



25 years free Bulgaria is a civic initiative under the auspices of the President of Bulgaria



President of Bulgaria



Dealing with the Past while looking to the Future

International conference, *part of the presidential initiative 25 years free Bulgaria*
11 and 12 November 2014, Sofia, Bulgaria
Conference Venue: Sheraton Sofia Hotel Balkan
5 Sveta Nedelya Square, 1000 Sofia

Background and Aims: 25 years ago in November 1989, the Berlin Wall, which for decades had represented the bipolar world and the division between free and unfree, just and unjust, open and repressed, was pulled down overnight. With it collapsed the communist regimes in a series of countries that stretched across Central and Eastern Europe, and its peoples looked forward with hope and enthusiasm to a unified Europe to which they had always culturally and historically belonged.

Anniversaries are frequently a time of remembrance. And while in other parts of Europe the 100th anniversary of the 1914-18 "Great War" occupies much of the public discourse, for Eastern Europeans the anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall is a good moment to take stock – 25 years ago we witnessed the fall of a regime which had enforced inhumane political standards and led to social and economic catastrophe in entire regions and states. It is now time to reflect on what went right and what went wrong during the years of transition from totalitarian rule to pluralism and democracy.

While memory and interpretations, when not codified, tend to be subjective, we are privileged to invite key figures from the events of 1989 and beyond to this conversation about our recent past. Although there are many personal stories, it is important that together we set a sequence of indisputable facts and key events. We do this on the understanding that if societies do not honestly rationalize their recent history, they risk mystifying the past and losing their historical points of reference in the present and in the future.

The ambition of this undertaking is to celebrate 25 years of freedom in Bulgaria and mark the anniversary of the fall of the Berlin wall, while simultaneously taking another step toward restoring trust in politics within Bulgarian society; we have rarely been more polarized, or the political debate more deprived of strategic perspective and basis for national consensus. Differentiating democratic values and principles from the realities of the inhumane communist regime is fundamentally important for a united Europe. It does not matter if we are looking toward the past or into the future, or where we stand on the political spectrum, or how we define ourselves through social status, income and lifestyle.



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Conference Programme

Tuesday, 11 November, 2014

Sheraton Hotel, Royal Hall

11:00 **Opening of the Memorial of Georgi Markov**

12:00 – 13:00 **REGISTRATION**

Light lunch

13:00 – 13:30 **OPENING AND WELCOME SPEECH**

President **Rosen Plevneliev**, Republic of Bulgaria

13:30 – 14:00 *Coffee break*

14:00 – 16:00 **Session 1: "25 YEARS LATER"**

The session will tackle the main findings of a nation-wide survey dealing with the perceptions of the different generations about the years of transition and coping with the authoritarian past.

Boriana Dimitrova, Managing partner at Alpha research (Bulgaria)

Petya Kabakchieva, Associate professor and Head of the Department of Sociology at Sofia University (Bulgaria)

Deyan Kiuranov, Programme director for political research at the Centre for Liberal Strategies (Bulgaria)

Mihail Nedeltchev, Head of Department „Modern Bulgarian Studies” at the New Bulgarian University and president of the Union of Bulgarian Writers (Bulgaria)

Dimitar Dimitrov, Assistant professor at Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”

Moderator: Kiril Valchev, Darik Radio (Bulgaria)

16:00 – 16:30 *Coffee break*



16:30 – 18:30 Session 2: THROUGH THE EYES OF THE CITIZENS

This session will be dedicated to the citizens who took part in the nation-wide survey. Some of the most engaging participants from a series of public debates based on the survey and held throughout the country will join the conversation in the capital.

Edvin Sugarev, Assistant Professor at New Bulgarian University (Bulgaria)

Solomon Passy, Former minister of foreign affairs (2001 – 2005) (Bulgaria)

Jordan Sokolov, Former minister of internal affairs (1991-1992), Former chairperson of the National Assembly (1997-2001) (Bulgaria)

Evgeni Daynov, Director of the Institute for Social Practices at New Bulgarian University (Bulgaria)

Andrey Raychev, BBSS Gallup - Bulgaria

Four citizens who took part in the discussions in four universities around the country, based on an opinion poll about the perceptions in the society about the years of transition (Bulgaria)

Viktor Yankov, Festival Director, Long Night of Museums in Plovdiv 2014

Moderator: Dobrina Cheshmedzieva, Bulgarian National Television (Bulgaria)

20:00

Dinner

Sheraton Hotel, Sredets Hall

Dinner speech: Nickolay Mladenov, Special Representative of the Secretary General for Iraq and Head of UN Assistance Mission in Iraq (Bulgaria)

21:30 – 22:30 Break-out sessions

Break-out session 1: TRUTH-SEEKING IN EASTERN EUROPE: WHAT DO THE ARCHIVES HAVE TO SAY?

Sheraton Hotel, Serdika Hall

The session will explore the impact of opening the archives for uncovering the truth about past regimes and forming a consensual societal position on their legacy, well-grounded in facts and



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documents. What is the best way to open the archives? What do they have to say? Is opening the archives a pre-condition for the subsequent social reconciliation? How can the information from the archives help a society in transition evolve and overcome its past? What are the hidden detriments of not opening the archives in an adequate manner?

Evtim Kostadinov, Chairman of the Committee for Disclosure of Documents and the Announcement of Affiliation of Bulgarian Citizens to the State Security and the Intelligence Services of the Bulgarian National Army (Bulgaria)

Dragoş Petrescu, President of the National Council for the Study of Securitate Archives (Romania)

Paweł Ukielski, Deputy Director of the Institute of National Remembrance at the Institute of National Remembrance (Poland)

Mária Palasik, Head of Department of Research at the Historical Archives of the Hungarian State Security (Hungary)

Milan Barta, Acting Director, Section for Research on Totalitarian Regimes at the Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes (Czech Republic)

Joachim Foerster, Head of the department of information and deputy director at the Federal commission for the records of the state security service of the Former German Democratic Republic (Germany)

Moderator: Momchil Metodiev, Historian (Bulgaria)

Break-out session 2: THE WESTERN BALKANS BETWEEN 1989 AND 2014. WHAT TRANSITIONS?

Sheraton Hotel, Sredets Hall

The session will look at the transitions that Western Balkan countries went through until the present day. Which is the watershed year that marked the beginning of transitions for the countries in the region? Can we speak of the Western Balkan's 89? What are the core characteristics of those transitions? Can we speak of post-Soviet societies or is the formulation "post-socialist" a better description? How has the communist legacy influenced the peculiarities of those transitions? What were the reform paths



chosen by their governments and why are they different from the rest of Central and Eastern Europe?

Petar Stoyanov, President of Bulgaria (1997 – 2002) (Bulgaria)

Stjepan Mesić, President of Croatia (2000 - 2010) and the last president of Yugoslavia (Croatia)

Radmila Šekerinska, Former leader of the Social Democratic Union of Macedonia (Macedonia)

Remzi Lani, Director of the Albanian Media Institute (Albania)

Jovan Teokarević, Director of the Belgrade Centre for European Integration (Serbia)

Panelist and Moderator: Ognyan Minchev, Executive director of Institute for Regional and International Studies (Bulgaria)

Wednesday, 12 November, 2014

Sheraton Hotel, Royal Hall

10:00 – 11:30 Session 3: THE PATH TO DEMOCRACY: ARE TRANSITIONAL EXPERIENCES UNIQUE OR TRANSFERABLE

Each transition society has its unique path to democratic transformation, determined by the national peculiarities that favour certain choices and developments over others. Therefore, it is important to pay attention to their different experiences. Even more important, however, is to make an attempt at extracting what is transferable as a lesson learned, both in terms of good practices and mistakes to be avoided.

President **Rosen Plevneliev**, Bulgaria

President **János Áder**, Hungary

President **Tomislav Nikolić**, Serbia

President **Giorgi Margvelashvili**, Georgia*

Moderator: Ivan Krastev, Chairman of the Centre for Liberal Strategies/ Chair of the board of ECFR (Bulgaria)

11:30 – 12:00 Coffee break

12:00 – 13:30 Session 4: 1989 AND THE CULTURE OF REMEMBRANCE: MANY STORIES AND THE UNTOLD TRUTH



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The recent communist past is a topic that fundamentally divides the Bulgarian society. It is often the subject of radical affirmation, rejection or emotional appraisals. We have a plethora of diverging stories but no consensual objective 'truth.' Common issues in post-communist societies are recycling of elites and highjacked revolutions. Lack of culture of remembrance renders a society susceptible to mythologizing, nostalgic distortions of the past and partisan confrontation. How can we cope with such deficiencies, especially in respect to younger generations, which have no personal memories of the past in question.

Janusz Bugajski, Senior Fellow at the Center for European Policy Analysis (CEPA) (USA)

Nassya Krlevska-Owens, Writer and journalist (Bulgaria/ USA)

Andrey Kovatchev, Member of the European Parliament (Bulgaria)

Aleksandar Smolar, Chairman of the Board, Stefan Batory Foundation; ECFR Council Member (Poland)

Moderator: Piotr Buras, Head of ECFR Warsaw Office

13:30 – 14:30 *Lunch*

14:30 – 16:00 Session 5: LESSONS FROM THE PAST: POLICIES IN TRANSITION, BULGARIA AND CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE IN COMPARISON

This session is organized with the kind support of Friedrich Ebert Foundation

A culture of clear and consecutive political programmes and responsible inter-party competition negatively affects a country's ability to formulate long-term goals, agree on national interests, or draft strategies that go beyond a government term or even a generation. The lack of that culture leads to denying the accomplishments of former governments, defining political opponents as anti-democratic, and making false and misleading evaluations of government results. This is a tendency that we have repeatedly observed in Bulgaria since the period of transition began. 25 years ago Bulgaria went through a bloodless revolution, but then suffered under severe economic hardship. Nevertheless, we managed to reach consensus on the currency board and on NATO and EU membership. Alongside critically examining what went



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wrong, and how, during the years of transition, we wish to reflect on what went right, while also moving beyond the national context and looking at the wider Eastern European experience.

Topics for discussion: Negotiated transition and the round table, drafting a constitution as a political act, elections as flagships of democracy, media and civil society, minorities, transitional justice.

Philip Dimitrov, Former Prime Minister (1991 – 1992) (Bulgaria)

Georgi Pirinski, Member of the European Parliament (Bulgaria)

Monica Luisa Macovei, Member of the European Parliament (Romania)

Wojciech Przybylski, Editor of Res Publica Nowa (Poland)

Ján Čarnogurský, Prime Minister of Slovakia (1991 – 1992) and chairperson of the Christian Democratic Movement (Slovakia)

István Gyarmati, President of the International Centre for Democratic Transition (Hungary)

Moderator: Rayna Gavrilova, Open Society Foundations (Bulgaria)

16:00 – 16:30 *Coffee break*

16:30 – 17:45 Session 6: UNFINISHED BUSINESS IN THE HEART OF EUROPE I

Western Balkans

The pro-EU protests in Ukraine revived the question of the EU accession perspective as a driving force for democratization and reform. So what is the role of the EU perspective in transition? What role has the EU played in the Western Balkans since 2003? Is the EU able to help dysfunctional states?

Topics for discussion: Together with the European perspective we will also search for answers to the question “What has changed in the world order after the Ukraine crisis?”

Kristof Bender, Deputy Chairman of the European Stability Initiative (Austria)

Goran Svilanović, Secretary General of the Regional Cooperation Council (Serbia)



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Dimitrij Rupel, Former minister of foreign affairs (1990 - 1992, 2000 – 2008) (Slovenia)

Vedran Džihic, Senior researcher and lecturer at the Austrian institute for international affairs (Bosnia and Herzegovina)

Aleksandar Pejovic, State Secretary at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Chief EU Negotiator (Montenegro)

Moderator: Tim Judah, Balkans Correspondent, The Economist (United Kingdom)

18:00 – 19:30 Session 7: UNFINISHED BUSINESS IN THE HEART OF EUROPE II

Eastern Neighbourhood and Russia

The pro-EU protests in Ukraine revived the question of the EU accession perspective as a driving force for democratization and reform. So what is the role of the EU perspective in transition? What role has the EU played in the Western Balkans since 2003? Is the EU able to help dysfunctional states?

Craig Kennedy, Former President of the German Marshall Fund of the USA (USA)

Jerzy Pomianowski, Executive Director of the European Endowment for Democracy (Poland)

Ivan Krastev, Chairman of the Centre for Liberal Strategies/ Chair of the board of ECFR (Bulgaria)

Ghia Nodia, Political analyst and founder of the Caucasus Institute for Peace, Democracy and Development (Georgia)

Moderator: Ognyan Minchev, Executive director of Institute for Regional and International Studies (Bulgaria)

19:30 Closing remarks

THE BULGARIAN REVOLUTIONS: 1989, 1991, 1997, 2014

Rumyana Kolarova, Minister of Education and deputy chair of the advisory board of the initiative 25 years free Bulgaria (Bulgaria)

20:00 Reception hosted by President Rosen Plevneliev
National Historical Museum
Vitoshko Lale, 1618 Sofia