

PREFACE

The topic of Bulgarians abroad is attracting more scholarly attention nowadays. The dynamics of our society leads to mobility, migrations to different destinations and due to various reasons, and the formation of new Bulgarian communities around the world, which form their own new ethno profiles in a foreign environment. The active development of this process offers grounds for a wide scope of different scholarly interpretations.

The “ONGAL” thematic volume – “*Bulgarians abroad – so near yet so far*”, allows for two approaches towards observing the ethno profile of our compatriots around the world: a scientific and academic one and an emotional and ethno psychological one.

During the last few decades the number of people living in Bulgarian communities abroad has unfortunately grown, and seems to have caught up with population numbers in Bulgaria itself. This dynamic growth of our communities is due to irreversible migration processes and leads to the creation of new corporations, associations, schools, kindergartens, folk music ensembles, media, radio stations and TV channels established by the Bulgarian communities. They develop their communities in their own way – so near, yet so far...

As stated above, in this volume of “ONGAL” there are two approaches – academic and scientific studies in the fields of anthropology, ethnology and linguistics on one hand, which show the character of different Bulgarian communities around the world and different problems related to them, and on the other hand are texts which openly tell their stories in a very peculiar for the “Bulgarians there” manner. Their messages are emotionally loaded to the extent of lofty naivety and reveal desire to share and find empathy. The Bulgarians in Banat (in Svetlana Karadzheva's text) as well as the Bulgarian communities in Izrael (Rina Bakalov), Spain (Deana Ivanova), Slovakia (Radostina Doganova), Switzerland (Mariela Tuntova) and Austria (Niva Vassileva-Zaneshev), having found their new motherland, write their history through the eyes of emigrants.

The study of topology of the Bulgarian presence by Ass. Prof. Dr. Vladimir Penchev offers an important and broad introduction to the topic of *Bulgarian communities abroad*. This study allows further understanding of the texts devoted to the Bulgarian communities in Chicago (presented in *An immigrant's suitcase: the museum without walls* by Dilyana Ivanova) or in Washington (in *The heritage and consolidation of migrant communities* by Lina Gergova and Yana Gergova), in Hamburg (about the uses of Bulgarian cultural heritage by Tanya Matanova) or the articles drawing attention to the peculiarities of the Bulgarian communities in Central Europe (in Hungary – by Adriana Petkova Papadopoulos and Kristina Menhart). Snezhana Yoveva-Dimitrova's text addresses the adaptation models of the Bulgarians in Slovakia and Austria and the specifics of integration policies regarding the Bulgarians as a minority in those two countries. Vessela Dabova focuses on communication in the Czech linguistic context, while the specifics and condition of the Bulgarian community in France is addressed in the text by a team from the embassy in Paris.

A curious point of view of Bulgaria offers the text by a non-Bulgarian – the Bulgarianist Katarina Sedlakova. Her essayistic perusal is full of accurate observations, emotional experiences, lyrical digressions and literary inventions all called *Bulgarian*, while her natural ease of expressions creates the feeling that her motherland Slovakia is not so far from Bulgaria – the place which left a lasting trace in her life.

The linguistic studies (by Ana Kocheva, Luchia Antonova, Kiril Parvanov and Slavka Keremidchieva) contribute to create a thorough ethno cultural image of the Bulgarians

abroad – the language is of capital importance and reveals the ethnic characteristics of a group of people. Issues of bilingualism, dialect words and specific unlocking ethno linguistic markers, or *sleep talking* in regions inhabited with Bulgarian communities abroad, all that correspond with the concept of *Bulgarians abroad – so near yet so far*.

At first sight the eclecticism of different views and approaches, methodologies and scientific models that were collected in this issue of "ONGAL" might look unbalanced, but when read in its entirety the main message is revealed: there is a need to share the destiny, existence, anxieties and all other emotional and scientific specifics of Bulgarians abroad. All texts communicate and share space in the *diaspora*, and what is *not so far but rather near* is the *Motherland*.

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