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### **HISTORICAL MEMORY AND OFFICIAL HOLIDAYS IN BULGARIA UNDER SOCIALISM<sup>1</sup>**

**Abstract:** The report looks at the development of the official Bulgarian holiday calendar and especially during the years of state socialism. The analysis shows that military victories are not the primary motive in choosing official memorial days. Even the Bulgarian military exploits are not of special honor in forming the official state holiday of new Bulgaria. The festive calendar does not include the victories for the Bulgarians of the Middle Ages, and there are no new military exploits in the twentieth century. During the period of socialism, the holidays of May 1 (International Labor Day) and September 9 (1944), proclaimed as „Freedom Day“ in 1945, became the main focus. Like all other events in the life of the People’s Republic, the holiday is used for a purely functional purpose - to unite, to emphasize unity, to reaffirm loyalty to the ruling party and the new ideology, to show confidence in the imminent onset of prosperity and a „bright future“ - communism. Particular attention is paid to substantiating the claim that the Third March was imposed as a national holiday by communist rule in the early 1990s. It is not as suitable for this role as the oldest all-Bulgarian holiday on May 24th. It is because of public holidays, incl. and the only national one so far (March 3) have always been determined by political decisions - until 1944 of the monarch, the National Assembly, and a specially authorized ministry, and after 1944 - predominantly the Council of Ministers or the State Council, rarely at the National Assembly.

**Keywords:** Bulgarian state, official holidays, state socialism, May 1st, September 9th, a national holiday, Third March, Twenty-fourth May

Until the creation of the Third Bulgarian State, which is also a consequence of war and peace treaty (Petkov 2015), the Bulgarian society shares mostly traditional and ecclesiastical holidays. The status of a public holiday, which has gained wide popularity, is the Day of the Holy Brothers Cyril and Methodius May 11 (celebrated since 1851), as well as the days related to the establishment of the Bulgarian Exarchate.

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In 1900, the first Law on public holidays was adopted in the Principality, approved following the Constitution by a decree of the prince of 31.01.1900. At this time, there is still no official definition of a holiday, and it is assumed by default to be a non-working day. The calendar of holidays includes February 19 as the Day of „Liberation of Bulgaria,“ May 11, as a day of commemoration for „St. Cyril and Methodius”, as well as the days associated with Prince Ferdinand’s personality. For the first time, the date of September 6 was included as a day for the celebration of the Union of North and South Bulgaria<sup>2</sup>. The text of the Law shows that the proposal of several MPs for the declaration of holidays on April 20, 1876 (the outbreak of the April Uprising), August 11, 1877 (the defense of Shipka and St. Nicholas) and November 8, 1885 (victory in the war with Serbia) not accepted.

By decree No. 4 of February 7, 1911, the monarch affirmed the Law on Holidays and Sunday Holidays, adopted by the National Assembly, applicable before and after 1944. For the first time in this text, an attempt is made to define the concept of a holiday, though too short and unsuccessful. According to Art. 1 of the Law, „Holidays in Bulgaria are all Sundays, as well as the following Lord’s, holy and official days“ (following is a list of holidays). In Art. 9 states that the „feasts of the Lord“ are the First day of the Nativity of Christ, the First Day of the Resurrection of Christ, the First day of the Ascension, the First Day of the „feasts of the fellowship of St. Spirit. “Holy Days are New Year’s Day (January 1) and St. Cyril and Methodius (May 11). And the „official days“ are announced on February 19 („Liberation of Bulgaria“), August 2 („the ascension of the King of the Bulgarian throne“) and September 22. The last date - the Day of the declaration of independence - was first included in the holiday calendar<sup>3</sup>.

In 1916 the Gregorian calendar was officially introduced in Bulgaria. In Art. 5 of the royal decree issued for this purpose states: „The national and national holidays, as well as those of the Royal House, shall be celebrated as follows: a) Birthday of His Royal Highness the Crown Prince - on January 30, b) Her Majesty the The Queen’s name day - February 21, c) Birthday of His Majesty the King - February 27, d) His Majesty the King’s ascension on February 14 and (e) Victory Day - November 27.“ The next Art. 6. obliges the Council of Ministers to issue regulations which, once approved by a royal decree, „will explain the details of the application of this law“<sup>4</sup>. For the first time the Victory Day is included in the holiday calendar. This commemorative Day was initially associated with the memorial service in honor of the fallen in the Serbo-Bulgarian War of 1885, with more and more secular elements being added to them - the presence of the prince, parades, speeches, meetings. For several years, the religious rite became a national holiday, which is why the date of its celebration was moved from November 7 (the end of the battles at Slivnitsa and Dragoman) to November 15 (the victorious end of the war).

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2 State Gazette, № 35, 16.02.1900.

3 State Gazette, № 36, 17.02.1911.

4 State Gazette, № 65, 21.03.1916.

Until the wars of 1912-1918, the days of war and peace treaties did not prevail in the official celebration of the Bulgarian state. Therefore, as early as 1880, the festive dates of the monarch's family - birthdays and names of the prince and throne heir, the Ascension of the throne, the birthday of the princess - gradually entered the calendar. Indicative of the dominant monarchical spirit in the festive system of the young Bulgarian state is that even the military exploits of the Bulgarian army during the Serbo-Bulgarian War of 1885 were not included in the official festive list. The celebration of the Order of Courage on the Day of St. George (until 1916 on April 23) was also not included in the official calendar as a tribute to the army. The holiday list lacks days such as the announcement of the April Uprising (April 20), the heroic protection of the peaks „St. Nikola ”and Shipka in August 1877, the date of the signing of the first official Russian-Turkish agreement at the end of the war - the so-called „Bases of Peace”, (January 19, 1878), declaring that an autonomous Principality of Bulgaria would be established on all lands inhabited by Bulgarians, but not less than the territories designated by the Constantinople Conference of Great Powers at the end of 1876 (Petkov 2018 : 8-19). Instead, it deliberately focuses on the preliminary San Stefano Treaty, though it does not include within the Principality of Bulgaria some Bulgarian territories already recognized as such by the Sultan and the Great Powers. It is because the Day of the signing of the San Stefano Treaty was deliberately chosen by N. P. Ignatiev to coincide with the date on which the Russian Tsar Alexander II, who was proclaimed Bulgaria's „liberator,” ascends to the throne. And though this part of the February 19 holiday - the „ascension of the throne of Alexander II“ will eventually disappear, it is this memorable Day that remains on the holiday calendar as a symbol of the Liberation of Bulgaria, although there are no serious grounds for this, but rather, consistent, systematic and ultimately productive suggestions.

After the wars of the second decade of the twentieth century on the holiday calendar, the Law of 1911 continued to apply, but it was necessary for individual agencies to further define certain official holidays (Paev 2012: 129-130). Thus, one of the most celebrated holidays in the celebration of peaceful spiritual work - the Day of the National enlighteners - emerges. The initiative for this memorable Day is the Minister of National Education in the Cabinet of the Bulgarian Agrarian Union Stoyan Omarchevski. On October 31, 1922, a decree of the Council of Ministers was issued announcing the holiday. On December 13, the same year, the National Assembly adopted an amendment to the Law on Holidays and Sunday Holidays, and by decree No. 32 of Tsar Boris III of February 3, 1923, the amendment to the Law was approved. According to the only member, the „memory of the deserving Bulgarians“ is celebrated on November 1st<sup>5</sup>.

Although there are no significant changes in the holiday calendar, in the period between the two world wars, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Religions, which is entrusted with the coordinating function in this specific activity, continues to inform citizens by issuing a Circle specifying the holidays for the current year. For example, in the Circular of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and

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5 , State Gazette, № 267, 28.02.1923.

Confessions No. 1429-70-V of February 9, 1933, the holidays for 1933 are mainly indicated in the 1911 Act with minor amendments: October 3 - the Day of the Ascension of the throne of Tsar Boris III is complemented by the meaningful „Independence of Bulgaria“. Probably for the first, but not the last time in the twentieth century, the state government violated the calendar chronology for specific expediency - in this case, the celebration of independence, which on the new style falls on October 5, was moved two days ahead to coincide with another a monumental day for the monarch. Again, on this occasion, the Day of November 1 was designated, in addition to the tribute to the „national enlighteners,“ and also to the celebration of Queen Joana’s name day. The original text of the Law, which in 1922 introduced the Feast of the „Honored Bulgarians“ on November 1, has over time been adjusted to the Feast of the „People’s Awakens“, as recorded in the cited District of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Confessions<sup>6</sup>. Both amendments and supplements to the holiday calendar (for October 3 and November 1) are maintained in the coming years<sup>7</sup>.

It is inconsistently and differently described in the official documents for the different years and the celebration of May 6 - St. George’s Day. For 1932, 1933 and 1936, that Day was mentioned in the respective districts of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Confessions only as „St. George the Victorious (St. George day)“<sup>8</sup> (Calendar for 1936). For the first time in the calendar for 1935 on May 6, in addition to the „Martyr George the Victorious,“ and also „Feast of the Order of Courage and Victory“<sup>9</sup>. For 1937 May 6 was marked in the respective district as „St. George the Victorious (Courage Day), for 1938 as „St. Georgi Pobedonosets (Courage and Victory Day), was similarly recorded in the 1939 Holiday District. Notwithstanding these formal differences, it was precisely in the 1930s and early 1940s that the 6th of May became a day of celebration for both the Order of Courage and the Bulgarian Army<sup>10</sup> (Calendar for 1941).

After the transformations in Bulgarian society in the mid-1940s, changes occurred in the holiday system of the country. On April 25, 1945, the Council of Ministers adopted an ordinance-law to approve May 1 as a national labor holiday. The only paragraph in the ordinance notes that May 1st is legalized as a national labor holiday - mental and physical, and should be celebrated in cities and villages throughout the country. The Minister of Social Policy is entrusted with this task<sup>11</sup>. Less than a year after the next coup d’état in 1944, by Decree No. 6 of the Council of Ministers of August 31, 1945, the date of September 9 was declared „a day of freedom, an official holiday and a non-attendance day for all offices, establishments, establishments, and institutions. persons“<sup>12</sup>.

6 State Gazette, N° 257, 15.02.1933.

7 State Gazette, N° 267, 27.02.1934; N° 6, 10.01.1935.

8 State Gazette, N° 257, 15.02.1933; N° 271, 02.12.1935.

9 State Gazette, N° 6, 10.01.1935.

10 State Gazette, N° 286, 16.12.1936.

11 State Gazette, N° 102, 03.05.1945.

12 State Gazette, N° 208, 07.09.1945.

Due to the political changes in Bulgaria and its proclamation as a republic on September 15, 1946, many holidays related to the monarchical institute, such as the birthday of Crown Prince Simeon II, the queen's name, etc., were abolished. Moreover, in every way seeks to remove them from the official holiday calendar, although the Holiday and Sunday Holiday Act of 1911 is still in force and has not been repealed.

The tradition of defining holidays on a year-to-year basis continues into the 1950s, with new holidays being introduced. By a decree of the Council of Ministers No. 26 of January 12, 1951, the following absent days during the year were determined: January 1 - New Year, May 1 and 2 - Labor Day, May 24 - Cyril and Methodius, September 9 and 10 - Freedom Day, November 7 - Anniversary of the GOSR (Great October Socialist Revolution in Russia), December 5 - Day of the Dimitrov Constitution<sup>13</sup>. The lack of many old holidays and the presence of new ones are evident here. The replacement of monarchy with the republic in 1946 led to the elimination of all holidays associated with the monarchical institute. With the imposition of the totalitarian regime and the new communist ideology, religious holidays were removed from the country's official calendar, as well as Christian and monarchy-related object names. In 1951, by decree of the Presidium of the National Assembly No. 557 of November 17, 1951, the then authorities renamed the famous Stara Planina Peak „St. Nicholas“ to „Stoletov Peak“<sup>14</sup>. As can be seen from the text of the decree, the names of other sites (mainly settlements) that form religious or monarchical associations were changed with the same state act: the village Cherkovna, Targovishko, was renamed Dabrava; Knyazhevo village, Tervelsko - Sredishte; the village of Popovo, Novozagorsko - on Kamenovo; Kalugerovo village, Novozagorsko - on Grafitovo; Vladikovo village, Asenovgrad - on Students; the village of Gospodarevo, Grudovsko - the Light<sup>15</sup> (Petkov 2018a : 7; 34).

The messages the new authorities made during official „holiday events“ are part of a propaganda mechanism aimed primarily at mobilizing people for more efforts. Like all other events in the life of the People's Republic, the holiday is used for a purely functional purpose - to unite, to emphasize unity, to reaffirm loyalty to the ruling party and the new ideology, to show confidence in the imminent onset of prosperity and a „bright future“ – communism (Ivanova 2011).

In the same 1951, the Labor Code was adopted. In Art. 52 of Chapter III Working Hours and Holidays does not specify specific and permanent holidays, and this right is conferred on the Government<sup>16</sup>. By Decree No. 31 of January 17, 1953, the Council of Ministers kept the new holidays, introducing restrictions on the celebration of the oldest national holiday. May 24 is defined as (the quote is literal) „Cyril and Methodius - the day of Slavic writing; a non-attendance day

13 Announcements of the Presidium of the National Assembly, № 9, 30.01.1951.

14 State Gazette, № 94, 23.11.1951.

15 Central State Archives (CDA), f. 117, desc. 2c, a.u. 62, p. 104-105.

16 Announcements of the Presidium of the National Assembly, № 91, 13.11.1951.

only for employees and learners from all educational and cultural institutions<sup>17</sup>. In this way, the new communist government in the early 1950s tried to break the tradition of May 24 to be celebrated as a national holiday, meaning not as before as a day of Bulgarian writing, education, and culture and as a memorial day for „Slavic writing.“ The grave grammatical error in spelling the name of St. Methodius in the official document, by which the initiators for demeaning the significance of this holiday, are even more self-deprecating. The restriction of the all-Bulgarian celebration on May 24, of course, does not work, and the oldest national holiday continues to be honored and celebrated by the entire Bulgarian population.

By a decree adopted on October 15, 1956, the Council of Ministers considered it appropriate to abolish the practice of defining absentee days each year, and to approve a permanent list that would continue to apply for subsequent years. In addition to the new public holidays since 1944, some changes and additions have now been made: December 5 - the Day of the Dimitrov constitution falls as an official holiday; since the next 1957, May 24 is already a national holiday, not just for employees of educational and cultural institutions and learners. The name of this memorable Day has also been changed - instead of „Cyril and Methodius,“ it is now called „Day of Bulgarian Folk Education and Culture and Slavic Writing“<sup>18</sup>. In the following year, this definition was supplemented, and on May 24, it became „Day of Bulgarian Folk Education and Culture, Slavic Writing and the Bulgarian Press“<sup>19</sup>. Undoubtedly, the new political line of the ruling parties after the April 1956 Plenum of the Bulgarian Communist Party takes into account the negative impact on society and the practical non-fulfillment of the restriction of this oldest Bulgarian holiday, imposed in the early 1950s.

In 1971, a new constitution was adopted, changes were made to the government and the holiday system. On April 12, 1978, the State Council adopted the „Basic Guidelines for the Development and Improvement of the Holiday and Rite System in the People’s Republic of Bulgaria“<sup>20</sup>. The decision consists of four main sections: 1) general provisions; 2) content, types and forms of the festive ritual system; 3) material and technical base; and 4) the management of the holiday ritual system. According to the accepted „Guidelines,“ holidays and rituals should be used as a means of ensuring unity between the personal and the social beginnings, to strengthening the links between the generations, to „unite the progressive traditions with the socialist present and the communist future.“ The document divides the holidays into two groups: national and international. The first includes: 9 September - Day of Freedom and Socialist Revolution in Bulgaria; May 24 - the Day of Slavic Literacy and Bulgarian Education and Culture; June 2 - Day of the Fallen in the Fight against Ottoman Slavery, Capitalism, Fascism and the Patriotic War; March 3 - Ottoman Yoke

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17 Announcements of the Presidium of the National Assembly, № 7, 23.01.1953.

18 Announcements of the Presidium of the National Assembly, № 85, 23.10.1956.

19 Announcements of the Presidium of the National Assembly, № 40, 17.05.1957.

20 State Gazette, № 42, 30.05.1978.

Liberation Day; New Year. International holidays are November 7 - Day of the Great October Socialist Revolution, May 1 - Day of International Solidarity for Workers from All Over the World; May 9 - Day of victory over fascism; March 8 - International Women's Day. Different work achievements should be highlighted during these holidays. The new solution has some differences with the already established holidays. March 3rd is not yet a public holiday as a non-attendance day, but it is celebrated with different celebrations outside of business hours or during business hours. The same applies for November 7, May 9 and March 8. The primary purpose of the decision is related to the affirmation of the official ideology and its propaganda through the holidays, rather than to any connection with the labor process. National, district and municipal commissions on socialist holidays and ordinances are established as public-state bodies. The National Commission was associated with the then-existing Committee on Culture, and the County and Municipal Committees - with the Executive Committees of the County and Municipal People's Councils<sup>21</sup>. Ritual houses are being set up at the Municipal People's Councils. BAS is charged with drawing up a national holiday calendar and, in accordance with it, an exemplary settlement calendar. These innovations leave lasting traces in the Bulgarian holiday-ritual system, which operated in this form until the end of the 1980s.

The new Labor Code, adopted in 1986, unlike the previous one in 1951, Section III 'Holidays' (Article 154, Paragraph 1) defines the regular official holidays: 1 January, 1 and 2 May, 24 May, September 9 and 10. In the second paragraph of the same 154 a member of the Council of Ministers is granted the right to declare one-off other days as official holidays, to celebrate certain professions, to be professed, and to postpone weekends during the year<sup>22</sup>. During these years there are a number of professional holidays, most of them related to old religious and national holidays: Babinden (January 21) - Day of Maternity Care, Obstetricians and Gynecologists; St. George's Day - despite the fact that the Bulgarian Orthodox Church continues to celebrate it on April 23, since 1977 it has been forcibly „combined“ with the Day of the shepherd on May 6 (Temelski 2006), in order to erase the memory of it as a „royal time“ as a celebration of the army. New professional holidays are also being created. For example, On the occasion of the opening of the first facilities in the newly constructed Kremikovtsi Iron and Steel Works by Todor Zhivkov on November 5, 1963, this Day was declared an official holiday of the metallurgist.

In 1988, by a decree of the State Council No. 27, a new amendment was made to para. 1 of Art. 154 of the Labor Code. On the official holidays was added the Third March, proclaimed as „Bulgaria's Liberation Day from Turkish Slavery“<sup>23</sup>. The change is related to the development of the so-called „revival process“ in Bulgaria in 1988-1989 (Paev 2012: 134-135), but it also has deeper ideological roots. In this way, the authorities at the same time express their negative attitude

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21 State Gazette, N<sup>o</sup> 42, 30.05.1978.

22 State Gazette, N<sup>o</sup> 26, 01.04.1986.

23 State Gazette, N<sup>o</sup> 6, 22.01.1988.

towards the Ottoman rule in the Bulgarian lands, but also explicitly declare their official gratitude to Russia as a „liberator“ of the Bulgarians from the foreign yoke. Propagated in the 1970s, limited nationalism (rather ethnic mysticism – Vodenicharov 2004), coupled with the persistently reiterated multiple liberation role of Russia (USSR), peaked in the late 1980s and apotheosis manifested itself in the early 1990s. Only two years after its inclusion in the list of official holidays, by Decree No. 236 of February 27, 1990, the State Council of the People’s Republic of Bulgaria, without any public discussion, decided and imposed the Third of March as a national holiday under the still-existing 1971 Constitution.<sup>24</sup> This act is just one of many factual confirmations that the notion of November 10, 1989, as a milestone in the recent history of Bulgaria, imposed over the last three decades is exaggerated and insufficiently substantiated, even if only on the Day that the plenum of the Central Committee of the ruling PA is replaced only by the party’s secretary-general and chairman of the State Council with another member of the Politburo whose nomination is previously agreed with the Soviet leadership. On November 10, 1989, neither a revolution nor a coup d’état began, the economic system was changed, nor the type of government changed. Over the next few months, the Constitution of the People’s Republic of Bulgaria continues to be applied, and the BCP is still virtually governed. The controlled changes that have begun are somewhat formal, giving the impression that the governing share power with the legal opposition created after November 10, 1989.

Changes in Bulgaria’s holiday system after 1989 are not subordinated to any pre-designed strategy or generally accepted national program. In the first years, even old (introduced in the period 1944-1989) and new or restored (from 1944 to 1944) holidays are celebrated, whose traditions and ideological foundations are incompatible. As early as 1990, in Art. 154 of the Labor Code have been amended. By a law passed on March 30, 1990 by the Ninth National Assembly, chaired by Stanko Todorov, under para. 1 of the same 154 articles as official holidays were added December 25 - Christmas as well as Easter. The holiday calendar remains May 1 as Labor Day and International Workers’ Solidarity, and September 9 is still officially designated „Freedom Day,“ with only one non-working Day scheduled. Following the decision of the National Council of the People’s Republic of Bulgaria of February 27, 1990 to designate a national holiday through the Law on Amendments to the Labor Code, March 3 was entered in the holiday calendar as „Bulgaria’s Liberation Day from Ottoman Yoke - National Day“<sup>25</sup>. The restored celebration of the Nativity of Christ and the Resurrection of Christ while maintaining the holiday of „freedom“ on September 9, as well as the addition (namely the imposition) of the Third March as a national holiday, clearly show the lack of a strong political will among the governing then to break decisively with the totalitarian past, and put traditional foreign policy dependencies and the holiday system on new foundations. The public reaction to this ideologically inhomogeneous mix of public holidays is also not strong enough to influence

24 State Gazette, № 18, 02.03.1990.

25 State Gazette, № 30, 13.04.1990.

the faster and unambiguous arrangement of the holiday calendar. Attempts to substantiate the understanding that the Third March is not suitable for a national holiday and to a full extent the purpose of a national holiday may play on May 24 are single events without broad public response in the then Bulgarian society (Petkov 1997: 23).

In the following years, until the end of the twentieth century, new changes are made - new holidays are added, old ones are canceled, some new ones are replaced by others. In the spring of 1991, two holy days were scheduled in connection with the coming great Christian holiday for Easter - Sunday and Monday<sup>26</sup>. By Decree No. 100 of the Council of Ministers of May 30, 1991, the government of Dimitar Popov repealed Decree No. 129 of 1953, which designated the holiday of the Bulgarian army on September 23 - the beginning of the September Uprising in 1923 - and designated 23 August for the Day of the Bulgarian Army in honor of the epic battles on 11/23 August 1877 at the peak of Shipka and St. Nicholas during the War of Liberation<sup>27</sup>. At the end of 1991, a new Law on Amendments to the Labor Code was adopted, in which in Art. 154, para. 1 made another change: September 9th was removed as an official holiday, and a number of weekends were set for Christmas: December 24th after 2 pm, December 25th, and December 26th<sup>28</sup>.

In the last decade in Bulgaria, there are no changes in the established official holiday calendar. According to the Labor Code (Article 154, paragraph 1), "official holidays are: January 1 - New Year; March 3 - Day of Liberation of Bulgaria from Ottoman yoke - national holiday; 1 May - Labor Day and International Workers' Solidarity; May 6 - St. George's Day, Day of Courage and the Bulgarian Army; May 24 - Day of Bulgarian Enlightenment and Culture and Slavic Literacy; September 6 - Union Day; September 22 - Bulgaria's Independence Day; November 1 - National Awakening Day - absent for all schools; December 24 - Christmas Eve; December 25 and 26 - Christmas; Good Friday, Good Saturday and Easter - Sundays and Mondays, which are designated to celebrate in the relevant year"<sup>29</sup> (Labour Code 2011: 74-75).

With the exception of some separate publications, in the scientific literature, there is no particular interest or purposefully organized discussion on the formation of a system of official and national holidays, reasoned by Bulgarian national interests (Petkov 2005). That is why it is not always clear what values and national achievements we honor, celebrating the days listed; it is hard to say for sure that they are all „national,“ that is, all-Bulgarian. However, it has long been stated that some important historical dates and events remain outside the list of declared „official“ holidays. Such is, for example: February 27 - the

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26 State Gazette, № 27, 05.04.1991.

27 State Gazette, № 47, 14.06.1991.

28 State Gazette, № 104, 17.12.1991.

29 National Assembly of the Republic of Bulgaria. Bulgarian official holidays. - <https://www.parliament.bg/bg/24> (23.08.2018 r.).

founding of the Bulgarian Exarchate in 1870 - the first legally recognized all-Bulgarian institution, reasonably defined in the scientific literature as Bulgarian proto-state, April 16 - the adoption of the First Bulgarian Constitution in Turnovo in 1879, April 17 - the election of the first Bulgarian prince after the restoration of the Bulgarian state in 1879, April 20 - the outbreak of the largest and most successful Bulgarian uprising for Liberation from the Ottoman yoke in 1876 and many others. The fact that some of the official holidays are included in the calendar with their old-style dates (September 6, September 22) and others - according to the new style, introduced in 1916 and still valid (March 3, May 6, May 24) (Petkov 2005). This is because of public holidays, incl. Moreover, the only national one so far (March 3) has always been determined by political decisions - until 1944 of the monarch, the National Assembly, and a specially authorized ministry, and after 1944 - predominantly the Council of Ministers or the State Council, rarely at the National Assembly.

From the viewpoint of the reflection of war and peace, some observations and conclusions can be drawn in the official holidays. The analysis shows that war and military victories are not the primary motives in choosing official memorial days. Even the Bulgarian military exploits are not of special honor in the formation of the official state holiday. The festive calendar does not include the victories for the Bulgarians of the Middle Ages. The official holiday calendar throughout the period under review lacks dates such as April 20 - the beginning of the April Uprising, which, despite its military defeat, ends with political success and is an indisputable display of courage and heroism. There are no dates related to the great victories of the medieval Bulgarian state, its military might, and political hegemony, which instilled national pride. There are no days of the new Bulgarian military glory related to the victories at Adrianople, Lozengrad, Doiran, and Drava. It is noteworthy that even in the recent times, with media freedom and opportunities for broad public discussion, these memorable days are not offered for inclusion in the official holiday calendar, except April 20 as a symbolic day of Liberation, which, however, celebrates in a new style, coincides with May 1st, which is on the list of official holidays of another meaning (Petkov 2005). Only St. George's Day, though not permanent, retains its place on the calendar as a day of Bulgarian martial glory and courage.

The possible objection that the Third March was precisely such a „celebration of victory“ in the war between Russia and the Ottoman Empire of 1877-1878 should be answered clearly and emphatically. 1. Third March does not express Bulgarian participation in the Liberation, as, for example, on April 20 or August 11/23, it should be remembered that the national holiday, and other official holidays, should reflect generally accepted Bulgarian values and Bulgarian achievements, be memorial days related to Bulgarian historical contributions; 2. The San Stefano Treaty is not the first valid Russian-Turkish agreement to end the Liberation War. Just a month earlier, on 19/31 January 1878 in Adrianople were signed by the official Russian and Turkish representatives „Fundamentals of Peace“, providing for the establishment of a Bulgarian principality on all

lands inhabited by Bulgarians, but no less than the territories, designated by the Constantinople Conference of Great Powers in 1876 (Petkov 2018 : 8-19); 3. The San Stefano Preliminary Treaty provides for an external military occupation of the Bulgarian Principality and the detachment of already recognized Bulgarian territories from the Bulgarian land, making it inappropriate for a „national“ holiday (How do the citizens of the Smolyan region celebrate today, March 3, according to the San Stefano Treaty? this part of the Rhodopes was left in the Ottoman Empire).

The specific periodization in the celebration of February 19 / March 3 in the Third Bulgarian State is indicative. For the official holiday, this commemorative Day was introduced by Prince Alexander I in 1880 as “the day of the ascension of the throne of Emperor Alexander II and the conclusion of the Peace of San Stefano.” Therefore, this holiday, except as a symbolic day of Liberation, has always carried a vivid monarchical content, not abstract, but specifically aimed at honoring the Russian emperor - the Liberator (It is known that N. P. Ignatiev deliberately postpones the signing of the preliminary San Stefano Treaty for the date 19.02.1878, to coincide with the anniversary of the Ascension of the throne of his employer Alexander II). Later, on the February 19th holiday, the description that the Day of the Ascension of the throne of the Russian Emperor was officially lifted, and it remained for a long time only as a „day of Liberation“, but this did not change the aforementioned bright monarchical symbolic meaning of that Day, expressing and grateful to the Russian emperor. Of equal importance, this memorial Day is also present in the Holidays Act of 1911, and since the introduction of the Gregorian calendar in 1916, it is already celebrated on March 3 instead of February 19. Thus, the Third March with the definition of „Liberation Day of Bulgaria“ remained as an official holiday until the mid-1940s, when a significant change in the holiday calendar began on an ideological basis. For almost four decades until 1988, March 3rd was not an official holiday in the Bulgarian state, but that does not mean that this date and its symbolic significance are not at all honored. Rather, the ideologized overexposure and noisy propaganda of the new holidays of September 9, May 1 and November 7 overshadows and suppresses the Third March. In 1978, an attempt was made to restore it in entirely as one of the „holidays of national importance“ and „Ottoman yoke liberation day“, but it was not until 1988 that the official holiday was declared with the substantially different designation „Day of Bulgaria’s liberation from Turkish slavery, „which is probably an emotional response to the current then-troubled issues of the day“<sup>30</sup>.

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30 As an employee of the Municipal Council for Spiritual Development in Stara Zagora, I remember that on the eve of March 3, 1988, we waited days before the decision of the Municipal Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party on what text to be written on the hundreds of banners that had to be placed on various public places in the municipality: „110 years of liberation from Ottoman yoke“ or „110 years of liberation from Turkish slavery“. The uncertainty came from contradictory reasoning - in the first case, the designation was historically more reliable and scientifically safe, and so it has been called this memorable Day since 1978; the second text has just been put into official use

The same communist authorities that rehabilitated that Day in 1978 and 1988 also declared it a national holiday in 1990 with its first definition since 1978 - „the day of Bulgaria’s liberation from the Ottoman yoke.“ This is the case today.

Therefore, notwithstanding the designation with which the Third March is celebrated over the years, this memorable Day is almost invariably present in the festive calendar of the Third Bulgarian State, inasmuch as even at times when it is not an official holiday, it has not been neglected and ignored, such as 22 September - the Day of Bulgaria’s declaration of independence. This is largely due to the early and deep-rooted suggestion and delusion that a preliminary peace treaty between Russia and the Ottoman Empire, signed on February 19 / March 3, 1878, is the true end of the Russo-Turkish War and the beginning of the new Bulgarian state, which is not historically true but is accepted almost uncritically. So in the last three decades Bulgaria has for national holiday an indisputably important commemorative day, which, however, is of greater symbolic importance for the Russian monarchy and for Emperor Alexander II himself, as well as for his will and role in the Liberation of Bulgaria from Ottoman rule, rather than the Bulgarian struggle for Liberation and the creation of a national independent state, such as the ideal of the Renaissance. This official and national holiday has never been determined as a result of public debate, let alone after competent expert opinions. It can easily be used to inflame nationalist and other ideological passions, and it is clear lately that by upholding its exaggerated significance, thinking and public speaking about it has become a new, vivid dividing line in contemporary Bulgarian society, ie. in no way does this commemorative Day meet the purpose with which it is charged - to be a national holiday, that is, a common Bulgarian day to gather and unite, to inspire Bulgarian national pride and greatness.

Peace, as a state of society providing opportunities for development and free communication, is much more revered and invariably present in the official holiday calendar. Peace is symbolized not only by traditional church holidays (Nativity, Resurrection of Christ, Epiphany) but also from a number of seculars such as May 24 and November 1, although they have as their primary symbolism the church symbolism - the first is related to the church feast of the Holy Brothers Cyril and Methodius on May 11, and the second is the new style on October 19th - the Day of the Church designated as a tribute to the heavenly patron of Bulgaria Saint Ivan Rilski. Even during the period of state socialism in the second half of the twentieth century, war and peace were present in a balanced way as motivating elements and content in the official holiday calendar - September 9, but also May 1; The seventh of November, but also the twenty-fourth of May!

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with the amendment of the Labor Code since the beginning of 1988. So, the current sharp controversy in the media and social networks between adherents of the historically pure „Ottoman rule“ and the emotionally attached to „Turkish slavery“ are not a product of the so-called „Ottoman rule.“ „Transition“ after 1989, and express old and unregulated (largely even consciously stimulated) intra-Bulgarian contradictions aimed at maintaining a permanent dividing line related generally to the meaning and meaning of the Third March.



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