



Sofia is one of the oldest capital cities in Europe. Its inhabitants have been making its history for more than 7,000 years now.

Not far away from the locations of the one-time Neolithic settlements (around today's Palace, as well as in today's Slatina Residential Area), during the second millennium BC, to the north of the warm mineral spring, near the Eleshnitsa River (today's Vladayska River), an ancient Thracian town was founded, called *Serdica* in later Roman documents - a name traditionally assumed to derive from „serdi“ - the local Thracian population in the vicinity of the city.

Serdica was conferred the statute of a Roman town by emperor Marcus Ulpius Traianus and incorporated his generic name to become *Ulpia Serdica*. In official inscriptions in Old Greek, posted by the Greek authorities, the town was called *Σερδίων πόλις* („serdi town“), which corresponds to the Roman *civitas Serdensium*. According to archaeologist Dimitrina Mitova - Dzhonova, *Sardon (Serdon)* is an unidentified settlement somewhere in the Thracian lands. *Serdica* was the favorite town of emperor Constantine The Great (born in Nish, not far away), who even planned to transfer here his capital from Rome and ancient authors confirm that he would often say, „*Sardica* is my Rome“. The emperor came to *Serdica* on many occasions and this is the place where many of his decrees were issued, now preserved in *Corpus Iuris Civilis*, and he lived in



his palace, tentatively called by scientists „the urban residence“. In the 4th c. it occupied a whole residential area, known as „Constantine's Quarter“. In 809, the town became part of the Bulgarian State and obtained its Bulgarian name, *Sredets*. In the 10th c., the *Comitopuli's* dynasty, successors to *Nikola, Governor (comit)* of the district of *Sredets*, again brought the Bulgarian State to an upheaval before it came under the rule of the East Roman Empire. It is assumed that in Byzantine sources of that time the town was called *Triaditsa* to commemorate the triumph of the Orthodox doctrine on *St. Trinity (Agia Triada* in Greek) at the *Serdica Council*. From the end of the 14th c. to the 70s of the 19th century, the city, as well as the Bulgarian State, were under Ottoman occupation. During the Russian-Turkish War of 1877-1878, *Sofia* was liberated on 4 January 1878 (23 December 1877, Old Style Calendar) by Russian troops under the command of General *Yosif Gurko*. At that time the city numbered 11,649 inhabitants, of which 56% Bulgarians, 30% Jews, 7% Turks and 6% Roma.

On 20 October 1878, the seat of the Interim Russian Governance was transferred from *Plovdiv* to *Sofia*, and on 3 April (22 March Old Style Calendar) 1879, on proposal put forward by *Marin Drinov*, the Constituent Assembly chose *Sofia* to become the capital of the Principality of Bulgaria (the date 4th April was pronounced to be a holiday for *Sofia*).

