

PERSPECTIVE

PEN paves the way for women writers to be recognised

By MARIELA BAEVA

The Second World War...The small fishing port of Anzio, Italy...The young girl having become the symbol of the innocent victims of the war cruelty...The rainy Monday morning of March, 25, 1957...Rome...Palazzo dei Conservatori...



These are the pillars of my story published in *Volume 4* of the tri-lingual International PEN* Women Writers' anthology 'Our Voice' now available. The anthology* includes award-winning poetry from Kenya to India; short stories from contributors living in Bulgaria, Scotland or in exile in Sweden, to mention just a few. The 40 authors and poets give an idea of the sensibility of women authors in the 140 PEN centres across the globe.

The works in Spanish, French and English offer a wide variety of styles and points of view. In the European year of Intercultural Dia-

logue this anthology will help build bridges between nations and individuals in the international community. "I am very proud to be the editor of this remarkable volume," advises Dr **Judith Buckrich**, chair of International PEN Women Writers' Committee, in her introductory notes to the anthology, and adds "It is always a privilege to present women's work, but never more so than when the work is excel-

lent and compelling." Here are two excerpts that "The Letter" - the idea, the spirit, the hope, the prospects:

"...She surveyed the grand ramped stairway. The buzz of Rome came with hundreds of boisterous people. They wended their way in the pelting rain, peering through the guard.

The motorcade of black Lancia emerged on Caprioline Hill. Civil Guards in Remains- sance clothes and Carabinieri snarped into a salute as the delegations eased up at the Palazzo dei Conservatori. Dark red roses and deep yellow tulips erupted with the colours of the frescoes of the Campidoglio..."

"...Oh well, you have to see her blue eyes - grief and triumph of life. Now we're both writing this letter in the van and watching the flutter of pigeons sent skyward by the recent crash of fire...

...The letter had been written minutes before an explosion

from a shell struck the Red Cross van... Europe will never again be a game in which one side wins and the other loses... Then there was silence."

Mariela Baeva is a Member of the European Parliament from Bulgaria, the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE) and the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs *International PEN is a worldwide association of writers with a special consultative status at UNESCO and the United Nations.

*The anthology comprises works from Germany, Finland, Mexico, Turkey, Zambia, Scotland, France, New York, Kenya, Estonia, Malaysia, Sweden, India, Venezuela, England, Pakistan, Australia, Bangladesh, Romania and Bulgaria (represented by Mariela Baeva before becoming a Member of the European Parliament).