

September 6th

BULGARIA

UNIFICATION DAY

Reunification of the Principality of Bulgaria with Eastern Rumelia in 1885

On September 6, 1885, the Bulgarian people launched and brought to a successful completion one of the most remarkable acts in the country's modern history – the reunification of Northern with Southern Bulgaria. This day, which has become a symbol of national unity, is an official holiday on the national calendar.

It all began in the summer of 1878, when the Berlin treaty of the European great powers revised the results of the Russo-Turkish war of 1877-1878. The war, which ended with the victory of Russia, liberated Bulgaria from five centuries of Ottoman domination. Under the San Stefano peace treaty signed on March 3, 1878, the Bulgarian state was restored within its historical ethnic borders. However, soon after, frantic diplomatic maneuvering began in Europe. Its aim was to revise the San Stefano treaty, so as not to allow the creation of a large Bulgarian state on the Balkan peninsula. Thus the Berlin treaty divided up its territory, and this resulted in a series of dramatic events, which have left a deep mark in our national history. Part of the Bulgarian lands – lying between the Balkan range and the river Danube, including the region of Sofia, was named the Principality of Bulgaria. Though it had full administrative autonomy, Southern Bulgaria, named Eastern Rumelia remained under the political and military rule of the Sultan. Macedonia, Aegean Thrace and Edirne region were returned to the Ottoman empire.



None of the great powers was willing to face the challenges, connected with the possible revision of the Berlin Treaty. The figures that headed the movement for re-unification in the Principality of Bulgaria, Eastern Rumelia and Macedonia reached the conclusion that all efforts should be concentrated on Southern Bulgaria. A secret Bulgarian Central Revolutionary Committee was set up in Southern Bulgaria's main city Plovdiv in February 1885 – its aim was to re-unite Northern with Southern Bulgaria. Branches of the committee were soon set up in all other major towns in the region. But the reaction of the Great Powers was negative – they considered Bulgaria's reunification a drastic violation of the Berlin Treaty. On the other hand, they were astounded by the determination of the Bulgarian politicians and of the ordinary people to uphold their national ideal. Gradually, Europe came to terms with the reunification of the Bulgarians, especially after the victory of the young Bulgarian army over Serbia, which, instigated by Austria-Hungary unexpectedly waged war on Bulgaria.

The Bulgarian reunification of 1885, called by historians "a political miracle" showed that territorial and ethnic unification can be attained using peaceful means. With the eradication of the artificial boundary dividing Northern from Southern Bulgaria, the country entered a new phase of economic, social and cultural prosperity.

"Unity makes Strength" - the inscription over the central entrance to the National Assembly (Parliament) House in Sofia

