisted that the bell tower be very elevated, but the designers opposed this and "proposed a solution in which the bell tower is not even as high as the dome, but even lower than it, and argued with the importance of the building in urban planning terms. Moreover, they also relied on an optical effect, according to which, with simultaneous perception of the dome and the bell tower, the subjective impression is of the elevation of the bell tower above the dome, i.e. the opposite of the objective, physical situation" (Дандолова, 1987, стр. 55). At that time, Bishop Stefan of Sofia was not in Bulgaria and when he returned, he summoned arch. Vasilyov "There is a supreme commandment," he said, "that the bell tower be very, very high." "I am of the opinion that it should be very, very low," Vasilyov replied. And the bell tower became the way we know it today (Паскалев, 1978, стр. 16). This is one of the main compositional tasks when designing an Eastern Orthodox church building, how to compose such large volumes, how to make them proportional and what should be given emphasis to - on the bell tower or the dome? Thus, they find the exact proportions of the two main compositional bodies and the exact height of the bell tower, neither too low nor too high. It is placed as seen in the initial sketch of the competition in exact harmony with the other volume.

"The development of the massing of St. Nedelya is an example of correct and profound urban planning" (Паскалев, 1978, стр. 17). We will not see anything accidental from the large scale of the cathedral's silhouette (well studied and hierarchical), to the perception from different distances, through the functional scheme, the Orthodox canon and the "gene" from forms and motifs embedded in our cultural area, to the large and small details that dress the building. "The voluminous articulation is developed and ordered with great skill – with calm rhythmic information, in a logical interconnection and in a stylistic unity revealing the plastic image of the cathedral" (Паскалев, 1978, стр. 17). A whole from the urban planning to the detail of the doors.

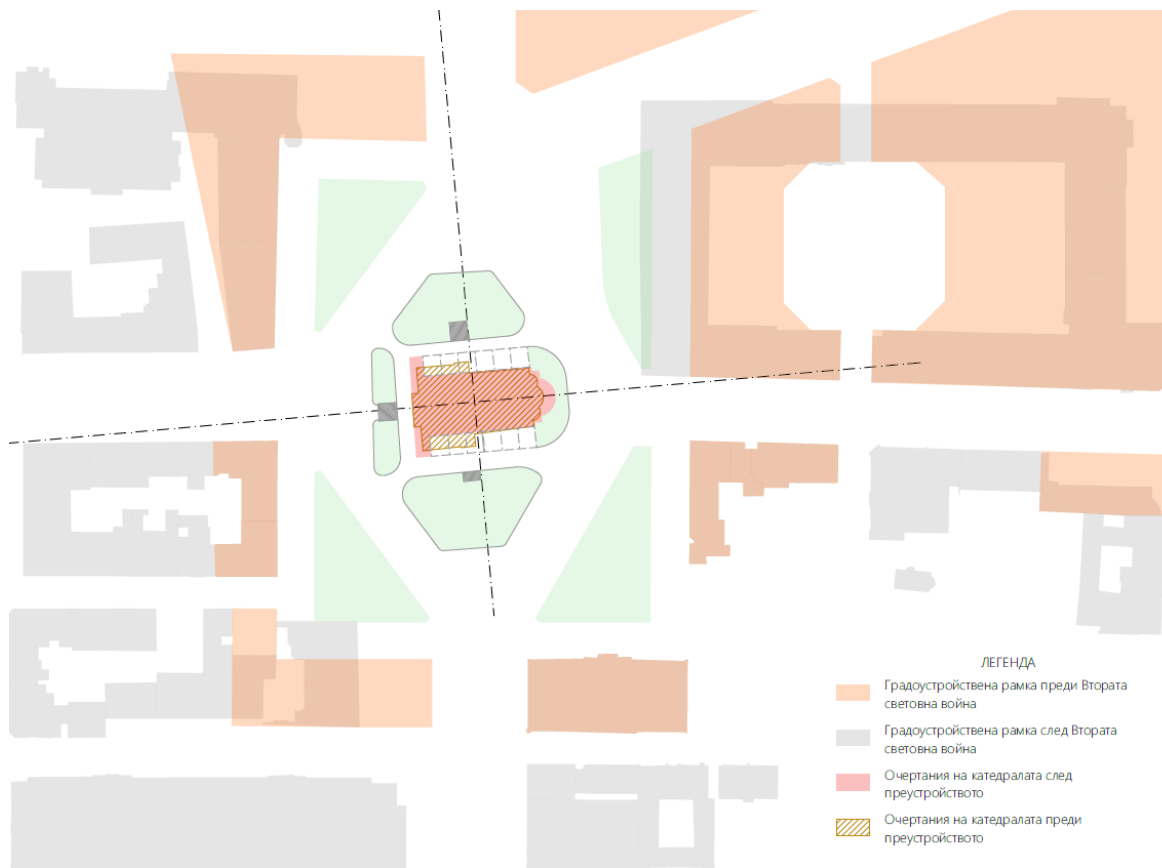


Figure 6 Combined diagram of the urban planning schemes around the St Nedelya Cathedral. The change in the square space is depicted before and after the Second World War. Also, the stepped shape of the Cathedral is marked before and after the reconstruction.

It can be observed that the arcades, which are also found in the Bulgarian Revival architecture, under a similar study of the people flow and circulation, play an additional function of 'milding' the large volume and introducing plasticity in the strict form of the cathedral, without losing its monumentality. Since the cathedral was initially raised to a higher elevation (which is positively affecting its perception as a temple and accent), due to the vertical planning carried out in the past, the three possible entrances are reached by means of two quarter landing ramps for each of them.¹⁷

¹⁷ Probably, the decision for two quarter landing ramps remained from the previous planning, as monumental powerful staircases lead to the temple on these three sides. The decision to keep the ramps turned out to be positive, as it is much more "welcoming".

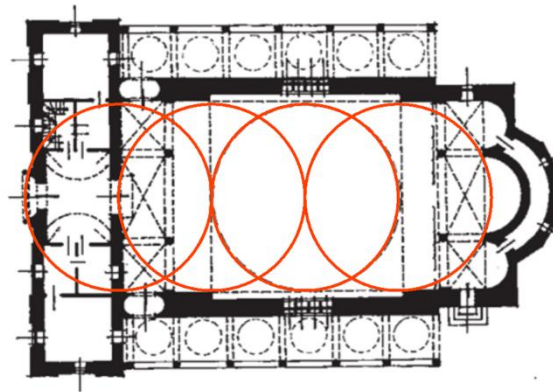


Figure 7 Relating the diameter of the dome as a basis for the proportions of the Cathedral.

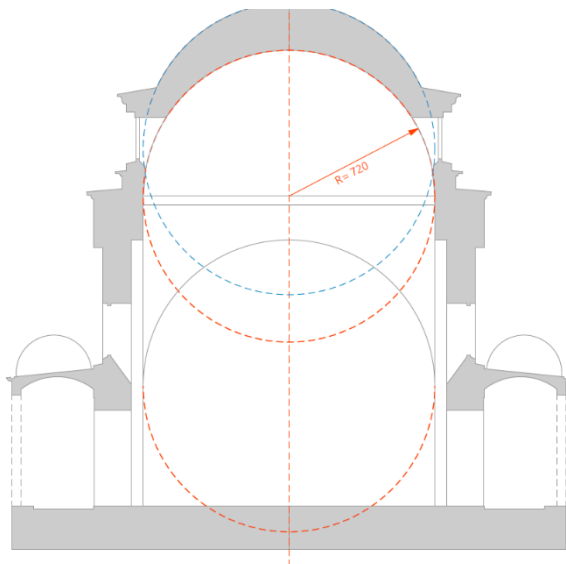


Figure 8 Relating the diameter of the dome as a basis for the proportions of the Cathedral. Cross section. The main elements of the architectural space are redrawn from the original drawings.

Symbolic meaning of the object:

Sacred architecture is mostly symbolic, it deals with a language with particular signs that it addresses to visitors. "The temple architecture has the purpose of building sacred spaces in which liturgical acts can be performed – consecutive acts established by the church statute and canon" (Коева, Олтарите на България, 2011, стр. 25). For this reason, the functionality of worship should be combined with architectural symbolic signs through all scales, from large spaces to the smallest details. St. Nedelya combines the large dome that has remained in the consciousness of all as one of the main symbols – paradigms, since the time of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople and a number of bell towers, an extremely strong symbol from the period of the Bulgarian Revival, exemplifying not only the Renaissance Eastern Orthodox Bulgarian Church, but also serving as a sign of autonomy and independence. These two leading compositional symbols are combined on a purely urban level, within the surrounding boundaries of the square. The proportions in height are also consistent with it. The northern and southern arcades well known not only functionally but also symbolically in church architecture and having their manifestation again during the Revival, when this element is skillfully combined (then in most cases made of timber) with the volume of the church. By treating



the facades with bigore, the atmosphere of antiquity and mysticism has been achieved, without them appearing intrusive and artificial. "With the decorative and plastic expression in the architecture of the cathedral, a Bulgarian sound with a characteristic touch of romance has been achieved." (Паскалев, 1978, стр. 20)

This manner of showing respect for the legacy accompanies the entire work of Vasilyov and Tsolov and is one of its main themes. How to adopt the inherited culture and how not to repeat it dogmatically, but combined it with the modern in an intelligent way, and to sit well in the space of the Balkan Peninsula? It is this reaction to the environment, spatial and cultural, that is one of the strongest qualities of Vasilyov – Tsolov.

3.3 Community centre in Oryahovo

The combination of traditional and innovative is also found in another architectural form of no less significance in the Bulgarian territorial and cultural environment. The community centre is a typical Bulgarian institution where we find a symbiosis of the new and the old. There is hardly any other more emblematic structure, a sign of Bulgarian amateur activity, as there three generations coexist by default. The very idea of a "community centre" is to be a home, in which knowledge is passed down from generation to generation through self-study. At the same time, a community centre is a place where the young generation seeks, discusses and synthesises new knowledge. The idea is clear – a place that unites tradition and innovation.

Usually, community centres (читалища) had a large hall designed to accommodate a large number of people, and initially the halls had movable chairs, which made it easy to transform the space according to the different needs, and gradually with the reconstruction or construction of new buildings, the model with fixed, comfortable and modern for the time seating is established coming closer to the scheme of theater halls. Along with halls, the centres have a library with books collected by different generations over the years, as well as various other modules to the main amateur activity, in different cases these are brass bands and many crafts' clubs.

While in other countries such structures as cultural centres, youth centres and other variations of this type of buildings are the result of the local governing body's decisions or ideas to some extent developed for propaganda purposes, the community centre (читалище) is a structure entirely created by the popular will. Even in the years of socialism, the Soviet model of the so-called "cultural houses", which were subordinated to a power centre, did not erase or shift the focus away from the community centres, which were subordinated to their owners.

The architectural bureau Vasilyov – Tsolov designed several community centre buildings in different forms, including such that include a theater, setting a model for the development of such buildings. To mention two of them – the community centre in their hometown of Oryahovo and another one in the town of Vratsa. The Nadezhda Community Centre in Oryahovo is not one of the famous works of the tandem,



publications about it are few and scarce, and therefore, this work would be the first attempt for a more in-depth analysis. Over the years it has been mentioned as work of the atelier, informative references have been given, but no previous academic analysis was carried out.

It was founded in 1871, and in 1910 began collecting funds for the construction of a new building for the community centre, but the process was interrupted by the wars. The initiative resumed in 1926 after Vasilyov – Tsolov made a project for the new building as a donation to the town of Oryahovo. The construction began in 1930 but again due to a problem with the funds, it was delayed, nevertheless the community centre was officially opened on the 31th December 1936.¹⁸

The brief for the community centre in Oryahovo was not easy, on the one hand, the plot had a steep slope, on the other – the organisation of the community centre and the added library were challenging the urban solution. When grouping the volumes, it became clear that the building would dominate the urban silhouette and when viewed

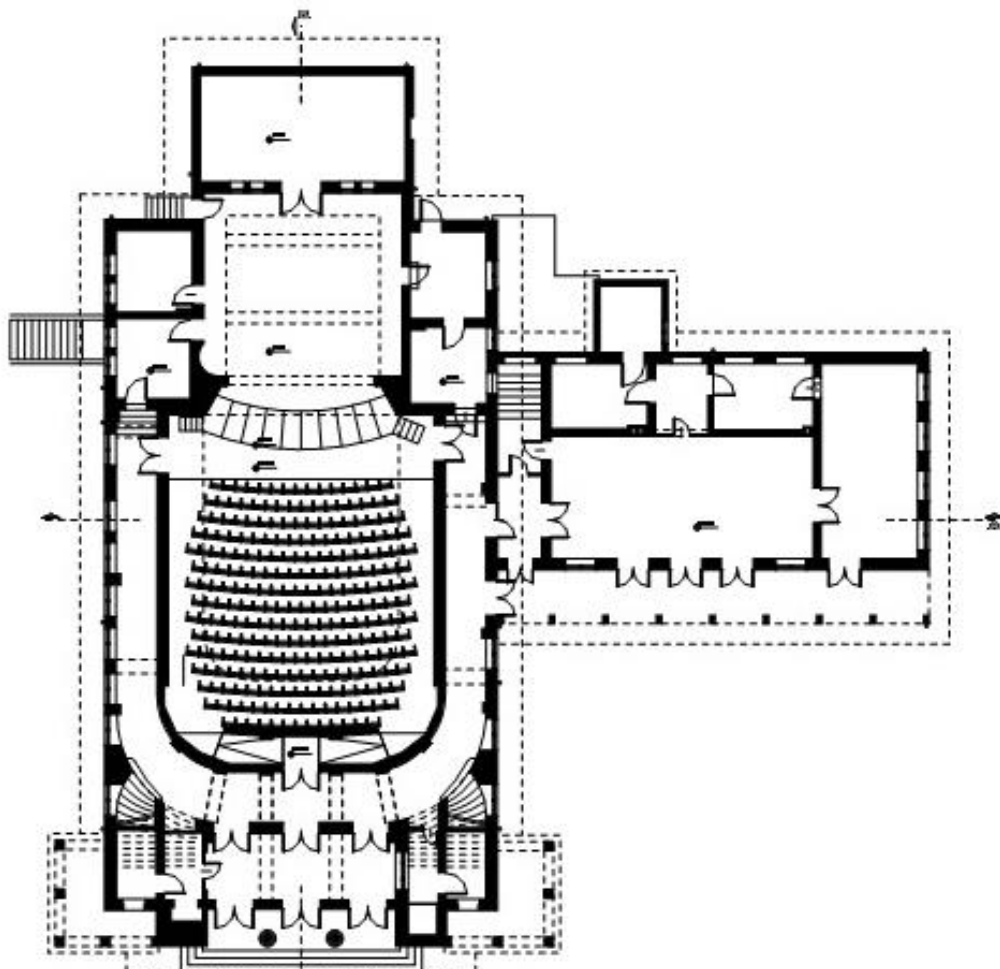


Figure 9 Ground Floor pLan of the Oryahovo Community Centre.

¹⁸ The reference was made thanks to the Historical Museum of Oryahovo



from the Danube, its "back" facade would be visible (if at all in the architecture from a modern point of view there is such a perception).

The architects found a solution by dividing the building into different in structure volumes, thus fitting into the existing scale of the surroundings, the displacement of the roofs, while the division of volumes and the retaining wall of porous stone remind of the general buildings' arrangement on the steep slope of the city and capture the spirit of the place. The modesty of the architects is carried over to their work – to preserve the legacy by emphasising tradition, while at the same time taking a step forward. This understanding was to be developed on an even larger scale and was brought to "perfection" in the future during the construction of the Bulgarian National Bank.¹⁹

In plan, the community centre is an organism of two bodies, just as is the functional scheme. The first body is the larger one, that of the community centre hall and its

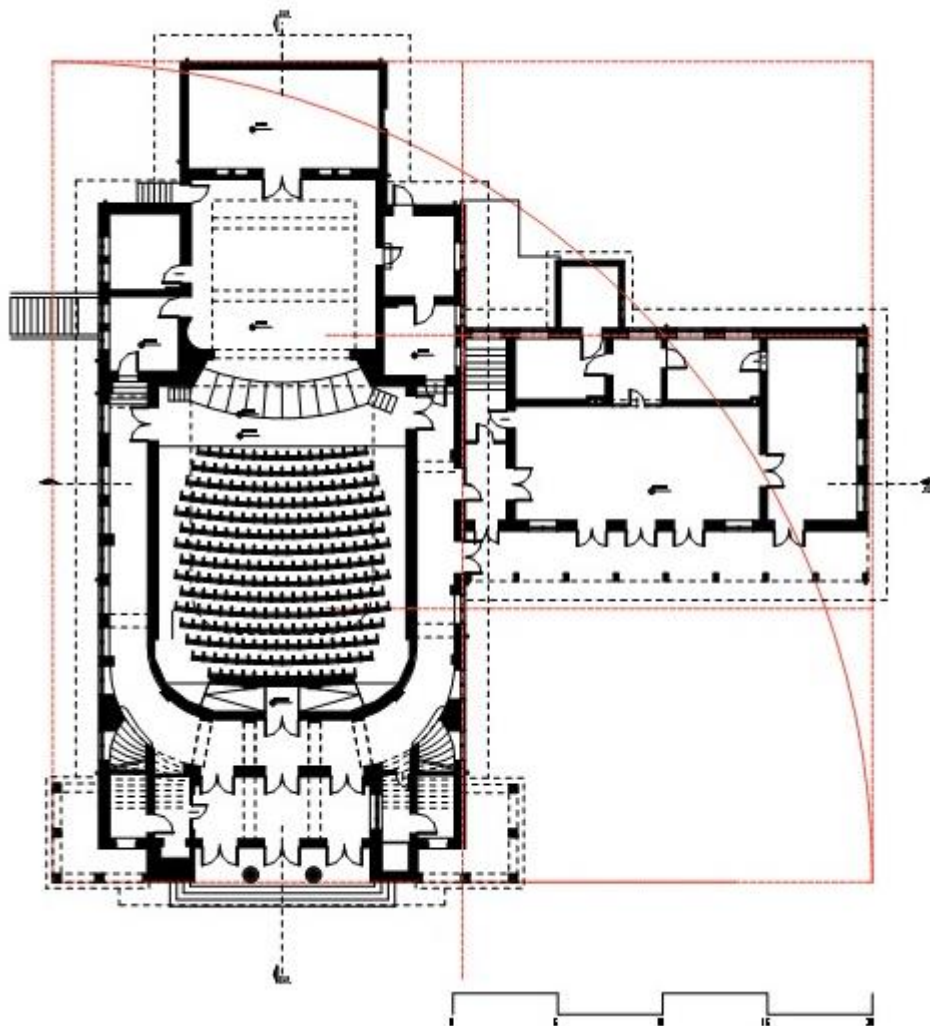


Figure 13 Relationship in the plan of the Oryahovo Community Centre.

¹⁹ All drawings of the community centre are drawn by the author on the basis of a site survey drawings done by SELKO 7, arch. S. Rizov and arch. A. Vassilev.



adjacent rooms, such as lobbies, stage, changing rooms, staircases, etc., in the second body is located the library, as opposed to the first. The eastern facade represents best the design of the authors, namely the organisation of the functional units in separate volumes, seeking dialogue with the forms in their surroundings.

The functional scheme is as pure as possible - classicism's idea of a central axis retains its semiotics, with asymmetry coming from the voluminous opposition of the lower library body, which possesses symmetry in itself. The central axis leads to an intermediate space under three arches supported by two columns, followed by a lobby with small ticket rooms and a wardrobe. Through doors you enter a bypass corridor, which circles the hall as the Latin letter "U", and it serves as a link between the library and the hall, while at the same time it distributes the flow of visitors to the hall. On both sides of the lobby there are staircases connecting the ground floor and the second floor of the hall, which consists of balconies, whereas the space of the hall itself goes across two floors. On the second floor above the lobby there is another lobby that functioned most likely for different types of functions accompanying a performance and in which conversations were held before or after the performance. Today, it is separated by partitions and the space is severely disturbed as during one of the reconstructions of the building a cinema function was inserted into it. The stage to the hall has an orchestra that is covered with wooden shutters, which if necessary can be removed. On the side of the stage there are rooms with convenient and quick connections to it, to the service "U" corridor and outside, adapted at the time to serve the largest possible range of activities that could be taking place in the community centre. The library is modest but well-sized as a volume of the composition, but later after an unskillful reconstruction a room was added that did not fit into the idea of the building. In front of the library, the architects placed a modern well-proportioned colonnade.

The facades are plastered due to the scarce funding for the construction. The overall impression of building is that of asceticism and continuity – all qualities of the Bulgarian community centre. The details of the facades are approached with great mastery. The windows and doors are framed with unpretentious frames and carry the spirit of classicism, the main cornice in this case is the eaves, which recall Bulgarian architecture and the heritage buildings in Oryahovo. Despite the compact volume and ascetic appearance, the monumentality is preserved. The two columns at the main entrance have simple base and capital, with a slight pause above the capital to visually separate the column from the weight of the arches, making them look even more subtle and the arcade lighter, but still monumental.

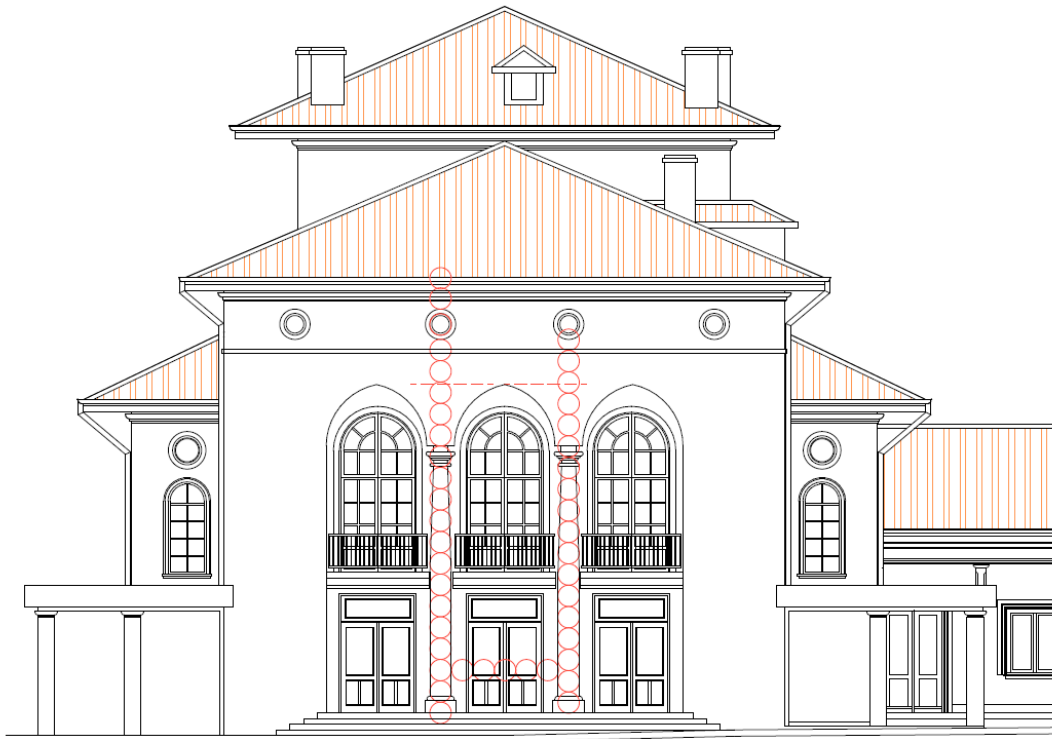


Figure 14 Proportions and modularity of the columns on the façade.

The height of the columns including the base and the capital is exactly equal to 12 and a half times the lower diameter of the column. If we exclude the base and the capital and start dividing the column itself from the base, then the lower diameter will be applied exactly 11 times, and here the neck of the column with the distance to the capital is included. The intercolumn space (column spacing) is equal to exactly 5 times the lower diameter of the column. The arches are Gothic but in depth closer to the wall behind them they form into a simple arc. The height of the arch is almost equal to 3 times the lower diameter / probably would be exactly three, but it is possible that there was an error in execution or survey/. The round holes above the intermediate cornice separating the so-called additional or over-course (надзид) from the main part of the wall are equal to 1 lower diameter of the column. The main cornice or in this case more precisely the eaves extend exactly 2 lower diameters from the facade. From the last arch stepping directly on the wall to the end of the main body of the building, the measure is 4 and a half diameters. It is evident that the facades were designed in a way well-known by the theorists of classical architecture, namely by sizing and proportioning, by using a single module – the lower diameter of the column. From the point of view of the gene, the height of the column relative to its diameter is 12.5 : 1, which is not found in classical orders, a similar elongation of the columns with high slenderness is found in the late works of Kolyu Fichev, for example, the St. Trinity Church in Svishtov. The proportions of



the Corinthian order (as the most slender and exquisite) are 10:1. The circular holes placed between the two cornices (main and intermediate) are also equal to the lower diameter of the column. They are a reference to the architecture of the older buildings in the city. In the architecture as it is inherited, these openings, placed in the additional course of the attic space, play a role in its ventilation and have become not only a functional but also an artistic element.



Figure 15 View of the Oryahovo Community Centre , September 2016. Image by the author.



Figure 16 Detail of the capital at the central entrance of the Oryahovo Community, September 2016. Image by the author.

3.4 Community centre in Vratsa

The second community centre that the architectural bureau Vasilyov – Tsolov made is the present-day building of the "Razvitie" community centre in the city of Vratsa. It was built in the period 1938 – 1941 according to their design. The construction is led by arch. Petar Dogramadzhiev and the engineers Nikola Novoselski and²⁰ Konstantin Yanakiev who were actively working in the city. As already mentioned, the community centre as a typical Bulgarian institution has great symbolism for a city. The tandem built these two community centres in a period when the culture experienced exceptional growth, when precisely such public buildings as community centres, were the sites around which this activity developed. This gives impetus to the development of this type of architecture.

Urban Planning Strategy

The plot allocated for the construction of the new community centre building is in a very complex urban situation. The main volume of the building is located in an inner neighborhood space connected to the public spaces by having access to three streets,

²⁰ Arch. Petar Dogramadjiev and eng. Nikola Novoselski were partners in the design bureau Dogramadjiev – Novoselski, which designed several important buildings in Vratsa and the surrounding area. Although one of them is an engineer, they also fit into the image of a tandem fully in line with the culture of that period. Among their most significant buildings are the Residence of the Metropolitan of Vratsa, the Church of St. George in Mezdra, the old building of the town hall in the town of Krivodol etc.



namely Hristo Botev Str.²¹, Targovska and Colonel Kethhudov. These three facade fronts, in turn, have peculiarities. Upon analysis, the access on Hristo Botev Str. Seems the most appropriate for a representative façade, then that of Colonel Kethhudov which is a narrow street but allows for a relatively wide facade, which later became the "back" of the stage, and lastly is the narrowest facade allowed at the then very busy street Targovska. Such an urban strategy would have proven much more significant if the architectural bureau Belkovski - Danchoy had not already designed the building complex "Bulgaria" in Sofia in 1934, where we can observe a similar situation – the significant hall "Bulgaria" is located in the middle of the inner neighborhood space with points of access between buildings to the different streets. Unlike this, in the case of the Vratsa centre the program is of a much smaller scale compared to the project in Sofia. In line with the understandings of Vasilyov and Tsolov, the building uses the functional scheme of the community centre in Oryahovo, even directly applying the U-shaped corridor. This decision proved very appropriate, as the two streets – Targovska and Hr. Botev do not meet at a right angle. This required the main entrance axis to be rotated. As a result of this, the entire coordinate system of the hall followed the vector of Targovska Str., which visitors experience by entering through the central entrance into the U-shaped corridor to find themselves into the hall, and only then understand that it is actually rotated, as the gaze unconsciously seeks for symmetry until it finds a symmetrical door at the other end, leading along the axis to the facade on Targovska Str. Thus, with the demonstrated mastery, the authors not only applied and developed the eternal classical scheme, but adapted it to the conditions of the site, achieving balance and functionality. This solution of urban planning problems is the result of in-depth knowledge of the theory and history of architecture.²²

²¹ This is the present-day name of the street, but over the years it has been changed names several times, for this reason the author chooses to call it by its current name, the other two streets in this example have not changed their names over the years.

²² The drawing of Figure 18 is provided by the architectural bureau KABE, redrawn from the original drawings of the community centre building.

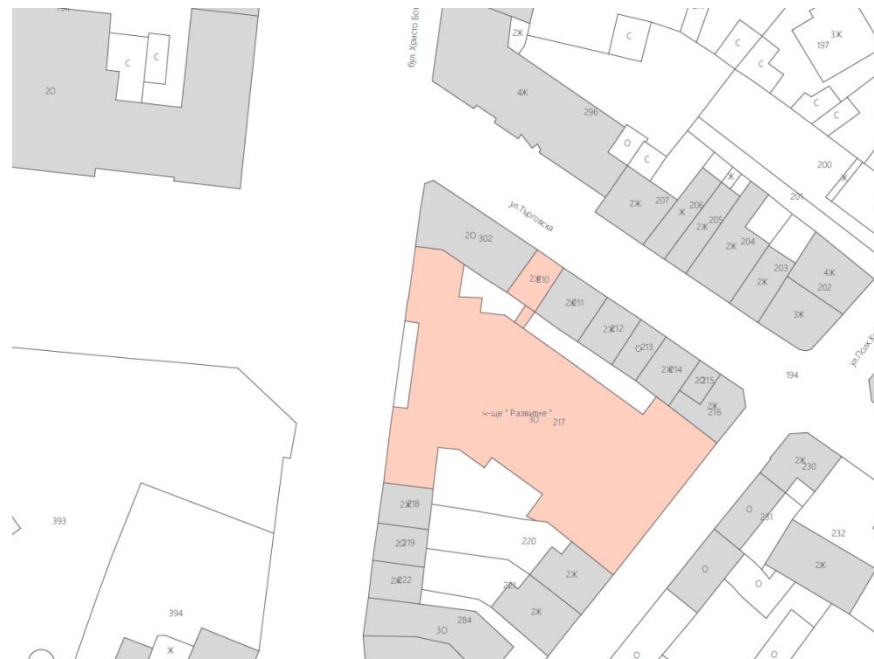


Figure 17 Urban plan of the Razvitie Community Centre in Vratsa.

Figure 17 clearly shows the complicated urban situation of the project. Clearly readable are the individual facade fronts to the adjacent streets, as well as the complex shape of the plot. The official representative, if we can call it in other words – the main²³, facade is located on Hristo Botev Str. in the space between two blind walls. This volume establishes the contact between the street and its buildings. By analysing the surrounding buildings, whose ground floor has a public function and the second level – residential, the tandem came to the understanding that in order for the building to be inscribed into the place, the facade must radiate public significance. Thus, the designers decided to divide this facade into three equal parts and to have an axis of symmetry. The resulting composition is justified somewhat, since the facade obtains an orderly solution achieved on a relative scale through two floors, and the contact with the neighbouring blind-wall buildings is made in two, so to call, lower wings. Logically, the so divided into three parts facade, could get higher, which is achieved with great precision without causing disharmony in the calm street silhouette.

²³ The author is far from the conviction that architecture can have a main and "back" facade, as each facade should be made for a certain purpose and react in a certain way to the surrounding context.

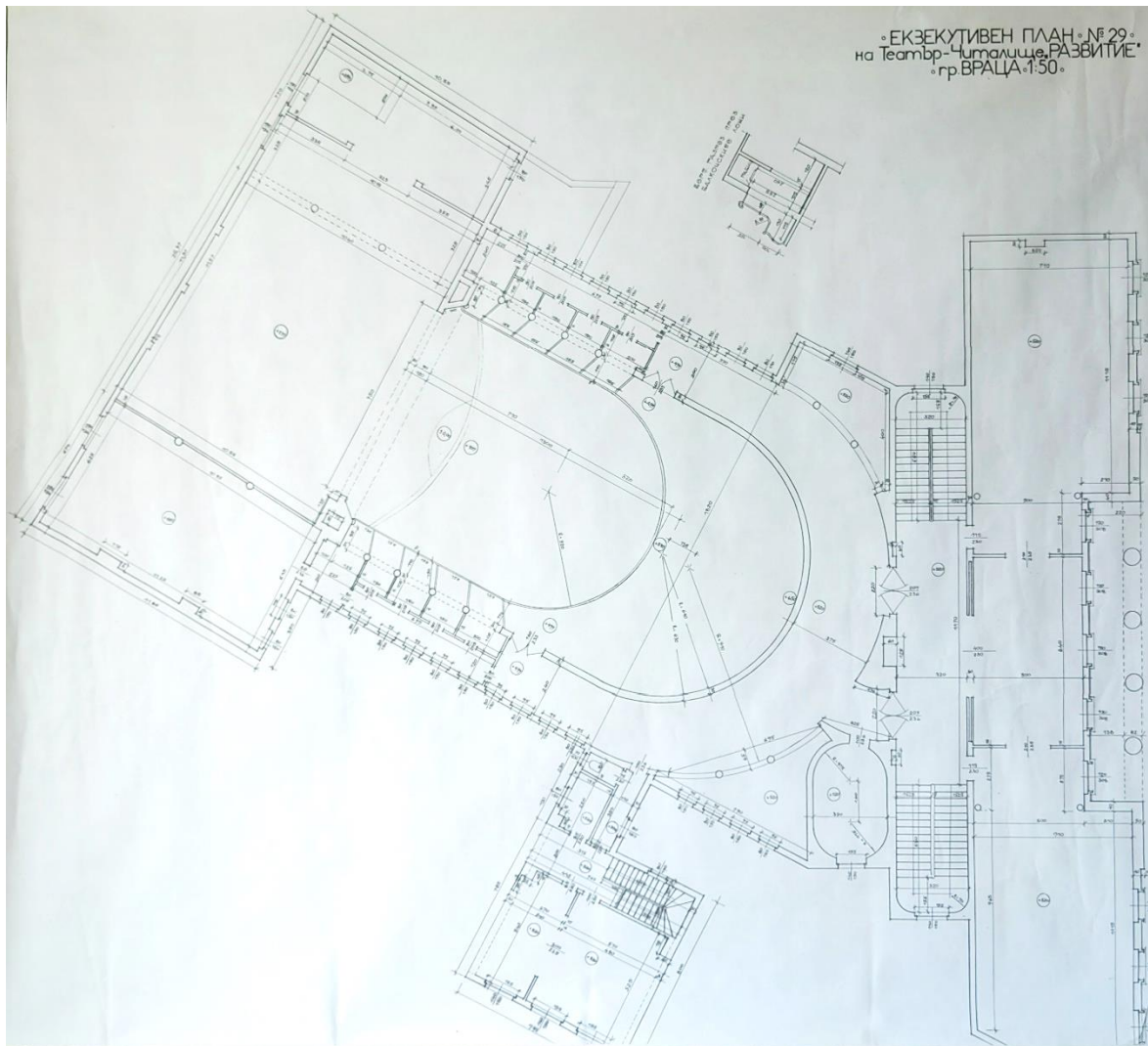


Figure 18 Second floor plan (above the ground floor) of the Razvitie Community Centre.

The interesting thing about proportioning the order is the development of clean capitals in Corinthian proportions. Their only decoration is the acanthus leaves, which wrap finely and create the illusion of Corinthian volutes. Here we can probably trace the mastery with which the two authors approach this solution, bringing a picturesque touch with this detail to the strict work. Very finely felt is the difference in the development of the columns for this community centre and the development of the more monumental columns of the National Library. Probably, in the elaboration of these details there is a lot of the so-called "Tsolo"²⁴ detail.

In the reaction of the building to the side street Targovska we notice that the space intended for construction is subordinated to the scale and requirements of the building

²⁴ "Tsolovski detail" is a colloquial concept used among fellow architects, especially from the older generation, which had contact with the work of arch. Dimitar Tsolov or his students. The concept comes from the general recognition that arch. Tsolov is a "master of detail" in the design of buildings.



plan. Of course, there is be no urban accent, as this facade is much narrower and plays an auxiliary function to the approaches to the building. The third front, where the building reacts differently to the situation, is the "back" of the stage with its larger volume, which has a facade on street Colonel Kethhudov. Probably, the large volume could not remain hidden, but its adaptation to the urban situation has been achieved. It is separated by a horizontal cornice, which corresponds to the height of the surrounding buildings and thus the large difference in volumes is overcome. It should be noted that in the conquests of post-war architecture in solving urban planning problems, such "boxes" of the stage (in the design of theaters and cultural centres) were imposed and emphasised and served as an accent, in most cases as expressive large volumes. Withing the limits of this analysis, we can point to an approach of which arch. Vasilyov was a strong supporter, namely the building's response to the environment on its human scale and different context. This thinking of the Middle Ages presupposes the contact of architecture with the environment, with each facade being solved in the context of the respective street and changed according to the spatial realities there. This manner the tandem adopted and manifested as the strongest and most logical in its work in the design of the Bulgarian National Bank.

3.6 The Bulgarian National Bank

The central bank in every country is a symbol of its prosperity and its wealth, we can even call it a kind of temple of money and financial prosperity. The function of a central bank is not limited to the fulfillment of its utilitarian functions as the workplace of its officials, public service, vault and monetary salon. Such a building should embody certain ideas and philosophy. Typically, central banks occupy a major place in the urban fabric of a city and are one of the main symbols and benchmarks in urban planning. Such is the case with the Bulgarian National Bank.

In 1933. a construction committee of senior officials of the Bulgarian National Bank was formed and the committee assigned directly, without a competition, the Vasilyov – Tsolov bureau for the design and management of the construction of the future central bank. Aparently, in order for a wonderful work to be created, no legal complications are needed to "regulate" a competition for its performance, but on the contrary. The research before the design of the building was carried out, with each of the two designers being sent for one year abroad. Arch. Tsolov was sent to research and learn from the design of all major modern banks in the United States, and arch. Vasilyov - of all banks in Europe.

The plot intended for the construction is located on the central square in the capital, in a key loction next to the Royal Palace and forms the frame of the square /the square today has other proportions and after its construction the Bank forms one of the two short sides of the square/. The plot also includes the building of the Archaeological Museum, housed in the old 500-year-old Buyuk Mosque /Kodja Mahmud Mosque/. Given that a bank is being built for eternity, in the beginning it was discussed whether to remove the mosque and the bank to be the only building that closes the entire neighborhood, or preserve the



existing museum building. This is probably one of the few examples in Bulgarian architectural history in which pure reason prevails and instead of liquidating the old cultural layer for ideological or opportunistic reasons, something new has been added to it. It was decided that the mosque would be preserved. And the newly created bank, which is planned to be situated overlooking the city garden, the side street and the square, had to establish contact with the old mosque via two wings.

In 1935 a tender was held for the construction of the reinforced concrete skeleton of the building, which is won by the Hungarian company Rella and Nefe. A geological study of the site was also conducted by drilling at 4 places, during which it was found that from the square the strong earth layer is at a depth of about 14 meters below the ground level, which required the building to step on piles or dig until the strong soil. It was decided, although quite unfavorable from the point of view of the digging, to remove everything until the strong layer was reached. Excavation works were carried out manually without mechanisation, with workers having to fight groundwater and the deep excavation. The statistical calculations were made by the company Rella and Nefe, led by Eng. Weiss, with Tihomir Kmetov as a representative from Bulgaria, as well as Eng. Gochev and Eng. Lyuben Dramov. The design bureau appointed Eng. Dimitar Baynov for audit of the statistical calculations, and BNB appointed Eng. Krustyu Ilchev. As we can see, each activity went through several audits to ensure the quality of the construction. It should be noted that participation in the management, and in part in the design also have arch. Boris Kapitanov and arch. Ivan Tomov, employees of the design bureau Vasilov – Tsolov at that time.

Urban Planning Strategy

In Bulgaria, it is rare to talk about urban ensembles informing the appearance of a city. To a large extent, the context in which the BNB was built is more than key for the capital. At the time of construction, this was the central square. The building is in contact with the fence of the Royal Palace, while the other side of the square is closed by the modernist buildings of arch. Karasimeonov (probably the first multi-family residential building with clearly separated day and night functions) and the building of today's State Archives by arch. Mikhailovski. The shape of the square has a 1:2 ratio, with BNB occupying its short southwest side. Upon the performed analysis, the authors had to place the main functions to the more favorable southeastern side, overlooking the city garden, but the classic central facade had to be the narrower one on both sides and overlooking the square. Another factor was the decision to preserve the mosque which required consideration of the difference in the volumes of the two. The bank also had to make contact the mosque through two lower wings. Another complication was the completely different orientation of the mosque when compared to the new urban planning. The difference between the vector of the old building and that of the bank is 60 degrees. The theme of heritage turned out to be leading: on the one hand, there is a mosque that is a spiritual symbol, on the other – the future central bank, a symbol of the new order and prosperity. The



research of the urban ensemble began, the main topic being the ratios and contact points with the mosque. The teacher of arch. Tsolov, prof. Bestelmeier was called as a consultant for the project²⁵ with the main task to resolve the dispute with the municipality on the idea to expand the southwest street, then named Clementine. The reason for this desire that would shorten the plot and open a larger space in front is not entirely clear. A possible reason is that the creation of a larger space is related to the height of the building, but there is another probably more logical and important reason for this decision and it is rooted in the proportioning of the new building.

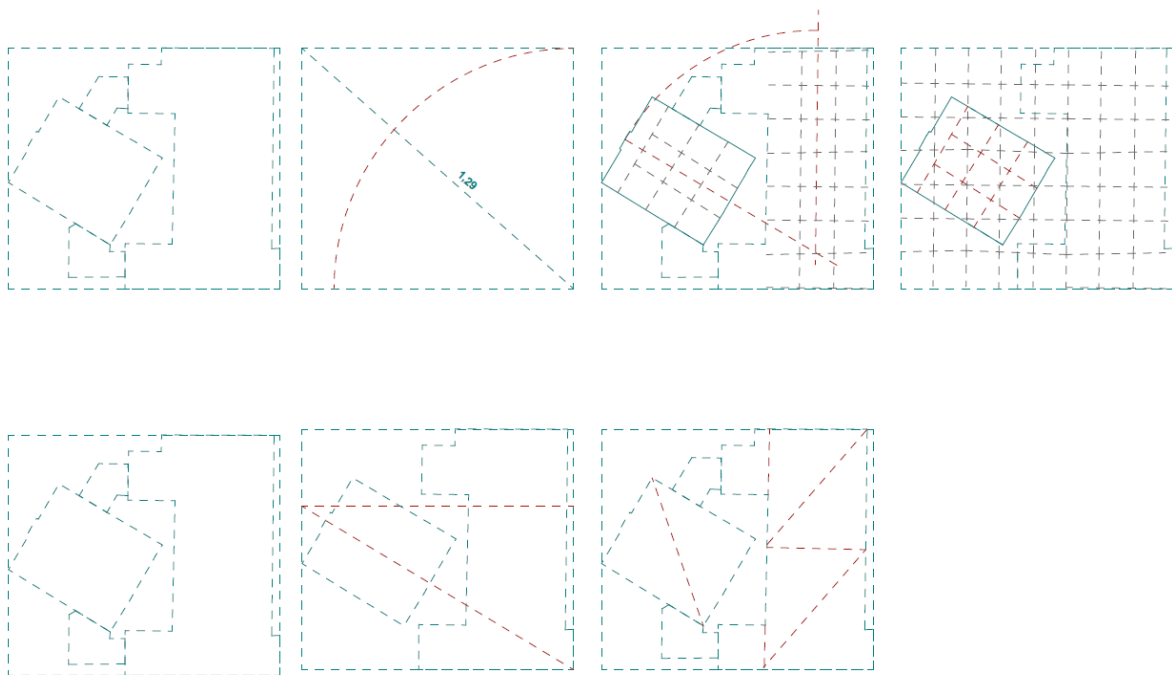


Figure 19 Diagram of the proportions and possible transformations of the form-making.

The author proposes the carried out geometric study of the proportioning of the building in the urban situation. This is a hypothetical study, consistent with the approach, way of thinking and solving problems of the team. This situational model may be random, or it may simply be another kind of solution to their urban planning problem. It proceeds precisely from the volume of the mosque as heritage.

Buyuk Mosque has 9 domes and an anteroom. The nine domes form in plan a square of module 3x3, the vestibule of the building has a side of 3 modules per 1/2 module. It is this starting geometry that may have proved to be key in solving the problem. Vasilyov is the one who considered himself the author of the large massing and proportions of spaces; He said that his teacher, prof. Ostendorf (a writer in the field of "simplified classics") taught him the inexhaustible possibilities that classical thinking possesses. Proportioning exercises of the volumes in a classical manner and the contact of the building with its

²⁵ The State Archives keeps the letters from the correspondence between the architectural bureau and the municipality, there is even a reference for the fee that prof. Bestelmeier took.



surroundings, which the professor instilled in the students turned out to be key. Prof. Lyuben Dimitrov mentions in the film about arch. Ivan Vasilyov for Vasilyov's attraction to the Middle Ages (Разказ за архитект Васильов, 1998).

The Middle Ages was characterised by the fragmentation of the volumes of different topics, as well as by the contact of the building in a different way with the adjacent streets (unlike the classics, which imposes order with an emphasised only main facade and a single theme to the surrounding spaces, with slight exceptions), that is, the contact to the adjacent spaces should be defined, first by the different functional needs, and secondly, by the dialogue with these spaces. Vasilyov's attraction to understanding medieval architecture here will be reflected.²⁶ Probably because of this in the State Archives, the two wings of transition from the bank to the mosque are signed only by arch. Vasilyov. The transition to the mosque and the dialogue of the BNB building with the surroundings align strongly with the medieval understanding, reinforced with the powerful tower and the displaced openings, recalling the medieval towers with "loopholes" in our lands. All this heritage is not just an imitative and self-serving idea of the author, but it is deduced from the sound rules of classical architecture applied to the main dimensions of the bank.²⁷

If we draw an axis in the direction of the mosque and this axis is crossed with the central axis of the bank, the discrepancy between them, as already mentioned, will be 60 degrees. If we take the intersection of the two axes as the starting point and rotate the mosque, as a volume of consisting of 9 modules, then it becomes visible that it is exactly as wide as the bank, and the vestibule of the mosque matches the space under the colonnade. If we assume that these 9 rotated squares, which I call modules, are propagated over the entire volume occupied by the ensemble, then we get a network of exactly 7x8 squares. The mosque, as we said, including the narthex, measures 3 modules by 3 and 1/2 modules. The step of the bank at the level of the cash hall measures exactly 3 modules to 7 modules, that is, twice the base of the mosque. This is a hypothesis of the author, made on the basis of geometric analysis and is not backed by anything found in the drawings of the BNB in the State Archives.

²⁶ Author's assumption.

²⁷ Author's opinion.

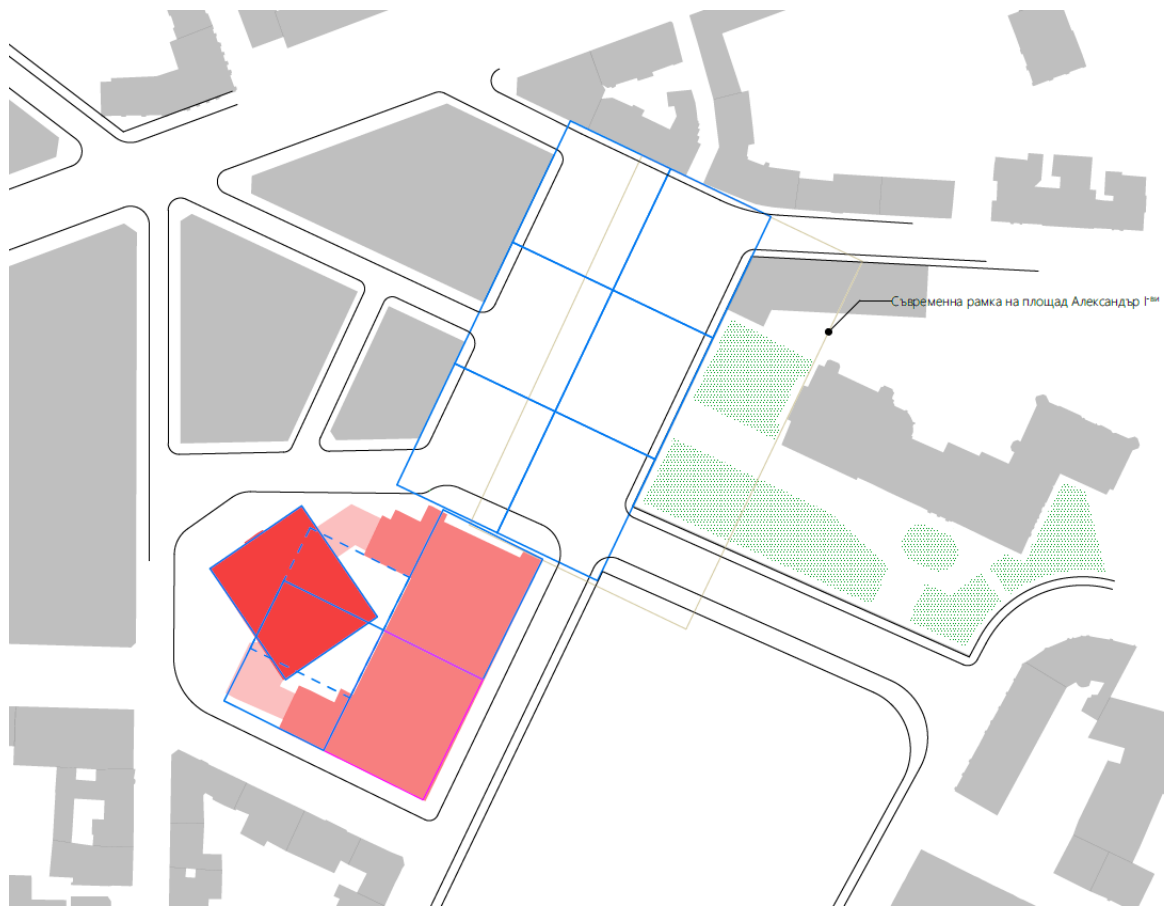


Figure 20 Diagram of the proportions and relationships between the mosque, the bank and the square.

The proportion of the square has already been decided with the urban planning of the city of Sofia after the Liberation. Favorable in this case turned out to be the fact that the step of the mosque can be accurately mapped 6 times in the frame of the square (before World War II), see figure 20.

The height of the building was considered as an aspect of the urban situation and it is consistent with the surrounding buildings on the square and to the Doctor's Garden. The mosque remains lower than the elevation of the bank, the transition is accomplished as we said with two lower wings. On another level, this plays the role of contact between the new and the old and shows the attitude of the period to the heritage. The need for this to happen in the best possible way required the transition to be developed with great attention.²⁸ The wings are proportioned as a synthesis of the scale of the two

²⁸ The drawings of the two lower wings mentioned are signed by arch. Ivan Vasilyov. Of course, authorship cannot be attributed to him alone, but perhaps his attraction to medieval architecture had an influence. From the drawings are visible the finesse and direction of the pattern, which show his thinking in this direction, symbolically, structurally and functionally. You can also see the latest pencil amendments he



buildings, great craftsmanship is manifested in the cladding and the choice of the authors to change with one shade the type of limestone,²⁹ as well as its processing, not only as a fracture, but also the slight picking of the edge of each plate. This enhances the feeling of antiquity and creates that subtle impression, which in any case is not an imitation, but the fruit of great mastery and another tribute to heritage.

Functional and axial scheme

The central entrance of the bank was decided logically – from the central square, through a powerful monumental staircase, further emphasising the classical understanding of orientation in architecture. This central axis of the bank passes through a colonnade space, the doors being symmetrical to the left and right of the middle mid-axis. On the main axis there is no door. Nevertheless, the idea of the central axis is preserved and experienced by the visitor. After the colonnade space follows a representative lobby, which is reached through a windbreak. From this lobby along the axis you enter the cash hall, and there is a composite ladder in the centre, leading to the underground level in the vault of the bank – the essence of such a type of building.

BNB is actually the pinnacle of the architectural activity of the tandem Vasilyov – Tsolov. It is progressive and at the same time traditional for its time, it has classics combined with modernism and the so-called "folk" forms, part of our geographical area. These are seemingly not compatible, even if we mention it outside the context of the BNB, they would be eclectic in the bad sense of the word, but here they are definitely in a single symphony pleasing the human eye. Arch. Nedelcho Paskalev will add for the bank the following: "an architectural image, through several themes that complement each other, oppose and finally unite, to make the work sound as a winning anthem of justice and beauty."³⁰

3.7 Library of Sofia University

Architectural Bureau Vasilyov – Tsolov left two famous libraries, namely the Library of Sofia University and the National Library St. St. Cyril and Methodius. The works began in 1930 when a national competition was held to build the Library of Sofia University, which the tandem won. The building is located in the yard of Sofia University, and then the

made. This study and the clear scheme speak again about the two main sides of an artist – an architect, namely: theory and practice.

²⁹ The limestone color of the transition wings is slightly darker to correspond to the darker color of the mosque and make the transition in a better way. Otherwise, the "brighter whiteness" of the limestone from the bank would not be a suitable contrast to the mosque. The cladding was changed and due to the fact that the architecture of the two wings is not the pure architecture of the bank, nor is it an attempt to imitate the architecture of the mosque. The wings are the intermediate link and they are precisely the collaboration and synthesis of the dialogue between the ages.

³⁰ Some of the information is taken from the written memories of Eng. Krastyo Ilchev, which he composed in 1989. on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the construction of the BNB and was provided to the author by arch. Angel Savlakov.



wings have not yet been built, but there is an idea for them, the designers should comply with this future situation. The situation is complicated, the building should be attached to the regulated street passing on the east, the other three sides should establish dialogue with the garden. They choose a solution, for which in plan the building looks like part of a segmented arc, the entrance to the library is from the south / the narrow end of the segment arc /. There is no entrance to the regulated street. The height of the library is visibly lower than that of the university, and its architecture is clear in the style of the modern movements between the two world wars, but still communicates well to the university. The "central", southern façade, is a classical motif composed of three entrance doors, flanked to the left and right with a fake window each. On the second level there are 7 windows, above which rises a simplified frieze, ending with a cornice. The plaster of all facades is coarse and contrast is achieved with the finely executed details around the holes and cornice. The axis of symmetry is along the southern entrance, and the east and west facades are 'marginal' according to the classical understanding of composition. They follow a logical simple rhythmic order of 7 openings on both floors, where in the avant-corps, there is again a fake window crowned with an opening. On the southwest corner in place of the frieze there is a clock, a functional solution given that it overlooks the courtyard of the university library. It should be noted that the frieze exists only on the said "avant-corps" and in the north direction only the cornice continues, but at a lower elevation, in relation to the lower part of the frieze. The northern facade, behind which the repository is housed, has a total of 9 high windows pieces, which are at the height of the two front floors. Despite its compact volume, the building seems monumental and definitely classic, the main entry is emphasised by a powerful staircase, flanked on both sides with lion sculptures. Vasilyov himself gave the following instructions to prof. Lyuben Dimitrov, sculptor of lions: "I want to put two plastic things, they should be from the animal kingdom, for example, to resemble lions, but not to be realistic lions, but a little more simplified, a little more stylised" (Разказ за архитект Васильов, 1998). The building, in addition to the classical spirit, also bears folk and romantic motifs, such as the details of the rosettes in the frieze from the south, the curved convex and concave forms corresponding to the baroque curve of the university, and the baroque curves of the Bulgarian Revival, strongly felt on the doors. / At that time the three central entrances of Sofia University had doors with similar curves, one can look for a parallel in this attempt for contextualisation; after the addition of the wings of the Sofia University, arch. Lyuben Konstantinov lined the front facade of the Rectorate, changing the openings in order to unite the building into one ensemble with the new wings and to strengthen the monumental action of the composition/.

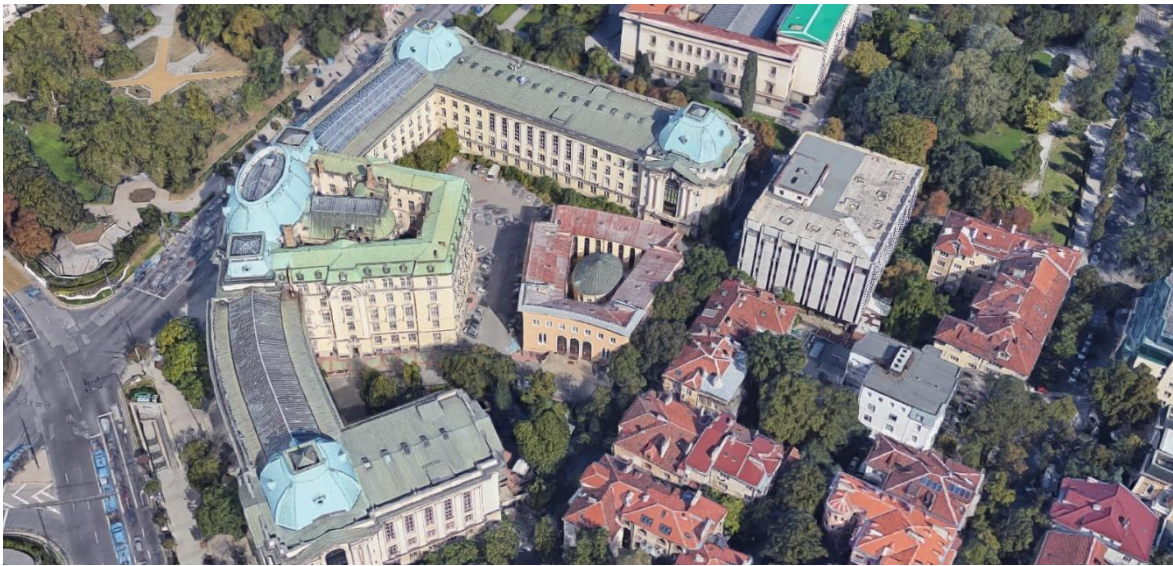


Figure 23 Site aerial view of the University Library. The complex urban planning situation can be observed, in which the building is located. 3D model by Google LLC, Source: <https://www.google.com/maps/@42.6918902,23.3361803,196a,35y,345.23h,45.65t/data=!3m1!1e3>

Figure 23 shows a 3D model of the University Library on which the entry in the middle of the building is clearly visible. At the time of the development of the project, the wings of the Sofia University did not exist, but the situation is consistent with a possible future expansion. Although different in style from the building of the Rectorate, a balance in the composition is sought. We also see the balance even in height and the transition from the impressive building of the Rectorate to the scale of the street building. The conflict between the direction of the street and the direction of the northeastern facade of the rectorate was also successfully resolved.

The two libraries have a different architectural expression and composition, although each of them is monumental in its own. While the courtyard library of Sofia University relies on a simple detail with ascetic materials without excessive elements, aiming at a somewhat "romantic style", reminiscent with its wooden finishes and elements in the interior of Western European university libraries, at the National Library we see a different approach. The latter, although monumental, is much stricter in its expression, making its meaning clear – that it is the central library of the new state.

3.8 National Library St. St. Cyril and Methodius

We see a similar theme for "clean", "modernised" or "renewed" classics in their last, significant work - the National Library St. St. Cyril and Methodius, the construction of which began in 1941 and ended after the war in 1951. The place it occupies is one of the key ones in Sofia, given the context in which it is located, forming one of the future representative spaces in front of it, which has become largely a symbol of the capital.



In 1938 a competition for the creation of a national library was held, first place given to the tandem of arch. Vasilyov and arch. Tsolov, but stage of presenting project plans was not reached. After a year, the two architects were informed that they would be assigned the construction under the condition that they agreed to include on the team other architects who would also work on the project. It is not surprising that they refused, considering the bad experience they had with the library of Sofia University. After a few years, when they lost hope and hardly thought that this project would be carried out, they were again notified to take it up. The plans had to be reviewed again, with discussions revolving mainly around the book depot, reading rooms and side rooms. It should be noted that at that time the project for the library was on three floors, located in the same volume!

During a visit of the Minister of Education at one of the additional studies, he recommended that savings be made, so the upper floor turned out to be completely unnecessary and the project had to be revised to its current form. As Vasilyov wrote "so unfortunately or fortunately, the library had to become two floors" (Васильов, 1974). This created great difficulties in maintaining the overall massing, but already with two floors, not three. It is necessary to rework the height of the floors, the articulation of the facades, as well as to create higher attic spaces. Of course, in the development of the new appearance, rigorous studies of the massing, monumentality and radiance of the new building have been carried out, for which Italian palaces with high room height were also researched.

During the war, construction was halted, and in one of the bombings several bombs in the middle of the library, destroying the interior. Only in 1951 the building was completed in its present form.

Urban and compositional solution:

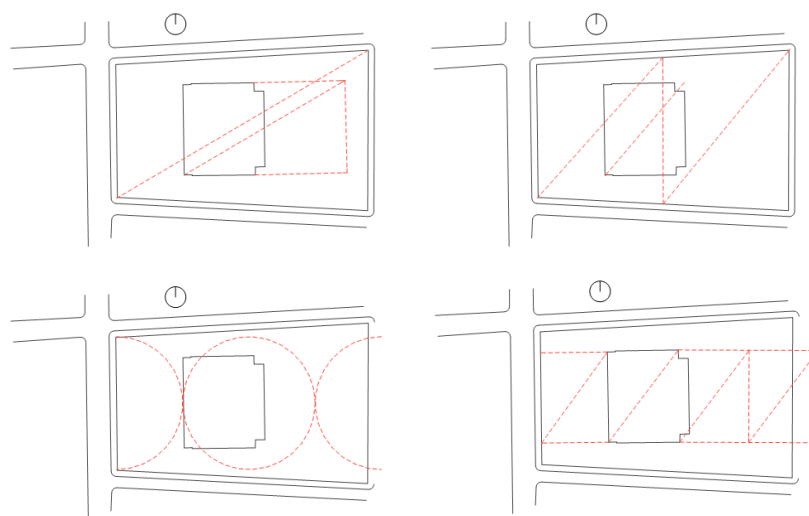


Figure 24 Site plan of the National Library St St Cyril and Methodius. Diagrams of possible proportional relations. Images by the author.



In urban terms, the library is positioned on a plot in the eastern part of old Sofia, a neighbourhood, then boasting of its elitism. However, in fact, during the years when it was built in this part of the capital, there lived representatives of the middle class. The building itself is free-standing in the surrounding green vegetation, which extends to the east in the Doctor's Garden. The modularity of classical architecture, the proportions and ratios of the building to the space around it and the detail are the main classical principles in their work.

The National Library is pulled forward in the plot to form a well-proportioned square, while at the same time not situated exactly in the middle of the plot, as it is clear that the building should be able to be expanded in the future, due to the growing needs of the library. As can be seen, it lies equally well in terms of proportions in both cases – at the time of construction and after the conceived possible extension. This is the idea of classical architecture – to embody eternity, while at the same time, it can undergo expansion and not interfere with the already existing architecture.

Symbolic meaning of the project:

The importance of the library as a paradigm left from Antiquity is that of a temple of knowledge, an idea derived through the twelve columns. The work instills in visitors precisely this deeply embedded in people's minds idea. The effect is further enhanced by the relatively large number of columns – 12 and by the giant order going through two floors. It is important to note that during the construction of the northern wing of Sofia University, arch. Lyuben Konstantinov, examines the relation of pilasters on the northern facade as a context of the relationship of the intercolumnar space of the library. This, combined with the slope of the site of Sofia University, is one of the probable reasons why the plinth of the university is graded in a granite massive part of the south and above it another plinth of striped rustic limestone, which acts as a plinth only seen from the National Library. The perception from that point of view is quite favorable when the gaze is directed to both buildings. The plinth of the library imperceptibly blends at the same height to the plinth of Sofia University, which enhances the harmonious feeling between the two buildings. The additionally placed monument in front of the Library building is exactly harmoniously proportioned, serving as a height and plinth part for the building of the library in the background. The northern front of this shaped square was later completed with a modernist-style building and a strip-shaped articulation of the facades, and although its volume and height to that of the library were different even in terms of relative scale, there was no sense of impaired rhythm. All these ratios create full harmony in this representative public space.

The development of a new order suggests that the two architects not only knew the rules of classical architecture, but also have far surpassed it. It is very difficult to proportionate a new architectural order and not leave the impression of ridiculous creative experiment,



but to take a worthy place in the development of architectural history. This is the root of tradition and innovation, making a valuable classic model, combined with innovation at the right measure. With this decision, they proved that it is possible to create an architecture that can detect the gene of the geographical area, as well as in their first attempt at the building of the church St. Nedelya. The library building has nothing to do with the decoration style, nor with the pure borrowing of a ready-made recipe for a classic architectural form; it is a skillful modernised classic. Vasilyov published an article in 1974 in the *Architecture* magazine, in which he extensively recounted the creation of the Library, mentioning that he and Tsolov had studied quite a few Italian palaces for carrying out proportioning and creating the order. This speaks of another aspect of their work, namely, the scientific research that every designer should do in order to give their work a proper place. This is one of the buildings in their work, which are proof that Tsolov's details, developed in a typically Southern manner, quite well fit into the otherwise monumental classical form, in which the whole building seems to have a richer, but at the same time restrained plastic. Such bold examples of plasticity we will not find in any case of the German classics of Speer and Trost. But such a rich plasticity, which Tsolov applied to the reconstruction of the War Ministry, is precisely the heritage in our lands. Such plasticity should not be confused with another extreme of the southeastern oriental ornaments, as well as of the Proto-Bulgarian ones, it is rather as we have already mentioned "typically Southern" and "lies" well in the spatial cultural area of the Balkan Peninsula.

Summary and conclusions:

The Vasilyov-Tsolov tandem definitely left a significant trace in Bulgarian architectural culture. From the study we see the similarities and at the same time the differences of the two artists who devoted their lives to the construction and attaching importance to key buildings for the development of architecture of that period. The comparison of the obtained information leads us to two main conclusions – the first that Vasilyov – Tsolov left an impressive number of buildings (as mentioned approximately 400 according to I. Dandolova), which confirms the hypothesis of an ongoing practice with a large number of connections and realisations during those years. The second, probably more valuable conclusion, is that the two architects, judging by the reports from the competitions, invested most of their professional efforts on buildings with a certain semiotic focus. Making public buildings that carry the spirit of the time and combine tradition and innovation, creating meaning and culture. For this reason, the works examined are generally recognised as peaks of their collaboration (public buildings - symbols), which are the main landmarks for urban spaces.

For example, Renaissance theorists interpreted the Middle Ages in one way, from their temporal distance, we from the point of view of modern theory in the 21st century – from a completely different one. Architectural processes have their regularity and temporal



and spatial ties, related to the culture and range of peoples. Based on this idea, the present work tried to shed a little more light on a fascinating time period, saturated with many contradictions between tradition and innovation, between classical and modern, that laid the foundation of modern Bulgarian architecture. A period of intelligent solutions and scientific research, applied in practice, which is evident even by the few examples in this work.

The functional and spatial schemes of the above examples share the same typical classical typology, with a central, clearly expressed axis opposed by transverse or parallel, subordinate secondary axes, which is sometimes communicatively expressed. In all the analyses of the functional schemes, we will identify the following elements:

A central, clearly expressed functional axis, left over from antiquity, as the main idea of the composition. Perhaps the most significant theme during the historical development of civilisations, marking the path walked by the recipient of the architectural work. In this work, the author defines the "axis scheme" as an essential element of architectural works, taking into account even the composition of architectural spaces along the way and the ratio of the starting point and end point (goal). At the top of scheme 25 is presented a classical scheme of movement, which is generally found in buildings from different historical periods of the European cultural environment and its peripheral parts. Below is the baroque movement scheme, in which from the starting point the visitor passes through separate streamlined spaces, climbing through a baroque staircase leading to the main goal, above the starting point of entry, but on another semiotic level;



Figure 25 Diagram of the functional axis of the main flow in buildings of the classical and baroque scheme of movement.



If the examples examined show the classical direction of the two artists and their intended "moderate" classics in the spirit of modern movements for the period, this inevitably marked an attitude in the axial functional scheme. Figure 26 presents the two main axial movement schemes of their works at the peak of their career – the National Library and the BNB. It is clear from this scheme that the National Library retains to a large extent the first rule of the classical functional scheme, the amendment, by the introduction of an additional hall, after the antechamber is not a fundamental change of this typological axis. However, it is also important to note the division of people flow in two, outside the middle axis in the colonnade, which is already a change on the classical scheme. This separation directs the flow to the goal, united in the hall (marked green on the scheme and representing a distribution hall to the main units). The division of this path even psychologically affects the perception of inner space from symmetry in the classics to asymmetry, an original solution influenced by the era and applied along or in reverse to the rigid rules of classics.

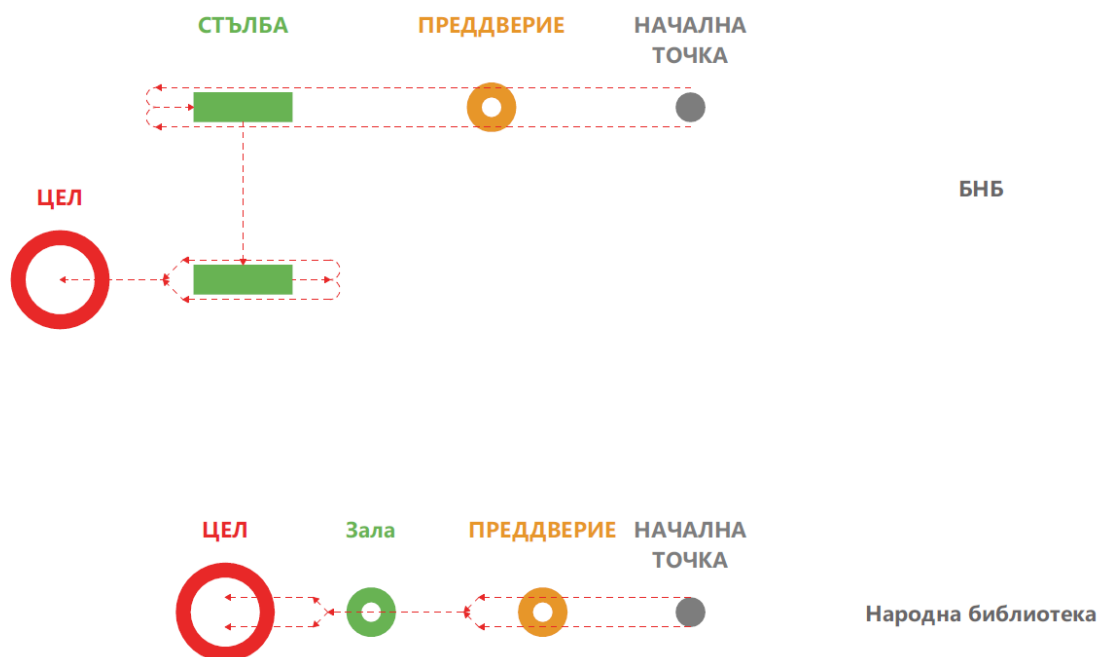


Figure 26 Diagram of the functional axis of the main flow in the Bulgarian National Bank and the National Library. .

It is even more interesting to consider the the BNB scheme from the above scheme in Figure 26. It not only respects the rules that are noticeable in the National Library, but although built before it here the functional axis actually takes a step forward in the innovation of the main flow. From the very beginning in the two adjacent inter-axial spaces of the colonnade space passes through doors, as well as in the National Library, and here the middle door is fake, it only preserves the classical appearance outside. Here



the main "target" of a visit and the most important part of the functioning of the banking organism is precisely the vault. Along the axis of movement we will trace its path from dividing the passenger flow in two to its collection in the only possible entrance to the vault – through the ladder in the central space. The central staircase, however, is facing not the entrance space but quite the opposite to the other direction of the hall, so the already divided passenger flow must bypass the railings and reverse the movement on it, as evidenced by the scheme. After reaching the underground level, the axis of movement is again rotated and divided into two streams to unite again in front of the actual entrance of the vault. This reversal of space ideologically and semiotically is definitely an innovation and an original solution. Such an axis of motion does not fall into any definition, nor is it any modification of the classical axial scheme, or the Baroque one. Certainly, the authors realised that the heart of a central bank is its vault, here built as a construction within the construction with a single entrance, functional and ideological. The discreet rotation of movement, details in the interior, the perception of the central interior space as symmetrical with shifted focus (due to the division of the chassis from the starting point into two) is an interesting innovative solution for classic buildings. A similar move, but with the colonnade will later develop arch. Georgi Ovcharov during the design of the municipality of Burgas, where in the middle instead of an interaxial space we see a column with entrances on both sides of it. The deliberate violation of the order and the classical rules is much more visible in this case, while Vasilyov and Tsolov remain completely classical in this respect, as for them is important to preserve the logical end of classical architecture, complete continuity with tradition and taking the step forward – innovation. It is this balance that makes their architecture lasting by reinforcing their views and embodying in the recipient timeless values.

Colonnade and pedestal space, which prepares the visitor from the level of city planning for the transition to the interior of the building, this inbetween space, where one is neither separate from the building, nor within it - a topic that has excited mankind since Antiquity. This idea of such transience is deeply rooted in the collective unconscious of humanity and has become a universal language of classical architecture. In most of their buildings, this transition was made through a colonnade.

An anteroom playing the role of a distribution lobby, from which the internal communication of the spatial scheme unfolds.

Staircases for vertical communication always across the main axis, with another one passing through the antechamber.

The main room that gathers visitors and is the centre of the idea - at St. Nedelya this is the space under the dome; in the community centre buildings – the hall that gathers visitors; in the two libraries - the space that is the core of the function together with the lending one and distributes visitors to the reading rooms; at the BNB this is the monetary salon as an expression of the collection of the multitude.



The goal, or a place that is not for visitors, but is a symbolic element, the most important from the point of view of semiotics, namely the essence of the building. Access to the whole has only the "patrons", but not the general public. In St. Nedelya it is the altar, in the community centres – the stage and the accompanying functions; in the libraries this is the book depository; and in the BNB namely the vault, albeit on a different level (functional and symbolic).

The study examined the buildings through the lens of cultural connections and context. The objectives set at the beginning of the study have been fulfilled. The PhD does not claim to be exhaustive, on the contrary, it was conceived as a general study marking separate cultural lines, contextually and temporally, covering the period, as evidenced by its subtitle.

Appendix 41 and 42 contain the drawn the functional diagrams of the works under consideration in scale 1:500 giving an idea of the comparative scale of each work, as they are juxtaposed together on the same scale. The schemes of the plans are made in order to indicate the different functional units derived above, as well as to analyse the main axis of movement in those buildings. We see that in all projects the design approach is similar - the most clear and functional scheme is sought. To a large extent, in the works of the atelier there is still the classical understanding of the so-called "back" façade, although this conception the author accepts as purely conditional, due to the study of the contact of the facade plains with public spaces and the prominent attitude, influenced by Vasilyov's medieval fascination, of the reaction of each facade with the context of its environment. In the case of BNB as already mentioned, we observe that this has been taken further to the point of perfection of the treatment of the inside-outside, due to the sought balance between the existing mosque and the bank. Here, in fact, a perfect organism has been achieved between functionality, and as we have learned from the analysis of the bank, and on a semiotic level, the radiance of the building, the context of the surroundings and last but not least the attitude of the culture of the period to heritage, tradition and innovation.

The architecture of Vasilyov and Tsolov is by no means modernism in its purest sense, they do not even fall into the category of moderate modernists; their architecture retains the clean traditional line, turned into the so-called "modern classics" or "renewed classics". Of course, the analysis ³¹ covered valuable examples and peaks in their work of public architecture, of which a detailed analysis was made. The author has deliberately not discussed the tandem's works of their residential architecture, although they are not few in number and possess valuable qualities. Those would allow future researchers to delve into the topic of modernism and the question of the extent to which architects allow it in it, to what extent the spaces and functional scheme correspond to the influences of this period, to what extent the tradition is woven into this scheme, even

³¹ In conclusion, the author accepts both expressions as commensurate.



Vasilyov's very home with an official, representative and secondary yard corresponds to the traditional idea of the Bulgarian Revival court; and to what extent the details in it carry the spirit of tradition and refer to his beloved Middle Ages.

These guidelines the author leaves as a basis for future researchers, who should find more and more residential buildings of the tandem and make the estimates of them. In this work, only public buildings are affected, which have become to a certain extent emblems of the classical architecture of that period. As we have seen, they are of interest, because, in addition to their utilitarian qualities, they reflect certain ideas from the culture, spirit, and thinking of the period in which they were created.

Afterword

Interesting is the method by which architecture is formed in the head of the architect and how the creator from his intimacy transfers it into matter. For this reason, each architect has his own searches, which consciously or unconsciously he has been chasing throughout his life since childhood.

If Western Europe has its majestic classical palaces and public buildings accumulated over the years, the Vasilyov-Tsolov tandem is one of those that left buildings worthy of modern movements during the period of their active work and formed Bulgarian "classics" in public buildings. In them we find that classical spirit that places us in the area of European architecture, but at the same time translated into a suitable language corresponding to the geographical area, without "copies" or "borrowings" in line with the new modernity.

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2. Анатолиев, Митко. 2020 „Някой обществени сгради на архитектурно бюро „Васильов - Цолов“, списание **Следва**, ISSN/ISBN 1311/9060, май/юни бр.41 2020: 104-110
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