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WELCOMING SPEECH  
TO THE PARTICIPANTS IN THE FIRST INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS  
OF BULGARIAN STUDIES

*Distinguished guests and friends,  
Dear comrades,*

*I am greatly honoured to welcome you most heartily on behalf of the State Council and the Government of the People's Republic of Bulgaria to the First International Congress of Bulgarian Studies and to wish you successful and fruitful work.*

*You understand just as well as I do the significance of this major scientific undertaking, held in the very year of the 13th Centenary of the Bulgarian State.*

*There can be no doubt that the congress will enrich the field of Bulgarian studies with many novel ideas, which will give new impetus to its further development. There can be no doubt that it will resound through the world and reach through to all people who appreciate the full merits of Bulgarian history and the contribution of the Bulgarian people to the development of modern civilization.*

*Yesterday you attended the ceremonial celebration of our unique national holiday, the Day of the Bulgarian and Slavic apostles Cyril and Methodius and of all their disciples and followers through the centuries, the holiday of Bulgarian Letters and Culture and of the Slavic Alphabet.*

*We would wish that all nations in the world could celebrate such holidays where the people march bearing the portraits of enlighteners and writers, of thinkers and poets.*

*At the end of the congress together we shall attend another unique Bulgarian holiday, the Day of Hristo Botev, our great poet and revolutionary, who perished in the struggle for national liberation, firm in his faith that the day shall come when the union of all free and enlightened peoples will be a reality. This holiday perpetuates the immortality of all Bulgarians who fell in the unequal, yet heroic struggle against obscurantism and social injustice, in the name of the freedom of all peoples and the creative development of man.*

*It is no coincidence that the congress takes place in the interval between these two notable Days, which carry deep significance for every Bulgarian.*

*Better than anything else they portray the way of the Bulgarian people through the centuries past and blaze its way in the centuries to come.*

*Better than anything else they prove the narrow link between the 13th Centenary of the Bulgarian state, the ancient holiday in honour of Cyril and Methodius,*

*and the traditions of the Bulgarian people in the struggle for freedom, independence and social justice.*

*Better than anything else they symbolize the creative ardour of our ancestors and the unquenchable striving of our people after learning and knowledge, after spiritual values and cultural development.*

*Better than anything else they confirm the orderly development of history which chose the lands of the ancient Bulgarian kingdom as the acre for the seed of Cyril and Methodius' teaching; here it struck root and grew to nourish our national consciousness and sovereignty through the centuries and sustain our independence, unity and culture.*

*Heirs to ancient civilizations, Bulgarians cherished the precious fruit of Old Bulgarian letters and endowed world culture and progress with many other invaluable gifts. Scholars of high eminence and authority from many countries, in your studies you have cogently argued the role and significance of the Bulgarian language and letters, of Bulgarian literature, art and culture, and of Bulgarian history.*

*We are most grateful for the scientific conscientiousness and justice of all scholars who have associated themselves with Bulgaria and have devoted their efforts to the study of the preservation and development of the Bulgarian nationality and, later, of the Bulgarian nation as well, of the Bulgarian language, that mighty spiritual weapon of our people, and Bulgaria's contribution to the cultural development of the Slavs and of Europe as a whole.*

*Bulgarian studies, like any other scientific field, allow of no two truths. We need the only objective truth about the historic development and the historic significance of the experience suffered by our people through the centuries, when our ancestors opposed foreign rule not only arms in hand but, also, with the weapon of the spirit, with the language of our marvellous folk art, with the unforgettable monuments of Bulgarian letters, with the noble apostolic activity of the famous literary schools that flourished in our lands.*

*Ever since their very first steps, Bulgarian letters and culture have served not only the cause of our nationality and the Bulgarian state, but universally human ideals as well. And, perhaps, it is for this very reason that they managed to stand in so many unequal battles. Because only that people is strong and invincible which sees its worthy place in constructive coexistence, in communication and equality with other peoples. Even the first written monuments of ancient Bulgaria assert the equal right to life of all peoples who live on the earth under the common sun. This is the reason why Bulgaria became the cradle of so many ideological and social movements, which spread all over the world and won its recognition.*

*Our land has always given birth to great popular leaders, revolutionaries and inspired thinkers and artists; it has always cultivated a feeling of dignity and social justice in the ordinary people. Our past has thus gained an intransient significance for us and still inspires the self-confidence of our brave people with the most elevated ideals of our times. They are the ideals of social justice and freedom for all peoples under oppression, the ideals of progress in all spheres of material and spiritual construction, the ideals of peaceful emulation in a world without violence and wars.*

*It is maybe for this particular reason, distinguished comrades and guests, that Bulgaria has riveted the attention of the world both with its past and with its present.*

*At the same time, Bulgaria has always been interested in the world and regarded itself as a part of this world; it has taken and will always take active part in the vital struggle between life and death, between freedom and oppression, between peace and war. Having passed through so many trials and preserved its spi-*

*ritual and physical strength, the Bulgarian people is now as never before complete master of its land and labour and feels confident in its future and the future of the coming generations. Such is contemporary socialist Bulgaria, who marches in the avant-garde of material and spiritual progress thanks to the talent and efforts of its people; Bulgaria, who cherishes and enriches the traditions of its unforgettable past in our anxious time, when the war-mongers threaten the foundations of our civilization and the very life on the earth.*

*It is the maturity of our culture, the upsurge of our economy, science and technology, and the successful overcoming of the difficulties in our development that enable us more actively than ever to maintain fruitful mutual exchange and cooperation with all peoples in the joint struggle for social progress, peaceful development and cultural advance.*

*Bulgarian studies serve the cause of cultural exchange, peace and understanding between peoples.*

*We are very pleased with the progress of contemporary Bulgarian studies, effected through your creative efforts and inspiration. We are pleased with your achievements and innovative research, which enrich the spiritual life of the Bulgarian nation and bequeath a fountain of knowledge and experience to the present-day and future generations of our fatherland. Bulgarian studies like any other scientific field offer unlimited prospects for research.*

*We highly appreciate the talent and the creative achievements of the contemporary Bulgarian scholars in this field as well as their ardent patriotism.*

*We highly appreciate and respect the selfless devotion of all Bulgarian scholars from abroad and their contribution to the enrichment of the international scientific tradition in this field.*

*Allow me to express our conviction that Bulgarian studies may continue to be a field of scientific cooperation, cultural and spiritual uplift, and genuine creative work that will always bring you new gratification.*

*Today science has a great historical mission. It must serve truth and build bridges of confidence and reciprocity; it must serve the cause of solidarity, oppose enmity, and elevate our thoughts in the name of progress and peace.*

*We cherish the hope that the First International Congress of Bulgarian Studies, held in an epoch as anxious as ours, will be a significant contribution to the struggle for detente in international relations, and a vote for understanding and cooperation in the necessary dialogue of our time, an expression of our mutual human concern about the present day and the coming day of mankind.*

*Once again I would like to thank you for your work, for your respect and love of Bulgaria and its material and spiritual culture! And once again I wish you all new creative accomplishments, happiness and health!*

*May the First International Congress of Bulgarian Studies remain memorable in modern history for its contribution to the development of science and culture, to the scientific exchange and mutual acquaintance of peoples, an event in the service of peace, humanism and progress!*

*Thank you for your attention!*