Croatian bishop and patron Josip Juraj Strossmayer granted many scholarships for Bulgarian students at Zagreb University.

Dora Pejačević, a lady with the subtlety of art-deco, gave a particular contribution in Croatian musical culture. She was a member of the respectable Pejačević family from Nalice.

The great Bulgarian tenor, Dimitar Uzunov, made a worldwide career. In Croatia, he played Don Jose in Bizet’s “Carmen” and Radames in Verdi’s “Aida.” He was later proclaimed the best performer for his role of Radames at the Split Festival by critical acclaim and positive audience reception.
SACRED TONGUE OF MY PREDECESSORS: CROATIAN-BULGARIAN PARALLELS

The title of the exhibition features the opening verse from "The Bulgarian Language," a poem by the most famous and most translated Bulgarian poet, Ivan Vazov (1850-1921). Vazov is one of the many Bulgarian intellectuals, who sustained close cultural, scientific and political ties with Croatian intellectuals at the turn of the 20th century. A large number of young Bulgarians studied at University of Zagreb owing to scholarships granted by the great Croatian patron and friend, Bishop Josip Juraj Strossmayer. For example, during the 1906-1907 school year, a third of the student body at the Zagreb Faculty of Philosophy was comprised of Bulgarian students. Upon returning to their homeland, they represented the intellectual elite and were holders of unbreakable friendships between Croatians and Bulgarians.

This exhibition shows how strong relations between our two peoples have been maintained for decades in various segments of life: culture, education, science, literature, healthcare, music, art, vegetable cultivation, etc. After the Second World War and up until Croatian independence in 1991, these relations were not fostered and have slowly started to be forgotten. Our joint task is to share information and awareness with the younger generations about the multiple historical threads that tie our two nations, and to encourage them to develop and enrich these ties, which we have inherited from our ancestors.

Today, the Republic of Croatia and the Republic of Bulgaria are on the same path, as members of Euro-Atlantic integrations, through which they have numerous opportunities for even more varied and closer cooperation. It is up to us to recognize those opportunities, while being inspired by the deeds left at a testament by our forefathers.

In 2007, the great Bulgarian historian, Rumiana Bozhilova, author of "History of Croatia" wrote: "Now we, Bulgarians, have the opportunity to pay back our moral debt to Croatia and the Croatians. A debt toward all those authors, social workers, politicians and scientists who have been deeply present in the fate of Bulgarians, and who have supported the development of our culture and national interests."

Ljerka Alajbeg  
Ambassador of the Republic of Croatia

Sofia, March, 2017

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1 Rumjana Božilova: "Bulgarians and Croatians Throughout the Centuries", Hrvatska revija, 3, 2007. pg 7