His Holiness Patriarch Kirill meets with President of Bulgaria's National Assembly



On 3 March 2018, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia, while on a visit to the Bulgarian Orthodox Church timed to the 140th anniversary of the liberation of Bulgaria from the Ottoman yoke, met with Mrs. Tsveta Karayancheva, President of the National Assembly of the Republic of Bulgaria.

The meeting took place in the city of Stara Zagora after the ceremony at the Monument of Freedom on Mount Shipka, where the remains of the Russian soldiers and the Bulgarian militiamen lie.

Representing the Russian Orthodox Church in the meeting were also Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations, and Archbishop Sergy of Solnechnogorsk, head of the Moscow Patriarchate's Administrative Secretariat.

Among the participants in the meeting were also Metropolitan Kipriyan of Stara Zagora and Mr. Anatoly

Makarov, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Russian Federation to the Republic of Bulgaria.

Greeting His Holiness Patriarch Kirill, Mrs. Karayancheva noted that their meeting was being held on a memorable day and mentioned the commemorative events and celebrations on Mount Shipka, dedicated to the 140th anniversary of the liberation of Bulgaria from the Ottoman yoke. As the President of Bulgaria's National Assembly emphasized, the memory of the Russian warriors who laid down their lives for the liberation of the country is cherished in the Bulgarian land.

Addressing Mrs. Karayancheva, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill said in particular, "Shipka is a part of both the Bulgarian and the Russian history. It is a unique phenomenon in interstate and international relations. To send troops abroad, authorities need to provide strong motivation to people or to make the troops go and fight in a foreign territory."

His Holiness emphasized that Russia's participation in the liberation of Bulgaria had been a result of neither state propaganda nor any other efforts of the state.

"Long before the liberation of Bulgaria, moliebens had been constantly said in every Russian church. Our ancestors asked the Lord to liberate their Bulgarian brothers from the hard foreign yoke which had fettered the national and religious life of the Bulgarians for 500 years," Patriarch Kirill said, "Therefore the state had no choice but to support that impulse of the Russian people and to go and defend their Bulgarian brothers. No governmental efforts, no commands were needed: it was a grassroots initiative. And, of course, that initiative was based on the educational work of the Russian Orthodox Church. For our Church most strongly sympathized and co-suffered with the Bulgarians, whose religious life had been suppressed by the presence of foreigners in their land."

According to His Holiness, it was the fraternal union between the peoples of Russia and Bulgaria that led to the victory in the battle of Shipka Pass and to the liberation of Bulgaria. As Patriarch Kirill noted with regret, the historical truth is sometimes subjected to false interpretations which are often determined by a specific political context.

"I am very glad that today the interpretation of the historical fact of great importance for Bulgaria and Russia has been in line with the historical truth," the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church said in conclusion.

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Photo by Press Service of Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia

Source: https://mospat.ru/en/news/47632/