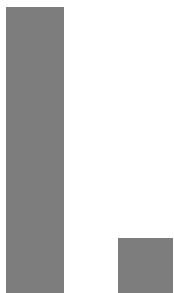


# :: BULGARIA...

:: Ivan Vazov's book "Under the Yoke" enjoys the status of Bulgaria's national novel... ::



## IVAN VAZOV - THE PATRIARCH OF THE BULGARIAN LITERATURE

The most famous fact about our town Sopot is that the greatest Bulgarian writer was born here.

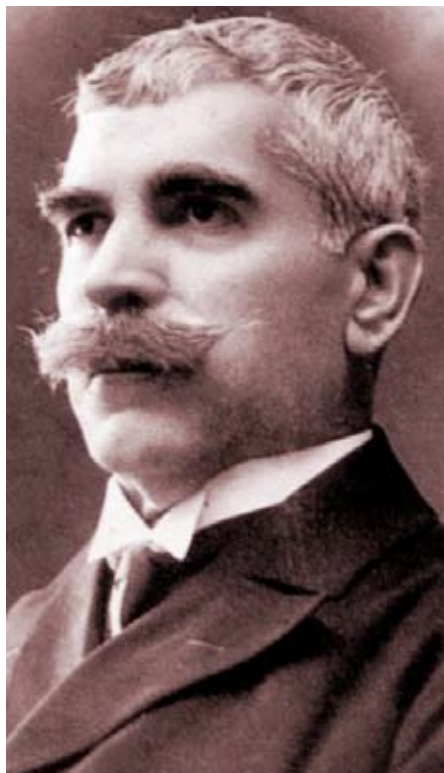
Each country has its national poets. They are people who were not only good at writing but also at exposing the depths of their fellow countrymen's souls. When celebrating their greatest moments, such as Liberation Day on March 3, Bulgarians remember the one and only person that used poetry and prose to tell the world of the Bulgarian soul, and the Bulgarian struggle to become a nation again - Ivan Vazov.

After the liberation of Bulgaria in 1878 and the restoration of its state independence, the new state began developing its culture in entirely new conditions. During the first decades of freedom, Bulgarian governments were anxious to help the country out of the Orient and its backwardness, which stimulated the multifarious influences of modern European culture. The "European shift" affected all cultural spheres - education, science, literature and art. In a number of cases the cultural accomplishments outstripped even the modernisation of the state itself or its economy.

Ivan Vazov was born in 1850 in the town of Sopot, situated in the beautiful Valley of the Roses, one of the most poetic sites the country has. Some people believe that it was one of the influences on the future great poet and novelist. The other was the struggle to overthrow Ottoman rule, which had for five centuries strangled the Bulgarian nation and limited its development.

Ivan Vazov also inherited a series of special virtues from his father, Mincho Vazov, who was a trader and a true Bulgarian, bearing the spirit of the Bulgarian people that had inhabited these lands for so many centuries. His mother also strongly influenced his development.

After finishing school in Sopot, Vazov was



sent to Kalofer, another town bearing the spirit of the Bulgarian revival, and was appointed assistant teacher. After the years of exams in Kalofer, the young teacher returned to Sopot to his father's grocery to help him with his work. But, thirsty for more education and further development, the next year Vazov went to Plovdiv to continue his education.

In Plovdiv, Vazov made his first steps as a poet. By his father's wish he went to Oltinitsa, a university town in Romania to study trade. But his soul was not keen to explore the secrets of the economy. He was immersed in his world of poetry. Soon he left Oltinitsa and went to Braila where he met Hristo Botev. Hardly anything else in this world could have had a greater influence on Vazov than the revolutionary spirit of Botev, who was the moral father of the Bulgarian liberation struggle. Later, he himself took part in the process of liberation and after the Bulgarian state was revived from the ruins of Ottoman rule, he was regarded as one of the most prominent figures in the country.

For more than 50 years, Ivan Vazov was the most highly regarded figure in Bulgarian literature. He was a citizen-poet who considered the social mission of literature an organic part of the nation's life and fate. He wrote his most compelling works to

glory Bulgaria's national reawakening and to articulate the ideas of the past, lest they be forgotten by post-liberation society.

His view of the Bulgarian national character had an enormous impact, and to this day his works remain an invaluable treasure of Bulgarian cultural history. Vazov is considered the patriarch of Bulgarian literature because he provided the highest standards for future generations of writers, who would seek in his verse a solution to their doubts and a confirmation of their ideas. Ivan Vazov was in fact the founder of all the literary genres employed by modern Bulgarian literature. His wide-ranging works are a brilliant manifestation of his artistic creativity. Partly because of his love of his homeland, its freedom and its nature, and his ability to incorporate into his works Bulgaria's traditions, history, morality, and national spirit, Vazov has come to be regarded as Bulgaria's national poet.

Ivan Vazov's book "Pod Igoto" ("Under the Yoke") enjoys the status of Bulgaria's national novel. Set against the background of the tragic April Uprising in 1876, it is an extended examination of Bulgarian character and the national awakening. From his poems, the most significant are collected in the "Epopoe to the Forgotten", true songs for the greatest Bulgarians in history.

Поет: Аз съм българче!  
Иван Вазов

Аз съм българче и силна  
майка мене е родила;  
с хубости, блага обилна  
мойта родина е мила.

Аз съм българче. Обичам  
наште планини зелени,  
българин да се наричам  
първа радост е за мене.

Аз съм българче свободно,  
в край свободен аз живея,  
всичко българско и родно  
любя, тача и милея.

Аз съм българче и расна  
в дни велики, в славно време,  
син съм на земя прекрасна,  
син съм на юнашко племе.

It is one beautiful Bulgarian poem we studied at 1st grade. This well could be the most popular and beloved poem for the Bulgarian people.

I am Bulgarian\*  
by Ivan Vazov

I am Bulgarian and strong  
Bulgarian mother has born me  
beauties and goods so many  
make my native land so dear.

I am Bulgarian and love  
our mountains so green,  
to be called Bulgarian  
is the greatest joy for me.

I am free Bulgarian  
in place of liberty I live  
everything native Bulgarian  
I cherish, observe and adore.

I am Bulgarian and grow  
in days so great in time of glory  
I am son of land so wonderful  
I am son of tribe of courage.

\*The translation is not a professional one but made by the students from SOU "Ivan Vazov"

Here is another masterpiece poem by Ivan Vazov. Every Bulgarian knows it by heart



ОПЪЛЧЕНЦИТЕ НА ШИПКА  
11 август 1877

Нека носим йоще срама по челото,  
синила от бича, следи от теглото;  
нека спомен люти от дни на позор

да висне кат облак в нашия кръгозор;  
нека ни отрича историята, века,  
нека е трагично името ни; нека  
Беласица стара и новия Батак  
в миналото наше фърлят своя мрак;  
нека да ни сочат с присмехи обидни  
счупените окови и дирите стидни  
по врата ни още от хомота стар;  
нека таз свобода да ни бъде дар!  
Нека. Но ний знаем, че в нашто недавно  
свети нещо ново, има нещо славно,  
що гордо разгупва нашите гърди  
и в нас чувства силни, големи плоди;  
защото там нейде наврѣх планината,  
що небето синьо крепи с рамената,  
издига се някой див, чутовен връх,  
покрит с бели кости и със кървав мъх  
на безсмъртен подвиг паметник огромен;  
защото в Балкана има един спомен,  
има едно име, що вечно живей  
и в нашта история кат легенда греј,  
едно име ново, голямо антично,  
като Термопили славно, безгранично,  
що отговор дава и смива срамът,  
и на клеветата строшава зъбът.

О, Шипка!

Три дена младите дружини  
как прохода бранят. Горските долини  
трепетно повтарят на боя ревьт.  
Присгъбли ужасни! Дванайсетий път  
гъсти орди лазят по урвата дива  
и тела я стелят, и кръв я залива.  
Бури подир бури! Рояк след рояк!  
Сюлейман безумний сочи върха пак  
и вика: "Търчете! Тамо са раите!"  
И ордите тръгват с викове сърдити,  
и "Аллах!" гръмовно въздуха разпра.  
Върхът отговаря с други вик: ура!  
И с нов дъжд куршуми, камъни и дървие;  
дружините наши, оплискани с кърви,  
пушкат и отблъскват, без сигнал, без ред,  
всякой гледа само да бъде напред  
и гърди геройски на смърт да изложи,  
и един враг повеч мъртъв да положи.  
Пушката екнат. Турците ревьт,  
насипи налитат и падат, и мрът; -  
Идат като тигри, бягат като овци  
и пак се зарвѣшат; българи, орловци  
кат лъвове тичат по страшний редут,  
не сецат ни жегат, ни жажда, ни труд.  
Шурмът е отчаян, отпорът е лют.  
Три дни веч се бият, но помощ не иде,  
от никъде взорът надежда не види  
и братските орли не фърчат към тях.  
Нищо. Те ще паднат, но честно, без страх -  
кат шъпа спартанци под сганта на Ксеркса.  
Талазите идат; всичките нащрек са!  
Последният напън вече е настал.  
Тогава Столетов, нашия генерал,  
ревна гороломно: "Млади опълченци,  
венчайте България с лаврови венци!  
на вашата сила царят повери  
прохода, войната и себе дори!"  
При тез думи силни дружините горди  
очакват геройски душманските орди  
бесни и шумещи! О, геройски час!  
Вълните намират канари тогата,



патроните липсват, но волите траят,  
щикът се пречупва - гърдите остаят  
и сладката радост до крак да измрът  
пред цяла вселена, на тоз славен рѣт,  
с една смърт юнашка и с една победа.

"България цяла сега нази гледа,  
тоя връх висок е: тя ще ни съзре,  
ако би бегали: да мрем по-добре!"  
Няма веч оръжже! Има хекатомба!  
Всяко дърво меч е, всякой камък - бомба,  
всяко нещо - удар, всяка душа - плам.  
Камъне и дървие изчезнаха там.  
"Грабайте телата!" - някой си изкряска  
и трупове мъртви фръкнаха завчаска  
кат демони черни над черний рояк,  
катурият, струпалят като живи пак!  
И турците тръпнат, друг път не видели  
ведно да се бият живи и умрели,  
и въздуха цепят със демонский вик.  
Боят се обръща на смърт и на щик,  
героите наши като скали твърди  
желязото срещат с железни си гърди  
и фърлят се с песни в свирепата сеч,  
като виждат харно, че умираат веч...  
Но вълни по-нови от орди дивашки  
гълтат, потопяват орляка юнашки...  
Йоще миг - ще падне заветният хълм.  
Изведнѣж Радецки пристигна със гръм.  
.....  
И днес йощ Балканът, щом буря зафаща,  
спомня тоз ден бурен, шуми и препраща  
славата му дивна като някой ек  
от урва на урва и от век на век!

The Volunteers At Shipka  
August 11, 1877

What if we still carry shame on our forehead,  
Marks of the whip, signs of bondage abhorrent;  
What if remembrance of infamous days  
Hangs like a cloud over all we survey;  
What if in history no place we're allotted,  
What if our name be a tragic one, what if  
Old Belasitsa and recent Batak  
Over our past throw their deep shadows black;

What if men mockingly laugh in our faces,  
Pointing to newly lost fetters, to traces  
Still on our necks of the ages-long yoke;  
What if this freedom was gives our folk?  
What of it? We know a recent true story,  
A shining new symbol, a symbol of glory,  
That proudly within every bosom pulsates  
And noble strong feeling within us awakes;  
There on a mounting that glows in the distance,  
Heaven's blue vault on its broad shoulder lifting,  
Rises a famous wild peak with blood on its moss,  
A monument huge to a deed that's immortal,  
Because a deep memory lives in the Balkans,  
Because there's a name that shall live for all time,  
As bright as a legend in history it shines,  
A new name, its roots to antiquity tracing,  
As great ad Thermopylae, all fame embracing,  
A same to wipe shame away, with its plain truth  
Smashing to smithereens calumny's tooth.  
O Shipka!  
For three days out youthful battalions  
The pass have defended. The high mountain valleys  
Re-echo the battle's tumultuous roar.  
The onslaught's ferocious! Again the dense hordes  
Along the ravine for the twelfth time are crawling  
Where warm blood is flowing and bodies are sprawling.  
Assault on assault! Swarm on swarm they advance!  
Once more at the towering peak Suleiman  
is pointing: "Rush forward! Up there are the rayahs!"  
Away race the hordes in a rage wild and dire,  
A thunderous "Attack!" re-echoes afar.  
The summit replies with a rousing "Hurrah!",  
A hail of fresh bullets and tree trunks and boulders;  
Spattered with blood, our battalions boldly  
Retaliate, every man in his own way  
Striving to be in the front of the fray,  
Each, like a hero, death bravely defying,  
Determined to leave one more enemy dying.  
Cannon are pounding. The Turks with a cry  
Rush up the slope where they tumble and die;  
Coming like tigers, like sheep they go flying,  
Then come once again: the Bulgarians fighting  
Like lions are running along the redoubt,  
Neither heat, thirst nor toil are they worried about.  
The onslaught is fierce, the rebuff no less stout.  
For three days they fight but no help is arriving,  
And no hope is visible on the horizon,  
And no brother eagles come swiftly with aid.  
No matter. They'll die, but die true, unafraid -  
As died the brave Spartans who stood against  
Xerxes.  
Fresh waves are now rolling up; all are alerted!  
A last effort's needed: the moment is grave.  
And then does Stoletov, our general brave,  
Roar words of great courage: "Young volunteer  
fighters,  
Now crown Bulgaria with laurels of triumph!  
The Tsar has entrusted the pass, the whole war,  
Himself even, unto these muscles, of yours!"  
Thus heartened, our proud and heroic battalions  
Courageously meet the next thrust of the rallying  
Enemy hordes! O heroic time!  
Fresh waves of assailants the cliffs now climb.  
Our men have no bullets, with bravery girded,  
Their bayonets broken, their breasts ever sturdy,  
They're all to a man ready gladly to die  
On the ridge which the whole of the world can descry,

To die here like heroes triumphant, victorious.  
"The whole of Bulgaria watches, supports us,  
The peak is a high one: if we run away,  
She'll see us - so better to die here today!"  
No weapons are left! What remains is the slaughter!  
Each stone is a bomb and each tree-trunk a sword is.  
Each object - a blow, and each soul - flame that  
sears.  
From the peak every tree, every stone disappears.  
"Grab hold of the bodies!" they hear a voice crying,  
At once through the air lifeless corpses are flying,  
And over the hordes like black devils they dive  
And tumble and roll as if they were alive!  
The Turks quake and tremble, not having seen ever  
The living and death fight a battle together,  
And raise a shrill cry of demoniac rage.  
In life and death combat the armies engage.  
Our heroes, there standing as steady as boulders,  
Meet bayonet steel with steel breasts no less boldly,  
And sing as they cast themselves into the fray  
When they realize Death shall now snatch them  
away.  
But still our young heroes rebuff, sink and swallow  
The hordes that is wave upon wave swiftly follow.  
The peak any minute shall ours be no more.  
Then suddenly Radetzky arrives with a roar.  
.....  
And today, every time there's a storm in the mountain,  
The summit recall this grim day and, recounting  
The story, its echoing glory relays  
From valley ti valley, from age unto age!

Plovdiv, November 6, 1883  
Translated by © Peter Tempest.  
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Shipka is a pass in the Balkan Mountains,

Bulgaria. Situated on the main road from Ruse on the Danube River through Stara Zagora to Edirne (Adrianople) in Turkey, it was a strategically important pass and was the scene of fierce fighting during the Russo-Turkish War (1877-78). The pass was originally held by the Ottoman forces of 4,000 men, but the Russian general Joseph V. Gurko seized it by surprise in July 1877. In response, the Ottoman general Süleyman Paşa attacked Shipka in August. The Russian force there, which included 7,500 Bulgarian volunteers, held the position against Süleyman's 38,000. The battles for Shipka pass turned to be the most important and heroic for the Bulgarian's Liberation. Ivan Vazov wrote this poem to honour those who sacrificed their lives for our freedom. In the poem Ivan Vazov makes references to some of the greatest battles in both the Bulgarian and the ancient history.

Nowadays Shipka is a symbol of courage, patriotism and peace not only for the Bulgarians but for the modern Turks also as it is a significant part of their history too. Along with the thousands of Bulgarian, Romanian, Finnish and Russian soldiers, thousands of Ottoman young men lost their lives on the Shipka slopes for their devotion to their countries. Every year when celebrations are held at the Shipka peak, Bulgarian, Romanian, Russian and Turkish high level officials are there to honour the fallen soldiers and to declare the new age through the new values of peace, friendship, solidarity and freedom.



### At the birthplace of Ivan Vazov

The presence of Bulgaria's most famous poet, immortalised in a quaint museum, resounds through this Rose Valley town of Sopot.

I am a flower in the Balkans,  
I am a power yet unknown,  
I am the violence of storm;  
Breaking the wings of eagles.

These were the majestic words of Sopot's most famous son and Bulgaria's most celebrated poet, Ivan Vazov, in his poem Native Flower, verse that remained unpublished in his lifetime.

Vazov's words spring to life when you visit his home and birthplace of Sopot in central Bulgaria.

Sopot, cradled by the Balkan, lies in the fertile mountain valley of Karlovo in the western part of the Rose Valley, so named because of oil-bearing roses that fill the surrounding air with a dizzying aroma when they blossom in late spring. In October the golden autumnal backdrop, crisp air and pink-tinted light make a trip to the area equally enjoyable.

Sopot is named after its abundant fountains – the name Sopoh means a spring – and cold water bubbles up through ditches throughout the town. Sopot's cobbled, winding streets are also home to many fine examples of Revival period architecture, usually hidden behind evergreen shrubs, lilac and fragrant flowers.

If you walk along the old cobbled streets of Sopot you can find old houses that resonate with the architectural achievements of Sopot during the Revival period. Sacred to all Bulgarians are those sites in Sopot related to Vazov's novel Under the Yoke. The childhood family home of Ivan Vazov is just off the main square – which contains his statue. The house was converted into a museum in 1935. When you enter the museum you find a delightful cobbled courtyard resplendent with boxed shrubs, wooden beams and overhanging vine trellises. The living quarters contain traditional emblazoned fleece rugs, crimson carpets and covers as well as a small dining room with copper and ceramic pots and wooden barrels of wine.

Two large exhibition rooms, opened in 1970, relate Vazov's life and work. Here you can find an artist's impression of the unique characters from Vazov's short story Haji Ahil and the short novel Chichovtsi (The Uncles). Each room conveys the atmosphere of the Revival period, ensuring that Bulgaria's national poet lives on



through his patriotic works.

If you enjoy the mountains there is a lift station only 2-3 km away. The lift's open chair will take you to the central Balkan National Park where you can feel the mystical power of the magnificent mountain tops: Malak Kupen, Goliam Kupen, Petkov kamak, Ostro burdo, Dobrila and, the highest of all, Ambaritsa. And when you climb the mountain perhaps the poet's verses will reverberate through your mind.

Oh, proud mountains, where mighty  
Eagles circle the blue skies,  
Thy magnificent bosom  
I embrace with thirsty eyes

Was your beauty not the reason  
For me to be a singer?  
And the passion it ignited,  
To my homeland and the sky

Ivan Vazov is a towering figure whose unflinching love of his homeland and literary masterpieces have permeated the consciousness of subsequent generations. Perhaps his most famous work was his account of Ottoman rule, Under the Yoke, as well as the magnificent ode, Epic of the Forgotten, and memorable short stories, One Bulgarian Woman and Old Yotso Stare. More than 50 of his poems are still recited alongside Bulgarian folk songs. His revolutionary poems, The Fight Has Come and A Banner, both written in the turbulent spring of 1876, were popular marching songs during the April uprising.

His songs, the militant and pathetic Rebels of Panagyurishte and Radetski, the lyric Where is Bulgaria and Two Beech Trees, the fascinating song of the blue squill have become enshrined into Bulgarian folklore. These display the true national character – and immortality – of his beautiful creative oeuvre. This immortality, which Vazov himself foresees, appears in the following verse, revealing the unlimited power and beauty of his songs:

The strong breath of the Balkan they carry,  
And the sound of the harmonies hidden deep,  
And the rolling thunder of nation's glory,  
But my songs will forever they repeat

They echo with the spirit of the people,  
Which won't die until our hearts still beat  
With joy and sorrow in our homeland freed  
But my songs will forever they repeat.

