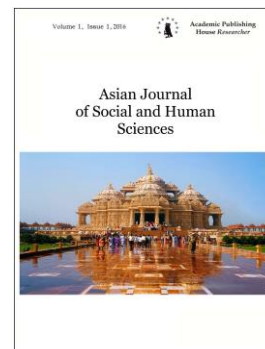


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Articles and Statements

Bulgarian Cultural Policy in India and Bulgarian-Indian Cultural Relations in the 70s and 80s of the 20th Century

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Abstract

This article examines the bilateral relations between India and Bulgaria in the field of culture - relations that have had an upswing after the mid-70s of the 20th century. Special attention is given to Bulgaria's efforts to strengthen its relations with India using the means of cultural policy; the role of the daughter of Bulgaria's head of state Todor Zhivkov, Lyudmila Zhivkova, for extending the cultural contacts between the two countries is noted. The main actions and forms used for the carrying out of the Bulgarian cultural policy in India are analyzed.

Keywords: Bulgarian Cultural Policy, India, cultural relations, 20th Century, Indira Gandhi, Todor Zhivkov, Lyudmila Zhivkova, Sheila Kaul, Arun Nehru, Amrita Pritam.

1. Introduction

Diplomatic relations between the People's Republic of Bulgaria and the Republic of India were first established in 1954. They were based on the principles of peaceful coexistence.

The visits of the heads of state of the two countries – of Indira Gandhi in 1967 and of Todor Zhivkov¹ in 1969, marked the intensification of the bilateral contacts at official level.

This article examines bilateral relations between India and Bulgaria in the field of culture - relations that have had an upswing after the mid-70s of the 20th century.

Special attention is given to Bulgaria's efforts to strengthen its relations with India using the means of cultural policy; the role of the daughter of Bulgaria's head of state Todor Zhivkov, Lyudmila Zhivkova for extending the cultural contacts between the two countries is noted. The main actions and forms used for the carrying out of the Bulgarian cultural policy in India are analyzed.

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¹ Todor Hristov Zhivkov (1911-1998) – Bulgarian politician of the Bulgarian Communist Party (BCP). For 35 years (within the period from 1954 through 1989), he has been at the head of the ruling Bulgarian Communist Party, occupying central leading positions, Chairman of the Council of Ministers (1962–1971) and Chairman of the State Council of the People's Republic of Bulgaria (8 July 1971–17 November 1989). In 1954, he was elected First Secretary of the Central Committee of the BCP. Later (1981) his position of First Secretary was renamed to General Secretary. He was Prime Minister of Bulgaria (1962–1966) and (1966–1971). From the passing of the Constitution in 1971 until the end of 1989, he has been the Chairman of the State Council.

2. Materials and methods

The material that was used, was from Bulgarian archives – from the archive of the Bulgarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (AMFA) and from the Central State Archive (CDA).

The study used the basic methods of cognition: the problem-chronological and the historical, which allow the aggregation of both the tasks and results of one concrete activity to be analyzed in regards to the bilateral relationships of a certain period.

3. Discussion and Results

In the 1970s, two parallel trends occurring in the Bulgarian cultural life found expression in the cultural policy of the Bulgarian Government:

a new turn to its own past, to the national cultural achievements and a new opening to the universal human values, among which a considerable importance is attributed to Indian culture, showing their impact both in the preparation for the celebration of the 1300th anniversary of the creation of the Bulgarian state, and in the aim for using other countries' experience in the strategic plans for development of the Bulgarian culture.

This activity is concentrated in a number of large programs and sub-programs that were implemented after Lyudmila Zhivkova's appointment as Chair of the Committee on Culture (CC)¹: the program for all-round harmonious development of the personality, the program for aesthetic education and the *Banner of Peace* International Children's Assembly, celebration of the 1300th anniversary of the foundation of the Bulgarian state, etc., which are linked to all kinds of initiatives and events, including international conferences, children's creativity projects, large-scale events, dedicated to famous people from the history, such as Leonardo da Vinci and Nicholas Roerich (this list was planned to include Rabindranath Tagore, etc.).

The underlying principle, writes the Bulgarian researcher Eugenia Kalinova, is the idea of Lyudmila Zhivkova “for **self-improvement of the personality**, which can be done through exploring ancient cultures and the world's biggest achievements. Continued efforts in this direction will lead to the **improvement of society...**” (Kalinova, 2013: 47-48).

The implementation of these activities within the cultural sphere gave a huge boost to the cultural exchange between India and Bulgaria.

Lyudmila Zhivkova's fascination with and admiration of the Indian culture and her ideas of cultural development make their mark on the comprehensive nature of the bilateral cultural ties that go beyond a friendly partnership in international relations.

She maintained contacts with representatives of the Indian culture and society from various backgrounds.

Lyudmila Zhivkova personally monitored the implementation of the cultural plans for bilateral cooperation, involving Indian researches and specialists on culture and art problems, as well as representatives of Indian intellectual circles in her programs, which earned her great popularity in India.

Her visit to the country in 1976 was very successful and became the basis for the active development of the Bulgarian-Indian cultural exchanges over the next 15 years.

An example of the attention that she got in India were both the hospitality, rendered to her by the heads of state and the public organizations during her visits, and the keen interest in her proposals, aimed at enriching the bilateral cultural cooperation.

The documents mention that the Prime Minister of India Indira Gandhi personally monitored the preparations for her visit in 1981, and that a secondary adviser with the rank of deputy minister at the Ministry of Education, Social Welfare and Culture (AMFA, op. 38, a.e. 1219, l. 2-3) was assigned as her official escort. In 1982 various events related to the celebration of her 40th anniversary were organized, reported in the Indian press, on radio and on television.

The Indian side took part in the meetings to establish the Lyudmila Zhivkova Foundation, and the parliamentarian Arun Nehru was included in the International Committee of the Foundation (AMFA, op. 40, a.e. 1643, l. 6).

Indicative for the evaluation of the unconventional views of Lyudmila Zhivkova was her admission as a member of the International Advisory Council of the experimental city of Auroville,

¹ In 1963, the Committee on Culture and Arts was created with the rank of a Ministry, which in 1966 was renamed to Committee on Arts and Culture, and in 1977 – to Committee on Culture.

(backed by UNESCO), constituted in the 80s, other members of which were the Minister of External Affairs of India Narasimha Rao, the Director-General of UNESCO Amadou Mahtar M'Bow and the famous Indian industrialist J. R. Tata. She made a number of proposals for the development of the city, including the creation of toys and sports equipment industries, construction of a Pavilion of the Bulgarian culture, etc. (AMFA, op. 40, a.e. 1623, l. 20)

One of the ideas of Lyudmila Zhivkova in India that was well received was the *Banner of Peace* movement, aimed at encouraging children's creativity, which was taken up and developed by the *Bal Bhavan* children's organization.

India is one of the countries that has a very active contribution to children's assemblies.

Those involved children delegations and official guests, including the president of the International Foundation for children's drawings Shankar; about 200 works of children were sent.

Under this program, a lot of events in India were held – a number of activities with organizations of children's art in different schools, press releases, meetings and film screenings.

In 1981 the country was visited by a delegation from the Palace of Pioneers¹ (AMFA, op. 40, a.e. 1586, l. 4). The *Bal Bhavan* centre for children's creativity, organized a national assembly for children from all over India, celebrations with concerts and exhibitions of children's drawings, visits to art studios, painting alleys in parks and so on (AMFA, op. 38, a.e. 1169, l. 4-5; AMFA 20, op. 45-16, a.e. 301, l. 20).

Both during her lifetime and today, Lyudmila Zhivkova remains one of the most controversial personalities not only in the Bulgarian society, but also abroad.

As the daughter of the President of the State Council Todor Zhivkov, she held several positions in the Bulgarian Communist Party and the state, but her ideas were visionary and did not respect the ideological norms, imposed by the Communist leadership.

Some members of the Nomenklatura, as well as representatives of various social circles in Bulgaria, were criticizing her ideas and the means to achieve them.

And in the immediate surroundings of Todor Zhivkov, and in Soviet circles of senior officials - according to Russian researcher of India, Lyudmila Vasilievna Shapochnikova - Lyudmila Zhivkova was even perceived as "strange", "not quite normal", "committed to fictions and fantasies" (Shaposhnikova, 2002: 242). Meanwhile, in Bulgaria "the opposite view was expressed more formally and at that by people who, for one reason or another, are obliged to do so or have an interest in it" (Baeva, 2013: 168). On the other hand, outside the country - according to German researcher Stefan Troebst - opinions regarding her personality were not straightforward. He gives the example of a broadcast of radio *Free Europe*², in which "on one hand, the author has noticed that Lyudmila Zhivkova has developed her own innovative ideas in the field of aesthetic education and that she has done a lot for the presentation of the Bulgarian culture abroad, and that she has been supporting the liberal historians, writers, playwrights and other intellectuals. On the other hand, he criticized the syncretism of her spiritual orbit" (Troebst, 2013: 105).

After the political changes in Bulgaria, the attitude towards Lyudmila Zhivkova remained just as controversial:

She had followers, but at the same time she was criticized, mainly because of her affiliation with the ruling elite and within the mainstream of criticism against the entire political system from the past.

Equally controversial is the attitude towards the role of Lyudmila Zhivkova in Bulgarian society by the Bulgarian researchers of that period. Bulgarian historian Ivan Elenkov writes:

¹ Central Palace of Pioneers Georgi Dimitrov in Sofia. It existed under that name from 1951 until 1990, as a publicly funded comprehensive extracurricular, organizational and methodical, educative, activist and representative Institute of the Dimitrovist Pioneer Organization *Septemberists* (child/youth organization whose activities were led by the youth organization of the Communist Party).

² Radio *Free Europe* was created after the WWII and financed by the US government. It was founded in 1949, and it transmitted its first program in Bulgarian language in 1950 from New York. In 1951, the radio began broadcasting from Munich. Until 1989, the radio was muted by the Bulgarian authorities and those working in it were defined as "traitors to the motherland", "non-returnees", etc. The main task of the radio was active propaganda against the then pro-Soviet regimes.

“There are still particular speculations, which present Zhivkova as an exclusive intellectual rebel and both hero and victim, especially intensified by the rumours of her violent death attributed to the visionary long arm of the KGB.

I think that the cultural policy, pursued by Lyudmila Zhivkova in Bulgaria, eventually represents a feudal model in which a small group of "spongers" have all the power and money.

The results of the "innovations" have no productive value for raising neither the educational, nor the cultural level of the Bulgarian population.

A public reaction against Lyudmila Zhivkova started to rise – she was called "Princess"; her fascination with Eastern esotericism was a subject for ridicule.

Her work did not leave behind the tracks that she was dreaming of because of the inadequacy of her ideas and the authoritarianism of her political style.

I.e., the "era of Lyudmila Zhivkova" didn't bring the dreamt liberation from the enslavement, let alone break down the main ideology and cultural model but it was rather an offshoot of the system through which Zhivkova worked her way up to the political elite and dictated the cultural policy of the state” (Elenkov: 14).

However, other researchers, as Evgenia Kalinova, without ignoring the negative moments in the policy of Lyudmila Zhivkova, focused on her importance for the "cultural opening" of Bulgaria to the world that "has nothing to do with the ideological or pragmatic reasons” (Kalinova, 2013: 48). In the cited article of Iskra Baeva (Baeva, 2013: 170-173), the author refers both to positive and negative assessments by Western historians of the work and personality of Lyudmila Zhivkova, which in itself appears to confirm the place, which was attributed to her in the period under consideration. I cannot disagree with her conclusion: "I think that the totally opposite assessments of her personality and her activities, expressed within the Bulgarian society, demonstrate that she really has her specific place in Bulgarian history.” (Baeva, 2013: 174)

As far as the primary task of the Bulgarian cultural policy in India was associated with cultural and propaganda activity of Bulgaria in the country, the most significant event during the period was the opening of the Bulgarian Cultural and Information Centre (BCIC) in Delhi in 1977. This was on the eve of the 3rd Congress of the Culture.

The main task of the centre was to promote Bulgarian culture and history in India, and was a step towards expanding the Bulgarian presence in the country.

The idea was established back in the 60s, but then the Bulgarian Embassy in Delhi took measures to strengthen the Indian-Bulgarian friendship societies in India, suggesting that these should be stationed in all state capitals and major centres; that a single organizational structure should be attempted; that the possibility of payment of the Secretary should be discussed; that the resources should be allocated to provide them with the necessary material and technical conditions and support; that small delegations should be invited to visit Bulgaria; that regular attendance of the Ambassador and staff of the embassy should be ensured; that there should be a constant correspondence with their management.

For the then not very big ambitions of the Bulgarian leaders about the development of contacts with India, the activity of these societies was satisfactory and it was considered better to rely on them rather than to open a cultural centre that would not justify the cost (AMFA, op. 21, a.e. 1200, l. 12-13).

The decision about the opening of the cultural centre was also met with resistance from the Foreign Ministry in the 70s.

The Ministry justified its resistance both by referring to the high costs necessary to support the centre and the not very positive position of the Indian government to such propaganda institutions of other countries, and pointed out several examples of closed Soviet and American cultural centres (AMFA, op. 32, a.e. 1411, l. 10-11). However, the opinion of the Committee on Culture and that of Lyudmila Zhivkova prevailed, especially as the Indian side did not require compliance with the reciprocal start.

The centre had no independent status because the cultural centres of other countries were controlled and limited by the Indian Government.

It was subjected to a double subordination – to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and to the Committee on Culture and was headed by a director who had a diplomatic rank of "adviser".

(Directors of the Centre, in chronological order, were Morphy Skarlatov (1977-1981), Eugenia Kamova (1981-1985), Stefan Cholakov (1986-1990) and Atanas Atanasov (1990-1992)).

Unlike the cultural centres of other socialist countries, which were mainly engaged in the organization of the friendship societies' activities, the Director of BCIC assumed also the control of the implementation of the international biennial cultural plans for exchanges between India and Bulgaria (AMFA, op. 34, a.e. 1218, l. 10-11).

Numerous initiatives have been undertaken in India by the BCIC.

The most important of those was the further development of the *Bulgaristics*.

This task was implemented in different ways:

Through the support of the Department of Modern European Languages at Delhi University and by creating a separate Bulgarian language course at the Centre, where the program was more extensive than that of the Department; through the translation and distribution of Bulgarian literature; by including students in events, dedicated to the Bulgarian writers and important anniversaries of the Bulgarian culture and history; by providing scholarships¹ for studying and specialization in this field; by opening Bulgarian language courses, held by the societies for Indian-Bulgarian Friendship (it was planned to overcome the financial difficulties that did not allow to appoint Bulgarian teachers by using Indian nationals with appropriate training), etc. A large Indian delegation participated in the Second Bulgaristics Congress in 1986 (AMFA, f. 6, op. 44-5, a.e. 152, l. 8).

A Bulgarian research centre was founded, which issued its own journal, with its own official print agency, which was unique, apart from similar organizations in Slavic countries and in some countries with small Bulgarian population (AMFA, op. 45-16, a.e. 298, l. 2).

The aspiration to enrich the forms of cultural cooperation led to the creation of clubs of interests: Bulgarian-Indian literary club, *Music* studio for the promotion of Bulgarian music, video club etc., and they organized themed receptions, dinners and more.

Thus, engaging both Bulgarians and club members and representatives of the Bulgarian-Indian societies in the activities of the Centre, BCIC prepared comprehensive programs for major celebrations of important dates, including not only literary/musical events and exhibitions but also organizing symposia and conferences with the participation of Bulgarian and Indian scholars and public figures.

Numerous and varied activities marked the most significant Bulgarian celebration for that period – the 1300th anniversary of the Bulgarian state. On this occasion, a National Committee was formed, which, within the scope of voluntary activities², brought together many prominent political and public figures of India.

The cultural centre played a large role in explaining and promoting of the long-term programs of Bulgarian cultural policy, as well as in attracting representatives of Indian culture and science in them, carried out under the direct leadership of Lyudmila Zhivkova.

The events dedicated to Nicholas Roerich as part of the program for all-round harmonious development of personality were carried out with the active assistance of the Indian side (for the Roerich exhibition alone, 470 paintings were exhibited which would be impossible without this aid (AMFA, op. 34, a.e. 1218, l. 25-26)). In 1979 Delhi organized a seminar in connection with the long-term program of aesthetic education (AMFA, op. 36, a.e. 1276, l. 88).

One of the important tasks of the Bulgarian Embassy in Delhi and BCIC was the deployment of cultural propaganda and information activities (AMFA, op. 34, a.e. 1218, l. 18), which consisted in spreading the Bulgarian propaganda literature, the issue of the *News from Bulgaria* magazine, placing of materials about the achievements of socialism in the press, as well as establishing a cultural and information centre at BCIC.

¹ Scholarships for study in Bulgarian literature and history through the friendship societies, however, were used by many students just to ensure their studies – once arrived in Bulgaria they used to change their specialty. On this issue, the Ministry of Education warned PRB Embassy in Delhi to give no such promises to the youth. – AMFA, op. 36, a.e. 1297, l.52..

² The aim of the Bulgarian side was to include the celebration in the plan for cultural and scientific exchange, i.e. to bring it at official level, however the Indian Foreign Ministry sent a note stating that such a practice is not accepted in India and that the government and political leaders can be attracted only as individuals. – AMFA, op. 36, a.e. 1234, l. 4.

The materials were targeted at individuals interested in Bulgaria, at libraries, mostly at societies for Indian-Bulgarian friendship.

Until the mid-70s, the cultural cooperation was still limited in terms of quantity and also as far as the more significant events were concerned.

Relationships with prestigious cultural institutions in India were relatively limited, there was a lack of consistency in the presentation of Indian cultural achievements in Bulgaria.

In 1977 the state of bilateral cultural relations was subject to serious criticism from part of the management of the Committee on Arts and Culture. Although included in a regulated plan for cultural exchanges, the exchanges of experts between the two countries were not carried out intentionally and systematically, as the documents on this issue report.

As a result of this, there was still no centralized cultural information about India and the opportunities to develop contacts with it.

"This shows that during those years, there was no organized interest in it, that the planned exchanges were made in response to individual departmental interests and with few exceptions, almost without the participation of prominent personalities of our creative and Indian cultural life." (CDA, f. 405, op. 9, a.e. 618, l. 181-182)

The document further states that there has been no effort to enrich our museums with works of ancient Indian art¹. Situation regarding the specialists in Indian literature was even worse.

As for books about India, the Bulgarian citizen is familiar with only the side, presented in individual works of Bulgarian writers and journalists, who remained in India for not a very long time, and some literary translations that do not give a complete picture of the country.

More serious information could be drawn from Soviet scientific works on philosophy, art or literature of India, but the Bulgarian reader didn't have the opportunity to find them, unless by accident.

In India, there was a very small number of published books about Bulgaria. The same was valid about the Indian citizens who were trained and familiar with the Bulgarian culture, and who could promote our country (CDA, f. 405, op. 9, a.e. 618, l. 182).

The first successes in the cultural relations between India and Bulgaria lead to the adoption by the Bulgarian side in 1981 of a comprehensive long-term program for developing cultural cooperation until 1995. The plans for cultural cooperation with India were ambitious and included a wide range of activities, aimed at carrying out large-scale cultural events in both countries.

Along with the development of other forms of mutual cultural exchange, there was a noticeable joint participation of both sides in the initiatives of the international organizations concerning the cultural life of third parties, which, according to its authors, would contribute to the promotion of Bulgarian ideas for cultural development:

"The basis for good cooperation with India – notes section 11 of the program – is also its active participation and positions won in several committees and departments of the UN, UNESCO and major international NGOs, where our and Indian representatives could seek together an international support for the ideas set out in our joint projects to improve the human personality of our time through harmonious development, aesthetic education, high humanitarian ideals" (CDA, f. 10, op. 496, l. 12).

The socialist ideology, though not entirely neglected (in the text of the program it is displayed as "Implementation of the achievements of the Bulgarian socialist culture in the spiritual life of India"), was present, but not strongly emphasized.

Justifying the need for propaganda of the successes of the socialist culture in fields such as educational work, care for cultural monuments, organization of science, education and culture, the authors of the program at the same time expressed the opinion that Bulgarian culture should be represented in India with all its cultural heritage from antiquity to the socialist period (CDA, f. 10, op. 496, l. 18).

¹ During the visit of T. Zhivkov negotiations were held on a the cultural plan for 1977-1978, however the Bulgarian proposal to exchange cultural values (historical, archaeological, museum exhibits) was categorically rejected by the Indian side, justifying their refusal by the existing law prohibiting such an exchange.– AMFA, op. 33, a.e. 1260, l. 71.

The ambitions of the drafters of the program were to elevate the role of the People's Republic of Bulgaria "TO THE LEVEL OF A NECESSARY AND IN SOME AREAS EVEN INDISPENSABLE PARTNER OF THE REPUBLIC OF INDIA" (CDA, f. 10, op. 496, l. 18).

All the important anniversaries, including the 1300th anniversary of the Bulgarian state, were marked with reports in the Indian press (AMFA, op. 36, a.e. 1247, l. 2-5, 15).

Bilateral cooperation and, most of all, the visiting government delegations found a place in the Indian press (AMFA, op. 36, a.e. 1247, l. 7-8). Information was published about many of the Bulgarian cultural events, such as the events of the *Banner of Peace*, about the visits of Bulgarian Folk Ensembles, and so on.¹ The Embassy regarded as a weakness the shortage of materials related to the foreign policy and the socioeconomic policy of Bulgaria (AMFA, op. 45-16, a.e. 316a, l. 5-6). There was a significant increase in the number of publications about India in the Bulgarian press.

During the cultural exchange, typical for international cultural relations activities were used. Celebration of anniversaries and holidays with photo exhibitions continued. The exchange of art exhibitions and dance ensembles (mostly folk ensembles) had worked well until then. During Lyudmila Zhivkova's visit to India, an exhibition of the honoured artist Alexander Petrov was shown, as well as *Colours and Rhythms* photography exhibitions reproducing Bulgarian traditions in the field of customs, culture and folklore (AMFA, op. 33, a.e. 1260, l. 74).

During the reviewed period, and particularly in connection with the 1300th anniversary of the Bulgarian state, there were a number of official delegations – from the Indian side, Bulgaria was visited by the Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, the Minister of State for Culture, Education and Social Welfare Sheila Kaul, Deputy Minister of Information Kumud Joshi, and others. From the Bulgarian side, India was visited by Lyudmila Zhivkova, Georgi Yordanov (Chairman of the Committee on Culture 1982-1986) and other executives (AMFA, op. 39, a.e. 1343, l. 1).

The number of visits of public and cultural figures from both sides to the other country significantly increased.

There was an increased participation of Bulgarian artists and groups in local or international forums, festivals, etc., held in India.

In December 1977 a Bulgarian delegation led by Svetlin Rusev, chairman of the Union of Bulgarian Artists, visited India and participated in the celebrations and exhibition on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the All-Indian Fine Arts & Crafts Society.

As a result of the exchange of films and the participation of Bulgarian artists and filmmakers in international festivals in Delhi, the Bulgarian cinematic industry found a number of fans among Indian critics and moviegoers.

In 1981 Rangel Valchanov's movie, called *Patent Leather Shoes of the Unknown Soldier*, was awarded the *Golden Peacock* grand prize at the International Film Festival. Bulgarian artists participated in jazz festivals held in India. Bulgaria participated in the International Triennial of Painting in Delhi, where many countries were represented from all over the world.

Among the most significant events, one should mention the visit in 1980 of the honoured artist Dechko Uzunov in India, as well as the exhibition, entitled *Thracian Treasures in the Bulgarian Lands* (AMFA, op. 36, a.e. 1276, l. 87). In 1986 the *Contemporary Bulgarian Artists* exhibition (AMFA 43-16, op. 43 (21), a. e. 431, l. 3) was presented. In 1988 and 1989 the *Days of Indian Culture* (AMFA 6, op. 45-5, a.e. 200, l. 6) were held in Bulgaria, and the *Days of Bulgarian Culture* were held in India (AMFA 6, op. 45-5, a.e. 200, l. 9), which were undoubtedly the largest initiatives for the entire period of existence of the Bulgarian-Indian cultural relations.

The program of the *Days of Indian Culture* for example, included such major events as:

Presentation of five exhibitions (*Indian Miniature, Indian Book, Female Artists from India, Children's Creativity of India* and an exhibition of crafts); the *Week of Indian Cinema*; a press conference for the film week; Writers' Round Table in Plovdiv, dedicated to two topics regarding the Bulgarian-Indian literary connections (*Bulgarian/Indian Literary Relations, Panchatantra - Roots of a Common Culture*) and general topical matters of interest ("Nature and Environment") (AMFA 6, op. 45-5, a.e. 200, l. 6).

¹ In 1988, there was a 10-minute TV broadcast dedicated to the *Banner of Peace* movement. – AMFA, op. 45-16, a.e. 301, l. 20.

Considerably more in comparison to the previous period were the interactions of experts in the field of humanities – archaeologists, musicians, folklorists, historians, etc., who explored the experience of the other country in their field.

The Indian side showed interest in the Bulgarian cultural clubs' work (AMFA, op. 33, a.e. 1260, l. 72). Contacts were established between Bulgarian and Indian museums and galleries, between the *St. St. Cyril and Methodius* National Library and the Indian National Library, between the *St. Kliment Ohridski* Sofia University and the Delhi University, and other scientific and educational institutions.

Hindi and Sanskrit were taught optionally at Sofia University, Sanskrit was taught at the National School for Ancient Languages and Cultures. In Delhi University, a Slavic specialty was founded in the name of Lyudmila Zhivkova.

Also, a number of books were issued promoting the achievements of Bulgaria and the bilateral relations, including *Bulgaria – a True Friend of India* (AMFA, op. 42, a.e. 1953, l. 24) by G. Mishra in 2500 copies, dedicated to the 30th anniversary of the establishment of the diplomatic relations, *Bulgarian History* in the language Telugu in 10 thousand copies (AMFA, op. 36, a.e. 1234, l. 12) and a translation in Hindi of *Bulgaria: 13 Centuries of Existence*, issued by Sofia Press in 3000 copies (AMFA, op. 36, a.e. 1247, l. 15) and many others.

Some joint sports events were planned.

Bulgarian coaches departed for India to prepare Indian teams for international sports competitions.

In 1982 a Protocol was signed about education and scientific and technical cooperation.

In implementation of this protocol, in New Delhi a joint historical symposium was held on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of Georgi Dimitrov¹, organized by the Historical Research Institute. It was attended by 60 researches from various universities in India (AMFA, op. 40, a.e. 1643, l. 2).

There was a change in the attitude towards bilateral cultural cooperation from the Indian side, too.

Until the 70s the Indian official institutions had not shown much interest in cultural relations with Bulgaria.

A more significant activity in the 60s was seen mainly in connection to the celebration of the anniversaries of Rabindranath Tagore and Mahatma Gandhi.

At the very meeting of the Indian Ambassador on the occasion of the celebration of the 100th birth anniversary of Rabindranath Tagore with representatives of the Committee on Friendship and Cultural Relations Abroad in 1960, Bulgarian participants noted that their proposals for signing an Agreement on Cultural Cooperation with the Lalit Kala Academy still remains unanswered and asked for the assistance of the Embassy to address those issues (AMFA, op. 22, a.e. 1233, l. 19).

In the implementation of cultural plans, the Indian side strictly adhered to the principle of reciprocity (except the opening of BCIC).

It demonstrated far greater keenness in the field of exchange of films expressing its wish that Bulgaria should buy Indian films (AMFA, op. 21, a.e. 1213, l. 28-29). Many short films and popular films about India were sent and they were displayed in newsreels and broadcasted on Bulgarian television.

From the 70s onward, cultural contacts between India and Bulgaria were carried out at all levels – from the relevant ministries and state institutions to individuals. India participated in almost all of the international cultural events organized in the country: Sofia Music Weeks, International Folklore Festival in Burgas, the Triennial of realistic painting in Sofia, the festival of crafts in Oreshak, the Day of Humour and Satire in Gabrovo and so on (CDA, f. 405, op. 10, a.e. 498, l. 30).

Among the biggest joint events in which the Indian side took active part was the *Evening of Bulgaria* (a 55-minute show of Bulgaria, in which Bulgarian spokeswoman S. Ivanova hosted the

¹ Georgi Dimitrov Mikhailov (1882-1949) – a Bulgarian politician popular in India, head of Bulgarian Communist Party and Chairman of Comintern (1935-1943). He was Prime Minister of Bulgaria in the 65th and 66th governments (1946 – 1949).

program in Hindi) during the visit of Todor Zhivkov in India in 1976 on Indian television, and the next year – *Evening of India* on Bulgarian television (AMFA, op. 32, a.e. 1367, l. 5, et al).

Indian music bands and folk ensembles visited Bulgaria on many occasions.

For example, the Kathakali Dance Ensemble, that gave concerts in many Bulgarian towns, was greeted with great interest by the Bulgarian audience (AMFA, op. 32, a.e. 1335, l. 103).

In 1979 there was an exhibition called *Contemporary Indian Art* at the National Art Gallery in Sofia.

In 1981 an exhibition of paintings by Rabindranath Tagore was organized (AMFA, op. 38, a.e. 1223, l. 20).

At the invitation of the Committee on Art and Culture, Bulgaria was visited by Professor Suren Goyal – an Indian yogin who lectured members of the Bulgarian yoga schools and conducted a short course for specialists working in the field of physiotherapy and rehabilitation (AMFA, op. 32, a.e. 1335, l. 103). He was strongly recommended by the Indian side in response to the expressed personal interest of Todor Zhivkov in yoga.

Indian specialists assisted in the search for paintings and study of works of the Bulgarian artist Boris Georgiev, who in the 30s of the 20th century visited India and painted portraits of such prominent Indians such as Mahatma Gandhi, his wife Kasturba Gandhi, Rabindranath Tagore, etc. In the building of the Museum of Modern Art in Delhi, an exhibition of 15 paintings by the artist was shown during the visit of Lydmila Zhivkova in 1976 (AMFA, op. 33, a.e. 1260, l. 46).

Over the years, the Indian side has repeatedly made donations of books – to the National School of Ancient Languages and Cultures, the *St. Kliment Ohridski* Sofia University (1,450 books, presented by the Embassy of India in Sofia (AMFA 17, op. 44-16, a.e. 343, l. 1)), the Centre for Eastern Languages and Studies (300 books in Hindi and Sanskrit (Todorova-Marinova, 2010: 23)), etc. For the first time in 1978 Indian secondary and higher education textbooks included information about our country (AMFA, op. 34, a.e. 1218, l. 13).

Cooperation was initiated in the field of conservation and maintenance of cultural monuments. In the late 70s of 20th century Bulgarian experts visited India, where they got familiar with the activities and successes of the Indian side on that matter (AMFA, op. 34, a.e. 1218, l. 14). It should be noted that it was first in 1978 that the Indian side authorized a Bulgarian camera team to shoot a film about Indian culture (AMFA, op. 34, a.e. 1218, l. 15).

The expansion of the cultural cooperation led to increased contacts at all levels, including personal contacts between Indian and Bulgarian citizens.

Besides the numerous cultural delegations, there was an increasing number of visits outside the plan for cultural exchange of specialists from different fields, journalists and so on.

At the personal invitation of Lyudmila Zhivkova and as guests of the Committee on Culture, Bulgaria was visited by the Indian writer and poet Amrita Pritam¹, who had a serious contribution to the presentation and the translation of Bulgarian writers in India, representatives of the Bulgarian-Indian Friendship Society and other individuals.

There were about 70 Indian students (AMFA, f. 6, op. 44-5, a.e. 152, l. 9) studying in Bulgaria. There was an organized exchange of children and youth groups. In 1988 in India there was a Himalayan sports and scientific expedition (AMFA 6, op. 45-5, a.e. 199, l. 7) organized on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the founding of the University of Sofia.

In the 80s negotiations were started, after which a cooperation agreement was made in the field of tourism, which allowed for more immediate acquaintance with the sights of both countries.

In 1988 a cooperation agreement was also signed between the *Indira Gandhi* 79th School in Sofia and Lakshman School in Delhi (AMFA 18, op. 46-16, a.e. 265, l. 3).

¹ Amrita Pritam (1919-2005) – the most famous contemporary Indian writer and poet in Bulgaria. Born in Gujranwala, Punjab. In his youth, she has lived for many years in Lahore. She worked as an editor at the All-Indian radio and as a professor at the University of New Delhi. Her first book was published in 1936, and in 1956 she was awarded the Sahitya prize of the Indian Academy of Literature for her poetry book *Sunehade*. In 1980, she won the *Nikola Vaptsarov* international literary prize in recognition of her merits for the distribution of Bulgarian cultural achievements in India. Her creative contributions include numerous books of poetry, novels, volumes of short stories, two collections of folk songs, a book about Punjabi literature, and one with biographies. She visited Bulgaria and published books in Bulgarian.

Relationships were established not only with news agencies but also with many journalists, correspondents and commentators.

In 1981 negotiations were initiated for a contract between the news agencies: Bulgarian Telegraph Agency and the Press Trust of India (PTI) (AMFA, op. 38, a.e. 1192, l. 4). The Bulgarian press agency Sofia Press signed an agreement with the Indian news agency United Press of India (UPI) (AMFA 6, op. 45-5, a.e. 180, l. 17-19).

This is far from being a complete list, yet it reflects the increased activity of both parties in the field of cultural exchange.

4. Conclusion

From the standpoint of Bulgarian historiography, which now brings under reevaluation all events and phenomena related to the communist regime, the period is complex, especially when it comes to assessing the role of the Bulgarian rulers in international relations.

When examining the Bulgarian-Indian relations, since the mid-70s there has been a reliable trend to intensify bilateral contacts between Bulgaria and India, especially in the field of culture.

For the Bulgarian society, this was a positive development because it significantly increased the information about a distant country, the amount of translated literature, the number of Indian films, exhibitions, etc., in correspondence with the public interest.

Indian citizens also had the opportunity to get acquainted with the Bulgarian culture.

At the same time, a number of planned events remained unfulfilled, and after the death of Lyudmila Zhivkova, Bulgaria was gradually revising her cultural policy, including some initiatives that were planned with the Indian side.

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