



## **Dean of the metochion of the Russian Church in Bulgaria serves short memorial prayer service by the Freedom Monument in the Shipka Pass.**



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On 23<sup>rd</sup> August on the occasion of the 147<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Battle of Shipka Pass during the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1878 the dean of the metochion of the Russian Orthodox Church in Sofia, Bulgaria, archpriest Vladimir Tyschuk served a short memorial prayer service by the Freedom Monument in Shipka Pass.

Attending the service were the Russian ambassador to Bulgaria Eleonora Mitrofanova and embassy staff, reports the website of the metochion.

At the conclusion of the memorial service flowers were laid at the Freedom Monument.

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The Freedom Monument at Shipka Pass is situated at the highest point in Bulgaria at 1523 meters above sea level. Shipka peak and the surrounding territories enjoy the status of national park and museum.

The monument was constructed at the initiative of the Bulgarian soldiers on private donations and was solemnly opened on 26<sup>th</sup> August 1934. It consists of a seven-tiered stone tower in the style of a medieval Bulgarian fortress. On the first tier beneath the sarcophagus are the remains of the heroes who died in the defense of Shipka. In front of the sarcophagus are marble white figures of a Russian soldier and Bulgarian volunteers. A museum is to be found throughout the seven tiers of the monument. Leading up to the monument is a stairway consisting of 890 steps with numerous platforms in between. Above the entrance into the tower is a bronze sculpture of a lion and an inscription in Bulgarian reading: "To the Fighters for Freedom." The area surrounding the monument is adorned with memorial plaques and obelisks in honour of the capture of the Shipka Pass by Russian soldiers in July of 1877 and its months-long defense, as well as artillery from the time of the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1878.

The Battle of Shipka Pass between its defenders and the Turkish army lasted from 21<sup>st</sup> to 26<sup>th</sup> August 1877 according to the New Style calendar. There were General Stoletov's detachment six thousand Russian soldiers and seven and a half thousand Bulgarian volunteers. Facing them were the forces of Suleyman Pasha consisting of thirty-seven thousand troops. However, the defenders of the Shipka Pass repelled all their advances and held onto their strategically important position.

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