

Independence

Restoration of the Bulgarian state

The temporary Russian government in Bulgaria created conditions for the development of all main institutions, necessary for the functioning of a state. The first Bulgarian administrators gathered knowledge and experience in those matters. As a result of the work of people such as prince Vladimir Cherkaski, general Anuchin, prince Alexander Dondukov, N. Gerov, professor M. Drinov, T. Burmov, P. Kravelov, T. Ikonov the newly created Bulgarian administration and army maintained their Bulgarian identity. The temporary Russian government supported the eradication of the Turkish feudalism and the protection of the sovereignty of the Bulgarian state, vassal as it was to the Ottoman empire. The period of the temporary Russian management was characterized by demonstrations of resistance on behalf of the Bulgarian people against the unjust decisions of the Berlin congress. The national discontent found expression in different forms. The Bulgarians sent many claims to the Russian government and the Great powers. In all major cities in the Bulgarian Principality and Eastern Rumelia were formed committees called "Unity", which conducted a massive campaign. There was also a call to military actions against the decisions of the Berlin congress. Thus the Bulgarians gradually started preparations for a struggle, the objective of which was not only full independence, but also unification of the two parts. Actions of Bulgarians in Macedonia, which grew into the so called Kresna-Razlog uprising (5 October 1878), mark the peak of the Bulgarian discontent. The uprising ended without success. Despite this it was the first step towards unification of lands and fellow countrymen. This resistance attracted the attention of the Great powers. During 1881 Russia, Germany and Austro-Hungary secretly signed agreements that they would do nothing to hinder a future unification between the Bulgarian Principality and Eastern Rumelia.

On Feb 10th, 1879 the first Bulgarian constituent assembly was called in Veliko Tarnovo. It consisted of 229 members of parliament. A part of them were elected by the people, others were assigned by the Russian emperor commissary, and a third part joined by right (clergy, administrators, judges, etc.). The aim of the constituent assembly was to create the constitution of the Bulgarian Principality. Exarch Antim I was elected chairman. The Tarnovo constitution has been adopted

on April 16th, 1879. According to this constitution the Bulgarian state was a parliamentary monarchy with moderately liberal device. The national assembly had law-making authority. The head of state was a prince. He was the lead representative, head of the state and leader of the military forces. The prince possessed a law-making initiative. He could dismiss the national assembly, place a veto, decide on new elections, adopt laws, mitigate sentences and give amnesty.

According to the Tarnovo constitution, the National assembly could be Simple and Great national assembly. The selection of a simple national assembly happened via direct and secret voting. All male Bulgarian citizens, aged 21 and more, had the right to vote. The great national assembly was only summoned for the purpose of changing the constitution and the state boundaries or choosing a new prince or regency. The motto of the national assembly was “Unifications means power”.

The constituent assembly selected Sofia as the capital city of Bulgaria. On April 17th, 1879 was summoned a great national assembly, which, following the advice of the Russian government, elected Alexander Batenberg as prince of Bulgaria. He was a German officer, son of an Austrian general and nephew of the Russian emperor Alexander II. On June 26th, 1879 he took oath as prince of Bulgaria.



Alexander Batenberg, source: Ву Димитър Карастоянов - Alexander I of Bulgaria - Dimitar Karastoyanov Photo.jpg, CC0, [source](#)

The political lines of the “young” and the “old” revolutionaries from the Revival epoch formed the grounds for the creation of the first two political parties - the Liberals and the Conservatives. The liberals defended the democratic ideas, while

the conservatives had a reserved attitude towards the liberal freedoms. The inter-party struggles for power, which started, led to instability in the Bulgarian state. The Bulgarian prince Alexander I did not approve of the Tarnovo constitution, which limited his power. Similarity of ideas brought the conservatives and Batenberg closer together. With their help he unsuccessfully tried to change the constitution of Bulgaria in order to broaden his rights and to impose a regime. The Russian political interference often additionally complicated the political life in Bulgaria.

According to the Berlin treaty, Eastern Rumelia was governed by a governor - a Christian, assigned by the Ottoman empire. On April 14th, 1879 the main law, regulating the political and social life in Eastern Rumelia, was adopted - an Organic statute. During that time in the Principality of Bulgaria was adopted the Tarnovo constitution. This proves that the two Bulgarias were developing at almost the same pace. There were no economic, social or cultural barriers before the future union.

The movement for the union of the Principality of Bulgaria and Eastern Rumelia was a natural continuation of the Bulgarian national-liberation movement. The dissatisfaction because of the unjust tearing of the Bulgarian state, transformed into an organized resistance. The Bulgarian diplomacy started intense negotiations with the Great powers on the matter. Those however lead to no specific results. Because of this, on Feb 10th, 1885 in Plovdiv was established a secret committee, later renamed into a Bulgarian secret revolutionary committee (BSRC). The prominent Bulgarian revolutionary Zahari Stoyanov was elected as its chairman. The old committees in Southern Bulgaria were restored. So were the Bulgarian revival ideas - "... a moral revolution and an armed one". On July 25th, 1885 in the village of Dermendere (Plovdiv), BSRC decided to undertake specific steps towards the union, under the leadership of the Bulgarian prince Alexander Batenberg. According to a deliberately prepared plan, it had to carry out an uprising in Eastern Rumelia, which was to be supported by armed troops and the local militia. The first to rise were the Bulgarians in Panagyurishte. They were followed by many other settlements. On Sept 6th, 1885 the Bulgarian rebels and the militia, led by Major Daniel Nikolov arrested the governor of Eastern Rumelia - Gavrail Krastevich. A proclamation was read before the Bulgarian people, announcing the union of the Principality of Bulgaria and Eastern Rumelia.

Still, this proclamation had to obtain the approval of the Great powers and Turkey. The Bulgarian government focused all its efforts in this direction. On March 24th, 1886 the Bulgarian government achieved an international confirmation of the union. The government of Eastern Rumelia passed on to the Bulgarian prince.

Bulgaria however continued to be a tributary principality to the Ottoman Empire. On Sept 22th 1908 Prince Ferdinand declared the independence of the Bulgarian state and titled himself tsar. The Great powers and the Ottoman Empire acknowledged the Bulgarian independence in April 1909.

Led by its urge to unite the unjustly cut territories in Macedonia, Edirne and Aegean Thrace during the next several years Bulgaria took part in three consecutive wars - the Balkan war (26 Sept 1912 - 17 May 2013), the Second Balkan war (16 June - 18 July 1913) and the First World War (28 July 1914 - 11 November 1918). The defeat suffered by Bulgaria during the Second Balkan war led the state to the first national catastrophe.



"Burial of those killed around Edirne", collection Georg

Woltz, [source](#)

The so desired union within the ethnic boundaries was not achieved. During the two Balkan wars Bulgaria lost more than 66 000 people. The Bulgarian economy suffered great losses of about 2 billion BGN. However the country managed to stabilize itself quickly. The participation of Bulgaria in the First World War was again motivated by the desire for solving the Bulgarian national issue. Bulgaria was among the defeated countries and suffered a second national catastrophe. The state suffered territorial losses as well. The internal condition was also worsened. The Bulgarian state lost the right to maintain its own military forces. Tsar Ferdinand abdicated. His place was taken by his son - Boris.

During the years to follow a period of political instability commenced. After the First World War the management of the state was undertaken by the Bulgarian agricultural people's union (BAPU), led by Alexander Stamboliyski. He undertook a number of changes in different directions. Those however made the political situation worse. Alexander Stamboliyski's government was overthrown in 1923. The power was taken by Alexander Tsankov. The political crisis deepened. This to a large extent was due also to the heavy world economic depression, as well as to the growing political tension in Europe and the world. On May 19th, 1934 another coup takes place. Kimon Georgiev comes in the spotlight on the Bulgarian political scene. His term in government is short. During January 1935, after certain reformations, a single control regime was introduced by Tsar Boris III.