

Bulgaria National Day



In 1868, VASSIL LEVSKI called upon among his countrymen to take up armed struggle for independence from Ottoman rule. He was arrested in 1872, sentenced and executed in 1873. In 1871 the CENTRAL BULGARIAN REVOLUTIONARY COMMITTEE with its seat in Bucharest, Romania was founded.

A rebellion in 1876, lead by GEORGI BENKOWSKI, was brutally suppressed by Ottoman forces, c. 30,000 persons fell victim to the atrocities committed by Ottoman forces.

A diplomatic conference aiming at reducing the tension did not bring any results; in 1877 Russian Czar Alexander II., regarding himself the protector of the Orthodox christians living within the Ottoman Empire, declared war on the latter. Russian forces, which were joined by a Bulgarian corps of 7,000 volunteers, defeated the Ottoman forces, among others in a battle at Shipka Pass. In 1878 the Ottoman Empire, in the TREATY OF SAN STEFANO had to concede the creation of a large Bulgarian state which would include Macedonia and Rumelia. The war had cost c. 200,000 lives on the Russian side. Bulgarians refer to Russian Czar Alexander II. as Czar Osvoboditel, Czar Liberator.

Other European powers, most of all England and Austria-Hungary, regarded this Bulgarian state a Russian satellite and were unwilling to accept the situation; a repetition of the Crimean War threatened. Then Bismarck called the representatives of the European states to meet at the BERLIN CONGRESS (1878). Here the Treaty of San Stefano was annulled. Macedonia and Thrace remained Ottoman provinces; a smaller (northern) Bulgaria was granted political autonomy within the Ottoman Empire, while the southern region of Rumelia would keep closer links to the Empire.

From July 10th 1877 to July 8th 1879, Bulgaria was placed under a provisional Russian administration.

The liberation of Bulgaria came as a result of the victory of Russia in the Russo-Turkish war declared on 12 April 1877. During the war, 12 battalions of more than 12,000 Bulgarians joined with the Russian army to fight against the forces of Ottoman Empire. On [March 3, 1878](#), the Peace Treaty of San Stefano (a tiny town near Istanbul) between Russia and the Ottoman Empire was signed which brought Bulgaria back to the political map. The Peace Treaty of San Stefano marks the revival of the Bulgarian State, submerged under Ottoman rule since the end of 14th century. However, the actual life of independent Bulgaria started after the Berlin Congress, which took place a couple of months later in 1878.

It is this day that is remembered as Bulgaria's Independence, as throughout its cities, towns and villages the people of Bulgaria pause for a tribute. Bulgarians are proud to point out that none of Bulgaria's losses have ever been in battle.

The first time of marking March 3 occurred in 1880, in honor of Enthronement of Russian Emperor Alexander the Second. Since 1888 March 3 has become Bulgaria's Day of Liberation and it was not pronounced a National Holiday until 1978.

Since 1990 the date March 3 is included in the list of Bulgaria's official holidays, according to a parliamentary decree.

Appropriately, Bulgaria honors Russian Czar Alexander II as a primary figure among its "founding fathers" with statues of him in many cities, including one in the heart of its capital, Sofia.

Although decidedly a man of peace, Alexander II became the reluctant champion of the oppressed Slav peoples and in 1877 finally declared war on Turkey. Following initial setbacks, Russian arms eventually triumphed, and, early in 1878, the vanguard of the Russian armies stood encamped on the shores of the Sea of Marmara. The prime reward of Russian victory -- seriously reduced by the European powers at the Congress of Berlin -- was the independence of Bulgaria from Turkey.

The struggle of the Balkan peoples for freedom from centuries of Ottoman domination was reflected in the Ottoman Empire's strained international relations: the Serbo-Turkish conflict of 1876; and the Russo-Turkish wars of 1877 through 1878. The latter conflict was resolved, for the time being, by the signing of the San Stefano Peace Treaty on March 3, 1878. With Turkey defeated and weakened by internal strife, the Russian Czar was able to dictate the terms of the treaty. In an attempt to secure enduring access to the Aegean Sea, he created the new Bulgarian state on the Balkans. However, when the Western powers convened for the Congress of Berlin in July, 1878, the Russian hopes for creating a Greater Bulgaria on the Balkans were stymied.



There is related information at our pages on [Shipka](#) and [Batak](#).



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Mila Rodino
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(Dear Fatherland)

The National Anthem of Bulgaria.