
Bulgaria

1. Flag

- Created in 1879
and adopted in 1994



The origins of the current Bulgarian flag date back to 1879. From the end of the 14th century until this time, the territory was placed under Ottoman rule. The Turks severely reprimanded the Bulgarian revolt, thus provoking the indignation of the Western Powers, of the British man William Ewart Gladstone, and of the Frenchman Victor Hugo who spoke up against the atrocities being committed in Bulgaria. This country periodically suffered the effects of Russo-Turkish rivalry. The last conflict between the two powers, won by the armies of the Czar, led to the creation (through the Treaty of San Stefano) of an autonomous and very extensive principality, whose borders were not unlike those of the Empire of Simeon I of Bulgaria some one thousand years before, which was a veritable Golden Age in Bulgarian culture. However, the other European powers, concerned about this new balance of power in the Balkans, immediately had the Treaty revised in Berlin, and drafted a compromise that would cost Bulgaria. It was divided into an autonomous principality and a Southern province remaining under Ottoman control.

It was in this context that the country adopted a flag that was very strongly and deliberately inspired by that of Russia, friend and ally, vector of independence, with the difference being that the green replaced the blue. The Bulgarian flag would thus be a local variant of the Slavic colours of white-blue-red.

According to the most widely admitted interpretations, the white symbolises peace and the Slavic mindset, the green both the richness of the fertile earth and the hope for freedom, and the red recalls the courage and bravery of the Bulgarian fighters, as well as their spirit of resistance and sacrifice against the oppression suffered by the people.

The national awakening of this key period was also marked by the laying of the foundations for a very democratic Constitution, that could only be actually applied after 1991 with its emancipation from Soviet control.

2. Anthem

- *Mila Rodino* (Dear Motherland)
- Written by Ivan Vazov
- Composed by Tsvetan Radoslavov
- Created in 1885 and adopted in 1964

While the date of adoption of the Bulgarian national anthem dates back to 1964 and was modified in 1990, its creation dates as far back as 1885, during the period of war with its Serbian neighbour. The latter reacted against the attempt to unify both parts of Bulgaria arising from the Treaty of Berlin. Both unification and independence were only validated in 1908 by the powers interested in the geopolitics of the Balkans. On this date, the Third

Bulgarian Kingdom was established and survived until 1946. Before World War I the terrible Balkan Wars ensued for two years plunging the region into bloodshed, with disastrous consequences for Bulgaria.

It is therefore easy to understand that the verse integrates all the regions that make up the Bulgarian entity such as we know it today: the plains of the Danube and the Thrace but also the Balkan and Pirin mountains. However, this last area in the south-west would only temporarily be part of Bulgaria at the end of the Balkan Wars, whereas the country lost land to the north.

The lyrical phrasing praises the place, the people and the motherland. Bulgaria is described in it as idyllic and emphatically recalls the fate of the soldiers who died to defend this motherland. Radoslavov's inspiration comes from the poet Ivan Vazov, a great name in Bulgarian literature, who never ceased to exalt the country and its people. Between 1964 and 1990, the anthem included a reference to the bonds that tied the Bulgarians and the Russians.

Mila Rodino

*Gorda Stara Planina,
Do nej Dunava sinej,
Sluntse Tkrakija ogryava,
Nad Pirina plamenej*

*Mila Rodino,
Ti si zemen raj,
Tvojta khubost, tvojtá prelest,
Akh te nyamat kraj
Padnakha bojtsi bezchet,
Za naroda nash l'ubim,
Majko, daj mi muzhka sila,
Put'a im da prodolzhim*

Dear Motherland

Proud Balkan Mountain,
Next to it the Danube sparkles in blue,
The sun shines over Thrace
And blazes over Pirin.

Dear Motherland,
You are heaven on earth,
Your beauty, your loveliness,
Ah, they are boundless.
Countless fighters died
For our beloved nation,
Mother, give us manly strength
To continue in their path!

