

IMAGES OF “OUR FOREIGN FRIENDS”: REPRESENTATIONS OF STUDENTS FROM THE MIDDLE EAST AND AFRICA IN THE BULGARIAN NEWSPAPER “STUDENT’S TRIBUNE” (1960-s – 1970-s)

Desislava Pileva

Abstract

The acceptance of university and Ph. D. students from countries of five of the continents was a part of Bulgaria’s socialist concept of spreading political, social and in a way cultural influence among the ‘non-developed’ societies, especially those, newly-gained independence of Western dominion. Foreign students’ social and cultural adaptation into Bulgarian society and the interaction among themselves and others are represented into the students’ newspaper “The Student’s Tribune” („Студентска трибуна“). The object of the current research is the images of African and Middle East students, as the way they were represented by the newspaper throughout the decades of the socialist period in Bulgaria, conditionally comprised into four sections “In class”, “In the dormitory”, “Free time – among students’ community” and “Graduated” students.

Key words: *foreign students, cultural interaction, socialist period, the Middle East, Africa*

Throughout the socialist period, Bulgarian higher educational institutions were accepting students from dozens of countries from around the world, in order to fulfill their “international duty” to spread the socialist ideology and educate youths, especially from ‘non-developed’ countries. These students’ motivations for receiving education in a socialist country, everyday life activities, social and cultural interactions outside their homeland, etc. were some of the objects of interest for ‘The Student’s Tribune’¹ newspaper (*Студентска трибуна*). Namely, the current paper

¹ Founded in 1945, published weekly until 1991; the most read student’s newspaper, with heterogeneous contents, considering students’ life, political, economic, military, social, cultural and sports issues not only in Bulgaria, but also around the world. Since 1957 until 1991 it is a newspaper issue of the Dimitrov’s Communist Youth Union (DCYU).

is an analytic study of African and Middle Eastern students, represented in articles and photographs published in the newspaper in the period from the beginning of the 1960s until the late 1970s. The research is entirely documentary, held in Sofia's city library archive, during which nearly 800 newspaper issues were looked over and dozens of articles and visual material, concerning the mentioned-above-themes, were systematized and analyzed, in order to extract essential and heterogeneous information to be extracted and comprised in several sections.

International context

After the Second World War many significant political, military and ideological changes took place in the Middle East² and African countries. This was a period of political and military collaborations and divisions, of building and dissolving unions, of decolonization³ and neo-colonial economic influences (Tzonev 1999: 156–157; Mircheva 1999: 489–495).

I will only mark those main geopolitical events in the Middle East which unfolded between the second half of the 50s and the late 70s: the Suez crises (1956) between Egypt and the Great Britain and France; the unstable merging between Egypt and Syria into the United Arab Republic (UAR) (1958–1961); the Israel-Arab conflict which defined international relations, not only in the Middle East area, but also between the so called “East and West”. The whole period was marked as well by numerous governmental and ideological changes in many countries in the area (Tzonev 1999: 64–73; 112–123).

In the context of those dynamic events and turbulent international relations, the Soviet Union stepped in, attempting to win over the independent Middle East countries. Bulgaria, by some authors, is seen as a Soviet's political instrument among some of the countries, fulfilling political tasks and spreading communist ideology as an antipode of imperial influence in the region (Tzonev 1999: 65, 74–97, 123–130; Filipova 2008: 207, 209; Filipova 2009: 320–322). Following this political line and trying to gain closer relationship for its benefit, Bulgarian government engaged in numerous economic, social and cultural contracts and agreements with several

² The range of the Middle East countries hasn't been a constant, some consider only the Arab peninsula, including Iran, Turkey, Afghanistan and Pakistan (some and Egypt), consist the area (UNHR; World Atlas); the Northern Africa (Egypt, Libya, Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco, some even Sudan and Ethiopia) are encompassed into the term, according to others (Davison 1960: 665–675; Tzonev 1999: 11; Encyclopedia Britannica).

³ The UN's General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV) of December 14, 1960 sanctions “Declaration on Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples” (The United Nations and Decolonization), moved by The Soviet Union, energetically supported by socialist republics (ST, XXIII, 31, p. 4; Mircheva 1999: 495–496).

countries.⁴ Some of them were unions of women, journalists, writers, workers, and employees, etc.; trading and construction⁵ agreements, organizations for scholar and technical collaborations and so on (Tzonev 1999: 60–61, 101–107). But the most relevant to the current topic are cultural agreements⁶. Aside from collaborations in the scope of cultural exchange as radio and television programs, cinema films and festivals, newspaper and magazine articles, musical and sport events, opening of cultural centers and exhibitions, there were fellowships for receiving higher education. Those grants were financially supported by several sources – the Bulgarian government, the sending country’s government and the International Students’ Union; but also there were quite a few students, paying by themselves⁷ (ST, XVIII, 6, p. 4; Tzonev 1999: 74–76, 81, 85, 100–110, 267–271; Filipova 2008: 218; Filipova 2009: 320–330). Aside from those grants, driven by the current state of the political interaction between Bulgaria and each of the countries, there were political immigrants, receiving education in Bulgaria as well (Tzonev 1999: 108).

Meanwhile, de-colonial movements in African societies⁸, started after the World War II, were rising. The year of 1960 was pronounced by the UN as “The Year of Africa” after the remarkable decolonization of 17 countries (Mircheva 1999: 491–495; ST, XXIII, 31, p. 4). This period of establishing state independence, accompanied by hostilities and coups, was also a period of aiming wider enlightenment for the population, in order to gain self-government, economic and social development (Mircheva 1999: 495–502): “*This development, this manhood has many sides: comprehensive economic development, literacy of the population, training of technical personnel...*” (ST, XII, 27, p. 3). Throughout the examined decades there were several articles published in the Student’s Tribune, considering the lack of highly educated black Africans⁹ as a result of the few universities in African countries, especially such receiving black students. This was pointed out as both – part and consequence of the colonial and neo-colonial ruling, bringing up racism and South Africa’s apartheid (ST, XII, 34, p. 4; ST, XXIII, 21, p. 4; ST, XXIX, 35, p. 4). In

⁴ In 1956 Bulgarian Council of ministers accepted a program for activating international relations with Arabic countries (Filipova 2009: 323).

⁵ Bulgarian engineers, architects and construction workers were part of major construction projects (roads, bridges, schools, residential sections, dam lakes) in Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, Egypt, Algeria, Libya etc. (Tzonev 1999: 62, 101).

⁶ Egypt – 1957; UAR – 1958; Iraq – 1960; Syria – 1962; Afghanistan – 1962; Algeria – 1963; Yemen – 1964; Tunisia – 1965; Iran – 1966; Libya – 1972; Jordan – 1974 (ASA, f. 363, i. 8, a.u. 273, 320, 555, 784, i. 9, a.u. 125, 128, 136; Tzonev 1999: 81, 107; Ministry of Culture).

⁷ For instance, in 1959 there were 12 Syrian and 1 Egyptian fellowship students, and 64 self-funding Syrian students in Bulgaria (Filipova 2008: 218).

⁸ About actions prior to these changes see Krachunova 1999.

⁹ In 1960 in Guinea, exemplarily, after the process of decolonization, there were only 40 graduated citizens (ST, XII, 34, p. 4). According to published statistic data in Africa, Asia and Latin America only 13, 5 % of the population were educated (ST, XXIII, 21, p. 4).

accordance to these political events and ideological changes, the rising influence of socialist formations,¹⁰ there were young Africans, many of whom with socialist political orientation, heading to Eastern European higher educational institutions, among which Bulgarian.¹¹

“The New Inhabitants of ‘the Small Globe’”¹²

Everything stated so far brought this research to the beginning of the 1960s.¹³ Acceptance of foreigners to receive higher education in Bulgaria was carried “*with great responsibility for fulfilling our international duty*” as it was said in a Student’s Tribune issue from 1978 (ST, XXIX, 35, p. 4). Of significant importance for that matter, was founding the Institute for Foreign Students¹⁴ in 1963 in Sofia. It was obliged to coordinate the whole studying process of foreigners from their arrival to their graduation, despite their professional orientation and in which higher educational institution they would henceforth study in.¹⁵ Through the first year¹⁶ students in the Institute learnt mainly Bulgarian language and had some preparation on other

¹⁰ See Krachunova 1989: 50–57.

¹¹ “*People’s Republic of Bulgaria has been always in an unflinching partnership and friendship along with the developing countries, gaining their own independence*”, extract from Zhivkov’s report in the Xth Congress of Bulgarian Communist Party (ST, XXVII, 27, p. 4). Numerous liberated African countries established diplomatic relations with Bulgaria: DR Congo – 1961; Congo – 1964; Ghana – 1961; Guinea – 1959; Guinea-Bissau – 1974; Kenya – 1964; Nigeria – 1964; Niger – 1973; Sudan – 1956; Tanzania – 1965; Zambia – 1968 etc. (Mateeva 2005). With some of them cultural agreements were signed: Ghana – 1961; Mali – 1961; Cameroon – 1962; Dahomey (today Benin) – 1962; Guinea – 1960; Somalia – 1963; Ethiopia – 1965; Congo – 1970 (ASA, f. 363, i. 8, a.u. 177, 219, 292, 458, i. 9, a.u. 127, 130, 131, 132)

¹² ST, XVII, 3, p. 3

¹³ Bulgaria received foreign students for the first time in 1949 (ST, XXIV, 10, p. 4; ST, XXX, 13, p. 4).

¹⁴ The inauguration was in the Aula Magna of the Sofia University in November 2, 1963, in the presence of government’s officials, professors, Bulgarian and foreign students. The event was accompanied by the latter’s performances (ST, XV, 6, p. 1). “[The Institute is] *an explicit example of friendship [...] sincere reach towards young people of underdeveloped countries [...] despite their believes and skin colour*” (male, Sudan – ST, XV, 7, p. 4).

¹⁵ Several of them were mentioned in some reports: the Sofia University, Sofia; the Institute of Agriculture, Sofia and Plovdiv; the Institute of Economy, Sofia; the Mining Institute, Sofia; the Medical Institute, Sofia and Varna; the Academy of Arts, Sofia; the Institute of Food Industry, Plovdiv; the Institute of Zootechnics and Veterinary, Stara Zagora; etc.

¹⁶ The whole study period in the Institute was 3 years, the primary of which was the first one, during the second and the third one students had limited language classes (ST, XV, 4, p. 4; ST, XXIV, 28, p. 4; ST, XXVII, 27, p. 4).

basic for their further study subjects (ST, XV, 4, p. 4; ST, XV, 6, p. 1; ST, XXIV, 28, p. 4; ST, XXIX, 35, p. 4).

In the course of time, and after founding the Institute, along with the increasing number of foreign students in the country,¹⁷ there were appearing columns in the newspaper, describing different aspects of their life in Bulgaria. Foreign students were presented in numerous articles, some of which accompanied by photos, containing heterogeneous information. On the one hand, describing episodes of their life as students – from arrival to departure, from first class to graduation, from studying for exams to going out with other students. On the other hand depicting them as activists for racial equality, decolonization, and a better lifestyle in their own and others' home countries. There were just glimpses of personal information about any of the portrayed students (Appendix); it was stressed on from how many sending-countries, from almost every continent, foreign students in Bulgaria were, therefore the readers' attention was brought to the “welcoming” and “open-minded” Bulgarians in the international social environment. The focus was also placed on political, military and ideological events and changes occurring in those sending-countries; so as on the need of well prepared and active young professionals to form economic, socially and culturally their homeland's future, thanks to the well-developed socialist education gained in socialist Bulgaria.

“Children of Different Nations”¹⁸

The main storyline of many narratives, presenting foreigners, was personal impressions and experiences among other students. On the one hand, they stayed in touch with their compatriots, studying in Bulgaria as well, through keeping close contacts within their small communities they were able to maintain a closer “sense of home” viable in the foreign land. On the other hand, there was the excitement of the opportunity of rather intensive communication with other foreign and Bulgarian students, allowing the inside view of their native cultural specifics. These relations unfolded on three basic “locations”: “*in class*”, “*in the dormitory*”, “*free time – among students' community*”, each of which will be presented shortly.

“**In class**” was a predominant atmosphere for students to be portrayed, short text under a picture about a foreigner, studying Bulgarian language, or longer story about a whole class during biology or chemistry exercise at the university. On some photos African students and such with Arabic features could be seen alongside other foreigners – European, Latin-American, Asian and Bulgarian working together, discussing scientific topics or listening to a lecture; sitting behind a desk, reading, or dressed in white aprons, working on a project in labs (ST, XVI, 4, p. 4; ST, XVI,

¹⁷ From 1 000 foreign students in the 1961/62 academic year the number reaches 5000 in the 1978/79 (ST, XIII, 17, p. 1; ST, XXX, 12, p. 4).

¹⁸ ST, XVI, 10, p. 4

7, p. 4; ST, XVI, 10, p. 4; ST, XVII, 3, p. 3; ST, XVII, 7, p. 3; ST, XXII, 13, p. 4; ST, XXII, 32, p. 1, 3; ST, XXIII, 2, p. 4; ST, XXIV, 28, p. 4; ST, XXV, 14, p. 1; ST, XXVII, 15, p. 4; ST, XXVII, 17, p. 4; ST, XXIX, 25, p. 4; ST, XXIX, 26, p. 1; ST, XXX, 13, p. 4). As a whole, articles permanently emphasize on two basic story lines. As the first one it could be defined the development of Bulgarian science, and the technical and equipment availability, for example, the language laboratory at the Institute, so as chemistry, biology and physics labs at the latter and other higher educational institutions (ST, XV, 7, p. 4; ST, XVII, 3, p. 3; ST, XVIII, 27, p. 4; ST, XXII, 16, p. 4; ST, XXII, 32, p. 1, 3; ST, XXIV, 28, p. 4; ST, XXVII, 25, p. 4; ST, XXIX, 26, p. 1).¹⁹ The second focus was placed on the mutual aid among students, especially when it came to Bulgarian language and difficulties foreigners met with it. In such situations close relationships and friendships with Bulgarian university colleagues came to the fore (ST, XVI, 7, p. 4; ST, XVI, 10, p. 4; ST, XXII, 13, p. 4; ST, XXII, 33, p. 4; ST, XXV, 14, p. 1).

Among those articles, presenting everyday life in class, there could be found some descriptions of the free time at the Institute/University, having students talking to each other, drinking coffee or reading a book on a bench at the campus. Regarding the casual time outside of the class rooms, students go to the theatre, concerts, exhibitions, play/attend to sport events and so on, predominantly depicted as a part of small or bigger groups (ST, XIV, 12, p. 4; ST, XVII, 7, p. 3; ST, XIX, 9, p. 2; ST, XVIII, 27, p. 4; ST, XXII, 10, p. 4; ST, XXII, 13, p. 4; ST, XXII, 32, p. 1, 3; ST, XXII, 33, p. 4; ST, XXIV, 28, p. 4; ST, XXV, 14, p. 1; ST, XXIX, 25, p. 4). Once again, the diversity of nationalities among foreign students, as well as international relations between foreigners and Bulgarians, were made visible mainly by photographs.

The dormitory and its vicinities was a space attracting newspaper authors at the examinations time, when a very particular atmosphere was constantly described: foreign students intensively studying by themselves, or along with other foreign and/or Bulgarian students. Foreigners' image was strongly presented as preparing hard for exams,²⁰ aiming to achieve the level of educated and reliable young professionals, helpful to their home countries' development (ST, XXII, 16, p. 4). *"In those rooms live unknown young people from lands far away, with eager of knowledge, with firm desire for becoming their nation's builders of tomorrow."* (ST, XVI, 17, p. 1).²¹ Meanwhile, the mutual aid among students, regardless of their descent (in-

¹⁹ In order to develop better relationships with foreign students, on the one hand, and to improve their education, on the other, several governmental structures (among which DCYU) reached agreements for partnership among higher education institutions and factories in the capitol. The direct and relatively intensive communication among students and workers was aiming to shorten the cultural distance between Bulgarian society and those foreigners, simultaneously, to spread communist ideology (ST, XXII, 16, p. 4).

²⁰ *"The morning is loud only in the cafeteria. Students go to it only for breakfast and go back to their rooms to study. There is no other way. It is a session time..."* (ST, XVI, 19, p. 4).

²¹ *"Not less than 8 hours reading a day [...] to succeed one need to organize oneself, which is not that hard, knowing Kenya has sent you and Kenya has been expecting you."* (male, Kenya – ST,

cluding skin color), was a constant theme (described with a lot of pathos) in such articles, “*In those days the friendship and help are particularly important. Bulgarian friends of Fuad and Roberto and all of the rest foreign students have been always sympathetic.*” (ST, XXVII, 25, p. 4). Therefore, international communication among students was defined as an everyday activity (ST, XIV, 12, p. 4; ST, XVI, 17, p. 1; ST, XVI, 19, p. 4; ST, XXVII, 25, p. 4).

Part of some students’ education, especially those in the sphere of medicine, veterinary, agriculture, and technical specialties, were the *practical exercises*. In a few articles and interviews, students’ please and positive impressions of Bulgarian medical centers’ equipment, technical development and work process in cooperative farms and manufactories etc., so as locals’ professionalism, helpful advises and hospitality²² were sensibly stated (ST, XXII, 13, p. 4; ST, XXII, 16, p. 4; ST, XXVII, 25, p. 4; ST, XXIX, 34, p. 4; ST, XXIX, 35, p. 4). Simultaneously, there were *students brigades*,²³ containing various activities, from working on agricultural fields to building harbors (students from 16 countries worked at the construction of the Varna-Ilichovsk ferry-harbor in 1977 (ST, XXIX, 5, p. 3). These activities sometimes included stays in local people’s homes, allowing (not only) foreigners to learn more about Bulgarians’ culture, everyday life, lifestyle and work ethics and experiences; an excellent opportunity for intercultural communication among the students themselves, as well (ST, XXIX, 5, p. 3; ST, XXIX, 35, p. 4).

Foreign students “*getting to know this endearing and unknown country*” (ST, XVII, 7, p. 3) by going to excursions²⁴ was another topic, submitting interesting information about the way they spent some of their free time. Students visited Ethnographic, Historical and Archaeological museums; monasteries (as Bachkovo monastery); churches, holding memorable pieces of national history (as Batak’s ossuary church); towns with preserved architecture from the Revival period; natural landmarks etc. (ST, XVII, 7, p. 3; ST, XVII, 26, p. 4; ST, XVIII, 2, p. 3; ST, XXIV, 28, p. 4; ST, XIX, 9, p. 2). Some of these tours were organized by the Friendship club, DCYU, and universities dean’s offices for foreign students, but there were also many self-organized tourist travels to different areas and towns in the country. Co-operative farms were not only a brigade working place for some students, but also

XIV, 12, p. 4). “*I feel uncomfortable to show up unprepared to an exam. I’ve come all the way from Afghanistan to study and I must become a good agronomist.*” (male Afghanistan – ST, XVI, 19, p. 4).

²² A photo from a brigade, picturing several African students, sitting on a long table with a Bulgarian woman, handing a banitza, was published in an issue from 1978, “Local cooperative women workers endeavored to make their best banitza and cakes” (ST, XXIX, 34, p. 4), marking this memorable for both parties event, showing some famous Bulgarian welcoming manners.

²³ In the summer of 1977, for example, several foreign students’ homeland organizations donated their members’ brigade earned money to the building of the Buzludzha’s monument (ST, XXIX, 5, p. 3).

²⁴ Among the destinations were: Plovdiv, Velingrad, Veliko Tarnovo, Ruse, Batak, Pernik, Dimitrograd and others (ST, XV, 36, p. 4; ST, XVII, 26, p. 4; ST, XXIX, 25, p. 4).

excursion destinations, along with factories, power stations and so on (ST, XIV, 24, p. 3; ST, XIV, 25, p. 4; ST, XVII, 26, p. 4; ST, XVIII, 2, p. 3; ST, XXIX, 35, p. 4). Such trips were used to illustrate Bulgaria's productive and technical development and to provoke foreigners to (want to) find out more about the social and economic positives of the socialist system.

*"With the Language of Friendship"*²⁵

Of great importance for the foreign students' everyday life and activities in Bulgaria was the existence of the Friendship club, founded at the beginning of 1960,²⁶ turned into a place for intensive international communication. It was a peculiar headquarter for all foreign students' homeland organizations which were part of the Foreign Students' Council. Thanks to their interaction many events occurred throughout the years. Such as national nights and annual festivals, in which music and vocal bands, dance assembles, theatrical companies and recitals took place (sometimes in a competitive manner). In such festivities, students were emotionally depicted and pictured as happy and smiling, excited to present their own culture to other foreigners (including Bulgarians) and eager to learn more about those foreigners' cultures (including Bulgarian). The Club was also a place for casual meetings, everyday communications, photo and art exhibition (for Sudan, Palestine, Iraq etc.), concerts, literature readings and celebrating personal events, such as weddings (as the one described in a newspaper issue from 1979), birthdays and children festivities (such as meeting *Dyado Mraz* (Santa Claus) for the New Years' eve) (ST, XI, 22, p. 1; ST, XIV, 25, p. 4; ST, XV, 7, p. 4; ST, XVI, 10, p. 4; ST, XVII, 27, p. 4; ST, XVII, 31, p. 2; ST, XIX, 32, p. 3; ST, XX, 11, p. 2; ST, XXII, 13, p. 4; ST, XXII, 25, p. 4; ST, XXII, 31, p. 4; ST, XXII, 33, p. 4; ST, XXIX, 5, p. 3; ST, XXIX, 35, p. 4; ST, XXX, 16, p. 4).

The Students' cultural home, the Club and higher educational institutions (mainly the Sofia University) were also a peculiar stage for annual marking of historical events, (inter)national holidays²⁷ and meeting political activists (antifascists and communists) (ST, XI, 22, p. 1; ST, XXIX, 35, p. 4). The communication and interaction among Foreign students' homeland organizations and Bulgarian students were reaching beyond the inter-cultural exchange, they were making political statements

²⁵ ST, XXII, 25, p. 4.

²⁶ It was inaugurated in February 23 in the presence of more than 750 students from Bulgaria, the Soviet Union, Guinea, Syria, Sudan, Iran, Iraq, Algeria, Lebanon, Jordan and etc. The club was accommodated in the Students' cultural home; it had a chairman and two vice-chairmen (later there was and a council), it financially and organizationally supported foreign students' homeland organizations (ST, XI, 22, p. 1; ST, XXII, 16, p. 4).

²⁷ Such as celebrations of the 100th jubilee of Lenin's birthday; 90th anniversary of G.M. Dimitrov's birthday; anniversaries of the September and October revolutions and so on (ST, XXIV, 10, p. 4).

regarding military, social and human rights issues in anywhere in the world (nights of solidarity), *“The world’s youth sings, dances and fights for peace”* (ST, XIV, 22, p. 1; ST, XX, 11, p. 2; ST, XXII, 25, p. 4). Widely spread among students were causes about anti-military operations in the Middle East and Southeastern Asia, decolonial movements in Africa, and neocolonial influences in ex European colonies²⁸. Hence, students accepted the concept of *“the colonialism [...] is evil which needs to be destroyed”* and organized numerous events for that matter (ST, XXIII, 31, p. 4; ST, XXV, 32, p. 4). Supporting telegrams and statements were issued, meetings and protests were regularly organized (mainly marking April 24 – anniversary of the Bandung conference; and May 25 – the Day of Africa) by students: in support of Vietnamese; against “America’s aggression”; and in solidarity with Africa’s nations in their fight for independence; launching slogans as: *“Freedom for Africa”*, *“Fascists, get out of Africa”*, *“Long live Africa”*, *“Peace to Vietnam. Peace to the World”* etc. (ST, XIV, 12, p. 4; ST, XV, 29, p. 4; ST, XVI, 36, p. 1; ST, XVII, 36, p. 4; ST, XVIII, 29, p. 4; ST, XIX, 37, p. 3; ST, XX, 31, p. 4).²⁹

These cultural and celebratory events, and such with political and social purposes, were presented as some of the most uniting foreigner and Bulgarian students; unifying young people with socialist bias and fighters for their home country’s liberty. No doubt the existence of the Friendship Club was of fundamental significance of bringing together this diversity and bringing in variegation to their everyday life among one another. At the same time, this community existence, through such activities and events, was a way of shaping certain ideological and political views and controlling students’ social life.

Graduated with gratitude

In the middle of the 1960s, but mostly during the 1970s, there were a few articles, considering foreign students’ graduation, describing the event’s atmosphere and graduates’ adjustments. The event was held in a festive manner in the Aula Magna of the Sofia University, in the presence of state officials, diplomats, university chancellors, professors, students, representatives of public organizations. Mainly boasting about the developed “socialist based” Bulgarian science and the selflessness of the principle of “preparing experts for other socialist countries” could be found in

²⁸ See Tzonev 1999: 156–160.

²⁹ Students sent notes of protest, considering foreign states’ dangerous and inhumane activities: against French atomic tests in Sahara; racial acts in the RSA and Rhodesia (today Zimbabwe) etc. (ST, XI, 22, p. 1; ST, XV, 29, p. 4; ST, XIX, 37, p. 3); there were events such as specially organized “labour day in favour of our Iraqi colleagues” (ST, XV, 7, p. 4). Students were donating money to different socialist oriented societies, in order to support the politics of “withstanding to the West” (ST, XVIII, 29, p. 4), so as in 1977 foreign and Bulgarian students jointly decided to send their brigade money to Palestine’s people, helping them in their revolution (ST, XXIX, 5, p. 3).

the speeches (ST, XXVII, 35, p. 4; ST, XXIX, 5, p. 3; ST, XXIX, 36, p. 4; ST, XXX, 37, p. 4).

Along with the official part, there were conducted interviews with some of the foreign graduates. In which nostalgia for student's years was sensible, referring to the built friendships and spent time with colleagues, altogether with studying in an international atmosphere and learning from a well-developed science and helpful professors (ST, XVII, 13–14, p. 9; ST, XXII, 16, p. 4; ST, XXVII, 10, p. 4; ST, XXIX, 5, p. 3). Several of the emotional headlines (accompanied by images of smiling young people) were: *"I'm happy I'm going back home, I'm sad I'm leaving Bulgaria"* (male, Guinea – ST, XVII, 13–14, p. 9), *"We've loved Bulgaria! We thank of our hearts!"* (four males, Syria – ST, XV, 35, p. 4), etc. Reminding and highlighting, once again, on the well-developed socialist educational system and the Bulgarians who had become a memorable part of the foreigners' stay and were set to resemble the students' years.

The positive recall of graduates' stay in Bulgaria was also embodied into the mail, sent to the Student's Tribune editorial office, following their departure. On several newspaper issues extracts from some of those letters were published, their contents were evidently similar to one another and to the graduates' interviews, described above. *"I can't find words to describe my filial affections towards my second motherland – Bulgaria [...] I am happy I received my education in a socialist country."* (male, Yemen – ST, XXVII, 5, p. 4). They submitted mainly expressions of gratitude towards university professors and the received qualitative education, and nostalgically remembering Bulgarian's good attitude towards them (ST, XXV, 39, p. 4; ST, XXVII, 4, p. 4; ST, XXVII, 5, p. 4; ST, XXIX, 5, p. 3; ST, XXIX, 35, p. 4): *"I'll always remember and think with respect about my second motherland – your homeland, about my professors, friends and colleagues. I will never forget Bulgaria, and I will probably soon come back to visit."* (male, Nigeria – ST, XXIX, 35, p. 4). Returning back to their home countries, aside from the letters of gratitude, some of the students stayed in touch with their professors, informing them about their professional development and setbacks, receiving scientific literature and advices, so as invitations for taking part in scholar conferences³⁰ (ST, XXII, 16, p. 4; ST, XXIX, 35, p. 4).

On the newspaper pages some of the foreign students educated in Bulgaria and succeeded back home were reflected with pride. Among them were: doctors, engineers, agronomists, architects, biologists, archeologists, mathematicians, journalists, university professors and etc. (ST, XXII, 16, p. 4; ST, XXIX, 35, p. 4). But those in governmental and managing positions were highlighted.³¹ This column appears

³⁰ Some of the foreign graduates founded Friendship Societies in their home countries, staying in touch with Bulgaria and marking important historical and national dates (Tzonev 1999: 271).

³¹ Mehrabudin Paktiaval (Afghanistan) – Minister of Finance, professor at the University of Kabul
Omar Nazif (Afghanistan) – Vice-Minister of Education
Idrissa Dabo (Guinea-Bissau) – Minister of Commerce and Craft

to be a well-placed summery of every other described in the text. Along with setting good examples to the current students, through showing (off with) graduates' successes the well-built name of the Bulgarian educational system was guaranteed. As well as, placing words which express the former students' delightful memories of those past times, speak well about Bulgarians' good will and positive attitude towards others.

Conclusion

The predominant pathos in the examined articles by which foreign students as a whole and from the Middle East and Africa, in particular, were portrayed, is sensible. Themes as students' thirst for knowledge; the extremely positive, harmonious and friendly relationships among them, and especially with Bulgarians; and last, but not least, the common looking up to the developed socialist Bulgaria, welcomed them unconditionally with open-minds and open-hearts, were constantly presented in the Student's Tribune. The lack of personal information, considering foreigners, and unified presentation of events, create a collective image and emphasize on the community life, in a way diminishing personal specifics and life-stories, bringing up only those personal particulates "important" for the entirely presented story-lines. Nowhere in the newspaper information about ethnic, racial etc., based conflicts was consistent, absence, pointing out to the Bulgarians' acceptance of others, creating a specific friendly and "good" image of "our others". The overall extremely positive foreign students' media image in socialist Bulgaria, created by typed words and reinforced by photos, was also a reflection of the government's pursuit of a friendly and liberal to other countries' image, opposite to the imperial and capitalist Western world – the negative and hostile other.

Appendix

The article of Zaynab "*who loves the sun*" is one of the very few, describing in further details a personal story. She came to Bulgaria from Sudan in 1968 to study for a dentist; her worries about the language and communication with patients were presented briefly. What was emphasized was the relationship with her university colleagues – pictured in class, working together and going out for a coffee in break time. "*The biggest help I get from Svetla – she lives near the sea and her parents*

^Keyta Sinkua (Guinea) – Director-general of liquid fuel to the Ministry of Minerals

^Peter Abuello (Kenya) – expert in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

^Kamal Hassan al Ganima (Iraq) – expert in the Ministry of Planning

^Saver Falhut (Syria) – chairman of the National Union of Journalists, editor-in-chief of newspaper "Al Ba-as"

(ST, XXIV, 39, p. 4; ST, XXIX, 35, p. 4)

and she have been inviting me over for quite some time – in the summer I would definitely go” (ST, XXII, 13, p. 1, 4).

Six years of education was the length of a stay for four male students from Syria. The paper about them, accompanied by individual photos, was written a few days before their departure back home. Among the information about how well learning they were and what a success was lying ahead of them, a sentence attracted my attention, “*What about Abdul – he has been a Bulgarian son-in-law for six months now, he is strongly attached to Bulgaria [...] There is a Bulgarian saying, wherever the wife is from, the husband is from there too*”. Although no further information about the living location of the mixed family was given, this statement was unique by itself since there was no other similar to it (ST, XV, 35, p. 4).

References

Davison R. 1960. Where is the Middle East? *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 38, № 4, pp. 665–675.

Филипова Н. 2008. България и арабският национализъм в практиката на политическите отношения с Египет (‘Bulgaria and the Arabic Nationalism in the Context of Political Relations with Egypt’). *Исторически преглед*, бр. 1–2, 202–230. [Filipova N. 2008. Bulgaria I arabskiyat nacionalizam v praktikata na politicheskite otnoshenia s Egiptet. *Istoricheski pregled*, 102, 202–230]

Филипова Н. 2009. България изгражда културни и образователни мостове със Сирия (ср. на 50-те – ср. на 60-те години на XX век) (‘Bulgaria Builds Cultural and Educational Bridges with Syria (mid 50s – mid 60s of XX c.)’). – В: *Проблеми и предизвикателства на археологическите и културно-историческите проучвания*. Пловдив: ПУ “Паисий Хилендарски” 2008, т. 2, 320–331. [Filipova N. 2009. Bulgaria izgrazhda kulturni I obrazovatelni mostove sas Siria (sr. na 50-te – sr. na 60-te g. na XX v. – V: Prob;emi i predizvikatelstva na archeologicheskite i kulturno-istoricheskite prouchvania. Plovdiv: PU “Paisii Hilendarski”]

Крачунова Д. 1989. Африканските страни със „социалистическа ориентация” (‘African Countries with ‘Socialist Orientation’). – В: *Векове*, кн. 3, 50–57. [Krachunova D. 1989. Afrikanskite strain sas “socialisticheska orientacia” – V: *Veкове*, 3, 50–57]

Крачунова Д. 1999. *Деколонизацията на Африка (1919–1945). Документи и коментари* (‘Decolonization of Africa (1919–1945). Documents and Comments’). София: Совсал’97. [Krachunova D. 1999. Dekolonizaciata na Afrika (1919–1945). Dokumenti I komentari. Sofia: Sovsal’97]

Матеева М. 2005. *Историята на дипломатическите отношения на България* (‘History of Bulgaria’s Diplomatic Relations’). София: Български бестсе-

лър. [Mateeva M. 2005. Istoria na diplomaticheskite otnoshenia na Bulgaria. Sofia: Bulgarski bestseller]

Мирчева Х. 1999. *Съвременна история. Светът в историята на XX век* ('Contemporary History. The World in the XXth Century History'). София: Софи-Р. [Mircheva H. 1999. Suvremenna istoria. Svetut v istoriata na XX vek. Sofia: Sofi-R]

Цонев К. 1999. *Българо-арабските отношения* ('Bulgarian-Arabic Relations'). София: Парадигма. [Tzonev K. 1999. Bulgaroarabski otnoshenia. Sofia: Paradigma]

Republic of Bulgaria Archive State Agency:

Fund 363, inventory 8, archive units: 177, 219, 273, 292, 320, 458, 555, 784

Fund 363, inventory 9, archive units: 125, 127, 128, 130, 131, 132, 136

Websites:

Encyclopedia Britannica, <http://www.britannica.com/place/Middle-East> (last access on: October 20, 2016)

Bulgaria's Ministry of Culture, <http://mc.government.bg/page.php?p=27&s=29&sp=0&t=0&z=0&ol=0> (last access on: October 20, 2016)

The United Nations and Decolonization, <http://www.un.org/en/decolonization/declaration.shtml> (last accessed on: October 20, 2016)

World Atlas,

<http://www.worldatlas.com/webimage/countrys/asia/lcolor/middleeastmap.htm> (last access on: October 20, 2016)

Student's Tribune (ST) articles and photos:

XI, 22, 1.III.1960, p. 1 – *Прекрасен плод на нашата братска солидарност* ('A Wonderful Fruit of Our Fraternal Solidarity')

XII, 27, 21.III.1961, p. 3 – *Независима Африка* ('Independent Africa')

XII, 34, 9.V.1961, p. 4 – *Африка щурмува училищата* ('Africa Storm the Schools')

XIII, 17, 9.I.1962, p. 1 – *Добре дошли!* ('Welcome!')

XIV, 12, 18.XII.1962, p. 4 – *С една любов* ('With One Love')

XIV, 12, 18.XII.1962, p. 4 – *С поглед към утрешния ден на Африка* ('With a Sight to Africa's Tomorrows Day')

XIV, 22, 5.III.1963, p. 1 – *Под знака на солидарността* ('Under the Mark of Solidarity')

XIV, 24, 19.III.1963, p. 3 – *Снимка: нашите колеги опознават българските обичаи* (Picture: 'our Colleagues Get to Know Bulgarian Customs')

XIV, 25, 26.III.1963, p. 4 – *Деца на различни народи* ('Children of different Nations')

- XV, 4, 22.X.1963, p. 4 – *Новият институт за чуждестранни студенти* ('The New Institute for Foreign Students')
- XV, 6, 5.XI.1963, p. 1 – *В името на мира и дружбата между народите* ('In the Name of the Peace and Friendship among Nations')
- XV, 7, 12.XI.1963, p. 4 – *След откриването на Института за чуждестранни студенти* ('After the Inauguration of the Institute for Foreign Students')
- XV, 29, 21.IV.1964, p. 4 – *Ръка за ръка в борбата против колониализма* ('Hand-in-Hand into the Fight against Colonialism')
- XV, 35, 2.VI.1964 p. 4 – *На добър път, приятели!* ('Good Luck, Friends!')
- XV, 36, 9.VI.1964, p. 4 – *Най-много от всичко обичам да пея* ('More than Anything I Love to Sing')
- XVI, 4, 13.X.1964, p. 4 – *Първо упражнение* ('The First Exercise')
- XVI, 7, 3.XI.1964, p. 4 – *Запознаваме ви с нашите нови колеги: Голямото семейство* ('Meet Our New Colleagues: The Big Family')
- XVI, 10, 24.XI.1964, p. 4 – *Деца на различни народи: Начало на пътищата* ('Children of Different Nations: The Beginning of the Roads')
- XVI, 10, 24.XI.1964, p. 4 – *Ято в полет* ('A Flock in a Flight')
- XVI, 17, 5.I.1965, p. 1 – *Един прозорец не свети* ('An Unlit Window')
- XVI, 19, 19.I.1965, p. 4 – *Сесия и за чуждестранните студенти* ('Foreign Students in Session')
- XVI, 36, 1.VI.1965, p. 1 – *Израз на солидарност с Африка* ('An Expression of Solidarity with Africa')
- XVII, 3, 19.X.1965, p. 3 – *Новите обитатели на малкото „земно кълбо“* ('The New Inhabitants of 'the Small Globe'')
- XVII, 7, 16.XI.1965, p. 3 – *Ноември в България* ('November in Bulgaria')
- XVII, 13–14, 26.XII.1965, p. 9 – *„Радвам се, че отивам в родината си, мъчно ми е, че напускам България“* ('I'm Happy I'm Going Back Home, I'm Sad I'm Leaving Bulgaria')
- XVII, 26, 29.III.1966, p. 4 – *Чуждестранни студенти на екскурзия* ('Foreign Students on Excursion')
- XVII, 27, 5.IV.1966, p. 4 – *Снимка: Темпераментен танц на судански студенти* (Picture: 'A Vibrant Dance of Sudan's Students')
- XVII, 31, 1.V.1966, p. 2 – *V фестивал на чуждестранните студенти: Ще откриеш едно небе* ('The Foreign Students Festival: You Will Find a Sky')
- XVII, 36, 31.V.1966, p. 4 – *Африка – единна* ('Africa – United')
- XVIII, 2, 11.X.1966, p. 3 – *В института за чуждестранни студенти – ново попълнение* ('In the Institute for Foreign Students – New Edition')
- XVIII, 6, 6.XI.1966, p. 4 – *Среща със стипендиантите на МСС* ('Meeting IUS Scholarship Students')
- XVIII, 27, 4.IV.1967, p. 4 – *В един пролетен ден* ('In a Spring Day')
- XVIII, 29, 18.IV.1967, p. 4 – *За теб, Виетнам!* ('For You, Vietnam!')
- XIX, 9, 21.XI.1967, p. 2 – *Студентите и времето* ('Students and the Time')

- XIX, 19, 23.I.1968, p. 4 – *Нов слънчев дом на дружбата* ('The New Sunny Friendship Home')
- XIX, 32, 30.IV.1968, p. 3 – *Празник на чуждестранните студенти* ('Foreign Students' Feast')
- XIX, 37, 4.VI.1968, p. 3 – *Ден на Африка* ('Africa's Day')
- XX, 11, 10.XII.1968, p. 2 – *Пъстър букет за българските студенти* ('A Motley Bouquet for the Bulgarian Students')
- XX, 31, 29.IV.1969, p. 4 – *С духа на Бандунг* ('In the Spirit of Bandung')
- XXII, 9, 24.XI.1970, p. 4 – *С името на Насър* ('With the Name of Nasser')
- XXII, 10, 1.XII.1970, p. 4 – *С палитра и пергел* ('With a Palette and a Wheelpen')
- XXII, 13, 22.XII.1970, p. 1, 4 – *Среща със Зейнаб, която обича слънцето* ('Meeting Zaynab, Who Loves the Sun')
- XXII, 16, 12.I.1971, p. 4 – *Пътища на доверието* ('Roads of Trust')
- XXII, 16, 12.I.1971, p. 4 – *С български диплом по света* ('With Bulgarian Diplomas around the World')
- XXII, 25, 16.III.1971, p. 4 – *С езика на дружбата* ('With the Friendship Language')
- XXII, 31, 27.IV.1971, p. 4 – *Концерт-спектакъл „за свободата“* ('Concert for the Freedom')
- XXII, 32, 4.V.1971, p. 1, 3 – *Срещи с ВИХВП* ('Meetings with the Institute for Food Industry')
- XXII, 33, 11.V.1971, p. 4 – *Вести от Клуба на дружбата* ('News from the Friendship Club')
- XXIII, 2, 5.X.1971, p. 4 – *На добър час!* ('Good Luck!')
- XXIII, 21, 15.II.1972, p. 4 – *Все още 810 милиона неграмотни* ('Still 810 Millions Illiterate')
- XXIII, 31, 2.IV.1972, p. 4 – *Приносът на България* ('Bulgaria's Contribution')
- XXIV, 10, 28.X.1972, p. 4 – *Рамо до рамо в учението и труда* ('Shoulder to Shoulder in Studies and Work')
- XXIV, 28, 3.IV.1973, p. 4 – *Българският език – ключ към науката* ('Bulgarian Language – the Key to the Knowledge')
- XXV, 14, 25.XII.1973, p. 1 – *Образованието е богатство, прилагането му – свършенство* ('Education is a Wealth, Its Application – Perfection')
- XXV, 32, 30.IV.1974, p. 4 – *С духа на Бандунг* ('In the Spirit of Bandung')
- XXV, 39, 18.VI.1974, p. 4 – *Благодарността няма граници* ('The Gratitude Has No Limits')
- XXVII, 4, 21.X.1975, p. 4 – *За нас България се превърна във втора родина* ('To Us Bulgaria Turned into Second Motherland')
- XXVII, 5, 28.X.1975, p. 4 – *Братство, равенство, свобода...* ('Fraternity, Equality, Freedom...')

- XXVII, 10, 2.XII.1975, p. 4 – „Щастлив съм, че можах да завърша в България” (‘I’m Happy I Graduated in Bulgaria’)
- XXVII, 15, 6.I.1976, p. 4 – *Текст под снимка* (‘Text under a picture’)
- XXVII, 17, 20.I.1976, p. 4 – *Текст под снимка* (‘Text under a picture’)
- XXVII, 25, 16.III.1976, p. 4 – *Мирни сражения* (‘Peaceful Battles’)
- XXVII, 27, 30.III.1976, p. 4 – *Нашият дял в световната съкровищница* (‘Our Share in the World’s Treasure-house’)
- XXVII, 35, 25.V.1976, p. 4 – *Вяра в утрешния ден* (‘Trust in the Tomorrow’s Day’)
- XXVII, 35, 25.V.1976, p. 4 – *На добър път!* (‘Good Luck’)
- XXIX, 5, 25.X.1977, p. 3 – *Тук приятелството няма почивен ден* (‘Here Friendship Has No Day Off’)
- XXIX, 5, 25.X.1977, p. 3 – *Аудитория „Дружба”* (‘Auditorium ‘Friendship’’)
- XXIX, 25, 14.III.1978, p. 4 – *Учим се да строим своето бъдеще* (‘We Learn How to Build Our Future’)
- XXIX, 26, 21.III.1978, p. 1 – *Възпитаник на пловдивския селскостопански...* (‘Alumnus of the Plovdiv’s Institute of Agriculture’)
- XXIX, 34, 16.V.1978, p. 4 – *Мигове, които се помнят* (‘Moments to Remember’)
- XXIX, 35, 23.V.1978, p. 4 – *Като своя втора родина* (‘As a Second Motherland’)
- XXIX, 35, 23.V.1978, p. 4 – *Бяха десетки, станаха стотици* (‘They were Dozens, They’ve Become Hundreds’)
- XXIX, 35, 23.V.1978, p. 4 – *Възпитаници на Алма Матер* (Graduates of Alma Mater’)
- XXIX, 36, 30.V.1978, p. 4 – *С България в сърцето* (‘With Bulgaria in the Heart’)
- XXX, 12, 12.XII.1978, p. 4 – *Текст под снимка* (‘Text under a picture’)
- XXX, 13, 19.XII.1978, p. 4 – *Фотообектив* (‘Lens’)
- XXX, 16, 9.I.1979, p. 4 – *И човек не може да не вярва* (‘And One Cannot but Believe’)
- XXX, 37, 5.VI.1979, p. 4 – *С български дипломи по света* (‘With Bulgarian Diplomas around the World’)

Desislava Pileva, PhD student

Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Studies with Ethnographic Museum – BAS
Moskovska 6A

1000 Sofia

desislava_pileva@abv.bg