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**THE ETHNIC SITUATION IN POST-COMMUNIST BULGARIA
(1989-1994)**

by

Ivaylo Grouev, M.A.

**A thesis submitted to
the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfilment of
the requirements for the degree of
(Master of Arts)**

Institute of Central\East European and Russian-Area Studies

Carleton University

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The undersigned hereby recommend to the Faculty of
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Carl McMillan, Director
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Abstract

In the period between 1989-1994, Post Communist Bulgaria achieved significant success in restoring fundamental civil rights to its ethnic groups. The Bulgarian political actors expressed the political will to resolve the country's internal issues by implementing human rights standards as outlined in the main CSCE and UN documents. A consensus to follow these blueprints for human rights was crucial for a peaceful post-communist transition. These rights were implemented as individual rights and it represented a pattern for dealing with ethnic minorities. However, the biggest and most homogeneous ethnic minority, namely the Turks, obtained collective political representation. The party of ethnic Turks (MRF) did not express any secessionist aspirations. In this respect, the active role given to the MRF was in rebuilding the civil society in Bulgaria along with other Bulgarian political parties which signified the emergence of a new, post-communist, ethnic contract.

Acknowledgment

This paper is dedicated to all ethnic groups living in Bulgaria who have lived through difficult and peculiar times but who have managed to find the courage to build bridges of understanding and tolerance and also to my friends and family, especially to Elsa, whose patience and devotion helped to guide me through this journey.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION TO RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN THE BULGARIAN ETHNIC LANDSCAPE

Bulgaria is an intriguing case in the context of the complex, rather confusing tendencies and dynamics of the Post Communist ethnic environment in the Balkans. The Bulgarian case remains a fascinating debate because it seems that, in some aspects, it does not follow the established scholarly models and explanations, leaving grounds for an open challenge to existing stereotypes and cliches of controversial ethnic issue. In this study, I will try to analyze the emergence of the "*Bulgarian model of ethnic accommodation*" (in case there is sufficiently strong evidence for such a definition - the original model; and not multiple models, or submodels); its driving force, grounds, possible explanations.

I also will look into its internal bonding tendencies which have made it into a coherent (or not) socio-political mechanism operating in the multifaceted Bulgarian Post-Communist ethnic landscape.

I would like also to distance this work from the overly simplistic conventional approaches vis-a-vis Balkan ethnopolitics, and to further expand the margins of the dominant classical categorization of Bulgarian nationalism. In this context, it is necessary for the scope and objective of the research to reach, if not a definite answer about the new character, or metamorphosis of Post Communist Bulgarian nationalism and ethnic agenda, but rather, at least, to indicate its high priority parameters.

In December 1989, one month after the "velvet coup d'état", ousting the longest ever ruling Communist leader, Todor Zhivkov, and 18 months before the war in Yugoslavia erupted, Bulgaria was perceived by some political observers in the West as on the verge of civil war. This civil war, it was stated, was as a result of "irreconcilable ethnic contradictions", which would open the prospect of an open conflict, violent ethnic clashes and even the possible break-up of the country.

However, Bulgaria *did not* experience civil war, violent ethnic clashes, or a violent break up.

Instead, it was surprising to most political analysts, that Bulgaria was able to preserve its ethnic peace and even despite the painful trauma of two major dramatic events which jeopardised the very existence of its fragile ethnic equilibrium: the "name changing campaign" of the winter of 1985 and the much more acute crisis of the mass exodus of

some 300 000 Turks in the summer of 1989 which left the economy and the national conscience in disarray. As one dissident put it, it was in "a stage of coma".

In this paper I will try to give a satisfactory explanation as to WHY the country did not experience violent ethnic clashes, despite the bleak record of the brutal and devastating assimilation campaign against the ethnic Turks (1985-1989) which, according to some international organisations such as Helsinki Watch, led to considerable human losses (1 500 ethnic Turks were killed; however, the number is, debatable at the very least).

From this explanatory position I will try to give the answer as to WHY Bulgaria was so effective in its attempts to accommodate its ethnic communities and to achieve a stable ethnic equilibrium. The fundamental metamorphosis (like Dr.Jerkyl-Mr.Hyde) of being blamed for its dark non-existent records vis-a-vis ethnic minority human rights to the status of an outstanding "human rights champion" in the Balkans will be the core of the scope of this work.

The forceful re-naming campaign of Bulgarian Turks in 1984-1985 was the last chapter of a long-lasting assimilation campaign; however, this chapter proved to be of crucial importance for the direction and dynamic of modern Bulgarian politics. Paradoxically, the peak of the acute ethnic crisis in Bulgaria (1985-1989) did not finish with

the exodus of the ethnic Turks in the summer of 1989, but with their return from Turkey in the fall of the same year. The exodus and the return of the ethnic Turks led to considerable ethnic tension in the fall and winter of 1989-1990, primarily in the areas with mixed ethnic populations. However, in the context of a collapsing Communist ideological framework and the evolution of the new liberal priorities of the multi-party environment in Bulgaria in the winter of 1989-1990, the national issue remained the key issue at the round table talks (between the Bulgarian Communist party and the emerging opposition groups).

In a situation of deep divisions within the Communist party and with an incoherent "national interests" vision expressed by the 16 parties of what later became the Union of Democratic Forces (UDF), a very disturbing event occurred in the Razgrad administrative region. (In this North-Eastern part of the country lived a compact mass of ethnic Turks.)

On New Year Eve 1990, the local party nomenklatura backed by the local police declared the so called "Razgradska republika". The driving force in the so-called "republic" was ethnic purity: this is Bulgarian land and no Turks should live here despite the fact that in that region they were the overwhelming majority.

The new self-elected authorities of the "republic" denounced the Central power (still Communist) in Sofia, the Bulgarian Constitution and the international documents and

treaties, envisaging the rights of ethnic minorities, which Bulgaria had signed. Barricades were raised, transportation through the area interrupted, and the local police put on high alert. The disturbing escalation of endangered institutional order and rule of law led the country to the verge of a catastrophe, where the inter-ethnic clashes would not be simply an internal Bulgarian affair.

The disturbing event of the "Razgrad republika" should be perceived as an anticipated result of persistent political manipulation and propaganda aiming to implicate the ethnic Turks in pursuing separatist agendas and posing a direct threat to the Bulgarian national interest.

The assertion was put forth that, according to international agreements, if a given ethnic or national minority numbers 10% or more of the population of the country it lives in, it automatically receives cultural, territorial and political autonomy and the right to separate itself and the territory in which it is concentrated or to be incorporated into another country (there is no legal basis for such claim).

Therefore, the "justification", or rather the excuse for the assimilation campaign of 1985 was that illegal organisations linked to Turkey had already been formed, and were preparing for the breaking away of extensive Bulgarian territories (notably the Razgrad and Kardjali regions with compact populations of ethnic Turks) and their future

annexation to Turkey. For the sake of "the preservation of Bulgarian national interests and the unity of the country" - as Communist propaganda impressed on them - there were no serious protests by Bulgarians against the campaign. ²

However, it should be mentioned that from the position of nearly no record vis-a-vis minority rights in the 1985-90 period, the situation in Bulgaria after 1990 has fundamentally changed. If we look at the development of inter-ethnic relations after 1989 there is clear evidence of *Full Restoration* according to the OSCE standards of the violation of the rights of the Turkish ethnic community. Indeed, in 1990 there was another name-changing "campaign", (however this time not forceful).

Most Turks decided to reinstate the old Muslim names.

All limitations on the exercise of the religious rights of Muslims in Bulgaria were lifted. Over 920 mosques began to operate after 1990. Religious literature (Koran) in both Bulgarian and Turkish languages were free to circulate. The study of the Turkish language in schools was also introduced. Publications of Turkish language newspapers and magazines resumed, as well as daily programmes in Turkish by the National Radio. ³

² See Ilona Tomova "Turtsite v Bulgaria" in Maltsinstvata v Bulgaria v konteksta na choveshkite prava, Komitet za zashtita na pravata na maltsinstvata, Sofia, 1994

³ See Ilona Tomova "Turtsite v Bulgaria" in Maltsinstvata v Bulgaria v konteksta na choveshkite prava, Komitet za zashtita na pravata na maltsinstvata, Sofia, 1994;

Facing the first challenges in the complex transitional period towards institutionalizing civil rights and liberties, Bulgaria succeeded in playing down some populist and ultranationalist forces. Thus, the avenue for a peaceful dialogue and compromise on delicate matters such as the national agenda and ethnic accommodation was opened.

Surprisingly, the real breakthrough was that the beginning of this process was designed, conducted and executed by the reformist wing of the Communist party, advancing to seize the political leadership after Zhivkov's ouster.

This accomplishment was accepted in the rest of the Balkans with mixed reactions. Turkey was most eager to establish a new rapprochement with Bulgaria, while Romania, due to its inter-ethnic tension in Transylvania, was not. Greece was increasingly anxious, having felt directly threatened by the emerging possibility of a normalization of Bulgarian-Turkish relations.

Outside of the Balkans, however, the response was different. Two years after the violent break up of Yugoslavia, Bulgaria was described (perhaps partly due to some not so concealed geopolitical concerns) as an "Oasis in the Balkans" as put forth by U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher.

II. OBJECTIVE OF THE THESIS

The purpose of the introduction of this thesis is to delineate the main hypothesis of this research.

My hypothesis is that Bulgarian political actors expressed the political will to resolve their internal issues, such as those related to ethnic minorities, politically rather through violent confrontations or the implementation of an assimilation policy, because ethnic rights were a major part of the human rights "basket" within the CSCE human rights context.

Initially, human rights were granted on an individual level. However, there was an evolution. In 1990, the Turkish community obtained collective political representation through the Movement for Rights and Freedoms, which essentially was a political party based on ethnic grounds. The rationale behind this decision was that it would be rather advantageous to channel and solve future discontents related to ethnic tensions democratically through open an political dialogue rather than to suppress these discontents which would allow the possibility of violent outbreaks. The lessons of the ethnic crisis from 1985-1989 were that the Bulgarian political actors were no longer willing to continue the same pattern of assimilation in order to

achieve a workable ethnic contract.

And on its side, MRF proved not to have a nationalist separatist agenda and was loyal to the Bulgarian state and Bulgarian nation in rebuilding the new civil society.

In this respect, it is interesting to analyze the extent to which Post Communist Bulgaria follows the general pattern of uni-ethnicity of some other Balkan states, such as Greece and Serbia, which adopted a strong assimilation policy.

The thesis will also focus on some emerging tendencies of ethnic accommodation and integration after the collapse of socialism in 1989 in Bulgaria, as well as on its direct impact on the dynamic of the recent political process in the country.

Some aspects of the process of maintaining ethnic equilibrium in Bulgaria and the actions of the main political parties in pursuing this agenda will also be analyzed. The thesis will deal with the position of ethnic and religious minorities within Bulgarian society after the collapse of the Zhivkov regime in 1989. New emerging tendencies in modern Bulgarian politics related to accommodating social and political rights of minorities will be examined. These new tendencies were reflected in the emergence of an ethnically based political party, a phenomenon unknown in the Zhivkov era. Before 1989, the Turkish minority was under the control of and subordinated

to the ruling Communist party, allowing, however, a certain degree of autonomy, such as limited study of the Turkish language and the existence of newspapers in Turkish. ⁴

In the period from 1989 to 1994, Bulgaria achieved an ethnic balance and avoided the escalation of ethnic tensions into open conflict, primarily because its main political actors agreed to grant a collective political right to the Turkish minority and this resulted in a new ethnic agreement. However, the same right was not granted to the other ethnic groups because they did not manage to organise coherent political entities.

After 1989, the Turkish minority in Bulgaria found an original way to become a fully independent political actor. In 1990, the Turkish minority in Bulgaria organised a political party "The Movement for Rights and Freedoms" (MRF).⁵ This party represented the Turkish community in the

⁴ See Hugh Poulton, The Balkans, Minorities and States in Conflict, Minority Rights Publications, London 1991; See also Vera Mutavchieva "Predstavata za drugia", in Vraski na savmestimost i nesavmestimost mezdu Hristiani i Muisulmani v Bulgaria, Fondatsia Mezhdunaroden tsenter po problemite na maltsinstvata i kulturnite vsaimodeistvia, Sofia, 1995

⁵ See Emil Konstantinov "Pravata na litsata, prinaldezachti kam religiozni, ezikovi i etnicheski maltsintva v Bulgarskata Konstitutsia ot 1991" in Aspekti na etnokulturnata situatsia v Bulgaria i na Balkanite Tsenter za izsledvane na demokratsiata , Fondatsia "Fridrih Nauman" Sofia, 1992, pp.13-20;

See also Donka Dimitrova "Etnicheskite plashila v pechata i traditsionnite modeli na obshtuvane mezdu Hrisitiani i Miusiulmani v Bulgaria", in Vraski na savmestimost i nesavmestimost mezdu Hristiani i Muisulmani v Bulgaria, Fondatsia Mezhdunaroden tsenter po problemite na maltsinstvata i kulturnite vsaimodeistvia, Sofia, 1995;

subsequent Parliamentary elections in 1990, 1991 and 1995.

The thesis will analyze, as well, the existing situation of another minority - the Macedonians (a highly debatable issue in other Balkan states: such as Serbia, Greece and Macedonia) and their status within the Bulgarian state. The paper will examine competitive doctrines (the faces of the current Macedonian nationalism) to solve this issue within the context of the new political tendencies after the collapse of the Yugoslav federation and the emergence of the new independent Macedonian state.

My research will deal, as well, with certain paradoxes in recent Bulgarian politics. According to the Constitution of 1991, Bulgaria accepted the nation-state concept granting individual rights (political, religious, linguistic) to all resident subjects, but does not allow the existence of political entities and organisations based on ethnic grounds. The preservation of the interests of various groups should not be based on ethnicity. Following this line of thinking, the new Constitution gives no official recognition to ethnic minorities, nor does it provide for autonomous regions of ethnic minorities.

One paradox is that despite the spirit of the new Constitution, in 1992 The Movement for Rights and Freedoms

See also Plamen Bogoev, "Bulgarskite Konstitutsii za pravata na maltsinstvata" in Maltsinstvata v Bulgaria v konteksta na choveshkite prava", Komitet za zachtita na maltsinstvata, Sofia 1994

(MRF) received the status of a political party.⁶

Another paradox is that a national minority party (MRF) holds the balance of power and is a guarantee for internal stability which is a unique case and an exception to the general pattern of other Balkan states.

In my thesis I will test the hypothesis that in the Post-Communist context the main ethnic minority in Bulgaria living next to the "mother country" does not have a separatist agenda and, therefore, is not perceived as a threat to Bulgarian territorial integrity. Turkish marginalisation increased their homogeneity. In a democratic, multi-party fragmented environment this homogeneity, institutionalized by the MRF, turned out to be a decisive factor for the outcome of the Bulgarian political struggle.

On the other hand, the over-simplistic generalisation of Post-Communist Bulgaria experiencing a truly "ethnic peace" and being an ethnic tension-free "Oasis in the Balkans" is, at least, misleading. The thesis will analyze some inconsistencies in the Post-Communist ethnic landscape, such as a lack of a new comprehensive "multicultural"

⁶ See Emil Konstantinov "Pravata na litsata, prinaldezachti kam religiozni, ezikovi i etnicheski maltisntva v Bulgarskata Konstitutsia ot 1991" in Aspekti na etnokulturnata situatsia v Bulgaria i na Balkanite, Tsenter za izsledvane na demokratsiata , Fondatsia Fridrih Nauman, Sofia, 1992; See also Ilona Tomova "Turtsite v Bulgaria" in Maltsinstvata v Bulgaria v konteksta na choveshkite prava, Komitet za zashtita na pravata na maltsinstvata, Sofia, 1994

minority doctrine. The text books for elementary and high schools are outdated and are from the Zhivkov period. The same is true at the University level.

In general, the present ethnic reality contains some disturbing features with respect to other ethnic minorities, such as Gypsies. Violations of the rights of members of the Roma community continue to be the dominant human rights problem in Bulgaria. There is still considerable tension between the Bulgarian and Gypsy ethnic groups living in ethnically mixed areas. Increasing criminal activity within the Gypsy community in tough economic times is seen as an additional factor for this tense inter-ethnic relationship.

After 1989, there was just one Gypsy elected in the Parliament, compared to some 21 deputy mandates of the MRF in the Great National Assembly. This fact could be explained by the assumption that the Gypsy minority did not follow the pattern of the Turkish minority. Turks were homogeneous and had one political agenda, while the Gypsies did not have a coherent political movement.

The importance of the thesis is based on the key issue of absorbing ethnic tension and channelling it into constructive political activity. The thesis will examine the so-called "Bulgarian model", securing internal stability in a multi-ethnic and multi-religious environment, in light of a practical model of solving ethnic tensions in the complex context of the ethnically dissonant Balkan states.

Using primarily an institutional approach my thesis will be mainly focusing on state institutions, political parties, NGO's, local administrations and special interest groups. The following research method will be used: analysis of governmental documents, analysis of the existing legal structure, analysis of research by leading Bulgarian scholars working on ethnic issues will also be taken into consideration as well as interviews conducted by the author.

In the first chapter, I will briefly examine the ethnic situation in Bulgaria. In the second chapter, I will examine some of the main tendencies of the existing theoretical framework of ethnic and minority issues.

In the third chapter, the focus will be the existing legal and institutional framework related to ethnic issues in Bulgaria. In the fourth chapter I will examine the situation of the Pomak community in Bulgaria. In the fifth chapter, I will analyze the minority status of the Macedonian community. In the sixth chapter, I will examine the minority status of the Pomak community. In the seventh chapter, I will analyze the emergence and dynamics of the transformation of the Movement for Rights and Freedoms (MRF) into a major political factor in Post-Communist Bulgaria in the period between 1989-1994; and factors facilitating this phenomenon will be discussed. In the eighth chapter, or conclusion, I will test my hypothesis from the introduction.

CHAPTER II

MINORITY RIGHTS ACCORDING TO THE INTERNATIONAL LEGAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Nationalism versus Liberalism

"With politics becoming "the art of creating majorities", the national minority became an inevitable victim of the development of modern East European society."

R. Pearson

"Why is it that the word "Balkanization" is almost always rightly understood and rightly applied? ...As far as I can see, its symbolic sense may best be apprehended from two starting points:- the first is the generally accepted statement that the Balkans are the powder magazine in Europe. The second is the fact of a peculiarly elemental and irreconcilable racial enmity"

¹Count Hermann Keyserling, Europe, Harcourt, Brace and Company, New York, 1928

It seems that the ethnic issue is becoming a new political Touchstone in the Post Cold War arena. Whatever the explanation may be, today there is disturbing evidence that the international environment seems to be less willing to express ethnic patience and tolerance as it was before. The euphoria of 1989-90, when the Wall fell down and the Communist regimes fell, was replaced quickly with a more sober mood. In Europe, in the space of just three years three multi-ethnic federations collapsed. The largest Eurasian state and the Cold War super power - the USSR, along with Czechoslovakia managed to disintegrate peacefully. However, in the Balkans, the disintegration of Yugoslavia turned out to be much more perplexing and became the bloodiest conflict after the end of the WWII. (The irony is that two of these three federations: Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia were created by intellectual émigrés, with no apparent consensus about such prospects expressed by their own peoples.)⁸

In Europe, after 50 years of stable peace (not mentioning the violent break up of Yugoslavia) and the creation of a single European market, the common impression was that radical nationalism as a political archetype belonged to the past. However, in the European context this impression turned out to be misleading. According to a 1992 CSCE report:

⁸ see Raymond Pearson, National Minorities in Eastern Europe 1848-1945 (Themes in Comparative History), London, 1981, pp.155-160

"If the 20th century has shown anything, it is surely that nationalism - despite the predictions and efforts of rationalists in their various guises - is still very much alive. One consequence is that the striving to create nation-states remains powerful among peoples whom history, their neighbours and sometimes distant powers had deprived of the opportunity: one implication is that many minorities remain in precarious circumstances, and this problem will not be wished away."

Some scholars, such as Pierre Cende, link this development with the effects of the so-called "refrigerator theory". That is one of the many good aspects of the Cold War was the freezing effect on the national movements of East European countries. ¹⁰ Others-like Ralf Darendorf, comment that the increasingly tense situation in Central and Eastern Europe can be described as "tribalism", the desire of people to live in ethnically homogeneous entities. ¹¹ These revitalised tendencies oriented "back to the past" are closer to the 1848 one nation-state European "élan", than to Post war liberalism. M. Heisler goes further than other scholars in maintaining that ethnic tensions exist in all sorts of

⁹ "Minority Rights, Problems, Parameters and Patters in the CSCE context", Compiled by the Staff of the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, Washington, D.C. 1992

¹⁰ See Milena Mateva "Aspekti na Bulgarskiat natzionalizm" in Aspekti na ethnokulturnata situatsia v Bulgaria i na Balkanite, Tsenter za izsledvane na demokratsiata, Fondatsia Frirdih Nauman, Sofia 1992, p.51

¹¹ Ibid pp.48-50

countries - Western and non-Western, large and small, democratic and nondemocratic, rich and poor, and even those with no ethnic minorities, and are not necessarily related to economic and political development. ¹²

On the other hand, despite the modernist socio-political complex describing the ethnic issues, in his controversial article "Clash of Civilisation", Samuel Huntington expressed a pessimistic anthropological-cultural panorama according to which the new stage of global ethnic affairs should be found in the depth of an unconventional culturally sustained rationality:

The fundamental source of conflict in this new world will not be primarily ideological, or primarily economic. The great division among humankind and the dominating source of conflict will be cultural. Nation states will remain the most powerful actors in the world affairs, but the principal conflicts of global politics will occur between nations and groups of different civilizations. The clash of civilizations will dominate global politics. The fault lines between civilizations will be battle lines in the future.

¹³

In this analysis it is not difficult to detect some nostalgic resonance, lexicon, arguments and a global approach

¹² Martin Heisler, "Ethnicity and Ethnic Relations in the Modern West" in Conflict and Peacemaking in Multiethnic Societies, Lexington Books, Mass., 1990

¹³ See, Huntington Samuel P. "Clash of Civilizations?" Foreign Affairs - Volume 72, #3, Summer 1993, pp.22

known from the Cold War era. Here, the old ideological differences constituting the markers for the international division, were replaced by the cultural-religious parameters. Later on, specific attention would be paid to this particular cultural-anthropological approach. But in one thing Huntington is right: at the present time, ethnic and religious tensions are intensifying in contradiction to dominant predictions of the fading importance of ethnic divisions in modern societies. Those common predictions in the literature of the social sciences turned out to give a plausible, but not necessarily the best answer.

Indeed, the national majority-minority issue was a central issue, long before the geopolitical "domino effect" of the disintegration of the two empires at the beginning of the 20th century. The issue is again one of the key issues in the political agenda in most European countries. The disturbing atmosphere of ethno-purity and xenophobia is one aspect in Europe - the new Common Home from Atlantic to Urals - as the former Soviet President Gorbachev once put it. Ultra-national right-wing parties today have wide public support in the mini Yugoslavia, Croatia, the former GDR, Czech republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Poland, and Latvia. The assumption that this tension arose because of the lack of a general trend of modernity is an inadequate argument. Nationalist-ethnocentric, right-wing parties in post 1989 industrialised Europe are an increasingly disturbing political phenomenon, to which it seems no country

is immune. (Albania may be the lonely exception in Europe.) Traditionally liberal countries, labelled as "immigrant paradise countries", such as Sweden and Holland are experiencing a xenophobic anti-immigrant atmosphere, as well.¹⁴

It seems that although modernization has substantially attenuated historical patterns of ethnicity, the conditions of modernity have created similar phenomena. Ethnicity was seen as premodern-primordial, parochial, as an abnormality to progress and conducive to conflict and its evanescence was welcomed as a felicitous by-product of modernization.¹⁵

The paradox is that the most industrialised countries are now experiencing a considerable rise in ethnic/religious intolerance. In five of those in the G-7 Club, there is a troublesome and tense atmosphere of ethnic and religious tension: the dichotomy: in the U.S.- WASP majority versus Hispanic and African American minorities; in Canada: the province of Quebec versus English Canada; in UK Protestant-Catholics in Northern Ireland; in France - French majority versus the 4 million immigrants primarily from the Magreb, and Western and Central Africa (not to mention the Basque and Corsican problem). In Germany, a German majority versus

¹⁴ In January 1996 it was announced that in Sweden Neo-Nazi gangs were looting buildings with immigrants, primarily from Bosnia and Herzegovina. In one occasion a man in his late 30's has been beaten to death by neo-nazis. On the street they smashed his skull and drew a swastika with his blood at the wall of the building.

¹⁵ See Martin Heisler, "Ethnicity and Ethnic Relations in the Modern West" in Conflict and Peacemaking in Multiethnic Societies, Lexington Books, Mass., 1990, pp.21

immigrants (Turkish Gastarbeiters). It seems that only Japan (with some indication of religious incidents like that in the Tokyo subway) and Italy do not experience the same level of instability.¹⁶

The process of ethnic/religious intolerance comes from the opposite conditions. This might be a confusing assumption because, after all, Europe seems to be far from Social Darwinism, imperialism and racism, which were the main cause for an aggressive breed of nationalism.

In most cases, the success of advanced industrial democracies provided material and physical security for their populations, maintaining political stability, extending and institutionalizing civil rights and liberties.¹⁷

However, ethnocultural distinctions have arisen in many modern societies once considered free of or no longer susceptible to politically significant ethnicity. And the presence of a large number of migrants and refugees has added multi-ethnic dimensions to previously homogeneous societies.¹⁸ However, it should be mentioned that in the last few years various governments have adopted more open policies vis-a-vis so-called "ethnic" representation.

**In seven of the countries, whose leaders
mobilizing considerable support among the
ethnic populations, organizing and**

¹⁶ Ibid

¹⁷ Ibid

¹⁸ Ibid

sustaining their positions over time, and eliciting concerted responses from central governments: United Kingdom (regarding Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales), Spain (mainly in the Basque provinces and Catalonia), Belgium, Canada, France, Switzerland, and Italy.
¹⁹

As a continuation of process of ethnic accommodation may be seen the creation of ethnic parties which became active political actors in some of these countries. Another significant element related to Western modern political history was the fact that ethnic demands have been rarely accompanied by violence; the ethnic or religious tension never reached the magnitude of the Yugoslav conflict or the Azeri-Armenian conflict. About 3,000 people have died in ethnic/religious related conflicts since the mid-1960s in the West, almost all of them in Northern Ireland and Spain.²⁰

It is obvious that the Western policy of accommodating ethnic matters, granting local autonomy, respecting minorities rights, is so far the best option to channel ethnic tension and to avoid open ethnic conflicts and warfare.²¹

Very few serious scholars would argue that in Europe some 50 years after the end of the WWII, with the continuing rapid industrialization and democratization in the classical "Rousseau social contract", and also with the establishment of

¹⁹ ibid

²⁰ ibid

²¹ ibid

the welfare state, they expected to witness a nationalist right wing Renaissance. Very few Sovietologists would have predicted the "Zhirinivosky phenomenon", with his ultranationalist agenda to be one of the dominant players in the Post Communist Russian landscape. Recently it was announced that Zhirinovsky and the French nationalist Jean Marie Le Pen are considering forming a broad European ultra-right Alliance.

"Nationalism from the top", "nationalism from below", "nationalism from nowhere," "Restoration" type of nationalism, and "Europecentric" type of nationalism, are some of the qualifications, which provides some background in understanding the generic basis for the complex relationship of inter-ethnic and inter-religious relationships.

In the second part of the chapter, I will try to put forth some of the prevalent ideas and concepts and to establish the theoretical tools (instrumentarium) used in this thesis.

2.2 Debates and Approaches

"It is a sacred principle, that though the will of majority is in all cases to prevail, that will to be rightful must be reasonable, that the minority possess their equal rights, which equal law must protect, and to violate would be oppression".

Thomas Jefferson

First Inaugural Address to the Nation

Questions concerning the rights and responsibilities, the condition and the future of minorities occupy high priorities in the agenda of the United Nations, the OSCE, the Council of Europe, and the European Union. In recent years, issues relating to "minority rights" were a prime theme and a focus of various international legislative documents. However, this sensitive matter seems to constitute a complicated and perplexing complex of different standpoints, views, approaches and methodological inclinations. Despite the existence of numerous internationally adopted texts on minority issues, there is still no conclusive universal legal framework on minority issues.

The list of comprehensive documents on minority issues is

impressively long: the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (Article 27), the Convention against Genocide, The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, UNESCO's Convention Against Discrimination in Education, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, UNESCO's Declaration on Race and Racial Prejudice, the Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Article 26), the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (Article 13) and the Declarations and Programmes of Action adopted in 1978 and 1983 by the two World Conferences to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination, the UN Minority Rights Declaration, as well as some regional texts such as: the Madrid Concluding Document of the CSCE follow-up conference, Vienna Concluding Document and Copenhagen Document.²²

However, despite those determined attempts to develop a universally workable conceptual model, it seems that this task has not been fully achieved. One of the challenges is the lack of general consensus vis a vis boundaries and standards of definition of the main categories in the area, such as "minority", "national minority", "nation", "people", "self

²² See Minority Rights, Problems, Parameters and Patterns in the CSCE Context, Compiled by the Staff of the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, Washington, D.D. 1992 p.12

determination" etc.²³ There is an evident problem of definition, which gives the opportunity to lend a variety of possible interpretations or even misinterpretations. The core of the question in terms of the international legal aspect is within the vague conceptualization of this subject. For example, neither in the UN, nor in any of the OSCE documents, including the most recent, is there an explicit definition of "What is minority?".

In the European context, starting with the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648, through to the present day, this "cassette" could be put categorically in the classification of the most challenging European logistic issues.

It is known that "minority rights", and "minority protection" came to the top of the political agenda at the Versailles treaties. This was a turning point in the minority accommodation process. After the war, the need for some more sophisticated logistic mechanisms became acute - because of the redrawing of borders after WWI some 25 percent of the European population suddenly obtained the status of "minority." This situation was most serious in Eastern Europe and in the Balkans. (The pressure to do something urgent, which would be effective in minority protection was of fundamental importance for the Allies.) At the risk of repeating obvious things, I would like to mention that the minority rights complex existed earlier, surfacing more

²³ *ibid*

distinguishably at the time of the emergence of nationalism as a political phenomena. This occurred in the context of the nation building élan and the emergence of the modern European states. (Without expanding the debate further it should be mentioned that the concept of nation is another source of disputable interpretations - see Lieber.²⁴ An important step in the evolution of the conceptualization of the "ethnic dilemma" in the late 19th and early 20th centuries was the promotion of a revolutionary idea (at that time) based on national cultural autonomy. This concept, in fact, separated nationality from territory. The founders of this concept were two Austrian Social Democrats, Karl Renner and Otto Bauer. They elaborated this conceptual model envisaging organising

²⁴ An excellent definition of a nation is that of Lieber "Nationalism" pp. 7-8. "What is a nation in the modern sense of the word? The word nation, in the fullest adaptation of the term, means, in modern times, a numerous and homogeneous population (having long emerged from the hunters and nomadic state) permanently inhabiting and cultivating a coherent territory, with a well-defined geographic outline, and a name of its own, - the inhabitants speaking their own language, having their own literature and common institutions, which distinguish them clearly from other and similar groups of people, being citizens or subjects of a unitary government, however subdivided it may be, and having an organic unity with one another as well as being conscious of a common destiny. Organic, intellectual and political internal unity with proportionate, strength and a distinct and obvious demarcation from similar groups, are notable elements of the idea of a modern nation in its fullest sense. A nation is a nation only when there is but one nationality; and the attempt at establishing nationality is more inconsistent and mischievous even than the establishment of "an empire within an empire", quoted in Edward Krenthiel, "Nationalism, War and Society" (a study of Nationalism and its Concomitant, War, in their Relation to Civilization, and the Fundamentals and the Progress of the Opposition to War) New York, The Macmillan Company, 1916

members of each nationality into associations at the local, regional and state level that would manage its people's educational and cultural but not economic or political affairs, independent of the state's administrative territorial structure.²⁵

This was an innovative idea, particularly influential in multi-national environments suffering from ethnic friction. If we remember Herder's warning in his "Essay on Origin of Language", that "threatened tribes will preserve all the more tenaciously their tradition and language". In this context, the whole range for protection of language, culture, religion and tradition might be threatened.

Therefore, there is another equally significant trend which should be taken into consideration - the process of mass participation in political activity. The latter seems to be of paramount importance in the following texts regulating the rights of minorities. It is known that nationalism as a doctrine argues that humanity is naturally divided into nations, which are distinguished from each other by their historically conditioned traits, especially language, and national self-government in the form of nation-states is the only legitimate form of government.²⁶

In this respect, mass participation in the political

²⁵ See Minority Rights, Problems, Parameters and Patterns in the CSCE Context, Compiled by the Staff of the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, Washington, D.C. 1992

²⁶ *ibid*

process arises as one of the fundamental characteristics of what we call modernity. Therefore, representative features in the context of the rule of law environment such as: universal suffrage, freedom of expression and freedom of association naturally influenced the future blueprint for minority rights protection. The emergence of these basic concepts - inalienability, universality and the rule of law - can be seen in several pivotal and historic Western proclamations: the English Magna Carta: (1215), the American Declaration of Independence (1787) and the French Declaration des Droits de l'Homme et du Citoyen (1789).²⁷

The 1919 Paris Conference intended to "just reduce not eliminate" the minority issue. The newly established League of Nations took the responsibility of being guarantor of the rights of minorities (religious, linguistic) however not granting them any representative national/ethnic organisations.²⁸ After the Versailles Conference, the League of Nations tried to put this issue at the top of its agenda, stating "recognition of the minorities question is one with distinct parameters and a matter of international concern."

²⁹ However, these concerns and most of all the assurances which the League of Nations pledged to guarantee did not

²⁷ *ibid*

²⁸ *ibid*

²⁹ see Protection of Minorities: Special Protective Measures of an International Character for Ethnic, Religious or Linguistic Groups (New York:United Nations,1967) UN Sales, #67.XIV.3,7-8

materialism. The interwar period proved to be anything but a period of protection for minority rights. "Extreme nationalism became a religion: it dominated the political life of almost every East European state."³⁰ Minority issues once again became a focal point of the international community after the end of the WWII. The creation of the United Nations in 1945 was a major development in this process. The United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which promoted universal individual rights on a non-discriminatory basis was perceived as the best scenario for the new post war World order. Despite the fact that there was not a specific text envisaging minority rights, the Declaration was seen as the direct guarantor of minority protection.

From this time, one of the first definition of "minority" appeared in the text of the Greco-Bulgarian Convention concerning emigration:

By tradition the "Community" is a group of persons living in a given country or locality, having a race, religion, language and tradition of their own and united by his identity of race, religion, language and traditions in a sentiment of solidarity, with a view to preserving their traditions, maintaining their form of worship, ensuring the instruction and upbringing of their children in accordance with the spirit and traditions of their race and rendering mutual

³⁰ Minority Rights, Problems, Parameters and Patterns in the CSCE Context, Compiled by the Staff of the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, Washington, D.D. 1992 p.1

assistance to each another. ³¹

Special texts on minority rights were also included in the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide of 1948, however, not addressing the issues directly Article II criminalized "acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group as such." ³²

The same principles of equality and non-discrimination were validated in the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination of 1966; Article 1(4):

Special measures taken for the sole purpose of securing adequate advancement of certain racial or ethnic groups or individuals requiring such protection as may be necessary in order to ensure such groups or individuals equal enjoyment or exercise of human rights and fundamental freedoms shall not be deemed racial discrimination, provided, however, that such measures do not, as a consequence, lead to the maintenance of separate rights for different racial groups and they shall not be continued after objectives for which they were taken have been achieved. ³³

³¹ Advisory Opinion of 31 July 1930 on the Greco-Bulgarian Community, P.C.I.J., Ser.B, # 17, 21

³² Human Rights, A Compilation of International Instruments (New York: United Nations, 1988) The Genocide Convention (New York: Institute of Jewish Affairs, 1960)

³³ Patrick Thornberry, "The UN Declaration: Background, Analysis and Observation" in The UN Minority Rights Declaration, Abo Akademi University Institute for Human Rights, Minority Rights

Special attention was granted to education and preservation of minority cultures. Without preserving their languages, there will be no minority cultures. A special provision in this respect was set in Article 5.1 (c) of the UNESCO Convention Against Discrimination in Education of 1960:

it is essential to recognise the right of members of national minorities to carry out their own educational activities, including the maintenance of schools and, depending on the educational policy of each State, the use of the teaching of their own language, provided however;

- (i) That this right is not exercised in a manner which prevents the members of these minorities from understanding the culture and the language of the community as a whole and from participating in its activities, or which prejudices national sovereignty;
- (ii) That the standard of education is not lower than the general standard laid down or approved by the competent authorities; and
- (iii) That attendance at such schools is optional³⁴

Similar concerns were expressed in the following international legal documents envisaging protection of minority rights. Article 30 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child of 1989 stated:

In those states in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities exist or persons of indigenous origin exist, a child belonging to such a minority or who

Group (International) Turku/Abo London 1993, p.17

³⁴ Ibid pp.18

is indigenous shall not be denied the right, in community with other members of his or her group, to enjoy his or her own culture, to profess and practice his or her own religion, or to use his or her own language.³⁵

The most comprehensive document dealing with minority rights is the Covenant of Civil and Political Rights and its famous Article 27 stating that:

In those States in which ethnic religious or linguistic minorities exist, persons belonging to such minorities shall not be denied the right, in community with the other members of their group, to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practice their own religion, or to use their own language.³⁶

The ambiguity of this Covenant is the open dilemma as to whether a state "recognizes" or does not "recognize" minorities on its territory. The Covenant perceived that this issue is within the internal law of the respective country and cannot in any way be decided by international law. However, there are some provisions in other international agreements clarifying this particular component and obliging states to carry out their responsibilities.

"Every State has the duty to carry out in good faith its obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law, and it may not invoke provisions in its

³⁵ *ibid*

³⁶ Plamen Bogoev, "Bulgarskite konstitutsii za pravata na maltsinstvata in Maltsinstvata v Bulgaria v konteksta na choveskite prava, Sofia 1994, p.11

constitution or its laws as an excuse for failure to perform this duty" (Article 13 of the draft Declaration on the Rights and Duties of States of 1949)³⁷

However, there should not be a great deal of optimism, because according to Article 27 of the Covenant of Civil and Political Rights, it is explicitly clear.

The duty of the state appears to be only one of non-interference in the enjoyment of minority rights-which "shall not be denied"-and not one of supportive action. The State is, as it were, a mere spectator in the minority's attempts to resist assimilation. ³⁸

³⁷ Patrick Thornberry "The UN Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities: Background, Analysis and Observations" in The UN Minority Right Declaration, Abo Akademi University Institute for Human Rights, Minority Rights Group (International) Turku/Abo-London, 1993

³⁸ Ibid

**The contemporary polemic
OSCE and Council of Europe**

In the present debate regarding minority rights, the definition of a minority is of principal importance. The Helsinki process, despite its outspoken position vis a vis the human rights record, (including minority rights) presents this subject rather cautiously. As was mentioned earlier, in fact, there is no explicit definition of "minority" in any part of the CSCE document.

Principle 7 of the 1975 Helsinki final Act states that:

the participating States on whose territory national minorities exist will respect the right of persons belonging to such minorities to equality before the law, will afford them the full opportunity for the actual enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedom and will, in this manner protect their legitimate right in this sphere.³⁹

The formulation itself, "on whose territories national minorities exist" could be interpreted as an open invitation to avoid as a whole the present debate about whether there are or there are not any minorities. Some countries, for example, went so far as to declare that they do not have any. France

³⁹ See Minority Rights, Problems, Parameters and Patterns in the CSCE Context, Compiled by the Staff of the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, Washington, D.C. 1992

was the first European country which explicitly denied that there are any minorities on her territories. It should be mentioned, however, that this standpoint is attractive to other European countries, including Bulgaria, which are inclined to share this view, although, not in so conclusive a manner.⁴⁰ This was just one example of the consequence of a vaguely elaborated methodological framework on minority issues. This having been said, it would be at least misleading to assume that there are not enough legal instruments on minority issues designed after the Helsinki Process. Minority rights are further elaborated and clarified in the following CSCE documents: the 1983 Madrid Concluding Document; the 1989 Vienna Concluding Document and the 1990 Copenhagen Document, however, none of these texts define or explain the concept of "minority".⁴¹

However, the CSCE documents validate the need for the ruling governments to meet the European standards vis a vis "national minority" rights. This could be done in elaborating rigid standards of comprehensive protection for the existing

⁴⁰ At the March 1991 meeting of the U.N. Working Group on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National, Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities, France stated that: "France does not recognize on its territory the existence of groups whose particular features are based on racial, linguistic and religious criteria.. France's ideas are based on a universal principle: 'All persons are born free and equal in dignity and in law ' see Minority Rights, Problems, Parameters and Patterns in the CSCE Context, Compiled by the Staff of the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, Washington, D.C.1992

⁴¹ *ibid*

"ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious" entities. This approach was consistent with the principles of Basket III of the Helsinki Final Act: the participating States recognized the contributions of "national minorities" in the fields of culture and education.⁴²

However, there are perplexing parameters and boundaries in many of the CSCE documents envisaging the core term of the CSCE documents - "national minority". It should be mentioned, however, that the term "national minority" is a unique European contribution to the international legislative legal framework in the field. In no other international document is this terminology mentioned. The origin of this term occurred during the elaboration of the Helsinki Final Act. Yugoslavia proposed the inclusion of the term "national minority" in the text of the final draft. In the case of the Yugoslav federation, probably this notion had its particular significance, however it is arguable that it is a universally applicable category in the European context.

In 1990, the Copenhagen Document decided to avoid the delicate and sensitive definition of "minority" abandoning in its final version the qualification "on whose territory national minorities exist".

In this way, the accent was set on the dynamics of minority groups in an open system, and not a static entity postulating that belonging to a minority group, is "a matter

⁴² *ibid*

of a person's individual choice".

The other European organisation dealing with human/minority rights is the Council of Europe. It is believed that its most significant achievement in the field of human rights was the approval of the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms. The Convention focused on the protection of individual rights and fundamental freedoms. However, the same cautious approach was implemented. There was only one reference to the rights of minorities - in Article 14, stating that "the enjoyment of the rights and freedoms set forth in this Convention shall be secured without discrimination on any ground such as -"association with a national minority." ⁴³

Despite the universality of the proclaimed principles, the Council of Europe does not leave any doubt that these principles in fact have only limited regional implication. Hence, minorities living in countries outside of the scope of the protection provided by these instruments are not the subject of its concerns. There is also another reason for double standards. Dividing Europe into Member and Non-Member States could give the impression of the existence of and promotion of double legal standards vis a vis minority issues within the European context.

⁴³ Eero.I.Arno "Minority Rights in the Council of Europe: Current Developments", in The UN Minority Right Declaration, Abo Akademi University Institute for Human Rights, Minority Rights Group (International) Turku/Abo-London, 1993.

A major perplexity in the CSCE documents is the lack of clarity in respect to the relationship between "national" and another controversial characteristic related to minority groups "ethnic". It seems that in the CSCE documents the accent of "national" has more a cultural connotation than legal meaning, and this could be described as one of the dominant highlights of the present European approach. The Council of Europe Committee of Governmental Experts outlined in the additional protocol to the European Convention on Human Rights that:

the term "national minority" should be interpreted as broadly as possible so as to include all ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities, as well as specifically "national minorities."⁴

However, following this line of thinking, it seems that the debate goes back to its starting point, which may give the impression of a classical "chicken and egg" situation. There are two competing doctrines; the UN includes national in ethnic, while Council of Europe includes ethnic in national. This logistic casse-tête is wisely balanced in the draft of the Working Group preparing the new UN Declaration on Minority Rights:

⁴ Patrick Thornberry "The UN Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities: Background, Analysis and Observations" in The UN Minority Right Declaration, Abo Akademi University Institute for Human Rights, Minority Rights Group (International) Turku/Abo-London, 1993

On the one hand, a preference was expressed for focusing on guarantees for national minorities only...

On the other hand, it was said that it would be difficult or even impossible to set up legal distinctions between national and ethnic groups, that the term "ethnic" probably encompasses "national", and that in order to avoid confusion in different jurisdiction, a formulation including all these elements should be prepared by the Working Group.⁴⁵

While the UN, CSCE and the Council of Europe were debating, France profited from this available legal emptiness declaring that the country does not have any minorities and that Article 27 of the Covenant is therefore not applicable to France. France put the whole minority debate into a new, different direction. France advocated the principle of territorial attachment. In this analysis national minority status is based on specific culturally distinctive heritage, on unique historical presence and particularly regionality, or the so-called "cultures regionales".⁴⁶ Another even more challenging aspect of the current debate was in the sensitive area of another long standing dilemma in the minority context - individual versus collective rights.

⁴⁵ UN Doc.E/CN.4/1991/53, para 10.

⁴⁶ Patrick Thornberry "The UN Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities: Background, Analysis and Observations" in The UN Minority Right Declaration, Abo Akademi University Institute for Human Rights, Minority Rights Group (International) Turku/Abo-London, 1993

It is known that from the very beginning of the Helsinki process this debate was prudently avoided, giving the impression of domination of the so called individual approach over the collective one. However, after 1989 it seems that CSCE decided to open Pandora's box. In the Copenhagen Document there are some sections which validate the rights of individual members of a minority to engage in various collective activities.⁴⁷

However, it should be mentioned that this document does not provide any forceful restrictive measures; it is up to the CSCE countries to decide whether or not minority rights belong exclusively to individual members of a particular group, or to the group, as a collective whole.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ See "Minority Rights, Problems, Parameters and Patterns in the CSCE Context", Compiled by the Staff of the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, Washington, D.C. 1992 p.12

⁴⁸ *ibid*

Article 27 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights reflects the view that has probably gained the greatest acceptance to date, i.e. that it is the individual members of a minority group who are entitled to minority rights and not the group *per se*: "In those States in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities exist, persons belonging to such minorities shall not be denied the right, in community with other members of the group, to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practice their own religion, or to use their own language. While there are certainly some CSCE states that accept the notion that minorities have collective rights, the only view that can be said to have the consensus of all the CSCE states is that individual members of minority groups have rights.

To date, however, the organisation was not able to agree on any kind of binding legal standards to the protection of national minorities.⁴⁹

⁴⁹ However, the Committee of Experts for the Protection on National Minorities appointed in 1992 a Working Party to prepare draft articles on minority rights. These article were drafted so that it would be possible to include them in any of the three alternative instruments: an additional protocol to the European Convention on Human Rights, a specific convention on the rights of national minorities or a framework convention on the matter. The leading rights, freedoms and principles were formulated so far

- Non-discrimination and equality before the law;
- Right to choose freely to belong to a majority
- Linguistic Freedoms (right to use a minority language in general and particularly before public institutions and in penal proceedings, right to use one's own name; right to put signs of place-names in the minority language);
- Right to education (right to learn the minority language at school and to be taught in the minority language, right to set up educational institutions);
- Cultural freedoms;
- Freedom of association and assembly;
- Information freedoms (freedom of expression, right to import information in the minority language, right to access to public media, right of the minority to its own mass media);
- Freedom of religion;
- Right to transfrontier co-operation;
- Right to participate in public affairs;
- Right to an effective remedy
- Minority obligation of Loyalty to the State and
- State obligation to abstain from any policy of assimilation

quoted from Eero.J.Aarno in the "Minority Rights in the Council of Europe: Current Developments" in The UN Minority Rights Declaration, Abo Akademi University Institute for Human Rights, Minority Rights Group (International), Turku/Abo-London 1993, pp.108-109

Conclusion

In retrospect, besides the strong launch of an ambitious minority doctrine in the Post Communist era the CSCE was not able to answer some of the main challenging definitions. For example - the explanation of the concept of "national minorities" is still in its defining stage and still there is no explicit position on the dilemma of the individual or group approach to the rights of national minorities. So far, the individual approach is predominant in the CSCE process. This approach rather fits into the existing framework of human rights than presenting a separate and independent issue. With the further evolution of the CSCE into the OSCE, this might change, but for the period between 1989-1995, it did not present the super-structure over the existing principle of the sovereignty of nation states to deal primarily independently with their respective ethnic minority issues. However, even as a part of the general human rights agenda, the regulation of ethnic minority rights became a part of a democratization platform in post-Communist societies. Once the victory over Communist totalitarianism was secured, the implementation of ethnic minority rights took various directions in the Central and East European countries. These various directions were caused by different political contexts and could be best

traced by following the development of the legal and institutional framework of ethnic minority accommodation. The Bulgarian legal framework for the accommodation of ethnic minority rights presented a specific and prompt answer to the post-Communist challenges of a newly emerging civil society, and it presented the cornerstone for the further build-up of political stability in this country.

The contemporary polemic - The United Nations

In most of the U.N. documents such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (Article 27), the Convention against Genocide, the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, UNESCO's Convention against Discrimination in Education, and others there is a striking lack of clarity in defining the main methodological categories dealing with minority issues. The same pattern common for the CSCE documents is applicable for the U.N. logistical framework. However there is a differentiation. Apparently, different or conflicting points of view regarding the core of the debate "who is a minority and who is not" led to the convenient solution of simply avoiding this definition. Such fundamental documents as the U.N. Charter and the Universal Declaration on Human Rights do not even mention minority rights. Although, Article 27 of the 1966 Covenant on Civil and Political Rights recognizes the rights of "ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities", it skirts the issue of their definition.⁵⁰

In 1984 the UN requested the Sub-Commission to prepare a text defining the term "minority". The Sub Commission was

⁵⁰ See Minority Rights, Problems, Parameters and Patterns in the CSCE Context, Compiled by the Staff of the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, Washington, D.D. 1992

unable to achieve a consensus on that definition.

A recent attempt to overcome this definition vacuum was in a report for the U.N. Sub-Commission on the Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities. Francisco Capotorti, Rapporteur described a minority as a:

group numerically inferior to the rest of the population of a state, in a non-dominant position, whose members-being nationals of the State-possess ethnic, religious or linguistic characteristics differing from those of the rest of the population and show, if only implicitly a sense of solidarity, directed towards preserving their culture, traditions religion or language".⁵¹

In his definition, Capotorti does not mention "national minority" as established in the CSCE. Another new element is the qualification stressing that the minority must be in a "non dominant position". However, in this definition, despite the desire to avoid the opportunity to become again a testing polygon for legal criticism - there are some obvious questions. The first qualification of "non dominant position" raises the issue of a further more elaborate definition - because in this case it is arguable that women might be considered to be in this category.

Another element, which needs further tuning up is the

⁵¹See Patrick Thornberry "The UN Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities: Background, Analysis and Observations" in The UN Minority Right Declaration, Abo Akademi University Institute for Human Rights, Minority Rights Group (International) Turku/Abo-London 1993, pp.20-21

qualification "numerically inferior" - in this case - the Russian minority living today in Estonia, should be excluded from the definition. ⁵²

The most ambitious and comprehensive U.N. document in respect of minority rights was the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities. This was the first United Nations human rights instrument entirely devoted to minority rights.

However, in this Declaration again there is no definition of the notion of "minority". However, this apparently did not disturb the authors to stress again on the protection of national or ethnic minorities, providing that: "national minority" is a matter of a person's individual choice. ⁵³

The rights are those of "persons belonging to" minorities, not minorities, as such. The "persons" reference occurs at twenty-four points in the text. This is in line with Article 27 of the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights which describes the rights of individuals rather than groups.⁵⁴

⁵² See Minority Rights, Problems, Parameters and Patterns in the CSCE Context, Compiled by the Staff of the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, Washington, D.C. 1992 p.9

⁵³ Patrick Thornberry "The UN Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities: Background, Analysis and Observations" in The UN Minority Right Declaration, Abo Akademi University Institute for Human Rights, Minority Rights Group (International) Turku/Abo-London, 1993

⁵⁴ *ibid*

"to belong to a national minority is a matter of a person's individual choice and no disadvantage may arise from the exercise of such choice." ⁵⁵

The declaration is full of phrases like "where appropriate", "wherever possible", "encourage conditions", "create favourable conditions", and "in a manner not compatible with national legislature", thus giving the impression of selective standards and approaches.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Ibid pp.27

⁵⁶ Gudmundur Alfreðsson "Minority Rights: A Summary of Existing Practice", in The UN Minority Right Declaration, Abo Akademi University Institute for Human Rights, Minority Rights Group (International), Turku/Abo-London, 1993, p.78

Conclusion

It would be fair to conclude that in recent years, in particular, there has been radical progress in improving and updating the international logistical framework with respect to minority rights. This is important not only in creating a better definition of the main notions and categories but also in respect to the (comprehensive) common legal framework dealing with minority protection.

The ambitious preparation and adoption of the latest UN Minority Rights Declaration is clear evidence of the strong will of the international community to do more about this subject. There is no doubt that the future of minorities will occupy high priorities in the present agenda of the United Nations. The same is also valid for some regional organisations: the EC, the OSCE and the Council of Europe. This agenda has been slowly evolving after the Helsinki process and despite some disagreement, the overall impression is of a remarkable cohesiveness and common will to accommodate the existing differences.

However, there are still problems. Again in the European context some governments have sought to control ethnic tension by strictly centralised and often authoritarian political control: (the Kosovo precedent and also some disturbing events in Russia and in the Baltic States) others have tried confidence-building and power-sharing among the different

ethnic groups.⁵⁷

However, it should be enough to mention that difficulties have arisen for both. Success did not and could not depend solely on the wisdom of government measures but also on the politics and behaviour of the different ethnic or religious groups and their leaders.⁵⁸

The steady process of accommodating ethnic tension in the case of the Western democracies made it possible to avoid ethnic tension being translated into open ethnic conflict common in many other parts of the world. However, despite implementing various policies and practices "no Western country has found a means of resolving all its minority-

⁵⁷ See Asbjorn Eide "Approaches to Minority Protection" in The UN Minority Rights Declaration, Abo Akademi University Institute for Human Rights, Minority Rights Group (International) Turku/Abo-London, 1993, p.89:

"An effort to sum up the many variations in democratic experiences which seek to accommodate a degree of pluralism, recent political science has seen the introduction of the notion of "consociational democracy". Its main theoretical analyst is Arend Lijphart. It is a form of power-sharing through a multiple balance of power among the segments of a plural society which allow for decision-making by the "grand coalition method". The notion of consociational democracy is seen as an alternative to the majoritarian type of democracy, and more suitable for good government in plural societies divided by ethnic, linguistic, religious or cultural differences, where the groups are clearly identifiable. Consociational democracy is built on the principle of executive power-sharing and a certain degree of self-administration for each group, whether they live together or separately.

⁵⁸ *ibid*

majority disputes (or minority-minority disputes for that matter) and certainly no one has found anything that close to a model that could be easily transferred to other countries. Indeed, these practices are continuing to evolve, not only as minorities within individual countries struggle to protect their own cultures and traditions, but also as state-to state relations undergo significant changes in both North Africa and Europe. As an issue that is having an increasingly direct impact on local, and global politics, it will continue to remain one which drives, as well as responds to political agendas."⁵⁹

⁵⁹ See Minority Rights, Problems, Parameters and Patterns in the CSCE Context, Compiled by the Staff of the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, Washington, D.C. 1992, p.12

CHAPTER III
MINORITY RIGHTS ACCORDING TO THE BULGARIAN LEGAL
FRAMEWORK

3.1 History of Inter-Ethnic relations in Bulgaria

1878-1989

The Congress of Berlin of 1878 left the newly created Bulgaria with a large number of ethnic Turks as well as other ethnic groups such as Gypsies, Greeks, Armenians and Jews, most of whom had been living there for centuries as citizens of the Ottoman empire. The Turks had come to this land in the late 14th century. Despite mass emigration of Muslims during the after Russian-Turkish wars of 1878 when some one million and a half left for Turkey, a considerable number remained within the new state.¹

In 1879 the first Constitution of the independent Bulgaria was adopted. The Constitution guaranteed the equality of all Bulgarian citizens (Article 57), outlawing all forms of religious and ethnic discrimination (Article 9 and 12) and granted minority groups the right to preserve and develop

¹ Darina Vasileva "Izselnickeskiat vapros v Bulgaro-Turskite otnoshenia" in Aspekti na etnokulturnata situatsia v Bulgaria, Tsenter za izsledvane na demokratsiata, Fondatsia "Fridrih Nauman" Sofia, 1992, p.62

their culture. ⁶¹ However, the blueprint of the Bulgarian Constitution in respect to the rights of minorities first appeared in the Berlin agreement of 13.07.1878, which links the recognition of independence of the Balkan countries with the principle of the prevention of discrimination on religious grounds (Article 5 and 44).⁶² Article 4 in the text states:

a meeting of prominent figures in Bulgaria to be held in Turnovo will draw up the constitutional statutes of the Principality before approval of the inauguration of the Prince. The rights and interests of Turkish, Greek, Romanian and other ethnic groups in areas where they are mixed with Bulgarian populations would be taken into account in the voting and drawing up the constitutional statutes. ⁶³

In accordance with these clauses in the agreement, the Constitution approved by the Constituent Assembly in Veliko Turnovo on the 16th of April 1878 forbids discrimination on religious or ethnic grounds and includes special rights which allow minorities the possibility of preserving and developing their culture. ⁶⁴

⁶¹ Constitution of the Bulgarian Kingdom, in Bulgarian Constitutions and Draft Constitution, M. Metodiev and L. Stoianov (eds) Sofia 1990, p.25

⁶² Plamen Bogoev, "Bulgarskite konstitutsii za pravata na maltsinstvata" in Maltsinstvata v Bulgaria v konteksta na choveskite prava, Sofia, 1994, p.11

⁶³ *ibid* p. 9

⁶⁴ *ibid* p. 9

The new Bulgarian Constitution of 1879 granted extensive self-rule to various religious communities: Christians, Muslims and Jews, which allowed for religious and secular schools and gave the opportunity to the leaders of these communities to exercise full control over their religious, economic and cultural activities. The state treasury was to pay salaries to the 12 mufti (Muslim religious leaders). From 1878 until 1934 in Bulgaria more than 80 newspapers and magazines were published in the Turkish language.⁶⁵

In 1885 the Great National Assembly passed a law giving complete freedom to the Muslim minorities with respect to education. As a result, the number of Turkish schools increased dramatically and reached altogether 1 300.⁶⁶

However, it should be mentioned that for more than 50 years in Bulgaria there was not a single *state sponsored program* for the integration of the Muslim community into Bulgarian society.⁶⁷ The general tolerant ethnic climate and lack of strong assimilation tendencies were translated into a process of exclusion of the two large ethnic groups: Turks and Gypsies, from mainstream Bulgarian politics and social life.

⁶⁵ Vera Mutavchieva, "Predstavata za 'drugia'" (iztorochesko izsledvane) in Vrazki na savmestimost i nesvmestimost mezdu Hristiani i Muislmani v Bulgaria, Fondatsia "Mezdunaroden Tsenter po problemite na Maltisnstvata i Kulturnite vsamiodestva", Sofia, 1995 p.23.

⁶⁶ Ibid p.23.

⁶⁷ Ilona Tomova, "Ethnic minorities in Bulgaria", working paper, Sofia, 1996 p.99

This was in contrast with the dominant assimilation policy in most of the South Balkan states. This policy resulted in the emergence of some ethnically "pure" states in the Balkans in the 20th century. (Greece claims to be ethnically homogeneous after expelling 400 000 Turks, and successfully absorbing its minorities - mainly "Slavo-phone Greeks (Macedonians)); Albania is virtually homogeneous with its largest minority group being Greeks, who represent just 2.4% of its population.)⁶⁸ As was mentioned, this policy of "laissez-faire" led to quite opposite results in Bulgaria compared to other South Balkan states. Instead of assimilation tendencies in the line of "one-state, one nation, one-ethnos", there was a policy of exclusion. The Gypsy and Turkish and Pomak population remained and still remains the most backward economically as well as culturally.

"Until the mid-1930's the Bulgarian state authorities made no attempts to teach minority children the official language (Bulgarian). This impeded the integration of Bulgarian Turks, Pomaks, and Gypsies into the country's political, economic and cultural life."⁶⁹

The situation of the ethnic Turks in Bulgaria, many of whom felt segregated and preferred to emigrate to Turkey, had

⁶⁸See Hugh Poulton The Balkan minorities and the states in conflict, Minority Rights Publications, London, 1991

⁶⁹ Ilona Tomova; "Ethnic Minorities in Bulgaria", working paper, Sofia, 1996, p.99

an interesting twist. With the rupture of the diplomatic relationship between Bulgaria and Turkey because of the First Balkan War, there was a tendency towards emigration, which came to halt later on. The new Turkish republic inherited the Ottoman empire with a substantial problem of large Turkish minorities wanting to emigrate. Turkey preferred to have compact clusters of Turkish population outside of its borders. There was a peculiar policy of selection of these areas.

During the first years of the stabilization of the Kemal Ataturk regime and especially after 1932, drawing the area of the Dardanelles as a strategic geopolitical area, Turkey was interested in keeping a large Turkish minority contingent outside of its borders. The preferred areas are Dobroudja (North-East of Bulgaria and now in Romania), Romania, and more remote areas like Persia and USSR, but the immigration from the areas like Kardjaliisko and Ardinsko (South-East Bulgaria) was limited.⁷⁰

This selective policy in granting rights to emigrate to Turkey provided grounds for long lasting speculation about a possible revanchist Turkish policy vis-a-vis Bulgaria. The Turkish minority was perceived as a "fifth column". This speculation was skilfully used during the name changing campaign of 1984-1985 and during the "ethnic crisis" in the winter of 1989 after the resignation of Todor Zhivkov.

⁷⁰ Darina Vasileva, "Izselnichiskiat vapros v Bulgaro-Turskite otnoshenia" in Aspekti na etnokulturnata sitiatsia v Bulgaria, Fondatsia Fridrih Nauman, Sofia 1992, p.64

The politically tense interwar period was a testing time for the viability of the ethnic policy - the civil war in 1923 (which never had any ethnic dimensions), and also the breakdown of the Macedonian organisation VMRO (*Vatreshno Makedono-Odrinska Revolutsionna Organizatsia*) seen as a state within the state and as a direct challenge to the Constitutional order in the country. During the authoritarian regime of Alexander Tsankov and particularly after the following military coup (Military league) in 1934, the government decided to toughen its ethnic policy. The study of Bulgarian as the official language became compulsory, as well as the study of Bulgarian history and geography. The authorities, as well, became more keen to intervene in the governing procedures such as electing governing bodies of the ethnic and religious communities. However, despite the strong efforts to implement these new restrictions, the results were not very encouraging.

"Notwithstanding these changes, the quality of education in the so-called "Turkish "schools continued to be behind that of the educational system as a whole. In 1944 82 per cent of Bulgarian Turks could not read and write in Bulgarian, and more than a half did not understand Bulgarian at all."⁷¹

⁷¹Ilona Tomova; "Turtsite v Bulgaria", (Kulturata, Ezikat i nachinat na zhivot na Bulgarskite Turts sled Osvobozhdenieto na Bulgaria ot Otomanska vlast) in Maltsinstvata v Bulgaria v konteksta na choveskite prava, Komitet za zachtita na choveskite parava", Sofia, 1994, p.16

As in most of the Balkan states, the interwar period in Bulgaria could be characterised as a time of bipolar political extremism - on one hand - the agrarian leftist agenda of Prime Minister Stamboliiski, and on the other - the radical shift to the right after the military coup in 1934. These fluctuations of the political spectrum were reflected in the national agenda and had direct implications vis a vis ethnic policy. However, it should be mentioned that despite the political instability which characterised this period there was no pronounced inter-ethnic tension. The fact that during this period election of deputies with Turkish backgrounds to the Great National Assembly was rather the norm than the exception is a significant illustration for this argument.

An independent and much more tolerant stand towards ethnic issues was taken by the Bulgarian government during WWII and the following German occupation. Again, Bulgaria distanced itself from the general pattern in respect to the ethnic policy adopted in the other Eastern European states, which openly complied with the "ethnic" restrictions. There were no concentration camps in Bulgaria, neither deportations of Jews or Gypsies, nor any indications of ethnically motivated attacks. The general ethnic climate in the country seemed to be very different from one of a German ally. Moreover, Bulgaria was the only occupied European country, apart from Denmark, which refused to authorize the deportation of its Jews (numbering 48 thousand) to extermination camps.

Some 160 thousand Gypsy lives were also saved. ⁷²

This different stand vis a vis an ethnic intolerance imposed from outside can be seen as evidence of a very different ethnic/religious compatibility and climate in Bulgaria, prior to the Communist take-over. The record from the same period was quite different compared to Romania, or Yugoslavia, where during the same period these countries were ravaged by ethnic conflicts, where some authors claimed that as much as 1.000.000 people had died. ⁷³

During the Communist regime Bulgaria experienced a new phase in its inter-ethnic & religious affairs due to the new ideological rationale. First, there were considerable religious restrictions. However, the same principles from the Turnovo Constitution were also stated in the new Constitution of the 4th December 1947. In Article 79 of this Constitution the term "minorities" was expressly used in guarantees of the possibility for those belonging to them to study their mother tongue and to develop their own specific culture, at the same time compulsorily learning Bulgarian. However, it was clear that the previous receptive and open-minded policy vis a vis minorities would experience a considerable set-back.

⁷² Ilona Tomova "Ethnic minorities in Bulgaria" pp.99 and 100.

⁷³ Christopher Spencer Behind the Headlines - The Former Yugoslavia: Background to Crisis, Canadian Institute of International Affairs, 1993, pp. 7

"Minority schools previously run by religious communities came under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of education. The study of Turkish, Armenian, Greek, Romanian, and the other minority languages remained part of the curriculum until the Ministry of Education started to gradually close down religious community schools in the early 1960's. Minority children retained the right and opportunity to study their mother tongue only in Bulgarian state schools. In 1975 the Turkish language was removed from general education programs, an indication that the authorities had adopted a new policy intended to culturally homogenize Bulgarian society. In fact, any right of Bulgarian citizens of minority background to ethnic self-identification was denied." ⁷⁴

The policy of the Communist regime with respect to ethnic issues experienced some peculiar twists and turns. First in 1946 there was a considerable rapprochement with Tito's Yugoslavia, otherwise perceived as a traditionally hostile neighbour because of Bulgarian claims over Macedonia. Bulgaria had to become a founding member of the "Balkan" Federation. Stalin's concept of equality between nation and ethnos in Bulgaria in the late 40s and early 50s was translated into an explosion of different "nations" some of them being so small that they were existing in few villages (for example the so called "Shopska nation" of a few thousand exists at a few villages between the cities of Sofia and Pernik.) However, it should be mentioned that after Zhivkov's coming to power there were fewer signs of an inconsistent ethnic policy.

⁷⁴ Ilona Tomova "Ethnic minorities in Bulgaria", working paper Sofia, 1996, pp.100

Nevertheless, his policy was also controversial:

"Officially labelled as Turks, now all Muslims became victims of the atheistic policy of the regime and are forced to face the restrictions regarding their religious and cultural traditions. At the same time, in an attempt to increase the education, a huge network of Turkish schools, high schools, and pedagogical institutes, operating in the Turkish language are created. And even three Turkish faculties within the University of Sofia."⁷⁵

However, despite well publicised and manifested tolerance there were consistent efforts by the regime (see Zhivkov's Thesis from October 1958; according to which Bulgaria was described as a mono-national state) to consolidate the nation - which has to be translated into an open assimilation campaign. The first to experience this were the most marginalized segment of the Bulgarian Muslims - the Muslim Gypsies. Second were the Pomaks. In their case, the same scenario was used as during the name changing campaign of 1884-1985. During 1970, by "administrative means" their Arab names were replaced with Bulgarian, Slav names.

An indication of a new turn in the ethnic policy of the regime to solve once and forever the Turkish problem was the new Constitution. Indeed, in the Constitution of the 18th of May 1971, Article 45 makes provisions for Bulgarian citizens

⁷⁵ See Hugh Poulton The Balkan minorities and the states in conflict, Minority Rights Publications, London, 1991

of non-Bulgarian origin to have the right to study their own language, in addition to the compulsory study of Bulgaria., without any mention of the existence of minorities in the texts, which was a new element. In the Constitution, the notion - minority - was replaced with "citizens with different than Bulgarian background". Another element was the absence of other procedures guaranteeing their rights.

If we take as an example the decrees in the 1971 constitution, we can draw the conclusion that there was no progress in the national legislature, eliminating any possibility for the preservation of specific minority cultures, or even aimed to assimilate the minorities. Following this logic, 220 000 Pomaks were subject to various levels of pressure in order to replace their Islamic names with Slav ones. Successfully achieving this stage of the assimilation campaign in 1977, the BCP declared that Bulgaria was moving in the direction of complete ethnic homogeneity. After testing the internal reaction as well as the diplomatic reaction while performing the name-changing campaigns with the Muslim Gypsies and later on with the Pomaks, the Zhivkov regime decided to launch its most ambitious ethnic operation of all - the so called "Vasroditelen protzes" (Renaissance, or Revival). This campaign occurred between December 1984 and March 1985 and it is definitely the most troublesome episode of recent Bulgarian inter-ethnic history. The "Renaissance" meant that Turks in Bulgaria "realised" that they were no

longer Turks, but in fact, ethnic Bulgarians. According to one of the leading specialists on ethnic issues and the director of the Institute of Folklore in Sofia, at that time-Todor Ivanov Zhivkov (no relation with the head of the state-Todor Zhivkov):

After the Liberation Christianity was confirmed as the national faith by the new bourgeois state and this resulted in the alienation of the Muslim community, from the overall national culture, the Muslims confined themselves to reproducing their folk tradition and notably its religious elements. This alienation gave rise to an incorrect interpretation of its origin and ethnic culture as non-Bulgarian, and after the formation of the Turkish nation, as inherently Turkish. Things were much more complex than that, but the conclusion that may be drawn is that the culture in question is Bulgarian, that its separate expression are mere sides of an integral Bulgarian tradition.⁷⁶

This dramatic radicalisation of the Bulgarian ethnic policy in the line of "nationalism from above", came from the Ideological department within the Bulgarian Communist Party (BCP). However, the particular timing of this operation deserves some explanation. It is a legitimate question about

⁷⁶ Todor I. Zhivkov, "Ethnic and cultural aspects of the revival Process" in "Aspects of the development of the Bulgarian nation", Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Sofia 1989, p.134

the specific timing of this name-changing campaign. In my view, there were two important factors - first - the external political climate after Gorbachev came to power as well as internal domestic factors. An important indicator for this dramatic radicalisation of the Bulgarian official policy in the mid 80's was the in the new context of a "stagnation-reform" policy, being *pro forma* within the line of the changes but in fact opposed to the perestroika challenge. Secondly, the economic situation in the 80's was deteriorating to the point that for the first time living standards dropped substantially. A widely spread fear of a rise of a Bulgarian version of "Solidarity", led to the consideration by the top party elite, to accommodate a more flexible and conformist policy towards public opinion. The first signals of a growing popular discontent, combining with an invisible, but firm political pressure from Moscow, were sound factors for this decisive turn of Bulgarian internal policy. The Turkish minority had to be blamed for all economic, social and political misfortunes. First because they were reproducing themselves in avalanche like proportion (+ 17.9 population growth in some areas, while the population growth among Bulgarians in 1989 was negative: - 0.35) thus challenging the survival of the Bulgarian majority. Secondly because of their insufficient productivity and finally and most of all, because they were perceived as the greatest threat to national security as a "Trojan horse" of an expansionist hostile

Turkey.

The Bulgarian Turks and Gypsies were prohibited from speaking Turkish at public places, from wearing their traditional clothes, from celebrating Muslim holidays and from performing traditional rituals such as circumcision and Muslim funerals. At some Turkish cemeteries even the old stone tombs with Arab names were removed. The year 1985 could be seen as the darkest in respect to inter-ethnic relations in the recent history of Bulgaria. It should be mentioned, in contrast with the previous ethnic crises (such as during the Nazi occupation, when there was strong civil condemnation against the German ethnic policy), this time the Bulgarian society as a whole was surprisingly silent. Even on the external diplomatic front there was no strong condemnation; the reaction was rather unexpressed. However, within Bulgaria this forceful name-changing campaign set up a very dangerous precedent. The traditional climate of ethnic tolerance and coexistence was replaced by mutual mistrust and the fostering of negative ethnic stereotypes between ethnic Turks and Bulgarians. There were a lot of incidents of resistance to that "spontaneous" campaign. There were also many hunger strikes, and acts of civil disobedience, which were cracked down upon. But all these actions were chaotic without clear guidance, platform or leadership. In 1988-1989 three independent political groups emerged. The first one was the "Independent" Association for the Defence of Human Rights in

Bulgaria (Konstantin Tellalov as chairman - a former ambassador to the UN). The main activity of the Association was to fight against the repression of ethnic Turks. Officially recognised and sponsored by the BCP.

The second one: the **Democratic League for the Defence of the Rights of Man** - which also opposed the assimilation campaign, with Mustafa Yemerov, a philosopher, as chairman, was formed the following year. This was an informal group, without the blessing of the regime. The third one, **The Association for the support of Vienna-1989 (ASVP-89)** with chairman Avni Veliev, a former political prisoner was created in early 1989. The same year, in Paris, the Conference on human rights under the CSCE was held. That conference was seen as the needed international stage to raise the issue of the perception of the Turkish minority in Bulgaria. These three organisations quickly obtained mass support among the Turkish minority. Their messages were broadcast by Radio Free Europe, the BBC, and Deutsche Welle. The ethnic Turks felt that for the first time the International Community was backing their struggle. This was the right moment to express their resistance. Sofia responded quickly, expelling all leaders of the three organisations in May and June 1989. With this expulsion the pattern was set for the next mass immigration to Turkey.

In early June another 500 activists were expelled to Turkey, and by the end of the month 60 000 voluntarily left

for Turkey. By mid September that number reached over 300 000.⁷⁷ There is a widespread belief that all these 300 000 Turks were forced to leave and were basically expelled by the authorities.⁷⁸

By mid October and early November 1989, (that means even before the end of the Zhivkov's regime) some 150 000 people - more than a half of the emigrating Turks voluntarily returned.⁷⁹ There was no really strong condemnation from the international community; the strongest one was on the Moscow-Sofia axis. There was considerable pressure, as well, from the reformist wing of the BCP with Peter Mladenov, Alexander Lilov and Andrei Lukanov, who toppled Zhivkov's regime in one of the most peaceful and gentle palace coups in recent history (in November 1989).

1990 was the year of *Full Restoration* of the violated rights of the Turkish ethnic community. All limitations on the application of religious and linguistic rights of Muslims in Bulgaria were lifted.

⁷⁷ See Hugh Poulton, The Balkan minorities and the states in conflict Minority Rights Publications 1991 London, pp. 157

⁷⁸ Personally, I am not so convinced, for more details see the chapter VII.

⁷⁹ Ivan Ilchev and Duncan M. Perry "Bulgarian ethnic groups: "Politics and perceptions" *RFE/RL*, Vol.2 #12, March 19 1993, p.36

Conclusion

The fact is that pre-Communist Bulgaria did not at any point experience any violent ethnic confrontation. This could be explained by the process of marginalising its ethnic minorities from the mainstream political, social and cultural life. This "ethnic contract" was changed, when, in order to achieve a total control over the society, the Bulgarian Communist regime centralised all existing institutions. Subordinating all ethnic and religious organisations, the government deprived them of their previous autonomous status in organisational and financial terms. Following a policy of steady assimilation, the late Zhivkov regime (between 1970-1980's) radicalised the ethnic climate in Bulgaria. A full scale propaganda in the spirit of "nationalism from above" was introduced from the "top" - the Ideological Department within the Central Committee of the BCP. Bulgaria in the late 1980's experienced cases of ethnic disturbances which were within the category of Orthodox populist Nationalism.⁸⁰

However, the inter-ethnic relations of 1944-1989 were multifaced, even controversial. On one hand, there were

⁸⁰ Peter F. Sugar, "External and domestic rules of Eastern European Nationalism", in Nationalism in Eastern Europe, ed. by Peter Sugar and Ivo Lederer, University of Washington Press, Seattle & London, 1994, p.46

consistent efforts by the government promoting openly an *assimilation policy vis a vis* the Muslim Gypsies and Pomaks; such as forceful settlement of all nomadic Gypsies and Karakachans in the 1950's name changing campaigns. However, with respect to the large Turkish minority the official position was considerably different. The BCP decided first to promote peaceful integration, preserving and even encouraging some level of ethnic autonomy - self governance, religious, linguistic freedom, even the publication of national newspapers in Turkish sponsored by the BCP, etc. Artificially creating a Turkish "nomenklatura" (18 000 Turks were elected to various local government positions) the BCP hoped to achieve its mono-ethnic agenda. However, due to internal factors such as sharp economic decline, disturbing demographic statistics about the birth rate of the Turkish minority etc., Zhivkov decided to shift from the evolutionary, gradual process, to a **shock-therapy** style of assimilation operation i.e. the name-changing campaign in 1985. Thus, the previous status quo of a homogeneous, but marginalised large Turkish ethnic minority was ended, as well as the long tradition of ethnic tolerance and religious compatibility between Christians and Muslims. The subsequent Turkish exodus of the summer of 1989 and their return in the fall of the same year led to a significant breakthrough in ethnic inter-relations in Bulgaria.

3.2 MINORITY RIGHTS ACCORDING TO THE BULGARIAN CONSTITUTION OF 1991

"The law maker concerned with minority problems must strike a balance and reconcile so far as he can the following values and procedures: Democracy vs. Individual Rights; Authoritarianism vs. Libertarianism; Interventionism vs. Laissez-faire; Coercion vs. Consensus; Group vs. Nation; Particularism vs. Universalism; Liberty and Free speech vs. Order; Freedom vs. Equality; Freedom vs. Justice; Affirmative Action to Compensate for Past Injustice vs. Discrimination in the Present; Bureaucracy vs. Democratic Development and Participation; Elite vs. Mass guidance; Uniformity vs. Stability and Status quo; Mobility vs. Stratification; and Future Well-being vs. Present Well being. In the context of dealing with minority problems there can be no right answers".⁸¹

Claire Palley

After 1989 Bulgaria pursued a consistent policy to restore essential civil rights to its citizens in its attempt to build a modern, democratic "civil society". The new legislative framework dealing with minority issues complies with the existing international legal standards. Furthermore, these international regulations have a higher status than the internal domestic laws, thus making the minority agenda a high priority for the new legislature.

⁸¹ Claire Palley, Constitutional Law and Minorities, Minority Rights groups Report # 36, 1987, pp.3

"Article 5, paragraph 4 of the 1991 Bulgarian Constitution provides the direct inclusion of the standards of international agreements as a constituent part of the Bulgarian law and for their priority over those national legislative standards which contradict them. As indicated above, the two covenants were ratified by constitutional means and made public in the context of Article 5, paragraph 4 of the constitution in the newspaper "Dersaven vestnik". They were consequently a part of the Bulgarian internal law and have priority over whatever internal standards contradict them".⁸²

However, it should be mentioned that, in the past, Bulgaria did provide similar assurances. Despite the ratification of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in July 1970, during the following two decades there were serious and systematic violations. Therefore, despite this pledge, there was no commitment to make any substantial progress in the national legislature in respect to minority issues. Furthermore, there were no consistent practical measures undertaken by the State for the preservation of specific minority cultures. On the contrary, there was a steady policy to assimilate minorities.

However, it should be noted that there was a considerable change in the new Bulgarian Constitution adopted in July 1991.

⁸² Plamen Bogoev, "Bulgarskite Konstitutsii za pravata na maltsinstvata" in Maltsinstvata v Bulgaria v konteksta na choveshkite prava, Komitet za zachtita na maltsinstvata, Sofia 1994, p.10

Despite the fact that there was no specific text (in respect to minorities or national minorities) which expressly and sufficiently guarantee the rights of individuals belonging to minorities to preserve and develop their culture, Article 6 proclaimed the principle of equality and non-discrimination. Thus, the new Constitution granted to different ethnic and religious groups in Bulgaria the same rights as those of the majority. This article is compatible with the provisions of the accepted international standards documents in respect to minority rights.⁸³

A few months after the adoption of the new Constitution

⁸³ See References of the following documents:

1. Principle VII of the Helsinki Final Act provides, for example, that "the participating States will respect human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief, for all without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion.

2. "Article 2 of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, which is incorporated by reference into the Helsinki Final Act, provides that everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.

3. The Copenhagen Document, in the section dealing with rule of law and free elections provides that "solemnly declare that among those elements of justice which are essential to the full expression of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all human beings are the following - all persons are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to the equal protection of the law. In this respect, the law will prohibit any discrimination and guarantee to all persons equal and effective protection against discrimination on any grounds. A second non-discrimination clause provides that human rights derogations due to states of emergency "will not discriminate solely on the grounds of race, colour, sex, language, religion, social origin or of belonging to a minority".

on December 20th 1991 the 36th National Assembly ratified the facultative protocol for the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. According to this document, there are two fundamental conditions necessary for the protection of minorities: the principles of equality and non-discrimination are declared. Therefore, members of ethnic and religious and linguistic groups should enjoy the human rights as the majority. These principles are the focal point, guaranteeing to minorities the preservation and development of their unique characteristics and traditions.⁸⁴

The interpretation this article and other clauses of Article 27 of the Covenant on minority rights, in the context of the new Bulgarian Constitution of July 1991 could lead to the conclusion "that the right to one's own culture is seen as the right of ethnic minorities; the right to profess one's own religion as the right of members of religious minorities; and the right to use one's own language as the right of linguistic

⁸⁴ Article 15 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights acknowledges and guarantees the right to partake in cultural life. Article 13 of the Covenant recognizes the rights to education. In discussions on the question of the rights of individuals belonging to minority groups to have their own culture and mother tongue, it follows that the principles set out in the UNESCO Covenant against Discrimination in Education be taken into account; See Plamen Bogoev, "Bulgarskite Konstitutsii za pravata na maltsinstvata" in Maltsinstvata v Bulgaria v konteksta na choveshkite prava, Komitet za zachtita na maltsinstvata, Sofia 1994, pp.10-11; See also Minority Rights, Problems, Parameters, and Patterns in the CSCE Context, compiled by the Staff of the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, Washington, D.C. pp.8-11

minorities."⁸⁵

This interpretation could not be separated from the fundamental provisions of the new Bulgarian Constitution of 1991, where the standards applying to the "political nation" were set forth. Thus, every Bulgarian citizen, regardless of his or her ethnic identity, Turkish or Macedonian, (according to the census in 1992 some 800 000 identified themselves as Turks and 10 803 identified themselves as Macedonians) is a subject of the Bulgarian "political nation".

Saying that, at the same time it should be underlined that there were some inconsistencies in outlining the principles stipulated in Article 6 which guarantees the principle of equality and non-discrimination, granting to different ethnic and religious groups in Bulgaria the same rights as those to the majority. One of the fundamental contradictions to the principles stipulated in Article 6, is the prohibition of political parties based on ethnicity, race and religion, Article 11 (4).⁸⁶

These parties were seen as no different from those who were seeking to overthrow the government by force.⁸⁷ The same

⁸⁵ Plamen Bogoev, "Bulgarskite Konstitutsii za pravata na maltsinstvata" in Maltsinstvata v Bulgaria v konteksta na choveshkite prava, Komitet za zachtita na maltsinstvata, Sofia 1994, pp.10-11

⁸⁶ Ibid pp.11-12

⁸⁷ See Kjell Engelbrekt, "The Movement of Rights and Freedoms to Compete in Elections", and "Nationalism Reviving," *RFE/RL Research Institute, Report on Eastern Europe*, vol.22, May 31, 1991, and vol.2, #48, November 29, 1991.

restrictive provisions were in the previous Constitution of 1947 (Article 78) and in the Constitution of 1971 (Articles 78 and 53).⁸⁸

The prohibition of ethnic or religious parties in Article 11 unquestionably contradicts Article 6 of the Constitution. It limits the rights of members of minority groups to form and run their own organisations independently and freely. This also contradicts Article 22 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. However, this clause of the new Bulgarian legislature needs to be interpreted adequately in order to avoid any misleading conclusions. In the existing Bulgarian law there is a distinction between non-political, non-profit organisations, and non-profit organisations with a distinctly political character. The first ones, such as all social and cultural organisations of various ethnic groups such as Turks, Gypsies, Jews are registered under the Law on Persons and Family.

The MRF (Movement for Rights and Freedoms) was created initially as a non-profit organisation. This movement was a logical reaction and an expected result after the ethnic crisis in 1985 whose climax in 1990 with the exodus of 300 000

⁸⁸ Plamen Bogoev, "Bulgarskite Konstitutsii za pravata na maltsinstvata" in Maltsinstvata v Bulgaria v konteksta na choveshkite prava, Komitet za zachtita na maltsinstvata, Sofia 1994, pp.11-12; See also Emil Konstantinov "Pravata na litsata, prinadlezachti kam religiozni, ezikovi i etnicheski maltisntva v Bulgarskata Konstitutsia ot 1991" in Aspekti na etnokulturnata situatsia v Bulgaria i na Balkanite, Tsenter za izsledvane na demokratsiata , Fondatsia "Fridrih Nauman" Sofia, 1992, pp.13-20

Turks was seen as one of the central factors in the toppling of Zhivkov's regime. Therefore, the agenda of this movement was to encourage, protect and defend the interests primarily of the ethnic Turks, but as well of Pomak and other Muslims in the country. Playing a soft "ethnic", and not a radical political agenda the movement was successful in registering under the Law on Persons and Family. However, in 1990 when an opportunity for a multiparty election arose and it was permitted that organisations registered as non-profit organisations could participate in the elections, MRF decided to benefit from these conditions. MRF ran and was able to obtain considerable support in the Parliamentary elections for the Great Assembly in 1990, 1991, and 1994. In 1990 and in the following years there were heated debates and speculations about the legitimacy of MRF. First to oppose the legitimacy of the party was a group of deputies from the Bulgarian Socialist Party contesting the legality of the organisation before the judicial authorities. The Bulgarian High Court ruled that within the framework of its jurisdiction, the organisation's existence was legal.⁸⁹ There were other attacks later on. Deputies from the Bulgarian Socialist party requested that the Constitutional Court should make a ruling in respect to the controversial Article 11, paragraph 4. The Constitutional Court of Bulgaria decided to not make any decision on this

⁸⁹Plamen Bogoev, "Bulgarskite Konstitutsii za pravata na maltsinstvata" in Maltsinstvata v Bulgaria v konteksta na choveshkite prava, Sofia, 1994, p.11

controversial issue because of the obvious political implications. It was clear that a categorical decision would be in nobody's best interests, in particular not in the interest of the BCP, now alienated even further from some 800 000 potential voters in the dichotomous political fight. On the other hand, there were no grounds for a strict interpretation of the international legal standards in respect to this issue. There is still no sufficient clarity as to how to deal with this chicken-egg like dilemma "whether minority rights belong exclusively to individual members of a particular group, or whether the group as a collective whole, is entitled to the rights of individual".⁹⁰ As is mentioned in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, it is up to the various countries to determine whether preferential status should be given to individuals or to the group.

Article 27 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights reflects the view that has probably gained the greatest acceptance to date, i.e. that is the individual members of a minority group who are entitled to minority rights and not the group per se: "In those States in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities exist, persons belonging to such minorities shall not be denied the right, in community with other members of the group, to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practice their own religion, or to use their own language". While there are certainly some CSCE states that accept the notion that minorities have collective rights, the only view that can be said to have the consensus of all CSCE states is

⁹⁰ See Minority Rights, Problems, Parameters, and Patterns in the CSCE Context, compiled by the Staff of the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, Washington, D.C. p.12

that individual members of minority groups have rights.⁹¹

The Constitutional Court of Bulgaria decided to authorize the existence of the Movement for Rights and Freedoms, and allowed the party to have its own parliamentary group in the Bulgarian National Assembly.⁹²

In the Post-Communist political spectrum the only logical and obvious choice for the MRF was to become a partner of the UDF (Union of Democratic Forces) which is the only strong political actor challenging the Bulgarian Socialist Party. During the last few years, the MRF successfully played the role of a power balance in the bi-polar political space of Bulgaria. Despite that, some observers were confused by the inconsistent political behaviour of the MRF. In the Parliament, elected in 1991, MRF voted in block together with the UDF (Union of Democratic Forces). This was how the first non-socialist government in Bulgaria came to power. However, ten months later precisely with the help of the MRF deputies the same government received a non-confidence vote. Particular attention will be concentrated later on the controversy of the MRF phenomena and its implication on modern Bulgarian politics.

⁹¹ Ibid p.12

⁹² Plamen Bogoev, "Bulgarskite Konstitutsii za pravata na maltsinstvata" in Maltsinstvata v Bulgaria v konteksta na choveshkite prava, Komitet za zachtita na maltsinstvata, Sofia 1994, p. 11

Another significant aspect of ethnic policy is the guaranteed right to members of a given minority group to an appropriate, adequate linguistic education. If they are subjected to discrimination in this area, the group's (minority) culture cannot develop.

As it was mentioned earlier in this chapter, the new Bulgarian Constitution is not sufficiently explicit in its articles guaranteeing the rights of individuals belonging to minorities to preserve and develop their culture. However, there are some clauses providing such assurances. Article 36 recognizes the rights of those citizens whose mother tongue is not Bulgarian to study and use their own language.

In 1991 after heated debates, similar to those during the polemic about the legitimacy of the MRF, an optional education in the Turkish language in State schools was implemented (primarily in the areas with large Turkish population). The programme covered children of primary school age and was entirely financed by the State with the aim of improving the literacy of individuals belonging to the Turkish ethnic minority in their mother tongue.⁹³

Article 27 of the Covenant declares the right of freedom of thought, conscience and religion, and therefore the fundamental domestic law envisaging the rights of individuals belonging to religious minorities to profess their religion should be in accordance with this particular clause of the

⁹³ibid 10

Covenant.

In the new Constitution, the rights to freedom of thought, conscience and religion are regulated by the text in Article 13 and Article 37. According to these articles it is a fundamental, constitutional right for all Bulgarians to organise their lives according to their own religion. The Bulgarian Constitution Court gave a compulsory interpretation to Article 13, paragraphs 1 and 2 and to Article 37 of the Constitution, resolving that, in accordance with the criteria set by Article 18 of the International Covenant on civil and political Rights, "The right to a religion is a personal, fundamental, and incorruptible right of every Bulgarian citizen. It is a value of the highest order....Religious communities and institutions are separable from the State. State intervention and State administration in the internal organisation life and public activities of religious communities and institutions is inadmissible."⁹⁴

Conclusion

This conventional legal framework which Bulgaria decided

⁹⁴ibid p.12

to adopt should not be any surprise. It is well known that the "political nation" is the backbone in most of the European and North American countries legislatures, most with large minorities. As it was mentioned in the previous chapter, a minority can be defined as: "Any racial, tribal, linguistic, religious, caste or nationality group within a nation state and which is not in control of the political machinery of that state"⁹⁵

In this respect, after the dismantling of Socialism, the choice which the new Bulgarian legislature adopted is rather the norm than exception in the context of the international conventional legal framework. The new Bulgarian Constitution does not mention, either, another category - "national minority". The Versailles treaty defines the term "national minority" as "the extension of a nation over the territory of another state" as well as the provisions guarantying minority rights. This concept led to the famous configuration: triangle-national minority-the state where this minority lives presently-the historic homeland of this minority. Following this logic, there are at least two national minorities in Bulgaria-the ethnic Turks, belonging to the Turkish nation, and those who identified themselves as Macedonians, belonging to the Macedonian nation. However, Bulgarian state does not recognise a separate Macedonian nation, perceived as a part of

⁹⁵ See Claire Palley, Constitutional Law and Minorities Minority Rights groups Report # 36, 1987, p.3

the Bulgarian nation, which has been under Ottoman occupation for more than 500 years, and then under Greek and Yugoslav rule. Therefore, if the category "national minority", would have been incorporated into the Constitution, the assumption is that the Bulgaria is then a multinational state, where live different nations.

It should be mentioned that the term national minority was practically introduced into the international law after the end of World War II, during the European Convention in defense of human rights and fundamental freedoms in Italy, November 11, 1950. This was a term widely used in various United Nations and UNESCO documents. However, there is a paradox with the legal interpretation of this term. It has not been applied to the laws of most European countries. For example, among 34 countries, members of the Council of Europe, the term "national minority" was included in just 11 of them, most of which are Central and Eastern European countries: Denmark, Germany, Poland, Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, the Czech republic, the Slovak republic, Romania, Hungary, and Slovenia.⁹⁶

In the 23 other countries, Bulgaria being among them, the term "national minority" does not apply and is not used. It is known that the term "nation" as ethno-nation appeared during the nation building process in Germany in the 19th century.

⁹⁶ Mihail Ivanov "Politicheska natsia ili etnonatsia", working paper, 1995, p.6

The end of the World War II left some 9 million Germans outside of Germany.

The other approach "political nation" is in the light of a process of a gradual disappearance not redrawing, of the borders. This how not only a strong, integrated, prosperous Europe could be achieved. The same approach seems to be even more significant in the Balkan context, still very much vulnerable because of its dark burden of warfare, systematic ethnic cleansing, grievances and contradictory claims from the past.⁹⁷

However, other categories such as, racial, ethnic and religious differences are used in the UK, "cultures regionales", in France, "ethnic groups" in Austria, in Italy and Belgium "linguistic communities", there are no minorities in Switzerland or in the Scandinavian countries. In the Balkans, the two NATO members, Greece and Turkey, both denied the existence of minorities, however admitting the existence of religious differences.⁹⁸ The best example for political nations are in North America; Canada and the United States, absorbing the most pronounced religious differences : Christians, (Catholics, Protestants, Orthodox) Jews, Muslims, Buddhists, Shintoists etc.

Therefore, the conclusion is that Bulgaria with its new

⁹⁷ Ibid pp.8-9

⁹⁸ ibid 6-9

Constitution of 1991 followed the dominant trend in Europe's conceptual framework of political nation, as a vehicle for internal cohesion and stability. The supremacy of citizenship upon all other self identification characteristics and the accessibility of the democratic participation was the model which Bulgaria decided to comply with. Adoption of this rather minimalist legal approach rather than a multicultural one did not mean any continuity of the old Zhivkovian pattern of minority rights policies, but rather the creation of a political compromise on the lowest common denominator among the ruling post-communists and oppositional anti-communists. It could be argued that in doing this, Bulgarian political actors were guided by political pragmatism not to give legal grounds for the opening of possible 'Pandora's boxes' but to respect, through the principles of common law, an emergence of the new praxis of ethnic accommodation. Bulgarian political actors shared the caution not to give too much legally but, on other hand, they were ready to accept a much more flexible implementation of ethnic minority rights in every day life. Therefore, the emerging reality of minority rights went further than the imposed legal framework elaborated in the Constitution. However, the Constitution did not impose any burden on the emergence of other laws and regulations which later dealt with various aspects of minority ethnic rights. The reason that this minimalist approach had such an affirmative effect on minority rights was the general desire

of Bulgarian political actors to comply with the general human rights framework developed by the EC and the CSCE. The Bulgarian political actors proved that they had more political will and flexibility to reach a pragmatic and workable consensus within the political arena instead of allowing the emergence of ethnic tensions which could endanger political stability and the image of the country as a whole.

CHAPTER IV

PEOPLE IN NO MAN'S LAND - THE CASE OF THE POMAKS

"Excellency,.. Your obedient servant is one of the enlightened people. I adopted Islam in your presence... I would like a suitable place to be appointed for the performance of the rite of my circumcision and that the Muslim ritual clothes that I have the right to be given to me....

(signed)

"Your slave, the converted Christian priest."⁹⁹

1. Background of the "Pomak" community

Bulgarian Christians are ethnically heterogeneous and include such groups as Bulgarians, Russians, Armenians, Greeks, Vlachs, Karakachani, Gagauz and others.¹⁰⁰ This trend

⁹⁹Asparouh Velkov, Evgeni Radoushev, "Documents from the Ottoman State Archive on the Balkan Islamisation processes 14th-19th centuries" Aspects of the development of the Bulgarian nation, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, 1989, p.67

¹⁰⁰ See more about Karakachani- Zhenia Pimpireva "Karakachanskata etnicheska obchtnost v Bulgaria" - obsta harakteristika in "Maltsinstvata v Bulgaria v konteksta na chovshkite prava" Komitet za zachita na maltsinstvata, Sofia, 1994;

is the same for the Muslim community. It includes Bulgarian Turks, Bulgarian Muslims (Pomaks), Gypsies, Tatars, Circassians, etc.¹⁰¹

According to various experts, the Pomak group numbers about 250 000 in the country. ¹⁰²

Pomaks live mainly in the Rhodope and Pirin (in the Mesta valley) mountains. They are also located in the Balkan mountains, close to the city of Lovech. Their lifestyle is very similar to that of the Turks. In their isolated communities, their main occupation is tobacco-growing. They

see also research on Gagauzes; Marinov, V. "Prinos kam isutchavaneto na bita i kulturata na Turtzite i Gagauzite v Severoiztochna Bulgaria", Sofia 1965 and Atanas Manov, "Potekloto na Gagauzite i tehните obichai i nravi", Varna, 1938

¹⁰¹Ilona Tomova "Ethnic minorities in Bulgaria" & Results of the 1992 Population Census. Demographic characteristics, vol. 1, National Statistical Institute, Sofia, p. 194. (in Bulgarian)

¹⁰² The name "Pomaks" was used by the local Christian population and by the Bulgarian State during the period between the liberation and the 1960's to signify the Bulgarian-speaking Islamic population. For their part, these people refer to themselves in various ways - "Bulgarians", "Turks", "Ottomans", "Muslims", "Yuruks", "Pomaks", "Archians", depending on how they identify themselves and on the actual political situation. This makes it difficult to choose an universally accepted term. The definition "Bulgarian Mohammedan" is consciously avoided because it was imposed by the State after the beginning of the so-called revival process and is not unanimously accepted by the Muslims themselves; see Boriana Panaiotova and Kalina Bozeva "Balgarskite Musulmani" ("Pomatsi") in "Maltsinstvata v Bulgaria v konteksta na choveshkite prava", Komitet za zashtita na maltsinstvenite prava, Sofia 1994

are also well known skilled workers in the construction business. Unlike many Turks who are concentrated in the large cities of Haskovbo, Kardjali, Ragrađ, Shumen, or Popovo, the Pomaks keep to their lifestyle of being traditionally rural people. Their relatively smaller number and their isolation vis-a-vis the Turkish minority along with their primarily Slav background led to a persistent attempt by the Bulgarian authorities to reintegrate them into the Bulgarian state and culture.

It should be mentioned that this particular community does not represent a different ethnic group. The Bulgarian Muslim Pomaks are a minority group based on their religious affiliation.¹⁰³ It is considered that Pomaks are descendants of Bulgarian Slavs who had been forced to convert to Islam during the Ottoman assimilation in the late 17th century. The

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"The root of the word Pomak is derived from words such as "pomamvam", "pomamil se" and most of all - "pometnal se" (all of which indicate unfaithfulness) or from "Mukna se" (going along with an alien belief through faint-heartedness or cowardice). It is clear that the nickname "Pomak" has heavily pejorative connotation in Bulgarian; see S.Shishkov, The Bulgarian Mohammedans- Pomaks. In Selected works Plovdiv, 1965, pp.226-220. V.Dečov, How the Christian Population in Dolashtur was converted 395-400; see also Boriana Panaiotova, "Bulgari-Mohamedani i Hristiani v Tsentralnite Rodopi-pogled varhu tehnite vzaiomootnoshenia", Aspekti na etnoculturnata situatsia v Bulgaria, Friedrich-Nauman-Stiftung, Fondatsia "Otvoreno obshtestvo"-Sofia, Fondatsia "Mezdunaroden tsenter po problemite na maltsinstvata i kulturnite vsaimodeistvia", Asosiatsia Akseš, Sofia, 1994

peculiarity of the self identification complex with the Pomaks is that they are in a way in a "no man's land." Some of them perceived themselves as a part of the mainstream Muslim culture and tradition. At the same time, they are perceived by the Turkish community as an alienated entity, artificially related to the Muslim religion and culture. Despite the fact that Pomaks practice Islam, they are not able to understand the religious Islamic texts.¹⁰⁴ In general, Pomaks do not know Turkish and they are not able to communicate in Turkish. The Bulgarian Muslim Pomaks speak and function in Bulgarian.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁴ It is known that Islamic religion has strict language restrictions. Formally, the "sacred language" of Islam is Arabic. That is why during the Arab caliphate, Islamisation went hand in hand with speaking Arabic and adopting other aspects of Arab culture. The Ottoman sultanate mainly preserved Arab for State and legal functions and in church and religious life. However, Ottoman scholars and high rank officials had to know three languages; Arabic, Persian, and Turkish. The Turkish language was established in the daily commercial and economic life of the conquered countries and peoples. None of these languages were used by the Bulgarian Mohammedans (Pomaks) which was considered by the Turks as a sufficient evidence of their religious non-orthodoxy; see Nikolai Mizov, "Ethno-religious aspects of the development of the Bulgarian Nation" in Aspects of the Development of the Bulgarian Nation Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Sofia 1989, pp.158

¹⁰⁵ There is another peculiar ethnic group, the so called Gagauzes, who are Turkish-speaking Christian Bulgarians. They have always considered themselves as Bulgarians, and have retained Bulgarian national awareness, however being unable to speak the Bulgarian language; research on Gagauzes; see Marinov, V. Prinos kam izutchavaneto na bita i kulturata na Turtsite

A good abstract of the Pomaks' identity complex of being in "no man's land" is given by Borianna Panaiotova:

"However, despite the fact that they adopted Islam and officially entered into the category of "true believers", "Pomaks" did not become a part of the Turkish community. The Turks never granted them equal rights, because of their Christian pasts and the fact that they did not speak Turkish. The "Pomaks" turned out to be completely isolated, both from the Christian Bulgarians and from the Turkish community. This was the reason for the closed nature of their community, which turned into a premise for their economic and cultural backwardness. Restricted in their traditional livelihood, i.e. small-scale farming and stock-breeding, the "Pomaks", became progressively poorer and poorer." ¹⁰⁶

There is an existing negative stereotype among Bulgarians vis a vis Pomaks, whom they see not only as betrayers of the Christian faith and the Bulgarian cultural heritage but also as a potential enemy. The last argument is supported by long-lived dark memories (many Pomaks fought on the side of the Ottoman empire during the April uprising in 1876 to a much lesser extent on the Bulgarian side). As it is known, this campaign led to the creation of the Independent Kingdom of Bulgaria. However, because of their support for the Ottomans,

i Gagauzite v Severoistochna Bulgaria, Sofia 1965 and Atanas Manov, Potekloto na Gagauzite i tehните obichai i nravi, Varna, 1938

¹⁰⁶ See Borianna Panaiotova, Kalina Bozeva, "Balgarskite Musulmani ("Pomatsi") Factologicheski dannii, in Maltsinstvata v Bulgaria v konteksta na choveshkite prava Komitet za zachtita na maltsinstvenite prava, Sofia, 1994

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Pomaks were excluded from Bulgarian society. Another element of the negative stereotyping of Pomaks by Bulgarians lies in the belief that most of them accepted this conversion to Islam voluntarily and were not forced to do so. It is even more troublesome for the Pomaks that most of their ancestors voluntarily embraced Islam. Thus, the division between the "good Bulgarians" who preserved their Christian faith and their betrayed peers became even deeper. In case of a forceful and bloody Islamisation campaign that decision would have been more justifiable by the Bulgarian majority. However, very few forceful campaigns have been documented. Instead, economic considerations seemed to be the predominant motivation. The following extract is from "Documents from the Ottoman State Archives on the Balkan Islamisation Process 14th-19 century" by Asparouh Velkov and Evgeni Radoushev in "Aspects of the Development of the Bulgarian Nation" Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, 1989, Sofia 1989;

"In order to encourage the process of Islamisation the Turkish authorities devised varied financial and material ruses. An excerpt from statement of the Ottoman Chief Accountancy says:

'....According to custom, those infidels who adopt the Muslim faith, receive from the state money for ritual clothes amounting to 10 groches for an ordinary outfit and between 50 to 60 groches for a

luxury outfit. It has become common practice however, to give only two or three groches for an ordinary outfit and 15 to 20 for an luxury outfit. In this way the interests of the state are injured.'

Therefore, instead of clothes, their cash equivalent will henceforth be granted. The case of a Christian priest who had adopted Islam is relevant to this document. The matter concerns the performance of circumcision of the newly-converted Muslim and the ritual Muslim clothes that were his due. As the convert was formerly a Christian clergyman the Ottoman authorities encouraged him by giving a luxury outfit. When religious figures or other prominent people from among the enslaved population adopted Islam their conversation was widely publicised to spread the faith among the Christians. Resolution from the office of the Grand vizier: "Money to be given for a luxury outfit of clothes. Imperative: 19 January 1721." Excerpt from the Chief Accountancy:

"Cost of a luxury outfit of ritual clothes:

"In 1716:16 grosches

"In 1719:25 grosches

"In 1720:64 grosches."

The excerpt from the Ottoman Chief Accountancy is very indicative. It shows that the Ottoman

administration spared no money to encourage Islamisation among the Balkan Christians. In the course of only four years between 1716 and 1720, the cost of luxury ritual clothes quadrupled. The sums given were considerable for the time. For instance at current prices a cow cost about five grosches; a calf - about two and a half grosches; a pair of oxen, 12 grosches and a small peasant house with no yard cost about 10 grosches. Therefore, after adopting Islam a family could set up a fairly comfortable farm on the money received. The economic coercion is evident."

After the liberation, the Bulgarian state policy in respect to the Pomak community has been inconsistent and controversial. At the beginning, they were threatened as aliens and as a hostile ethnic entity. No distinction was made between ethnic Turks and Pomaks.

They were left on their own; Pomaks were marginalised living increasingly in cultural and economic backwardness.

The gap between the mainstream Bulgarian society and the Pomak community was becoming deeper and deeper. To halt this process, it was the Bulgarian intelligentsia which took the initiative in the 1930 and 40's to set up the first "Pomak

Cultural-Educational Organisation "Rodina" (Fatherland)

"The organisation was headed by local Muslims who managed it according to the principle that "there are many faiths, but only one nation". The main results of its seven-year activities were as follows: The Koran was translated into Bulgarian; public worship began to be in Bulgarian, and an independent Rhodope Muslim Mufti's office was separated from the Central Turkish one. In 1942 the practice was introduced of forcing newly-born children to be Christened with Bulgarian names, and the 25th Ordinary National Assembly voted in a law to facilitate the changing of names. By September 1944 many of the Rhodope "Pomaks" had changed their Turkish-Arab names for Bulgarian (though non Christian) names".¹⁰⁷

The situation drastically changed after the Communists came to power in 1944. The new regime declared "Rodina" fascist and issued 8 death sentences to its most prominent activists. In 1945 as a demonstration against the new ethnic policy, the Communist party decided to restore the old Arab names to the Pomaks.¹⁰⁸

During the early Post war years, when the Stalinist

¹⁰⁷ See Boriana Panaiotova, Kalina Bozeva, "Balgarskite Musulmani ("Pomatsi") Factologicheski dannii, in Maltsinstvata v Bulgaria v konteksta na choveshkite prava, Komitet za zachtita na maltsinstvenite prava, Sofia, 1994

¹⁰⁸ See Boriana Panaiotova, "Bulgari-Mohamedani i Hristiani - v Tsentralinite Rodopi - pogled varhu tehните vzaiomootnoshenia", in Aspekti na etnoculturnata situatsia v Bulgaria, Friedrich-Nauman-Stiftung, Fondatsia "Otvoreno obshtestvo"-Sofia, Fondatsia "Mezhdunaroden tsender po problemite na maltsinstvata i kulturnite vsaimodeistvia", Asosiatsia Akse, Sofia, 1994

utopian dream to create a huge Pan-Slavic Balkan federation gathered momentum (however for a very short time) a more sober and more pragmatic period of ethnic consolidation took place. First to bear the consequence of this new social experiment were the Pomaks. They were in a more vulnerable position than the huge and compact Turkish minority or the Macedonians. Instead, the assimilation campaign against the Pomaks was perceived as a low risk operation because of their relatively small number, marginalized status and the fact that they had no visible prospect for gaining reliable external protectors.

A long-lasting assimilation campaign took place shortly after Zhivkov came to power, which with some protracted interruptions and remissions ended in the 80's. A large scale of assimilation strategies were implemented: perpetual propaganda, constant administrative pressure, as well as sporadic coercion. Some extreme measures were used, for example: Pomak children were separated from their parents and sent to boarding schools, often away from where they lived, in order to sever their links with their "retrogressive family background". ¹⁰⁹ In the early 70's, Pomaks were forced to change their names, obliged to choose new ones from a list of "official" Bulgarian names. This "class-patriotic education of the population and for the Bulgarian people's awareness of the

¹⁰⁹ See Boriana Panaiotova, Kalina Bozeva, "Bulgarskite Musulmani ("Pomatsi") Factologicheski dannii, in Maltsinstvata v Bulgaria v konteksta na choveshkite prava, Komitet za zachtita na maltsinstvenite prava, Sofia, 1994, p. 29

Mohammedan religion" was accepted not entirely with great popular enthusiasm. In some cases, in the Western Rhodopes and the Mesta Valley this name changing campaign was received with hostility resulting in some fatalities.¹¹⁰

Those who for one or another reason avoided the campaign realised that their old identification cards (so called internal passports) were no longer good and they were not in a position to get their salaries, or pensions, or even money from their bank accounts. However, it should be mentioned that this economic constraint was not always carried out in a coercive fashion. The carrot-stick policy truly characterised the late Zhivkov regime. The Pomaks had the opportunity to experience this strategy. In the 80's, the regime decided to concentrate its ambitious revival process primarily on one of the Rhodope centres - Smolyan. This process was designed to

¹¹⁰ Hugh Poulton, The Balkans Minorities and States in Conflict, Minority Rights Publications, London 1991, p. 112; According to the author the name changing campaign of the Pomaks in 1971 was not "softer" than of the later name changing campaign against the Turks in 1985.

"An eyewitness account relating to a town in the Southern Rhodope mountains in this period states that in the town square, in front of the House of Culture, a long red table was set out with all local state and Communist Party officials in attendance. An armed detachment with loaded weapons at the ready was also there to ensure order. The Pomaks were obliged to approach the table one by one over a long red carpet and hand in their old identity papers and receive new ones made out in new Bulgarian names and thank the officials publicly."

According to Hugh Poulton, Amnesty International reported that 500 Pomaks were serving prison sentences for opposing the name campaign.

incorporate into the Bulgarian society, economy and culture the marginalized and backward Pomaks. The city of Smolyan was virtually rebuilt, becoming one of the most splendid cities in the country. As well, an ambitious economic program with enormous capital injections for regional economic development was launched. ¹¹¹ In general, the ethnic crisis of 1985-1989 did not have a direct impact on the Pomaks as a whole. To a certain extent the same is true for the mass exodus of the Turks in 1989. However, some demonstrations took place by Pomaks protesting against the authorities' apparent refusal to issue new "international" passports. Many were arrested but soon released. ¹¹² Nonetheless, it seems that at that time Pomaks did not have a strong desire to emigrate to Turkey. Among the reasons mentioned already in this chapter was the fact that the Turkish embassy imposed a basic "rudimentary language test" in order to differentiate who was a real Turk and who was Pomak. Visitors' visas were granted to the Turks. ¹¹³

¹¹¹ Boriana Panaiotova, Kalina Bozeva, "Bulgarskite Musulmani ("Pomatsi"), Factologicheski dannii, in Maltsinstvata v Bulgaria v konteksta na choveshkite prava, Komitet za zachtita na maltsinstvenite prava, Sofia, 1994

¹¹² Hugh Poulton, The Balkans Minorities and States in Conflict, Minority Rights Publications, London 1991, p. 114;

¹¹³ Ibid pp.114

The present situation

After 1989 Pomaks experienced an even greater identity crisis. They had been really badly hit after the fall of the Zhivkov regime, because of the general collapse of the economy including the traditional employment for the Pomaks in the tobacco growing industry and the construction business. In 1990 there were some indications that the identity complex of the Pomaks was moving towards identification towards the Turkish minority and Turkish-Arab culture in general.

"Fieldwork in 1990 in Hadzhhiyska showed that 44.4% of the sample group chose definite Turkish/Islamic forms for their names in the new climate of 1990, while only 14.3% chose distinctive Bulgarian forms, with the remaining 39.2% exhibiting various types of Bulgarian-Turkish anthroponymic compromises - eg. choosing a name like "Aldin" or "Silvina", which would be acceptable to both ethnic Turkish and Slav Bulgarian groups." ¹

¹ Ibid p.115

However, the process of identity fragmentation turned out to be more complicated. Two years later, after this research was conducted during the last census in 1992 other comprehensive research has been done. From a 2% sample of the 1992 Bulgarian census, 70 000 people identified themselves as Bulgarian Muslims.

Another significant group of Pomaks, who are non-religious but preferred to be registered as "Christian Bulgarians" should be added to the above. The group numbers 20 000 to 35 000 people according to the data from expert scrutineer, sociologists and local authority representatives.² There has also been a conversion of other Pomak groups (mainly in the Eastern Rhodopes) to Christianity, predominately to the United Church and other Protestant sects, and to a lesser extent to the Bulgarian Orthodox Church.³

There is another tendency among the Pomaks to identify with the Bulgarians and Bulgarian culture and tradition, but in the context of preserving their unique and exceptional

² Boriana Panaiotova, Kalina Bozeva, "Bulgarskite Musulmani ("Pomatsi") Factologicheski dannii, in Maltsinstvata v Bulgaria v konteksta na choveshkite prava, Komitet za zachtita na maltsinstvenite prava, Sofia, 1994

³ Ibid pp.30

place as Islamised Slavs, with Bulgarian as their mother tongue. Another sizeable part of the community is at the stage of forming an awareness of belonging to such a specific ethnic group, different from both Bulgarians and Turks. In this group, religion has become the main ethnic distinguishing factor. These people define themselves as "Muslims", "Pomaks", "Ahriani", or "Bulgarian Mohammedans", and 65 000 registered themselves as such under "other".⁴

In general, Pomaks have been and still are facing the difficult choice of sacrificing either their language or their religion. Some preferred to distance themselves as Pomaks and erase any trace of their Christian past.

"Pomaks began to define themselves as "Turks" or "Osmans", deriving their origins from Asia Minor Turks or Yuruks, who, according to them, lost their own language and learned Bulgarian under the influence of the Bulgarians."⁵

A third large sub-group identified themselves as Turks, in the last census. 27 000 of them identified themselves as Bulgarian-speaking Turks, while 35 000 individuals from the Western Rhodopes and three Pirin villages declared their mother tongue to be Turkish, despite the fact that they could

⁴ Ibid pp.30

⁵ G. Chichovski, Central Rhodope Problems, Sofia, 1938, p.77; Riza Solakov, The Bulgarian Mohamedans in the Past and Today, 1940, p.9

not speak it at all.⁶

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⁶ Borianna Panaiotova, Kalina Bozeva, "Bulgarskite Musulmani ("Pomatsi") Factologicheski dannii, in Maltsinstvata v Bulgaria v konteksta na choveskite prava Komitet za zachtita na maltsinstvenite prava, Sofia, 1994, pp.30

"Pomak" Associations and Organizations

Unlike the Bulgarian Turks, who were able to organise their own party, the Pomaks have no representative political organisation.¹²⁰ Their political affiliation, in a way, is a reflection of their self determination tendencies. Some of them sympathise with the main national political parties - the Union of Democratic Forces (UDF), the Movement for Rights and Freedoms (MRF) and the Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP). Soon after 1989, many Pomaks supported the Independent Association for the Defence of Human rights (IADHR). After the emergence of the right wing - Bulgarian Nationalistic movements during the events of the so called "Razgradska republika" in late 1989 and in 1990 already mentioned above, the Pomaks felt threatened and needed a stronger defender. It was seen in the Movement for Rights and Freedoms.¹²¹

The opposition coalition UDF missed the opportunity to win the trust and to become the official voice of this ethnic group. This was quite understandable - with its radical market reform agenda, UDF was much more appealing to the urban

¹²⁰ *ibid*

¹²¹ Hugh Poulton, The Balkans Minorities and States in Conflict, Minority Rights Publications, London 1991,

population than to the population in the predominately agricultural areas - this was the case with the Pomaks. Another reason was the apparent lack of initiative. Instead, the Movement for Rights and Freedoms, gathered substantial support in the Rhodope mountains among the Pomaks, managing to present a strong case in support of restoration of the human rights of the Bulgarian Muslims:

"Even in the March 1990 Names of the Bulgarian Citizen Act which gave the Bulgarian Turks the legal right to reinstate their Turko-Arab names, no provision has been made for the Pomaks to enjoy the same right. The Movement for Rights and Freedoms declared itself a defender of this right. The Movement brought about the change in the Names of Bulgarian Citizen's Act which the Bulgarian Turks and "Pomaks" had wanted. The MRF in this way gained a stable position in part of the "Pomak" community. This in turn provided a pretext for manipulation of the Western Rhodopes after it became clear that a significant proportion of the "Pomaks" were identified themselves as Turks."¹²²

On the other hand, there are also well manifested tendencies within the Pomak community to gravitate towards the Bulgarian mainstream culture. After 1990, two small formations have been set up with only Pomak membership. One of them is the Democratic Party of Labour led by Kamen Burov, the mayor

¹²²Boriana Panaiotova, Kalina Bozeva, "Bulgarskite Musulmani ("Pomatsi") Factologicheski dannii, in Maltsinstvata v Bulgaria v konteksta na choveshkite prava, Komitet za zachtita na maltsinstvenite prava, Sofia, 1994

of the Zhultusha in the Eastern Rhodopes. Mr. Burov supports the theory of a unique Pomak identity, maintaining that the Pomaks are a Slavic tribe which voluntarily adopted Islam.¹²³

The other organisation particularly influential among the "Pomaks", (especially in the central Rhodopes, in Smolyan district, where the revival process had its most pronounced effects) is the "Rodolyubie" union led by Branko Davidov. The leader of the union openly acknowledges the Bulgarian roots of the Pomaks. However, in this search of *"l'esprit perdu"*, it seems that he does not stop there. He recommends the urgent incorporation of the Pomaks into the Bulgarian mainstream as the only viable solution in order to prevent a large ethnic conflict. According to the leader of the union, Pomaks are particularly vulnerable and are a systematic target for political manipulation by various partisan forces, from the Movement for Rights and Freedoms, to Islamic fundamentalist groups. In his nationalist propaganda, he makes frequent analogies to Bosnia.¹²⁴

Another expressing a more tolerant position towards Pomak organisation is the "St. John the Precursor" movement in the Rhodopes. It is advertised as a cultural-educational organization and is headed by Father Boyan Sariev, who has devoted himself to "apostolic" work amongst the Pomaks, from whom he himself originates. The press reports hundreds of

¹²³ *ibid*

¹²⁴ *Ibid* pp.31

cases of Christian baptisms of Pomaks by him. He explains that the newly-christened recognize their Bulgarian roots and want to be fully incorporated into the Bulgarian ethnic community.¹²⁵

¹²⁵ Ibid pp.32

Conclusion

Pomaks have always been in a difficult position in finding their appropriate place in ethnically diverse Bulgaria. Unlike other ethnic groups they had to face the hard dilemma of sacrificing one of the two of the most intimate ethnic characteristics: language or religion.

After the end of the Zhivkov regime, the fragmentation process in search for self-identity among Pomak community became much more pronounced. Being marginalised by the two larger ethnic entities: the Bulgarians and the Turks, and having "transitional ethnic character in a transitional period" as one Bulgarian scholar put it, (however, the intermediate nature of this community has always been an *a priori* precondition for such a process) Pomaks were left to chose three possible options: to identify themselves as Bulgarians, to identify themselves as Turks, or to identify themselves as a unique ethnic group.

As was mentioned already in this chapter, the tendency to identify with the Christian Bulgarian culture goes back in the inter-war period, and definitely is not a new phenomenon. However, in respect to the other identity, the inclination towards the Turkish ethnos, in particular, there are some indications that this process was more pronounced after 1989. According to findings based on the 1992 census by Ilona Tomova

- a senior adviser on ethnic issues with the Presidency, the division within the Pomak group is the following: from 250 000 in total: 70 251 identify themselves as Bulgarian, approximately 60 000 identify themselves as Turkish; and 65 546 responded that they belong to the Bulgarian Mohammedans (Pomaks). The most important is the third group where the dynamism are most pronounced.

In this context, five years after the end of the Zhivkov regime there was still no coherent state policy with respect to economically depressed areas where the Pomaks live. However, the observed phenomenon of "Turkicization" among Pomaks is seen as a negative ethnic tendency and causes concern, particularly in the current political partisan confrontation. This is much less of a concern in respect to national cohesion. Thus Pomak issues became highly politicized and used by various political forces. This climate made it possible to send a large number of commissions of inquiry from various state institutions to check whether they are "Turkicizing" themselves, and to what extent.

"This went as far as the absurd draft-resolution of the joint parliamentary commission which proposed that instead of individual ethnic self-determination, parliamentary groups should express their opinions through authorised representatives from the parliamentary platform about what the Bulgarian Muslims actually are - Bulgarians, forcibly Islamised after 1628, or Turks who have forgotten their own language as a result

of Bulgarian coercion after 1912. ¹²⁶

It is certain that the harsh reality during the transitional period, with a collapsing tobacco industry and collective farms, and uncertain conditions for individual farming because of land restitution, created a difficult economic environment for the Pomaks. The economic pressure has always been a dominant element shaping their self-identification but never to the present magnitude. Unemployment in some areas surpasses 20 per cent. There are no state projects for the economic recovery of these areas. Therefore, the solutions on a personal level for quick economic improvement are not that many. The first one is to move to the main urban centres within the country, looking for jobs (primarily in the construction and the services sector). In this case, the identification would be expected to be towards a Bulgarian identity. The second solution for a better opportunity for economic prosperity is to follow the tendency common among many Turks-to emigrate to Turkey (or eventually Germany). In this case Pomaks would be inclined to identify themselves as Turks.

There is an acute need for a comprehensive state policy vis a vis the Pomak settlements. Special programs and pilot projects are expected to be introduced soon in order to revive

¹²⁶ Report of the Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry, 21 January 1993

economically these remote and economically depressed areas. This will also have a direct impact on the persistent search for an ethnic identity among Pomaks and would help them to feel closer to the Bulgarian State and culture. Of course, this process has to develop in parallel with a higher level of tolerance in the Bulgarian public.

According to recent polls, 56 per cent of Bulgarians believe that Pomaks should be incorporated into the Bulgarian mainstream culture and Bulgarian society. 60 per cent reject the forceful fashion of the revival process, although not contesting its positive impact on the process of building national cohesion.¹²⁷ It should be mentioned that some of these projects have already begun. On the initiative of the Presidency, an interdepartmental team of experts is drafting a Bill for the Development of Mountainous Regions.

The Pomaks and their religious and cultural differences should not be seen as a threat to peace in the country - nor as a Trojan horse for Islamic fundamentalism. In fact, they are an excellent example of a cultural intermediary between the two main religious groups in the country - the Christians and the Muslims. An improvement in the socio-economic situation in the regions they live in, and an amenable acceptance of their right to be different and to practice their religion, are the most promising ways to

¹²⁷ Ilona Tomova, Mihail Ivanov "Etnichesките групи i mezduetnicheskite otnoshenia v Bulgaria", in Aspekti na etnoculturnata situatsia v Bulgaria, Friedrich-Nauman-Stiftung, Fondatsia "Otvoreno obshtestvo"-Sofia, Fondatsia "Mezdunaroden tsenter po problemite na maltsinstvata i kulturnite vsaimodeistvia", Asosiatsia AkSES, Sofia 1994, p.29

dismantle the tension and mistrust between them and the remainder of the Bulgarian citizenry."¹²⁸

¹²⁸ Boriana Panaiotova, Kalina Bozeva, "Bulgarskite Musulmani "Pomatsi", Factologicheski dannii, in Maltsinstvata v Bulgaria v konteksta na choveshkite prava, Komitet za zachtita na maltsinstvenite prava, Sofia, 1994, p.32

CHAPTER V

MACEDONIA, THE GORDIAN KNOT IN THE BALKANS - MACEDONIANS; ETHNIC IDENTITY AND LANGUAGE POLICY; CURRENT DIMENSIONS OF THE PROBLEM

"What are we, Macedonians? One brother lives here and they called him Bulgarian, the other brother is in the Vardar Macedonia, and the sister is in Greece. Is she a real Greek? Is it not true that all were born from one mother? We live in three different countries, but we are one - Macedonians. That is why borders bother us."¹²⁹

Ivan "Makedonetsot"

member of UMO "Ilinden"

¹²⁹ Ilona Tomova "Vlianieto na Makedonisma v Pirinska Makedonia" in Aspekti na etnokulturnata sitiatsia v Bulgaria, Sofia, Aktes 1994, pp.193;

In general, in Bulgaria the United Macedonian Organisation UMO "Ilinden" is perceived as radical nationalist organisation, aiming to separate Pirin Macedonia from Bulgaria, Aegean Macedonia from Greece, and Vardar Macedonia from Yugoslavia creating thus an united Macedonia seems not to have a clear homogenous political agenda and is divided by internal factions with conflicting tendencies and visions.

"Macedonians are brothers with the Bulgarians, cousins with the Yugoslavs, and just neighbours with Greeks. It would be normal to go to your brother, rather to your cousin!".

from an interview conducted in 1991 with the leader of UMO Ilinden in Eleshnitsa, Georgi Karpachev¹³⁰

1. The background

"The Macedonian Question has historically been one of the most contentious as well as one of the most complicated matters in the Balkans."¹³¹

The question "To which nation does the population of the

¹³⁰ *ibid*

¹³¹ See Robert Kaplan, 1991, "History's Cauldron"; "The Atlantic monthly", June 1991, p.24:

"Macedonia is place strangely difficult to be defined, where the landscape cannot merely be looked at, but must be read according to each racial and linguistic claim and interpretation of the history. Because Philip II of Macedon, a monarch with strong Greek ties established *de facto* rule over much of present day-Greece in the fourth century B.C., the Greeks believe that Macedonia is theirs. Because the Bulgarians in the tenth century under King Ivan Assen II expanded the frontiers of Bulgaria all the way West to the Adriatic Sea, the Bulgarians believe Macedonia to be theirs. In the Balkans, history is not thought of as a chronological progression. It jumps and moves in circles."

geographical region called Macedonia belong?" is a very old one. It is not about the existing ethnic diversity - beyond all doubt, Turks Albanians, Greeks, Jews, Kutso-Wallachians etc. have lived in this area for centuries. The problem concerns the main mass of population who speak the Slavonic language and are of corresponding origin.¹³² In order to present the current dynamics of the identity process of the Macedonians living in Bulgaria, (the Pirin area) to indicate the boundaries of Macedonianism as a political movement, and to understand the rationale of the official response of the Bulgarian state vis a vis these matters, some historical clarification seems more than necessary. For the purpose of a comprehensive review and clarification of this complicated and sensitive issue, (because of various rival claims), this chapter might be a bit longer than the others.

¹³² Kalina Bozeva, Bobby Bobev, "Makedontsite v Bulgaria", in Maltsinstvata v Bulgaria v konteksta na choveshkite prava, Komitet za zachtita na Maltsinstvenite prava, Sofia, 1994, p.33

Background to the Macedonian question

The "Macedonian issue" is neither an ethnic, religious, nor linguistic one. The "Macedonian issue" is a clearly political issue.¹³³

Indeed, prior to 1878 there was no need to raise the issue of the ethnic character of the Macedonian Slavs. Great powers simply included Macedonia within the boundaries they had ascribed to an autonomous Bulgarian area at the Istanbul Conference in 1876.¹³⁴

In that geographic area lived Turks, Greeks, Bulgarians, Albanians, Jews and Armenians. As far as its national consciousness is concerned, information from the time when Macedonia was part of the Ottoman empire until the Balkan wars speaks in favour of its predominately Bulgarian character.

However, the Macedonian Question was created artificially by the Great powers to solve specific geopolitical interests.¹³⁵ Indeed, behind the liberation of South Slavs in

¹³³ Milko Bojadzhiev "Makedonskiat vapros" v svetlinata na mesdunarodnite dogovorenosrti" in Aspekti na ethnokultutnata situatsia v Bulgaria i na Balkanite vol.2 Tsenter za issledvane na demokratsiata & Fondatsia, Fridrih Nauman, Sofia 1992, p.193

¹³⁴ Kalina Bozeva, Bobby Bobev, "Makedontsite v Bulgaria". in Maltsinstvata v Bulgaria v konteksta na choveshkite prava, Komitet za zachtita na Maltsinstvenite prava, Sofia, 1994, p.33

¹³⁵ Milko Bojadzhiev "Makedonskiat vapros" v svetlinata na mesdunarodnite dogovorenosrti" in Aspekti na ethnokultutnata situatsia v Bulgaria i na Balkanite, vol.2 Tsenter za issledvane na

the Russo-Turkish war of 1878 there was quite a transparent political motivation consonant to an old and delirious ambition for many Russian emperors in the eighteenth, nineteenth and even twentieth century to have access to the Black and Mediterranean Seas. The quick military victory over the Ottoman empire and the emergence of the San Stefano Bulgaria, helped to materialise the Russian dream of having direct influence on the Balkans. However, this spectacular expansion was not welcomed in the European capitals. The

demokratiata & Fondatsia, Fridrih Nauman, Sofia 1992, p.193

Among other facts there was a report about an important meeting in 1878 between the emperor of Russia, Alexander II and Franz Joseph emperor of the Habsburg empire to accommodate their differences in respect to Bulgaria.

"Russia guarantees not to be involved in any military operations on Serbian territory. The Russian Count Ignatieff proposed to the Austrian (Habsburg) diplomats to annex Bosnia, if the Habsburg agreed to the San Stefano peace treaty. The Count Andrashi responded with an counter-proposal to leave a completely free hand to Russia in Bulgaria, on condition if Macedonia would be left proclaimed autonomous however, under Austrian-Hungarian protectorate."

"In the same report envisaging a secret agreement between Habsburg Empire and Serbia in 1881, in respect to the Article 7 of this agreement: Therefore, when the Habsburgs did not leave any hope for Serbia to expand Westward and achieve unification with this part of Bosnia-Herzegovina, populated with Serbs, Austrian diplomacy offered to Serbia as a compensation to expand Southward in land, populated until 1860-1870 by Bulgarians, a fact which was widely recognized, even by the Serbs themselves."

strategic Aegean Sea, the Bosphorus straits, keeping the Russian fleet within the Black sea, were strong enough arguments to deny access to what they assumed would be the future pro-Russian puppet state of Bulgaria. The Treaty of Berlin left Bulgaria with less than 60% of the territory of San Stefano Bulgaria. Aegean Macedonia and Vardar Macedonia were returned to Turkey.

That was how the beginning of the Macedonian "Gordian knot" was set up.

The Berlin treaty, "the Dirty Bazaar of the Peoples" according to Giuseppe Garibaldi, compensated the Russians for their client state's loss of Macedonia with new land taken from Romania and from Anatolia. Because independence was granted to the Serbs, Bosnia and Herzegovina, which also wanted to be liberated from Ottoman rule, was passed from the Turks to the Habsburg. Great Britain received from the Turks the island of Cyprus.¹³⁶ Ironically, instead of peace, the Berlin Peace Treaty created the future HOT SPOTS dominating Balkan and European politics during the next century: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Cyprus.¹³⁷ These hot spots are

¹³⁶ Raymond Pearson, National Minorities in Eastern Europe 1848-1945, Themes in Comparative History, London, 1981

¹³⁷ Milko Bojadshiev "Makedonskiat vapros" v svetlinata na mezhdunarodnite dogovorenosrti" in Aspekti na ethnokultutnata situatsia v Bulgaria i na Balkanite, vol.2 Tsenter za issledvane na demokratiata & Fondatsia " Fridrih Nauman" Sofia 1992, p.193

far from being taken care of yet. The decision to choose the criterion of accommodating geopolitical interests of high politics and not the standards of national self-determination for the local population (which at that point had not been generally accepted) led to disastrous consequences.

According to Article 23 of the Berlin Treaty, Macedonia and the Adrianople area (the Odrin area and Aegean Thrace) were to be granted an autonomous status within the Ottoman empire, (similar to Eastern Rumelia) with significant authority for the local government, chosen by ethnic criteria:

The estimates of many European travellers, researchers and diplomats in the 19th century are similar - Ami Boue, Cyprien Robert, Guillaume Lejeune, Irby, MacKenzie, Hann, the Russians Gilferding and Makushev. They all bear witness to the fact that the language of the greater part of this population is Bulgarian and it is a part of the Bulgarian ethnic group. ¹³⁸

But the implementation of this clause was never achieved.

In 1885, Eastern Rumelia, an autonomous province under the jurisdiction of the Sublime Porte, (with the capital Plovdiv - the second largest Bulgarian city) and the independent Kingdom of Bulgaria unified and this act jeopardized the granting of the autonomous status for

¹³⁸ Kalina Bozeva, Bobby Bobev, "Makedontsite v Bulgaria", in Maltsinstvata v Bulgaria v konteksta na choveshkite prava, Komitet za zachtita na Maltsinstvenite prava, Sofia, 1994, p.33;

Macedonia provided in the Berlin treaty. It was believed (this was the original plan for Macedonia) that the same process would occur immediately after autonomy was granted.

The aspiration in Macedonia for finding a diplomatic solution to the status quo led to the formation of the VMRO (Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation). The Thesaloniki (Solun) Committee created in 1893 was titled: "Committee for granting political rights to Macedonia, according to the Berlin Treaty". However, "Christian Europe" and "Christian Russia" were not in a charitable mood. The Committee soon abandoned the fruitless propaganda-style activity and turned in a more radical direction. VMRO became a revolutionary movement, aiming to topple Ottoman rule in Macedonia, to achieve autonomy and to unify with Bulgaria. The autonomy was perceived in the Eastern Rumelia fashion - the final goal was unification of Bulgarians into one state. After the crackdown of the Ilinden insurrection in 1902, two factions of the VMRO emerged in Macedonia: the left wing faction took the position of "Federal (Independent) Macedonia on the Switzerland model", the right wing - had more conservative ideas, Autonomy and Unification with Bulgaria.¹³⁹

During the Balkan wars, the two factions gave their support to the Bulgarian army and proclaimed union with

¹³⁹See Ivan Mihailoff, Spomeni, volume 2, Rossels, Belgium, 1965

Bulgaria.

The outcome of the Balkan wars and WWI had a significant impact on the evolution of the Macedonian Question. This is when the Macedonian Question became a paramount subject dominating Balkans politics for the next few decades. To justify the subsequent assimilation policy conducted by Serbia and Greece, the Macedonian Question became an insurmountable academic casse-tete. As is known, the three Balkan states, Serbia, Bulgaria and Greece decided to divide Macedonia between themselves. However, once hostilities erupted, the Serbian and Greek diplomacies entered in separate negotiations to deprive Bulgaria of territories which, according to the pervious arrangements, belonged to her.¹⁴⁰ The annexation of

¹⁴⁰ According to findings of the Report of the International Commission to inquire into Causes and Conduct of the Balkan Wars, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Division of Intercourse and Education; Publication #4 Published by the Endowment, Washington, D.C.1914:

"The Bulgarian Statistics alone take into account the consciousness of the people themselves. The Serbian Calculations are generally based on the results of the study of dialects and on the identity of customs; they are therefore largely theoretic and abstract in character. The Greek calculations are even more artificial, since their ethnic standard is the influence exercised by the Greek civilization on the urban populations, and even the traces of classical antiquity. The same difficulties meets us when we leave population statistics and turn on geographical distribution. From an ethnographical point of view the population of Macedonia is extremely mixed. The old maps, from that of Ami Boue (1847) down, follow tradition in regarding the Slav population of Macedonia as Bulgarian. Later local charts make whole country either Serbian or Greek."

Vardar Macedonia by the Serbian army and Aegean Thrace by the Greek army caused the eruption of the Second Balkan war, with catastrophic political, economic, territorial, as well as moral consequences for modern Bulgaria. The occupation of Macedonia by the Greek and Serbian armies, presented a green light to the Greeks and permitted Serbian nationalism to carry out a brutal assimilation policy. More than ever, the controversy about the ethnic character of the Macedonian Slavs came to the top of the Balkan and European political agendas. The political dimensions of this otherwise simple, ordinary academic ethnic/linguistic issue, made it possible for it to be transformed into the Balkan "Gordian Knot".¹⁴¹

Aegean (Southern) Macedonia and Aegean Thrace became part of Greece. The population, predominately with a Bulgarian national consciousness, were subjected to a policy which included both the removal of Bulgarians from the region (on

¹⁴¹ Winston Churchill: World crisis pp.460-62 also Loyd George Memoirs, vol,2. as well as Outline of Tentative Report, written by S.E.Mazes, David Hunter Miller, Walter Lippmann, and especially David Hunter Miler My diary at the Conference at Paris, New York, 1925; "David Lloyd George, the long time British prime-minister and a prominent political figure during WWI underlines that the project granting autonomy to Macedonia failed because of the French-Serbian opposition. The project envisaged granting rights exclusively to the Bulgarian population in Macedonia. For all objective people including Lloyd George, the Macedonian Slavs are nothing else, but Bulgarians."

the basis of a bilateral agreement with Bulgaria for exchange of national minorities) and an active assimilation policy.¹⁴² The main point here is that these documents signed by both countries in fact imply a recognition on the part of Greece that "a large part of the population of Aegean Macedonia had a Bulgarian national consciousness. According to these and other international documents at that time the geographic area called Macedonia was populated primarily with subjects identifying themselves as Bulgarians. According to the Serbian-Bulgarian agreement of 1912, the larger part of Macedonia was recognised as being populated with Bulgarians. There were disagreements only regarding the North-West of Macedonia which was proclaimed as a "disputed area" (Churchill agreed that its destiny should be solved under the jurisdiction and judgement of the Russian king. According to the most comprehensive legal document envisaging the ethnic issue in Macedonia, the Bucharest Peace Treaty:

the population in Macedonia in total was 2 301 767 people, from which 1 095 000 were Bulgarians, 542 000 Turks, and 253 000 Greeks. Interestingly enough, in this document there were no numbers of

¹⁴² Kalina Bozeva, Bobby Bobev, "Makedontsite v Bulgaria", in Maltsinstvenite grupi v Bulgaria v konteksta na choveshkite prava, Komitet za zachtita na Maltsinstvenite prava, Sofia, 1994, p. 37-38

any Serbian subjects living in Macedonia." ¹⁴³

However, despite the fact that this thesis does not pretend to explore exclusively the background of this controversy, because it is oriented towards the current ethnic accommodation in Bulgaria, it is important to underline what was academically verified and accepted as factually correct on the matter of the ethnic identity of the Macedonian population before the Balkan wars.¹⁴⁴ (According to others authors: Robert Pelie, Richard Fon Maks, Leon Dominion, Verkovic, the number of Bulgarians were estimated between 1 166 000 to 1 334 000.) ¹⁴⁵

In Serbia and Greece, the measures mentioned above, deportation, immigration and forceful assimilation led to a wholesale change in the demographic picture of the occupied

¹⁴³ Milko Bojadzhiev "Makedonskiat vapros" v svetlinata na mezhdunarodnite dogovorenosrti" in Aspekti na ethnokultutnata situatsia v Bulgaria i na Balkanite, vol.2 Tsenter za issledvane na demokratsiata & Fondatsia, Fridrih Nauman, Sofia 1992, p.193

¹⁴⁴ see The Report of the International Commission to inquire into Caused and Conduct of the Balkan Wars, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Division of Intercourse and Education; Publication #4 Published by the Endowment, Washington, D.C.1914

¹⁴⁵ Milko Bojadzhiev "Makedonskiat vapros" v svetlinata na mezhdunarodnite dogovorenosrti" in Aspekti na ethnokultutnata situatsia v Bulgaria i na Balkanite, vol.2 Tsenter za issledvane na demokratsiata & Fondatsia, Fridrih Nauman, Sofia,1992,p.193

Macedonian regions.¹⁴⁶

According to the Report of the Carnegie Commission, the terror by Greece and Serbia in the occupied Macedonian territories was much more harsh than Turkish rule, the regime which, by the way, did not aim at denationalization (ethnic cleansing).¹⁴⁷ It is also important to mention the fact that in Bulgaria, in the Pirin district (Bulgaria obtained 10% of the geographic area called Macedonia - the Pirin area) there were no such precedents. Apparently, there was no need for ethnic cleansing, or it was simply impossible because Macedonians were seen as Bulgarians. Another important fact: immigration from Macedonia, long before the eruption of the Balkan wars traditionally had just one destination - Bulgaria. In Bulgarian society, there was no economic or political distinction on the basis of Macedonian background. They were and are part of mainstream Bulgarian society.

However, in Serbia and Greece the situation was different. The famous "Law of state security" in Serbia in 1913 imposed a state of terror, forbidding all political activities, and establishing complete censorship.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁶ Kalina Bozeva, Bobby Bobev, "Makedontsite v Bulgaria", in Maltsinstvata v Bulgaria v konteksta na choveshkite prava, Komitet za zachtita na Maltsinstvenite prava, Sofia, 1994

¹⁴⁷ Ivan Mihailof, "Spomeni", (Osvoboditelnata borba 1919-1924) Belgium, 1965; Volume II, pp. 67

¹⁴⁸ Kostadin Paleshutski, Makedonskiat vapros v burzhuasna Yugoslavia, Sofia, 1983 pp.47

Rooted in Serbian propaganda as early as the 19th century, the long-term policy imposed there effectively aimed to do away with Bulgarian national feelings and replace them with Serbian. In the course of this process, more than 550 Bulgarian schools and over 700 churches, chapels and monasteries were closed down. Any hint of Bulgarian national consciousness, including the speaking of Bulgarian was followed up by the administration and punished. The drastic nature of these measures in itself is indirect proof that the greater part of the population there had a Bulgarian national consciousness.

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The Report of the International Commission to Inquire into the Cause and Conduct of the Balkan Wars, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace represents the most comprehensive and detailed report.¹⁵⁰ This document of a few hundred pages presents a horrifying picture of ethnic cleansing by the Greek and Serbian regimes in the occupied territories; mass murders, mass tortures, and rapes of the civilian population, who, ironically, just days before had met their "liberators with flowers".

According to the Carnegie International Commission, as

¹⁴⁹ Kalina Bozeva, Bobby Bobev, "Makedonstite v Bulgaria", in Maltsinstvata v Bulgaria v konteksta na choveshkite prava, Komitet za zachtita na Maltsinstvenite prava, Sofia, 1994, pp.37

¹⁵⁰ International Commission to Inquire into the Cause and Conduct of the Balkan Wars, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Division of Intercourse and Education; Publication #4 Published by the Endowment, Washington, D.C. 1914

result of the systematic ethnic cleansing in Serbian Macedonia:

"761 Bulgarian churches were closed, shortly after that transforming them into Serbian churches. Similar experience befall 641 Bulgarian schools, Serbia expelled 833 Bulgarian priests and 1013 school teachers. In Aegean Macedonia Greece closed 340 Bulgarian schools and 378 churches, expelling 750 teachers and 300 priests."

This assimilation policy radically changed the ethnic character of the occupied territories. In Aegean Macedonia, especially after the Greco-Turkish war of 1920-1922, 540,000 Greeks left Turkey and settled there, in addition to the 100 000 refugees who had settled there before.¹⁵¹ Therefore, Aegean Macedonian became ethnically homogeneous, populated with Greeks (the operation ended after WWII).

In general, a different development occurred in Macedonia during the interwar period. After 1918, Yugoslavia, facing challenges on many other "ethnic fronts" after the emigration of close to 1 000 000 Macedonians subjects to Bulgaria, decided to replace its forceful assimilation policy in South Serbia (Macedonia) with a softer and presumably more effective strategy. In the 30s, VMRO under the influence of the Comintern embraced the idea of the right to self-determination of the Macedonian population and the creation of a united and

¹⁵¹ Hugh Poulton, The Balkan minorities and states in conflict, London, Minority rights publications, pp. 176

independent Macedonia.

At the same time as the attempts at Serbianisation of the population of Macedonia, another tendency, so called Macedonism, got under way. As early as the end of the 19th century, the theory that the population of Macedonia is neither Bulgarian, nor Serbian and has its own independent ethnic characteristics was put about. If this was a scholarly hypothesis, it might be acceptable. In this case, however, ulterior policies are involved. The Serbian scholar and diplomat Stoyan Novakovic, the author of this concept himself, has quite different arguments. According to him, the Bulgarian idea holds firm in Macedonia, and contrasting it only with the Serbian idea is quite insufficient..."the Serbian idea would benefit from some ally strongly opposed to Bulgarianism, who would be able to attract the people and popular feeling, breaking it away from Bulgarianism. I can see such an ally in Macedonianism.¹⁵²

The ideals of Balkan federation as well as the Switzerland model and the idea of an autonomous Macedonia were abandoned. Due to external pressures and internal factions, in 1934 VMRO ceased to exist. The underground Communist movement was the only strong local political movement dealing with the Macedonian national issue through the perspective of a unique Macedonian nation and unique Macedonian language.

However, the idea of a Macedonian language and a Macedonian nation was

¹⁵² See Djambazovski, K. "Macedonia's Social link with Serbia in the Course of the 19th century", Skopje, 1960, p.170

taken up by the Comintern - completely dominated by the Bolshevik party and toeing the line of Soviet foreign policy. This idea was launched as early as 1920's and in 1934 it was officially accepted. Furthermore, the Communist International designed the task before the Balkan Communist Parties of working for the consolidation of this nation and of promoting the creation of its written language. etc. as urgent." ¹⁵³

However, it should be clear that drawing political maps of the Balkans in the last 120 years did not lead automatically to the division of the linguistic bond. Furthermore, it is even naive to accept the idea of developing a new literary language-by decree. ¹⁵⁴ Linguistic history does not provide many similar examples. In addition, the

¹⁵³ Kalina Bozeva, Bobby Bobev, "Makadontsite v Bulgaria", in Maltsinstvata v Bulgaria v konteksta na choveshkite prava, Komitet za zachtita na Maltsinstvenite prava, Sofia, 1994, p.38

¹⁵⁴ Borianna Veltcheva and Maksim Mladenov, "Problemat za ezika v "Makedonskiat vapros", Ethno-kulturnata situatsia v Balgaria i na Balkanite, Sofia, 1992, vol.2 pp,211;

see also Heinrich A.Stammler, What is the national character of the Macedonian Slavs? - LMRO, Sofia, 1991. pp.11

For more than a thousand years the Slavs living in this area have been considered Bulgarians, speaking Bulgarian whose idiom is distinguished by certain dialectical peculiarities, without thereby losing its general Bulgarian character. Stammler based his analyses on works of various philologists and linguists beyond again the national affiliation such as works done by independent scholars detached from the Bulgarian or Serbian point of view, from Germany, Czechoslovakia, Switzerland, Russia, France in order to conclude that:

"The language spoken by the Slavs between Skopje and Salonica (Thessaloniki), Kostur and Kuistedil (the geographic boundaries of Macedonia, lies in the present time in three Balkan states) neither Serbian, nor "Macedonian", but Bulgarian."

scholarly dimensions of this unique academic precedent became absurd knowing that the directive from the Kremlin set up a deadline to achieve this task "urgently", in the space of a few months. Despite the fact that there are some 20 nations in the world using the same literary Spanish, without this being a problem for their separate national identity, the Comintern, however, propagating internationalism, perceived this task through the concept of one-language, one-nation concept. Therefore, an official, literary Macedonian language had to be invented. The following paragraph gives an insight of how this happened.

I am talking about the original correspondence of the Comintern. There is correspondence about the decision of the Comintern regarding the Macedonian nation. The Comintern and the Soviet state are considering the maxim: one nation-one language. They did not want to say that there is a Macedonian nation, without a Macedonian language. Then Vassil Kolarov received the order to write official letters in the name of the Comintern to the leading Slav linguistic department in the USSR. These were the departments in Kharkov, Kiev and Moscow. The three answers that Comintern got from them were identical. The specialist linguists agreed that it would be best that the most remote Bulgarian dialect be taken, in order to create the Literary Macedonian language. ¹⁵⁵

Ironically the Soviet linguists took the Eastern spoken

¹⁵⁵ Boriana Veltcheva, Maksim Mladenov "Problemat za ezika v" Makedonskiat vapros" in Etnokulturnata situatsia v Balgaria i na Balkanite, Tsentar za izsledvane na Demokratsiata, Fondastia "Fridrih Nauman", Sofia 1992 p.230

language - this from Veliko Turnovo - (the Medieval Bulgarian capital) which was the base for the Bulgarian written language, creating in this way the closest possible version to the Bulgarian literary language. For further references in respect to the linguistic dimension of this problem see, the research of A.M. Selishev, and Heinrich A. Stammer.¹⁵⁶

The nature of the evolution of the autonomy-federal idea which took shape after the end of W.W.II is not well researched, as well as the dispute between Tito and Dimitrov over Stalin's Pan Balkan federation. It is also a little known fact that the Macedonian controversy played a significant role in the rivalry between general Draza Mihailovic (the war minister from the exiled London government) and Tito. It was the principle of the South-Slav federation which did most to draw non - Communist support away from Mihailovic to Tito, who had inherited the idea of the Green International, the Agrarian dream of a huge Balkan federation. Between the wars, Moscow mostly preached federalism for the Balkans. The official position of Comintern at that time (probably due to the direction of G. Dimitrov) was to prefer the revolutionary potential of Bulgarian revisionism, although an alliance with IMRO was abortively attempted on the basis of the third

¹⁵⁶ A.M. Selisthev, "Makenonskaia dialektologia i serbskie lingvisti, A. Belitch i ego posledovateli" in "Makedonski pregled", IX, 1934, # 4, p.77

possibility - Macedonian independence.¹⁵⁷

This dynamism of the official position of Moscow can be explained by a strong political and military rationale. It was after the Nazi attack in 1941 when Stalin suddenly changed his mind and began to back the Yugoslav federal programme (to include Macedonia) which Marshal Tito may have been expounding since 1924.

"It was chiefly Tito's whole - hearted adoption of the policy of armed resistance and partisan warfare that won him Moscow's support on the Macedonian question."¹⁵⁸

The nature of this support was the keystone in the later developments between Bulgaria and Yugoslavia. This new position had been maintained for several years and finally brought Stalin's backing in 1945 for the plan to incorporate Bulgaria into a Federal Yugoslavia, which Marshal Tito had established by then. Tito's ambition was to solve the Macedonian controversy by reducing the status of an independent Bulgaria into the 7th republic incorporated into the Federation.

As is known, despite its political affiliations, Bulgaria traditionally claimed that Macedonians (including those living

¹⁵⁷ Elizabeth Baker, "Macedonia and its place in Balkan Power Politics", Royal Institute of International affairs, London, Chatham House, London-New York, 1950

¹⁵⁸ *ibid*

in Yugoslavia and Greece) were ethnic Bulgarians. However, immediately after WWII when Georgi Dimitrov was leader, the BCP fully recognised a separate Macedonian nationality, and accepted the newly formed Macedonian Republic in post-war Yugoslavia. (During this period, a nation-wide campaign took place recognizing different Thracian, Dobrudjanska and Shopka ethnic groups, separate from the Bulgarian ethnic group which had been established. The creation of these distinct ethnic groups within the Bulgarian ethnos was done by decree, in order to have a precedent to invent the Macedonian nation. In accordance with Stalin's demands in 1946, the leaders of the Bulgarian Communist Party decided to announce the so-called "cultural autonomy", with which the Bulgarian population in the Pirin region was declared a part of the "Macedonian nation" and individuals were required to define themselves as Macedonians under "nationality" on their passports.¹⁵⁹

Although the population itself showed opposition, everything was imposed by command-administrative measures which even assumed violent forms.¹⁶⁰

Tito's ambition was to solve once and forever the Macedonian Question and, at the same time, to eliminate

¹⁵⁹ Central Party Archives, Vol. 1. Inventory # 5 archival unit 3, paper 1; See also Panaiotov, L. The Macedonian Question and Bulgaro-Yugoslav relations, Sofia, 1991, pp.107

¹⁶⁰ Kalina Bozeva, Bobby Bobev, "Makedontsite v Bulgaria", in Maltsinstvenite grupi v Bulgaria v konteksta na choveshkite prava, Komitet za zachtita na Maltsinstvenite prava, Sofia, 1994

Bulgaria as a strong Communist neighbour, reducing the status of the independent state of Bulgaria into one of seven Yugoslav republics.

Mutual mistrust between Sofia and Belgrade and particularly between Belgrade and Moscow, was the dominant reason for the collapse of this idea. Moreover, despite socialist internationalism, Tito's "generosity" was hardly accepted in Sofia. The following events were the rupture and the following bilateral Cold war, (Zhivkov and Tito never met); a Cold war which in fact lasted even longer than the original one. Three years after Stalin's death in 1956, when Zhivkov cemented his power, it was decided no longer to recognise a separate Macedonian nationality.¹⁶¹ That is the background.

¹⁶¹ Mitko Bojadzhiev "Makedonskiat vapros" v svetlinata na mezunarodnite dogovorenosrti" in Aspekti na ethnokultutnata situatsia b Bulgaria i na Balkanite vol.2 Tsenter za issledvane na demokratsiata & Fondatsia " Fridrih Nauman" Sofia 1992, See also King. R., Minorities under Communism, Nationalities as a source of tension among the Balkan Communist States, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1973, pp.188-189

**The present situation; the status of UMO Ilinden;
current dimensions of Macedonianism in Pirin Macedonia**

In 1990, all of the main political parties in Bulgaria - the Bulgarian Communist Party (BCP) Supreme Council Chairman Alexander Lilov, Angel Dimitrov, secretary of the Bulgarski Zemedelsi Naroden Sauiz (BZNS-Peasant party), Zhelyu Zhelev, Chairman of the Union of Democratic Forces (UDF) and Petar Dertliev, leader of the Bulgarian Social Democratic Party - all stressed that there was no "Macedonian Question" and that Macedonians were Bulgarians. ¹⁶² However, it should be mentioned that in the same year a "Union of the Macedonian organisation" was created (UMO) - Ilinden, with several clubs emerging in Petrich, Blagoevgrad and Sandanski (the Pirin area). The program of the organisation raised demands for cultural and national autonomy for Macedonians in displaying slogans like: "We are Macedonians and nothing else". ¹⁶³

UMO Ilinden also sent a declaration calling for an autonomous Macedonia to the UN, European Parliament, and the

¹⁶² BTA, (Bulgarian Telegraph Agency) 22 February, 1990, in BBC; Summary of World Broadcast EE/0697, February, 24, 1990

¹⁶³ Hugh Poulton, The Balkan Minorities and the States in Conflict, Minority Rights Publication, London, 1991 p.109

International Court in the Hague. A few months later, in May 1990, UMO Ilinden failed to get the status of a political party because the "targets of the organisation and the means of its attainment are directed against the nation's unity and are aiming and spreading a national and ethnic hostility". The Organisation has probably close to 1000-1500 members and in the villages mainly in the Southern part of the Pirin area soon turned to an extreme nationalist direction.¹⁶⁴

"On April 22, 1990 the organisation raised the demands in its program during a convention near Roshen: the breaking off of the Nevrokopski Bishopri from the Bulgarian Orthodox Church and its incorporation into the Patriarchy of Ohrid; the withdrawal of the Bulgarian army of occupation which had taken possession of Pirin Macedonia as early as 1912; the introduction of the "Macedonian" language as official; prohibition of Bulgarian political parties and organisations on Pirin Macedonian territory, and for the Bulgarian State to be required by the International Court to pay reparation for suffering inflicted upon Macedonians".¹⁶⁵

It should be mentioned that the economic situation was an additional factor for the process of "radicalisation", or extreme nationalist Macedonianism. In some parts of the Pirin Macedonia the impact of the collapse of the centrally planned

¹⁶⁴ Ilona Tomova "Vlianieto na Makedonisma v Pirinska Makedonia" "Nie i Makedonia" in Aspekti na etnokulturnata situatsia v Bulgaria. Tzenter za izsledvane na demokratsiata", Fondatsia "Fridrih Nauman", Sofia 1991, pp.299-300

¹⁶⁵ See Daily Newspaper "Trud", Sofia 16,03,1994, p.4

economic system was acute. The unemployment rate is one of the highest in the country. In some areas it exceeds 30 per cent. Most of the unemployed (over 60 per cent of the total) are young people under 30 years old. ¹⁶⁶ The collapse of the Cooperatives, the confusion with land restitution (many immigrants living now in Greece and the former Yugoslavia have claims), the breakdown of the Tobacco growing industry, and the general backwardness of the region are factors which indirectly influence the ethnic identity complex.

It should be clear that the political agenda of UMO Ilinden is not predominant among the population in Pirin Macedonia. The majority of the population does not share the extreme nationalism expressed by some of the leaders of UMO Ilinden. The separatist programme expressed by Ilinden's leaders not only traumatized the population which identifies itself as Bulgarian, but also shocked a considerable number of those defining themselves as Macedonians. ¹⁶⁷

According to the sociological survey from 1991, in the Pirin area there are 10 000 people who identify themselves as Macedonians. ¹⁶⁸ According to another survey, from the

¹⁶⁶ *ibid*

¹⁶⁷ In the recruiting policy of UMO Ilinden there is an interesting element. The movement is active in recruiting Pomaks using their identity crisis. "Those are our people they are Macedonians, who converted into Islam in the past!" Although, it seems that this policy is not received with-great enthusiasm by the Pomaks; see Ilona Tomova "Vlianieto na Makedonizma v Pirinska Makedonia", in Etnokulturnata situatsia v Bulgaria, Asosiatsia Akses, Sofia, 1994

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid* pp. 296

present population of Pirin Macedonia people identify themselves

79.7 per cent as Bulgarians,

4.4 per cent Macedonians,

1.2 per cent as Turks,

8.4 per cent as Pomaks, (Bulgarian Mohammedans)

3.5 per cent as Gypsies - ¹⁶⁹

This data was supported by the results of the last census conducted in 1992 where 10 800 people identified themselves as Macedonians.¹⁷⁰

In view of the strong Bulgarian identity of the inhabitants of the Pirin region, few took this separatist program seriously. To the question: "If you could chose the country where you could live, would you choose Bulgaria?" 98.5 per cent among the respondents who identified themselves as Bulgarians responded "yes", the remaining 1.5 percent preferred the other answer "rather yes". Among those who identified themselves as Macedonians the results are: "yes, categorically" - 58.6 per cent; "rather yes" - 14.9 per cent. In total, 73 percent of the respondents with a Macedonian

¹⁶⁹ Valery Russanov, "Izsledvane v Pirinska Makedonia", in Aspekti na Bulgarskata etnokulturna situatsia v Bulgaria i na Balkanite, Tsenter za izsledvane na demokratsiata, Fondatsia "Fridrih Nauman" Sofia, 1992 p.307

¹⁷⁰ "Ethnicheskata i Religiozna Structura na Bulgarskoto Obchestvo" in Maltsinstvata v Bulgaria v konteksta na choveskite prava, Komitet za Zachtita na pravata na Maltsinstvata, Sofia, 1994 p.7

ethnic identity want to live in Bulgaria. ¹⁷¹

In a sociological survey from 1991, UMO has a low profile among the local population, 78 per cent of whom criticized its activity.¹⁷² It is perceived by the population in the area as a ultra-national and Serbian inspired movement. (An indication of this was the open support for the Bosnian Serb cause in Bcsnia and Herzegovina. Moreover, UMO actively campaigned to send volunteers from Pirin Macedonia to fight on the side of the Bosnian Serbs.) There are other dimensions of this problem. It is arguable to what extent the UMO pursue a truly Macedonian cause: "Macedonia for Macedonians", or if it is just the continuation of the long lasting political confrontation between Belgrade and Sofia over Macedonia. Politically it is often convenient to explain internal tension with external propaganda. However, there are indications of external pressure. Many of the UMO leaders in the villages received propaganda materials from Yugoslavia for free. There are direct and indirect hints that the ultimate goal is to unite divided Macedonia into one state. According to one of the UMO Ilinden leaders, Keresov, there are other scenarios:

"I don't understand what Bulgaria would
lose so far? If it reacts in a
"civilised" manner, (to liberate

¹⁷¹ Milena Mateva: Aspekti na Bulgarskiat natzionalizm in Aspekti na ethnokulturnata situatsia v Baulgaria i na Balkanite, Tsenter za izsledvane na demokratsiata, Fondatsia Frirdih Nauman, Sofia 1992, p.269

¹⁷² Ilona Tomova "Vlianieto na Makedonisma v Pirinska Makedonia", in Etnokulturnata situatsia v Bulgaria, Asosiatsia Akse, Sofia, 1994

Macedonia with its occupation army) it will lose nothing. Even if Bulgaria would say: Yugoslavia, take now Macedonia!" In this case Bulgaria will gain a good friend and strong trends with a neighbouring country - something unseen in the Balkans"¹⁷³

Similar (absurd) ideas were expressed during another study in the Pirin area. According to one of UMO Ilinden leaders:

"Serbia realises that it is impossible to hold Macedonia. But Serbia will not agree that it will be just be one among the other Balkan states abandoning the land which was captured in the 20 century. Seeing in Bulgaria and Greece its traditional enemies, Serbia will try to create a strong ally in the Balkans - and that will be the state of Macedonia. That is why Serbia will use strong pressure to Greece and Bulgaria to abandon their shares, as well - the Pirin Macedonia and Aegean Macedonia. That pressure will be backed by America. And the Western European countries will support this initiative as a solution of the Balkan dispute." ¹⁷⁴

These direct talks of united Macedonia into one state are not shared by some UMO leaders from the stronghold cities of UMO Ilinden-Petrich and Gotse Delchev. They believe that the alienation of Pirin Macedonia from the Bulgarian economy and

¹⁷³Ilona Tomova- "Pirinska Makedonia-dve izsledvania, Vlianieto na Makedonisma v Pirinska Makedonia" in Aspekti na etnokulturnata situatsia v Bulgaria i na Balkanite, Tsentar za izsledvane na demokratsiata, Fondatsia "Fridrih Nauman "Sofia, 1992, p.298

¹⁷⁴Ilona Tomova "Vlianieto na Makedonisma v Pirinska Makedonia", in Etnokulturnata situatsia v Bulgaria, Asosiatsia Akse, Sofia, 1994, p.298

society would have a catastrophic impact on the area. They perceive Pirin Macedonia as an integral and undivided entity from the Bulgarian state, culture and nation. Their "Macedonianism" has rather dimensions of promoting a greater regionalism improving the cultural and economic links between the Pirin Macedonia and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM), and in generally improving the climate on a regional governmental level.

As was mentioned already, on the local level, UMO is not popular, however, some political parties and the police in particular overreacted. As a result, the rights of several UMO activists have been repeatedly violated.¹⁷⁵ The other organisation, the Traditional Macedonian Organisation Independent Ilinden (IMRO-Ilinden) had its registration cancelled by the Supreme Court in 1993 and a criminal investigation was initiated against one of its leaders."¹⁷⁶

There is another ethno-political organisation, VMRO-UMA (Vatresno Makedonska Revolutsionna Organisatsia-Sauiz na Makedonskite Asosiatsii) which is part of the Union of Democratic forces and does not share the nationalist view of UMO and has purely cultural aspirations. This organisation is the successor of the main Macedonian liberation movement VMRO (1893-1934) mentioned above and, as such, shares its

¹⁷⁵ Kalina Bozeva, Bobby Bobev, "Makadenotsite v Bulgaria", in Maltsinstvata v Bulgaria v konteksta na choveshkite prava, Komitet za zachtita na Maltsinstvenite prava, Sofia, 1994

¹⁷⁶ Ilona Tomova, "Ethnic minorities in Bulgaria" working paper, Sofia, 1996 p.105

traditional Pro-Bulgarian political agenda.¹⁷⁷

In conclusion it should be outlined that the current dimensions of Macedonianism as a political phenomenon in the Post Communist Bulgaria is a multifaceted, heterogeneous movement, embracing a large variety of tendencies, from ultranationalism to expressing purely cultural aspirations.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁷ Kalina Bozeva, Bobby Bobev, "Makedonstite v Bulgaria", in Maltsinstvata v Bulgaria v konteksta na choveshkite prava, Komitet za zachtita na Maltsinstvenite prava, Sofia, 1994, p.41

¹⁷⁸ See Ilona Tomova "Vzianiето na Makedonisma v Pirinsa Makedonia", as well as, Kalina Bozeva, Bobby Bobev, "The Macedonians in Bulgaria", in "Maltsinstvata v Bulgaria v konteksta na choveshkite prava", Komitet za zachtita na Maltsinstvenite prava, Sofia, 1994;

"The discord between the Ilinden leaders is gradually leading in internal splits. The far right-wing sets itself up around Yordan Kostadinov, the universally acknowledged leader of the organisation. Another section is united around Georgi Solunski, and constitutes a new formation "The Traditional Macedonian Organisation IMRO independent "Ilinden". This formation announced itself as a fellowcountry men's organisation acting on cultural basis. An unregistered organisation called the Macedonian Democratic Party has been formed around the writer Slave Makedonski and his illegal newspaper "Makedonets", i.e. "Macedonian". The Macedonian Democratic Party declares its aim to be:" for Pirin Macedonia to form an alliance with rich Macedonians in the West and together to build up a miniature modern Pirin Macedonian autonomous economic and cultural area within Bulgaria."

Conclusion

According to the results of sociological observations and research in the region in the last 2-3 years, self-identification as Macedonian more often covers acute regionalism (also characteristic of those with a Bulgarian ethnic consciousness) than a feeling of belonging to a separate ethnic community.¹⁷⁹ This should be taken into consideration within the new post 1989 context. In the democratic and multi party environment, ethnic affiliations in Bulgaria were no longer perceived as a prohibited issue, an issue which should be better avoided. In this light, in Pirin Macedonia the 79 per cent identification of the population as Bulgarians is at least an indication of the present dynamic of the ethnic situation in the region. Therefore, the rise of a nationalistic Macedonianism in the Post-Communist Bulgaria is rather an exception than a common trend in the area. Macedonianism is also represented by ethno-political organisations such as VMRO-UMA and others which have purely cultural aspirations and which are known for their profound Pro-Bulgarian affiliations and identity. Saying that, at the same time, it should be taken into consideration the

¹⁷⁹ Valeri Russanov. "Izsledvane v Pirinska Makedonia" in Aspekti na etnokulturnata situatsia v Bulgaria i na Balkanite, vol.2, Fondastia Fridrih Nauman, Sofia 1992, pp.311

importance of the traditional regional aspect of the culture in Pirin Macedonia. As it was mentioned above, even some of the leaders of the radical UMO Ilinden movement did not challenge their Bulgarian ethnic identity. They are rather inclined to revitalize the cultural characteristics of the region.

It should be mentioned also that in contrast to the Movement for Rights and Freedoms, which in fact is a political party on an ethnic basis, the same status was not granted to UMO Ilinden. The obvious excuse was that according to the Article 11, paragraph 4 of the Constitution of 1991, any political party based on ethnic or religious grounds should be banned. However, in contrast to the Movement for Rights and Freedoms, who openly denied any separatist agenda and are advocating ethnic tolerance and ethnic peace, closely working with the other main political actors (UDF) in rebuilding the Bulgarian civil society, from the very beginning UMO Ilinden proclaimed itself as a movement with a clear anti-Bulgarian character, declaring directly a separatist agenda. The political lexicon of ethnic extremism only galvanised the Chief Prosecutor's Office into denying the registration of the movement. However, this decision created additional complications. Being denied access to the political stage and being outside of the official legal system, this lack of legal status additionally radicalised some leaders of the UMO Ilinden. This radicalisation created a sound animosity: both

from the Bulgarian ethnic group, as well as from the 80 percent of Macedonians who identify themselves as Bulgarians. This climate additionally aggravated the conflict of UMO Ilinden versus the Bulgarian state, and internal factions have divided UMO Ilinden.

It is true that as result of this, the mass media and the police overreacted, the passports of Ilinden activists were confiscated along with their literature and lists of subscribers, and their meetings were banned, which is a violation of Articles 21 and 22 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.¹⁸⁰

This problem has also its international repercussions. Despite the fact that Bulgaria was one of the first countries to recognise the independent state of Macedonia (known as a The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia-FYROM), the relations between the two countries have remained rather cautious and distant. Part of the problem was the fact that Bulgaria does recognise the independence of Macedonia, however, it does not recognise Macedonians as being a different ethnic group from Bulgarians, and does not recognise a separate Macedonian language. The last argument was crucial in the missed opportunities for ratification of important bilateral documents.

¹⁸⁰ See Kalina Bozeva, Bobby Bobev, "Makedonstite v Bulgaria", in Maltsinstvata v Bulgaria v konteksta na choveshkite prava, Komitet za zachtita na Maltsinstvenite prava, Sofia, 1994, pp.42-43.

However, even the historical fact that the 'Macedonian question' had a long and violent past and was perceived as a possible destabilizing factor in post-Communist Bulgarian and Balkan relations did not negatively affect the democratization process of post-Zhivkov Bulgaria. It should be mentioned that after 120 years of different political experiences, (since the liberation of Bulgaria in 1878) the Macedonians in the FYROM naturally developed a sense of an unique ethnic Macedonian consciousness. The existence of the emergence of a separate Macedonian ethnic identity in FYROM was not perceived with anxiety in Bulgaria - neither as a potentially explosive issue, opening the "Macedonian" Pandora's box, nor as an internal issue threatening national security. UMO "Ilinden", as a movement for Macedonian minority rights in Bulgaria, did not have the magnitude and homogeneous electorate behind it, as was the case with the Turkish minority. It became rather a question to be dealt with on a local administrative level rather than in the national political arena.

CHAPTER VI
THE GYPSIES, A FORGOTTEN MINORITY

"At around 9pm in March of 1994, a day after a fight between some Roma and ethnic-Bulgarian schoolboys, a group of around 50 "skinheads" attacked Roma homes in Zhelesnichar Street in the Storgisia quarter of Pleven. The attackers were armed with Molotov cocktails, firecrackers, knives, and sticks and some wore stockings over their heads. They shouted racist abuse such as "We will burn you alive" and "Gypsies shall no longer live in Storgozia". They set fire to the home of Zaharinka Koleva in which the entire roof and much of the furniture were destroyed. When the police arrived, according to some witnesses, they did not intervene to stop the attack and, in some cases, beat the Roma with truncheons to prevent them from leaving their homes. Some police officers also allegedly shouted racist insults."¹⁸¹

"Tears from the eye slip into the heart."¹⁸²

A Gypsy proverb

¹⁸¹ see *Amnesty International Report*, "Bulgaria, Turning a Blind eye to Racism", London, September, 1994

¹⁸² Elena Malushiakova & Veselin Popov, Studii Romani, Izdatelstvo, Klub'90, Sofia, 1994, pp.40

Background and present situation

It is debatable as to when the Gypsies first settled in Bulgaria. According to some authors, early historical documents mentioning the presence of Gypsies in the Bulgaria date from the 14th century. Other Tsiganologists, however, argued that Gypsies were mentioned earlier in the early 12th century.¹⁸³ However, it is not debatable that during the time of the Ottoman empire most of them adopted Islam. It is important to mention that the Gypsies living in Bulgarian lands during the 15th to 18th centuries, in contrast to the Gypsies living in Valachia and Moldova, did not have the same slave (serf) status.¹⁸⁴ In the 18th century, many Bulgarian Gypsies were part of the craftsman's guild.¹⁸⁵

With the development of capitalism, the decline of the crafts in general, and the gradually shrinking market, the economic and social status of the Bulgarian Gypsies were affected significantly.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸³ Elena Marushiakova & Veselin Popov", Tsiganite v Bulgaria, Izdatelstvo, Klub'90', Sofia, 1993, p.19

¹⁸⁴ Ilona Tomova, Tsiganite v Prehodnia Period, Mezdunaroden Tsenter po problemite na maltsinstvata i kulturnite vsaimodeistvia", Sofia, 1995, pp.16-17

¹⁸⁵ ibid

¹⁸⁶ Ilona Tomova, "Romskata etnicheska obshtnost" Maltsinstvata v Bulgaria v konteksta na choveshkite prava, Komitet za zachtita na Maltsinstvenite prava, Sofia, 1994, Sofia, p.22

"In 1940, the Bulgarian Parliament passed the Defence of the Nation Act, which contained a large number of discriminatory decrees aimed at the Jews and Gypsies. However, the fight to save the Jews from genocide by the progressive public in Bulgaria also affected the fate of the Gypsies. Bulgaria did not allow its citizens to be annihilated just because they belonged to these two ethnic groups."¹⁸⁷

After the Communists came to power, efforts were made to raise the literacy rate among Gypsy children, as well as their living standards. Roma in Bulgaria were a target of a systematic assimilation campaign led by the Communist Party. The Muslim Gypsies were first to change their names. In the period of 1953-1954 there was an operation to settle the nomadic Roma population, often in the Northern plain below the Danube and-in the case of Muslim Roma-the majority were forced to change their names.¹⁸⁸ In 1952, the Roma/Bulgarian language newspapers started to be produced in Bulgarian only, and later ceased to exist altogether.¹⁸⁹ A similar name-changing campaign to that concerning the Pomaks took place against the Muslim Roma in 1965.¹⁹⁰ Significant efforts were

¹⁸⁷ *ibid*

¹⁸⁸ Hugh Poulton, The Balkans-Minorities and States in Conflict, Minority Rights Publication, London, 1991, pp.116

¹⁸⁹ Ilona Tomova, "Romskata etnicheska obshtnost" Maltsinstvata v Bulgaria v konteksta na choveshkite prava, Sofia, 1994, p.22

¹⁹⁰ See Hugh Poulton, The Balkans-Minorities and States in Conflict, Minority Rights Publication, London, 1991, pp.116

made to improve the living conditions of the Gypsy population. Whole districts of single-storey one-family houses intended for Gypsies living in poverty were built in many towns between 1958 and 1965.¹⁹¹ During the name-changing campaign in 1984-1985, the Bulgarian authorities forced the Muslim Gypsies to replace their names with Slavic-Bulgarian names. Like other Muslims they were prohibited from speaking Turkish in public places, from wearing their traditional clothes, from celebrating Muslim holidays and from performing traditional Muslim rituals. Public works schemes became compulsory and, according to a sociological study carried out at the beginning of the 1980's, about 85% of the economically active Gypsy population was working.¹⁹² However, the situation of the Gypsies in general remains as being the most marginalised and backward segment in Bulgarian society. Even after these efforts, the literacy rate for Roma remains the lowest among the other ethnic groups - only 13%, in comparison to the skyrocketing of crime among Gypsies, 80% of all prisoners in Bulgaria are Roma.¹⁹³

¹⁹¹ See Ilona Tomova, "Romskata etnicheska obshtnost" Maltsinstvata v Bulgaria v konteksta na choveshkite prava, Sofia, 1994, p.22

¹⁹² Ilona Tomova, "Romskata etnicheska obshtnost" Maltsinstvata v Bulgaria v konteksta na choveshkite prava, Sofia, 1994, p.22

¹⁹³ Hugh Poulton, The Balkans-Minorities and States in Conflict, Minority Rights Publication, London, 1991, pp.116

The present situation "The poorest of the poor"

After the census in 1989, it became clear that the Gypsies were "threatening" the status of the Turkish minority - according to some authors, the Gypsies now in Bulgaria represent between 600 000 and 800 000, which certainly is not an objective number because many Gypsies prefer to identify themselves as Bulgarians or as Turks (these numbers are perceived in Bulgaria as inaccurate). ¹⁹⁴

According to the last census conducted in 1992, there were 313 400 Gypsies in Bulgaria.¹⁹⁵ Some expert estimates received from local authorities show a significantly higher proportion of Gypsies - 530 000 - 570 000 individuals, i.e. between 6.2% and 6.9% of the whole Bulgarian population.¹⁹⁶ The leaders of various Roma organisations estimate the number of Gypsies in the country even higher - over one million - but their estimates appear to be unrealistic.¹⁹⁷

This radical increase of the number of the Gypsy minority in Bulgaria is not due only to the high birth rate among this ethnic group: according to a sociological survey conducted in 1994, the birth rate among the Gypsies drastically surpasses

¹⁹⁴ See Ivan Ilchev & Duncan Perry, "Bulgarian Ethnic Groups: Politics and Perceptions", RFE/RL, vol.2 #12, March, 1993, pp.38

¹⁹⁵ Ilona Tomova, "Romskata etnicheska obshtnost", Maltsinstvata v Bulgaria v konteksta na choveshkite prava, Komitet za zachtita na maltsinstvata" Sofia, 1994, pp. 21

¹⁹⁶ *ibid*

¹⁹⁷ *ibid*

the birth rate among Bulgarians.¹⁹⁸ In addition, the doubling of the Gypsy population from 183 000 in 1975 to 313 000 in 1992 could be explained by the more intense identity crisis among the Gypsy ethnic group, especially during the transitional period.¹⁹⁹ It should be mentioned that the Gypsy community in Bulgaria is not homogeneous. There are many subgroups, distinguishable by numerous features - preferred ethnic identity, religion, language, sedentary or nomadic lifestyle, place in the internal group hierarchy, traditional trade, rituals and customs, etc. In the few last years, more and more Gypsies have been inclined to identify themselves as Bulgarians, the titular ethnic group, or as Turks, the leading minority group. This tendency is particularly strong in the urban areas, where Gypsies are subject to increased hostility from their fellow countrymen.

According to the findings of what is, perhaps, the most comprehensive sociological research about Gypsies, conducted in 1994 by the International Centre on Ethnic and Cultural Relationships, led by the President's adviser on ethnic issues and also a leading Bulgarian scholar - Ilona Tomova, the Gypsy community in the transitional period is the most vulnerable and has experienced the greatest difficulties.²⁰⁰

There are more than 50 subgroups within the Gypsy ethnos,

¹⁹⁸ Ibid

¹⁹⁹ Ibid

²⁰⁰ Ilona Tomova, Tsiganite v prehodnia period, Mezhdunaroden Tsenter po problemite na maltsinstvata i kulturnite vzaimodeisvia", Sofia, 1995, pp.21-22

among which the largest are "Dasikane Roma" or also called "Gadjikane Roma".²⁰¹ 47% of those who identified themselves as Bulgarian Gypsies mentioned this subgroup.²⁰² 46.2% of those who identified themselves as "Gypsy" perceived themselves as "Turkish Gypsy" or so-called "Horohane Roma".

In general, 60.4% are Christian Orthodox, while 39% identify themselves as Islamic.²⁰³ There are also Romanian Gypsies, who identified themselves as Romanian-Rudari after having emigrated in the 19th century from Romania. A large group, the Kardarashi, have a nomadic background. Formerly shepherds, they were forced in the 50's to descend from the high mountains and to settle permanently. They continue to live relatively isolated from other groups. They settle their disputes between themselves, without any involvement of the authorities.²⁰⁴

Another division is the mother tongue issue. Approximately half of the Gypsy ethnic group have Roma as their mother tongue, the remainder speak the Turkish language,

²⁰¹ Ivan Ilchev & Duncan Perry, "Bulgarian Ethnic Groups: Politics and Perceptions", RFE/RL, vol.2 #12, March, 1993, pp.38

²⁰² Ilona Tomova, Tsiganite v prehodnia period, Mezdunaroden Tsenter po problemite na maltsinstvata i kulturnite vzaimodeisvia", Sofia, 1995, pp.21-22

²⁰³ "Etnicheskata i religiozna structura na Bulgarskoto obchestvo" in Maltsinstvata v Bulgaria v konteksta na choveskite prava, Komitet za zachtita na pravata na maltsinstvata", Sofia, 1994, pp. 8

²⁰⁴ See Ivan Ilchev & Duncan Perry, "Bulgarian Ethnic Groups: Politics and Perceptions", RFE/RL, vol.2 #12, March, 1993, pp.38

while just over 14% speak Bulgarian at home.²⁰⁵ This is quite disturbing and clear evidence as to the state of affairs in respect to education. In 1992, 52% of Roma lived in the cities, and 48% in the villages.²⁰⁶

The fall of the Zhivkov regime allowed the Roma to exercise their right to ethnic self-identification, to use their mother tongue in public places, to move freely and to travel abroad and to preserve their culture and traditions. However, some problems remained. In the 1970's, "Gypsy schools" were officially founded and almost all students studying in these schools were Gypsies. These "Gypsy schools," were a means of segregation:

"In 1991, there were 104 such primary schools, 31 of which were defined as "primary school with professional craft training" (PSPCT) with 800 students. Seventy-seven others were defined as "schools for children with low cultural and living standards". These schools were founded in cities on a territorial basis, inside or near Gypsy ghettos (often quite close to "normal" schools). When Gypsy schools were located in villages, usually they were in the most remote settlements in a given area; and children from the entire district were transported to the school by bus (often they lived there for an entire week in a school boarding-house). In general, education and conditions in these schools are at a much lower level than schools for Bulgarian

²⁰⁵ Ilona Tomova, Tsiganite v prehodnia period, Mezunaroden Tsenter po problemite na maltsinstvata i kulturnite vzaimodeisvia", Sofia, 1995, pp.25

²⁰⁶ "Etnicheskata i religiozna struktura na Bulgarskoto obchestvo" in Maltsinstvata v Bulgaria v konteksta na choveskite prava, Komitet za zachtita na pravata na maltsinstvata", Sofia, 1994, pp. 8

children. The curriculum in the PSPCT's is oriented towards manual craft training (even with a production plan until very recently) and, as a result, a large number of the Gypsy children do not manage to graduate, nor do they receive sufficient education and professional qualifications."²⁰⁷

In 1992, the legally segregated status of these schools was officially abolished by a special decision of the Ministry of Education and a new categorisation of schools in Bulgaria was adopted. However, as it turned out, in practice, "Gypsy schools" continued to exist with no changes in the curriculum, the educational conditions, or in the ethnic diversity of the students. Other schools (mostly those in villages) were re-named "boarding schools for socially weak families".²⁰⁸ However, this euphemism cannot hide the truth - they function as segregated schools for Gypsies.

"The problem with segregated education of minorities throughout the world is not new. There is no doubt any more that these schools are inefficient and negatively affect members of minority groups, who, being treated as "second class citizens," are doomed to be outsiders from the very beginning, and thus become a problem for the country in question."²⁰⁹

Despite what has been said, some progress was made to accommodate the Gypsy children with a higher quality education

²⁰⁷ Elena Marushiakova & Vesselin Popov, "Gypsy Schools in Bulgaria", *Obektiv*, July-September, 1994, pp.8

²⁰⁸ *ibid*

²⁰⁹ *ibid*

system, more consonant with Roma culture and language. First, the Roma language book was published, in which dialects spoken by the most numerous Gypsy groups were described. From 1992, Gypsy children were able to study the Roma language and the history of Roma culture in schools, for the first time in the history of Bulgarian education. The first Roma textbook was published in which three dialects spoken by the most numerous Gypsy groups were described.²¹⁰ Despite these attempts, the literacy rate among the Roma continues to be the lowest among other ethnic group.²¹¹

"At the momentt, a significant number of the Gypsies are in no condition to see to their children's education, sunk as they are in misery. From 1989 onwards, between 26 000 and 33 000 children dropped out of school every year, without counting the tens of thousands who are subject to education but are not even enroled in the first class. In the various Gypsy neighbourhoods, 40% to 70% of children do not go to school any more".²¹²

The Gypsy problem with education and qualification reflects directly on their level of employment. With the rapidly deteriorating socio-economic conditions, the situation of the Gypsy community in the transitional period is

²¹⁰ Ilona Tomova, "Romskata etnicheska obshtnost", Maltsinstvata v Bulgaria v konteksta na choveshkite prava, Komitet za zachtita na maltsinstvata" Sofia, 1994, p. 21

²¹¹ Ilona Tomova, "Ethnic minorities in Bulgaria", working paper, Sofia, 1996

²¹² Natsionalen Statisticheski Insitut, "Obshto i professionalno Obutchenie, 1992-1993", Sofia, 1994

appalling. This ethnic group (with a few drastic exceptions, however) experienced the most difficulties in adapting to the new "market economy" environment, primarily because the level of education and qualifications among Gypsies is definitely the lowest in the country. Just 0.2% of Gypsies have a higher or college education as compared to 20.2% of Bulgarians.²¹³ Illiteracy among Gypsies still remains high - 8.5%²¹⁴ These are quite disturbing tendencies leading to technical inability to integrate into the job market. It is believed that unemployment among Gypsies is the highest in the country among all ethnic groups and may well exceeded 60%²¹⁵ In general, Gypsies are given the lowest paying jobs (food-processing, agriculture, although, unlike other ethnic groups, Gypsies did not own land). With the collapse of the socialist economy, the Gypsies experienced the most difficulties in the transitional period. In the context of the collapse of the collective farms due to the implementation of the restitution law, they lost the last possible source of income, being seasonal agricultural work.²¹⁶

Their other option is in the grey or black economy. The statistics show that Gypsies, more than any other ethnic group, are inclined to commit crimes. Most of the import

²¹³ibid

²¹⁴ ibid

²¹⁵Ilona Tomova, "Romskata etnicheska obshtnost", Maltsinstvata v Bulgaria v konteksta na choveshkite prava, Komitet za zachtita na maltsinstvata" Sofia, 1994, pp. 23

²¹⁶ibid

consumer trade from Turkey, Greece, Romania, the former USSR and most of all Yugoslavia, is predominately monopolized by the Gypsies (especially selling gas and other goods to Serbia, violating the UN embargo).

Unlike the Turks, who continue to maintain their image of people who struggle for their survival, who are good, serious and skilled workers, the general perception of the Gypsies, more than ever, continues to be negative, not just among Bulgarians but also among Turks.²¹⁷

"Analyses carried out on the willingness of private businessmen to hire labourers and employees from various ethnic groups show that they prefer to take on Bulgarians and Bulgarian Turks. Despite the fact that the Bulgarian Turks have a lower educational and qualification status than representatives of the majority, they are often preferred on the actual employment market because of their exceptional conscientiousness, discipline, and diligence. Most private businessmen do not want to employ Gypsies. There is a widespread conviction, that they are undisciplined, irresponsible, careless and lazy. The negative stereotype is the reason for the discriminatory attitude shown towards them in the filling of new vacancies."²¹⁸

In a survey "Ethnic stereotypes and prejudices among Bulgarians" the predominant stereotypes of the Gypsies are

²¹⁷Ilona Tomova, "Etnicheskite stereotipi i predrasadatsi u Bulgarite", Aspekti na etnokulturnata sitiatsia v Bulgaria, Tsenter za izsledvane na demokratsiata, Fondatsia "Fridrih Nauman", Sofia, 1992, pp.78-82

²¹⁸ Ilona Tomova, "Romskata etnicheska obshtnost", Maltsinstvata v Bulgaria v konteksta na choveshkite prava, Komitet za zachtita na maltsinstvata" Sofia, 1994, pp. 23

characterized as the most negative. They are practically excluded from Bulgarian society in general. Despite the attempts of the Gypsies to be incorporated into the mainstream Bulgarian culture and society or the Turkish community, the two ethnic groups are reluctant to accept them.²¹⁹

Gypsies are facing an increasing hostile environment dominated by a strong anti-Gypsy xenophobia.

"Hunger, misery and the total lack of employment opportunities drive most of the Gypsies to reassess their values and the behavioral norms which regulated their actions up to the recent past. Theft and fraud increasingly begin to lose their negative moral and emotional significance and begin to be seen as the only possible means of survival. The increased level of crime in the country is especially high within this ethnic group. According to Ministry of the Interior data, 37% of crimes in the country are committed by Roma. There is also a rise in the number of homeless, child prostitutes and glue-sniffers - mainly Gypsy children."²²⁰

²¹⁹Ibid

²²⁰ Ilona Tomova, Tsiganite v Prehodnia Period, Mezdunaroden Tsender po problemite na maltsinstvata i kulturnite vsaimodeistvia", Sofia, 1995, p. 24

Ethnic violence against Roma

There is a general negative perception of the Gypsies which has been confirmed by statistics from the Ministry of Internal affairs and also from the Presidency. According to the Presidential adviser on Ethnic Policies, Mihail Ivanov, 37% of crimes were committed by Gypsies. 89% of Bulgarians believe that Gypsies are thieves, and are concerned that law enforcement is not in a position to halt the unprecedented rise of crime in the country. According to statistics from the Bulgarian Ministry of the Interior, in 1993, an average of 475 crimes were committed per day.²²¹

The negative stereotypes come as no surprise. 37% of all crimes in the country are committed by Roma, who represent 1.3% of the population of the country. Therefore, Roma are almost 40 times more inclined to commit crimes than Bulgarians.

On the other hand, it seems that the Bulgarian state is reluctant to confront the needy and disturbing situation of the Gypsies. On the other hand, it seems that the police force is not motivated enough and unable to cope with these problems. There is an ever-increasing number of cases of

²²¹ See Ivaylo Grounev, "Organised crime in Bulgaria, a peculiarity of a transition", working paper, 1995

Bulgarian citizens living next to Gypsy areas taking the law into their own hands and attacking groups of Gypsies in response to criminal activities. Usually, neither the police nor the local authorities offer any protection to the victims of these incidents. Some international human rights organisations believe that human rights abuses against Roma are widespread and apparently a large scale problem in Post-Communist Bulgaria.²²² There are frequent cases of police violence and even pogroms in various Gypsy communities met with reciprocal aggression.²²³ The following quotations represent a graphic picture of the recent avalanche of acts of ethnically motivated violence against Roma.

HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH HELSINKI

Novi Pazar (April 5, 1992)

"Policemen, wearing balaclavas, invaded Gypsy houses, breaking doors and windows, and harassing people who were still in their beds. The policemen beat indiscriminately men, women and children. The whole operation took place in the dark, with the inhabitants of the houses being prevented from switching on the lights. Women were brutally humiliated. By the time the operation was over, the people in the Roma neighborhood had not understood that this was a police action."²²⁴

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

²²² for more details see "Bulgaria, turning a blind eye to racism", *Amnesty International*, London, September 1994, pp.2 and *Bulgarian Helsinki Committee - Member of the International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights Human Rights in Bulgaria* in 1994, March 8, 1995;

²²³ *ibid*

²²⁴ See "Bulgaria-increasing violence against Roma", *Human Rights Watch Helsinki*, Vol.6.#18, November 1994, pp. 7

Pleven (March 28, 1994)

Another attack reportedly took place on March 28 (1994) at around 8:30pm when a group of "skinheads" armed with Molotov cocktails, firecrackers and torches attacked the homes of Milka Koleva Marinova, Biser Russanov Nockolov and Velichka Kirilova Koleva. Windows were broken and household appliances and furniture were set on fire. A spent cartridge was found after the attackers left one of the homes. An hour later the police came together with the fire brigade and an ambulance car. The attack was stopped, but none of the persecutors were arrested, although the identity of many was well known to the local police. When six police officers entered the home of Milka Koleva Marinova to inspect the damage, one of the officers reportedly hit her and her child with a truncheon. Several other people were also reportedly beaten by the police. In one incident, Assen Ivanov was hit by a police officer with an electric club while waiting at a bus stop. Many people left their homes out of fear and did not return until April 1. (1994) ²²⁵

BULGARIAN HELSINKI COMMITTEE

Bratanitsa village (September, 23, 1994)

The most typical case of an attack on Gypsies by "wrestlers" was the one in Bratanitsa village, located in the Pazardzhik District. On September 23, approximately ten "wrestlers" arrived in the village and for less than an hour cruelly battered several people, fractured N.N.'s skull with their bats, smashed windows and other objects in the Gypsy quarter, and then left. When the police arrived, the raid was already over. ²²⁶

"On March 27, 1994, three Gypsies, wrongfully suspected of theft, were tied to some trees and clubbed. One of

²²⁵ "Bulgaria turning a blind eye to racism", Amnesty International, London, September 1994, pp.7

²²⁶ Bulgarski Helzinski Comitet, "Choveskite prava v Bulgaria prez 1994", March 8, 1995, Sofia, pp. 7

then was tied to a car and dragged along the road. In Morozovo village located in Haskovo District, on the night of June 12, unidentified people, apparently local residents, raided the town's Gypsy quarter, setting several houses on fire. During the fire, the attackers threw stones and metal objects at the inhabitants of the burning houses."²²⁷

Probably the most disturbing finding of the incidents mentioned above, is the flagrant atmosphere of impunity of the perpetrators. The Roma have been subjected to acts of mob racial violence which the authorities failed adequately to investigate. These human rights abuses are an indication of a discriminatory policy towards citizens of Roma origin. Even more disturbing is the fact that in some cases, local authorities, mayors, police and groups closely associated with Bulgarian institutions were acting against Roma, which is a transparent message that, at the present time, Bulgarian authorities seem to express very little concern and will to protect and defend the Roma community.²²⁸

²²⁷ibid

²²⁸ Bulgaria is not the only country in Eastern Europe facing increasing ethnic intolerance against Roma population. A series of polls conducted in Hungary, Poland and Czechoslovakia further illustrate the prevalence of such views. For example 76 per cent of the respondents in Hungary, 72 percent in Poland and 85 per cent in Czechoslovakia said they would prefer not having any Roma in their neighbourhoods - a stronger feeling than that expressed towards Arabs, Blacks, Asians, Russians, or Jews. When asked if Gypsies behave in a manner which provokes hostility, 69 percent of the respondents in Hungary said yes, 43 in Poland said yes, and 87 in Czechoslovakia said yes - much higher percentages than for Romanians, Soviets, Germans, or Jews. Such analyses only strengthen the fear among Roma that they are at risk of being the targets of a new wave of pogroms, especially in countries, where economic dislocation may fuel existing intolerance. Roma frequently are the target of organised acts of violence.

Conclusion

In Post Communist Bulgaria, the economic situation of most Roma has deteriorated further. As was mentioned earlier, according to Alexander Kracholov, of the Bulgaria Roma Confederation, "nearly 90% of Roma live below the poverty line." With an almost collapsed social security net, during the transitional period thousands of large Gypsy families who traditionally relied on monthly social security payments had to bear an impossible financial burden to feed their families.²²⁹ Crime among Gypsies is the highest among any other ethnic group. This is why in the Post Communist Bulgaria Roma have increasingly become a target of an intense anti-Gypsy xenophobic attitude. There is an ever-increasing number of cases of Bulgarians living next to Gypsy areas taking the law into their own hands and attacking groups of Gypsies in response to criminal activities. It is a routine practice that neither police nor the local authorities offer any protection

Recently in the Romanian village of Bolitin Deal, a group of Roma were barely rescued from some 2,000 villagers who attempted to lynch them. A recent report by Helsinki Watch notes that "trademarks of the ethnic conflicts in Romania were the failure of the local police and the army to protect ethnic groups under attack and at times, the active participation of the authorities in these attacks. Yet there appears to be little governmental interest in establishing the true nature of police and army participation in ethnic conflicts." see *Human Rights Watch Helsinki*

²²⁹ "Bulgaria, turning a blind eye to racism", *Amnesty International*, London, September 1994, pp.2

against these incidents.²³⁰ Such mob acts of racial violence against the Roma were reported in Debovo, Stara Zagora, Dolno Belotintsi, Glushnik, Pleven, Pazardjik and Kazanluk.²³¹

In conclusion, the current situation of the Gypsy community in Post-Communist Bulgaria represents a very different picture from any of the ethnic groups in the country. Roma are not only the poorest of the poor, and the least educated of all, they are subject to even further marginalisation by Bulgarian mainstream society. In contrast to the Turkish community in Bulgaria, the Roma were not able to match its achievements or to begin a political dialogue with the ethnic Bulgarian majority and to accomplish a workable ethnic contract. Being divided into many subgroups, Roma in Bulgaria were unable to find and raise their own voice, to create their own representative organisations (with the exception of the Educational Organisation for Roma in Bulgaria). The Roma were unable, as well, to create their own political representation, leaving just one deputy (BSP) in the National Assembly to represent their interests. In terms of their voting pattern, Roma are divided among three main political actors: BSP, UDF, and MRF. Those Roma who identify themselves as Turks, vote in blocks for the MRF. The rest is a close vote between the BSP and the UDF, based primarily on

²³⁰ Ilona Tomova "Romskata etnicheska obctnost v Bulgaria", Maltsinstvata v Bulgaria v konteksta na choveskite prava, Komitet za zachtita na maltsinstvata, Sofia, 1994, pp. 25-26

²³¹ for more details see "Bulgaria turning a blind eye to racism", Amnesty International, London, September 1994

a generational basis. The young, middle-aged Gypsies vote for the UDF, the elderly for the BSP.²³² In general terms, because the crime rate is rocketing and because of the negative stereotyping the Roma have missed the opportunity to create an open avenue for peaceful dialogue and to compromise on delicate matters such as ethnic accommodation and integration into Bulgarian mainstream society. It is known that the participation of the MRF in the central and local governments has succeeded in somewhat consolidating the position of Bulgarian Turks as an ethnic community within Bulgarian society and has played a positive role in the reduction of inter-ethnic tensions. In contrast to the Turkish community, the ethnic tensions of the Roma have evolved into open violent outbreaks which have not been suppressed democratically through open political dialogues.

²³² "Politicheskata stabilnost i obchestvenata modernizatsia", Marketing Konsulting, in Aspekti na etnokulturnata sitiatsia v Bulgaria, Acses, Sofia, 1994, pp.323-325

CHAPTER VII

THE ETHNIC TURKS BETWEEN TWO FATHERLANDS OR WITHOUT ONE AT ALL

"What you are hearing from the radio or the TV from Sofia, that here in Razgrad we (Bulgarians and Turks) do not understand each other and that we fight with each other, is not true...Come and see....Probably in Sofia, among the Bulgarians there is an opinion that the Turks are very religious. This is a case of a pure speculation on Islamic fundamentalism. This is not true. I respect your religion, for example. This ethnic hate propaganda of Ivan Georgiev, Gelemenov (right wing Bulgarian nationalists) they speculate on the subject. We just attend the mosque during Ramadan. We do not have any disputes with Bulgarians, whatsoever. We also do not have any disputes about religious or ethnic matters. Here our people, Bulgarians and Turks, are wise. They do not allow these things to happen."²³³

statement from a urkish survey
respondent from the Razgrad district

²³³ Donka Dimitrova "Etnicheskite plashila v pechata i traditsionniite modeli na obchtuvane mezdu Hristiani i Muisulmani v Bulgaria", Vraski na savmestimost i nesavmestimost mezdu Hristiani i Muisulmani v Bulgaria, Fondatsia "Mezdunaroden Tsender po problemite na maltsinstvata i kulturite vsaimodeistvia", Sofia, p. 309

Background

The Turks came to Balkans in the late 14th century. Until the mid 19th century, before the collapse of the Ottoman empire, most of the Balkans were still under the Ottoman jurisdiction. However, the situation changed after the nation building process leading to the independence of Serbia, Montenegro, Romania, Greece, and Bulgaria.

One may ask about the situation of the Turkish population after Bulgaria became an independent kingdom. The year after the creation of the Bulgarian Principality in 1878, the first census was carried out. According to that, the Turks made up 19.7% of the entire population.²³⁴ During the Russian-Turkish war, huge masses of Muslims left Bulgaria for Turkey and, at the same time, some 70 000 Bulgarians from Thrace and Macedonia left for the new independent Bulgaria.

This was the first major emigration wave between Bulgaria and Turkey, but there were also Turks who preferred to stay in the new independent kingdom. The new Bulgarian Constitution of 1879 granted extensive self-rule to its ethnic and religious communities, including Muslims. According to the relevant provisions, Turks had the right to exercise full control over

²³⁴ Ivan Ilchev and Duncan M. Perry "Bulgarian ethnic groups: "Politics and perceptions" *RFE/RL*, Vol.2 #12, March 19 1993, pp.36

their religious, economic and cultural activities. In 1885, the Great National Assembly passed a law giving complete freedom to the Muslim minorities in respect to education. As a result, the number of Turkish schools increased dramatically and reached altogether 1 300.²³⁵ The Bulgarian government was, at that time, paying salaries to the 12 mufti (Muslim religious leaders). From 1878 until 1934, during the liberal regime in Bulgaria, more than 80 newspapers and magazines were published in the Turkish language.²³⁶

With the rupture of diplomatic relations between Bulgaria and Turkey caused by the First Balkan War, there was a tendency towards emigration, which came to a halt later on.

"The Turks who represented 26% of the population of Northern Bulgaria, decreased respectively to 24% in 1880 and in 1900 they are 14%. For the period 1878-1912 350 000 Muslims, mainly Turks but also Pomaks, Tcherkezs, Tatars emigrated. 100 000 Muslims immigrated up to 1884, and 250 000 during the period after the Unification and prior the First World War" ²³⁷

The emigration was not excessive and did not drastically change the ethnic symmetry in Bulgaria. According to the

²³⁵ See Vera Mutavchieva, "Predstavata za drugia" in Vraski na savmestimost i nesavmestimost mezdu Hristiani i Muisulmani v Bulgaria, Fondatsia "Mezdunaroden tsenter po problemite na maltsinstvata i kulturnite vsaimodeistvia", Sofia, 1995 p.23

²³⁶ ibid p.23.

²³⁷ Darina Vasileva "Iszelnicheskiat vapros v Bulgaro-Turskite otnoshenia" in Aspekti na etnokulturnata situatsia v Bulgaria, Tsentar za izsledvane na demokratsiata, Fondastia "Fridrih Nauman" Sofia, 1992, pp. 59-60

census of 1925, the Turks represented 10.5% of the whole population.²³⁸ After Kemal Ataturk came to power, the Turkish republic inherited of the remains of the Ottoman empire with the substantial problem of large Turkish minorities wanting to emigrate to Turkey. It seems that Turkey was simply not in a position to absorb such a large quantity of immigrants.²³⁹

The refusal by Turkey to accept Bulgarian Turks willing to emigrate left some room for interpretation. In Sofia there were speculations as to the geopolitical rationale behind it. The compact Turkish mass was interpreted as a "fifth column", a Turkish "Trojan horse" giving the convenient pretext to Turkey to intervene in order to protect its Turkish minority. This fear never materialised, at least, in the Bulgarian context.²⁴⁰ However, these speculations were skilfully used again during the name changing campaign of 1984-1985, as well as during the "ethnic crisis" in the winter of 1989 after Todor Zhivkov's "voluntary" resignation. In general, despite the existing tolerant ethnic climate and apparent lack of assimilation tendencies by the Bulgarian state, this did not lead to a process of incorporation and integration of the Turks into main stream Bulgarian society, culture and

²³⁸ Ibid pp.63

²³⁹ Darina Vasileva "Izselnicheskiat vapros v Bulgaro-Turskite otnoshenia" in Aspekti na etnokulturnata situatsia v Bulgaria, Tsentar za izsledvane na demokratsioata, Fondastia "Fridrih Nauman" Sofia, 1992, pp. 59-60

²⁴⁰ Plamen S. Tsvetkov, Bulgarskata vanchna politika, Fondatsia "Svobodna Initsiativa", Sofia, 1994 pp.11-14

politics. Instead, there was a process of exclusion of the Turkish community from Bulgarian politics.²⁴¹ An illustration of the marginalised status of the Turkish community is a fact which speaks for itself - in 1944, 82 per cent of Bulgarian Turks were not able to read and write in Bulgarian, and more than a half did not understand Bulgarian at all.²⁴²

The policies of the Communist regime after 1946 regarding the Turkish population in the country changed this pattern. Despite well publicised and manifest tolerance, there were consistent efforts by the regime (see Zhivkov's Thesis from October 1958-according to which Bulgaria was described as a mono-national state) to consolidate the nation, which this time was translated into an open assimilation campaign. This campaign was performed rather slowly. In general, until the mid 70's the inter-ethnic relations between the two large groups, Bulgarians and Turks, were rather calm. One explanation is that the target of the assimilation campaign was different. The first to experience this were the most marginalized segments of the Bulgarian society: the Muslims, the Gypsies, then the Pomaks. "Administratively" their Arab names were replaced with Bulgarian, Slav names. The Turkish

²⁴¹ See Ilona Tomova, "Turtsite v Bulgaria" (Kulturata, Ezik i nachin na zivot na Bulgarskite Turtsi sled Osvobozdenieto na Bulgaria ot Osmanska vlast) in Maltsinstvata v Bulgaria v konteksta na choveshkite prava, Komitet za zachita na pravata na maltsinstvata, Sofia, 1994, pp.16

²⁴² Ibid pp.17

minority was under the control and subordination of the ruling Communist party, allowing, however, a certain degree of autonomy, such as limited study of the Turkish language at schools and the existence of newspapers in Turkish.²⁴³

An indication of a new turn in the ethnic policy of the regime to solve once and forever the Turkish problem was the new Constitution of 1971. The notion - minority - was replaced with "citizens with other than Bulgarian background". Another element was the absence of other procedures guaranteeing their rights. In the early 70s, Turkish was not on the school curriculum. In 1974, the Department of Turkish in Sofia University was closed and replaced by a Department of Arabic Studies. Turkish language newspapers and radio broadcasts were closed down.²⁴⁴

Successfully achieving this stage of the assimilation campaign in 1977, the BCP declared that Bulgaria was moving in the direction of complete ethnic homogeneity. The Zhivkov regime decided to launch its most ambitious ethnic operation of all the so called "Vasroditelen protzes" (Renaissance, or Revival).

²⁴³ Ibid pp.17

²⁴⁴ Ted Zang, Destroying Ethnic identity, (The expulsion of the Bulgarian Turks) U.S Helsinki Watch Committee, New York, 1989, p. 5

The name changing campaign of 1984-1985

"In accordance with Article 2 of Order #1 People's Communal Council, it is prohibited to wear shalvari, pyjamas, veils, yashmaks (traditional Islamic veils) and other non-traditional Bulgarian clothes or to speak a non-Bulgarian language in a public place. This tradition, inherited from five harsh centuries of slavery, has been forever rejected by the whole people, including the Muslims. Therefore, we remind you that the time has come to end conservative modes of life to adopt more appropriate and pleasant clothing and the pure Bulgarian language. We hereby warn you that after the 7th of October, those who do not abide by these requirements will be sanctioned."²⁴⁵

This campaign occurred between December 1984 and March 1985 and it is definitely the darkest episode of recent Bulgarian inter-ethnic history. The Bulgarian authorities forced ethnic Turks to replace their names with Slavic-Bulgarian names. The Bulgarian Turks were prohibited from speaking Turkish in public places, from wearing their traditional clothes, from celebrating Muslim holidays and from performing traditional rituals such as circumcision and Muslim funerals. At some Turkish cemeteries even the old stone tombs

²⁴⁵ Hugh Poulton, The Balkans. Minorities and States in Conflict, Minority Rights Publications, London, 1991, p.137

with Arab names were removed.

"According to credible reports, villages with predominately Turkish inhabitants were surrounded by police and troops, often in the early hours of the morning. The villages were sealed off and ethnic Turks were forced, in some cases at gunpoint, to accept identity cards bearing their new Slav names. Every Turk was required to change his or her name, even, for example, Olympic athletes, whose Turkish names were already etched into sports history. There were reports of violence against those who resisted."²⁴⁶

The traditional good relations and trust between Bulgarians and Turks was gradually replaced by mutual fear, suspicion and alienation. Most ethnic Bulgarians did not protest the action of their authorities. As Ilona Tomova, a senior adviser on ethnic issues of the Bulgarian Presidency, put it "This was a difficult, confusing and profoundly demoralising experience for the entire society."

The "Renaissance" or "Revival" meant that Turks "rediscovered" the fact that they were no longer Turks, but in fact ethnic Bulgarians and had always been. The same scenario as the Pomak assimilation campaign applied but this time for the Turkish community. It is true that the Pomaks' ethnic background is not subject to argument. However, in respect to the Turks, things seem to be much more different. Nevertheless, there are a few original documents which could

²⁴⁶ Ted Zang, Destroying Ethnic Identity, (The expulsion of the Bulgarian Turks) U.S Helsinki Watch Committee, New York, 1989, p.6

support the official position of the Zhivkov regime - that Turks were in fact Bulgarians. One of such document is the famous Midhat Pasha article, published in 1878 in a French journal:

"These 1 000 000 Moslems did not come from Asia to establish themselves in Bulgaria, as it is widely believed. They are themselves descendants of those Bulgarians converted to Islam at the time of the conquest and during the following years. They are children of one common country, form one common race and share a common origin." ²⁴⁷

However, it is highly arguable who were the Muslims in this text, the Pomaks or the ethnic Turks. It was obvious that Zhivkov's regime was not concerned about the academic dimension of the problem, because it was obvious that they knew the answer. It is a justifiable question why it was precisely in the mid 80's, after a relative relaxation of the political climate in Europe due to the Helsinki process, that such a blatant violation of the human rights on a large scale could occur. As was mentioned already, an important indicator of a new radicalisation of the Bulgarian official policy vis-a-vis the Turkish minority in the mid 80's was the emergence of a new fashion of a more aggressive "nationalism from above", led by the Ideological division within the BCP. There were internal and external factors for such radicalisation. Political manipulation and propaganda managed to persuade many

²⁴⁷ Hugh Poulton, The Balkans, Minorities and States in Conflict, Minority Rights Publications, London, 1991, pp.149

Bulgarians of the need of these actions. Their Muslim neighbours were said to be inspired by a separatist agenda posing a serious treat to civil peace and the national interests of Bulgaria. The Bulgarian authorities claimed that under international agreements, minorities consisting of more than 10 per cent of the population were automatically entitled to cultural, territorial and political autonomy.²⁴⁸ This manipulation was coupled with tension due to serious economic problems. (In the mid 80's Bulgaria could be characterised as suffering convulsions of a "stagnation-reform" policy which was indeed opposed to the perestroika challenge, but at the same time had a modest "reform" make up. The economic situation in the 80's was such that for the first time, living standards drastically dropped.)²⁴⁹ On the other hand, Zhivkov's regime found itself in an uneasy isolation from its traditional patronising protector the Kremlin, where a reformer took control. Instead of support there was constant pressure from Moscow after Gorbachev came to power. Zhivkov decided to react quickly to achieve the name-changing campaign in a military discipline fashion within four months during the

²⁴⁸See Ilona Tomova "Ethnic minorities in Bulgaria", working paper, Sofia, 1996, pp. 101

²⁴⁹ Christopher Cviic, Remaking the Balkans, Chantam House Papers, The Royal Institute of International Affairs, London, 1991, pp.48: "Bulgaria, after managing huge average annual growth rates during the early 1970's, found itself in the midst of a serious economic crisis by the end of the decade. Growth rates dropped to an average of 3.7% between 1981 and 1985. The lowest point for that period - 1.8% - was reached in 1985".

winter of 1984-1985. The time-frame was well set up: knowing that 75% of the Turkish community live in rural areas, the winter conditions seemed to be the most convenient. The regime declared that the "Revival" process was a "spontaneous" and "voluntary" act. However, there are different opinions as to the official lexicon at that time. According to the Halil Ahmedov Ibishev, who was at that time a member of the National Assembly and now living in Turkey:

"The main assault began in Kardzhali in late December 1984. All villages and cities where Turks lived were besieged by the military and the police. It was forbidden for Turks to move in or out of the region. Anyone violating this would be taken to prison or killed. Then the campaign moved to other areas. Many houses were searched during the night and many people tortured. The villages were besieged by tanks, trucks, even fire trucks to ensure the completion of the name-changing campaign. Telephone conversations were interrupted and it was made impossible for those in one Turkish village to phone other villages...

The schools were used as military headquarters. Anyone who asked questions or objected was taken away, and tortured. The oppression came to our district in January 1985. The village filled with soldiers and police. Then I was called to the party committee and informed: "Turkish and Arab names will be changed to Bulgarian ones. You, as a Deputy and Representative of the people, will help us. You will explain that anybody who resists will be killed like a dog." I asked who ordered this and they replied that the Bulgarian Communist Party Central Committee had made the decision. So on the 24th of January they began to change the names. They... banned the

speaking of Turkish and stopped Turkish language radio broadcasts. Turkish tombstones were taken down.

A month later or two after the campaign had been completed, circumcision was banned altogether. All children were examined and it was recorded who had and who had not been circumcised. From my own village there was a case of a young man who travelled to another village to bring the man who would do the circumcision. This man was arrested and kept in prison for 40 days and he was still in prison when I escaped. It is just one example: there have been many similar cases."²⁵⁰

It should be mentioned, in contrast with the previous ethnic crises, in 1985 the Bulgarian society as a whole was surprisingly silent. The traditional climate of ethnic tolerance and coexistence was replaced by mutual mistrust and the fostering of negative ethnic stereotypes between ethnic Turks and Bulgarians.²⁵¹ However, Bulgarians experienced a collective moral guilt witnessing a forced name changing campaign, which they were not able to prevent.²⁵² The campaign created unexpected confusion. All the legal and administrative documentation of 1 000 000 citizens was in

²⁵⁰ Hugh Poulton, "The Balkans, Minorities and States in Conflict", Minority Rights Publications, London, 1991, pp.144

²⁵¹ See Dr. Peter-Emil Mitev "Vrazki na savmestimost i nesavmesimost v ezednevieto mezdu Hristiani i Miusliumani v Bulgaria", in Vrazki na savmestimost i nesavmesimost mezdu Hristiani i Miusliumani v Bulgaria, Fondatsia "Mezdunaroden Tsenter po problemite na Maltsinstvata i kulturnite vsaimodeistvia", Antonina Zheliaskova, Sofia, 1994, pp. 183-195

²⁵² *ibid*

complete disarray. Turks never got used to their new Bulgarian names, therefore all administrative applications involving salaries, pensions, mail, army conscriptions, inheritance, divorces and all previous records were in complete chaos. The confusion was total.

There were a lot of incidents of resistance to this "spontaneous" campaign. There were groups who printed thousands of leaflets which were distributed in 1986 calling on ethnic Turks to show their opposition by boycotting the forthcoming elections for the National Assembly. Many Turks were sentenced and received jail terms. (Among them was the present leader of the MRF - Ahmed Dogan). There were also small scale terrorist actions in which 8 people were killed and 52 were injured.²⁵³ There were also hunger strikes and acts of civil disobedience. In mid 1985, in the Belene prison camp, there were 1 000 ethnic Turks, hold under the accusation of "hooliganism".²⁵⁴ The protests were chaotic, desperate actions without clear guidance, a platform or leadership. However, it should be clearly underlined that the violent reaction towards the name-changing campaign was marginalised. The Bulgarian authorities were prepared for much tougher protests and coordinated a reaction, so they were surprised to face the extreme patience expressed by the Turkish community. In 1988-1989, three independent political groups emerged. The

²⁵³ Hugh Poulton, The Balkans, Minorities and States in Conflict, Minority Rights Publications, London, 1991, pp.148

²⁵⁴ *ibid* 142

first one was the "Independent" Association for the Defence of Human Rights in Bulgaria.²⁵⁵ The organisation was officially sponsored by the BCP. The second one: the Democratic League for the Defence of the rights of man - was an informal group, without the blessing of the regime.²⁵⁶ The third one, The Association for the support of Vienna-1989 (ASVP-89) with chairman Avni Veliev, a former political prisoner, was created in early 1989.²⁵⁷ The same year, in Paris, the Conference on human rights under the CSCE was held. That conference was seen as the needed international stage to raise the issue of the perception of the Turkish minority in Bulgaria. As has been already mentioned, these three organisations quickly obtained mass support among the Turkish minority, helped by broadcasting companies abroad such as Radio Free Europe, the BBC, and Deutsche Welle. The Bulgarian Turks felt that, for the first time, the international community was backing their struggle. This was the right moment to express their resistance. In the spring of 1989, the Bulgarian Turks started mass protests against restrictions of their rights.

Zhivkov's regime responded quickly expelling in June 1989 most of leaders of the Association for the support of Vienna-1989 (ASVP-89) and the Democratic League for the Defence of the rights of man.²⁵⁸ With this expulsion the pattern was set

²⁵⁵ Ibid pp.154-155

²⁵⁶ Ibid pp.154

²⁵⁷ ibid pp.154

²⁵⁸ Ibid pp.157

for the next mass immigration to Turkey.

The mass exodus in 1989

"As you see, the struggle has begun. Personally, I see it as a struggle between fear and conscience."

**Konstantin Trenchev-chairman of the
Independent Union "Podkrepa"**

In the spring of 1989, the Bulgarian Turks started mass protests against restrictions of their rights. In early June, another 500 human rights activists were expelled to Turkey. By the end of the month, 60 000 left for Turkey.²⁵⁹ Responding to the mass demonstrations, the Zhivkov regime used police and other forces against demonstrators. In the clashes, some fatalities occurred Helsinki Watch reported between 300-1.500, Amnesty International 100, The Bulgarian Telegraph Agency (BTA) mentioned about three. The largest demonstration turned into the Kaolinovo riots.²⁶⁰ The regime launched a campaign to induce emigration of the Muslim population. In the summer 1989, that number reached over 300 000.²⁶¹ In the fall of

²⁵⁹ Ibid pp.157

²⁶⁰ See Sofia BTA in English, May 23, 1989, FBIS, May 24, 1989

²⁶¹ See Hugh Poulton, The Balkan minorities and the states in conflict, Minority Rights Publications 1991 p. 157

1989, between 120 000 and 180 000 had returned but suffered heavy material losses (According to the latest Bulgarian research the numbers who returned does not exceed 155 000).²⁶² There is a widespread belief that all these 300 000 Turks were forced to leave and were basically expelled by the authorities. However, this belief was exaggerated.²⁶³

In 1989, Bulgaria was experiencing the outcome of the accumulated tension of the abusive assimilation campaign of some 5 years before. 1989 was the climax of a protracted ethnic crisis. The Zhivkov regime seemed to be increasingly

²⁶² see Ivan Ilchev and Duncan M. Perry "Bulgarian ethnic groups: "Politics and perceptions" *RFE/RL*, Vol.2 #12, March 19, 1993, pp.36; see also Darina Vasileva, "Bulgarian Turkish Emigration and Return, in *International Migration Review*, vol.26, #2, summer 1992, pp. 342-352; Stephen Ashley, "Migration from Bulgaria." *RFE/RL*, Research Institute, Report on Eastern Europe, December 1, 1989.

²⁶³ Personally, I am not so convinced. Being a journalist, I had the chance to visit villages with a concentrated (100%) Turkish population, and I spoke with the remaining ethnic Turks in these villages. My impression was that the motivation to emigrate was first because of deep humiliation after the name-changing campaign. I am rather inclined to believe that many Turks simply decided that the policy of forced assimilation and repression was too much for them and they preferred to leave everything; jobs, real estate, property, wealth and social position, to face a new and uncertain life in Turkey. There was no evidence of a large scale deportation campaign by the regime, the decision to emigrate was rather because a pattern had been already set. I heard a lot of these kinds of explanations: "My uncle left, my cousins left, my neighbours left, the people from my street had already left. I cannot stay. I cannot separate from my people. What is for them, the same should be for me and my family. I must move, too."

losing confidence that they could control the events. The government preferred instead the convenient strategy to solve the problem by simply eliminating it. One should admit that the "departures" were, in a sense, the final stage of the assimilation campaign initiated in 1984.²⁶⁴ On May 20, an obviously unconvincing Todor Zhivkov gave a speech broadcast on Bulgarian radio and television repeating the official explanation - that the protests were connected with the new passport laws.²⁶⁵

"Although Zhivkov did not depart from the traditional Bulgarian position that the ethnic Turks are Bulgarians, whose ancestors were converted to Islam during Ottoman rule, he indicated that any ethnic Turk who desired to go to Turkey on a temporarily or permanent basis was free to do so. He called upon Turkey to "open the borders for all Bulgarian Muslims who would like to go to Turkey on a temporary basis or to stay and live there."²⁶⁶

Avoiding the core of the ethnic crisis, Zhivkov's speech was a direct encouragement for the Turkish community to leave if they wished. In conformity with the Vienna accords, Bulgaria adopted new legislation granting all citizens the right of free travel to and settlement in any part of the

²⁶⁴ Ted Zang, Destroying Ethnic identity (The expulsion of the Bulgarian Turks) U.S Helsinki Watch Committee, New York, 1989, p.27

²⁶⁵ Ibid pp.49

²⁶⁶ Bulgarian Embassy Press Release, Washington, June, 8, 1989.

world while preserving ownership of their property.²⁶⁷

Following Todor Zhivkov's speech of May 29 Turkey opened its borders to ethnic Turks. On several occasions, Prime Minister Turgut Ozal and other Turkish government officials announced that Turkey was prepared to accept all ethnic Turks who wanted to enter. The Turkish prime minister, Ozal, stated in a speech to refugees at the Kapikule border camp:

"You are welcome here. Our border is open and will stay open until all the Turks in Bulgaria come home to Turkey."²⁶⁸

The Turkish policy of "open arms" promised economic prosperity as well as a guarantee for the violated human rights of the Bulgarians Turks. This was an additional factor in their decision making process and the number of Turks who were leaving Bulgaria increased dramatically, numbering 2,000 to 4,000 daily.²⁶⁹ On August 22, Turkey changed its policy and imposed a visa requirement on Bulgarian Turks who wanted to enter Turkey. The Turkish government announced that it was taking this action to pressure Bulgaria to negotiate an emigration agreement and indicated that the border would be reopened once Bulgaria guaranteed the property rights of ethnic Turks who left and the civil liberties of those who remained behind.²⁷⁰

²⁶⁷Ted Zang, Destroying Ethnic identity, (The expulsion of the Bulgarian Turks) U.S Helsinki Watch Committee, New York, 1989, p.51-52

²⁶⁸ Ibid pp.54

²⁶⁹ ibid pp.29.

²⁷⁰ Ibid pp.54

By mid October and early November 1989, (that means even before the end of the Zhivkov regime) some 120 000-180 000 people more than a half of the emigrating Turks-voluntarily returned.²⁷¹ There was no really strong condemnation from the international community; ironically, one of the most pronounced was on the Moscow-Sofia axis. However, there was condemnation within the country itself. One of the most vocal was the Discussion Club for the Support of Perestroika and Glasnost.²⁷²

Besides the already mentioned organisations, the "Independent" Association for the Defence of Human Rights in Bulgaria, the Democratic League for the Defence of the rights of man and The Association for the support of Vienna-1989 (ASVP-89), there were also a few new independent organisations openly supporting the rights of the Turks. Such an organisation was the newly created independent trade union "Podkrepa" ("support" in Bulgarian). This was the Bulgarian version of the Polish "Solidarnost" which was established by Dr. Konstantin Trenchev in February 1989 to defend the interests of intellectual labour. The union consisted of blue-

²⁷¹ See Ivan Ilchev and Duncan M. Perry "Bulgarian ethnic groups: "Politics and perceptions" RFE/RL, Vol.2 #12, March 19 1993, pp.36

²⁷² In November 1988, the Discussion Club for the Support of Perestroika and Glasnost (the "Discussion Club") met for the first time at the University of Sofia. The membership was composed primarily of professors, scientists, artists, writers, and film-makers. Ironically, the majority of its members were members of the Communist Party.

collar workers, as well as intellectuals, artists, writers and scientists. On May 26th, 1989, Dr. Trenchev was arrested before he could inform the French Embassy that he would be unable to attend the CSCE Human Rights Meeting in Paris, to which he had been invited, because his government had denied him a passport. He helped a number of Turks who lacked a good command of Bulgarian to prepare a statement explaining the reasons for their hunger strikes. According to his wife, Dr. Trenchev was accused of inciting the Turkish demonstrations. He was charged under Articles 273 (spreading false allegations intending to create mistrust of the government) and 321/2 (membership in a group formed for the purpose of committing crimes in Bulgaria or abroad) of the Bulgarian Penal Code.

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Another such organisation was the Society for the Protection of Human Rights (the "Society") founded in 1988 and aiming to "heal ...the wounds sustained by the ethnic and religious minorities." The Society was engaged in organising hunger-strikes and street protests. On May 26, one of its members Anoton Zapryanov read a statement to Radio Free Europe supporting the Turkish minority's campaign for human rights. ²⁷⁴

Most vocal of all was the Discussion Club for the Support of Perestroika and Glasnost. On August 1, 1989, the Discussion

²⁷³ Ted Zang, Destroying Ethnic identity, (The expulsion of the Bulgarian Turks) U.S Helsinki Watch Committee, New York, 1989, p.44

²⁷⁴ Ibid pp.41

Club delivered a document to the Bulgarian National Assembly asking Bulgaria to account for the mass exodus of "Bulgarian citizens of Turkish ethnic consciousness" and to restore their religion, language, and Turkish names. The document stated that the situation endangered the country's "entire legacy" as a humane and tolerant nation. ²⁷⁵

**DECLARATION OF THE DISCUSSION CLUB FOR THE SUPPORT OF
PERESTROIKA AND GLASNOST, JULY 1989**

Now that more than 200,000 Bulgarian citizens who feel themselves to be ethnic Turks have emigrated from our country and hundreds of thousands more are preparing to leave, the state is threatened by a general crisis. This crisis, which has economic, political, moral, and ideological dimensions, is the direct result of the abrupt change in policy toward citizens with Turkish ethnic consciousness that was made in 1984 and 1985.

The crisis is economic, since we are suddenly losing a large part of the labour force in vital sectors of the national economy, such as the building industry, tobacco cultivation, mining and road maintenance, livestock breeding, and agriculture, without the state having any possibility of replacing the departed workers. The loss can only be temporarily compensated for by extraordinary measures and special task forces.

The crisis is political, since our country has fallen into a profound international isolation, which might result in further economic difficulties and will inevitably damage the international prestige of the Bulgarian nation and the Bulgarian state.

²⁷⁵ Ibid pp.44

The crisis is moral, since the Bulgarian nation has been placed in the situation of being an accomplice to a fateful act that was carried out without its knowledge and participation. If the changing of Moslems' names is to be argued on grounds of their blood allegiance, this is simply the spurious racial theorizing of the recent past returning with all its tragic consequences.

For an entire century after the liberation, the Bulgarians displayed tolerance and magnanimity toward minorities. They sympathized profoundly with the tragedy of the Armenian nation at the beginning of this century. They saved the Bulgarian Jews from Hitler's gas chambers. Now, when we are keeping silent about the real causes of the endless outflow of refugees, who are said to be "vacationers", our national dignity is dying.

The way out from the crisis that is threatening our society must be sought today, while it is still at an initial stage, so that we can preserve the unity of all Bulgarian citizens, whatever their ethnic origins or consciousness, in the one political and state body. We must heal the atmosphere, alleviate despair and bitterness, revive hopes of a better future, and establish the prerequisite for a difficult but attainable end to our impasse. We consider it necessary:

to give to Bulgarian citizens who feel themselves to be ethnic Turks the possibility of choosing their names themselves, which would include the right to restore their old names.

to recognise the right of preserving one's ethnic and cultural identity, together with all incumbent rights of language, religious faith, customs, and traditions. The same must apply to all ethnic minorities in our country.

that those Bulgarian citizens of Turkish ethnic consciousness who wish to return to our country and are respectful of its laws must be given full guarantees that their property, civil rights and freedoms, and human identity will not be

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PM-1 3½"x4" PHOTOGRAPHIC MICROCOPY TARGET
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PRECISIONSM RESOLUTION TARGETS

infringed upon.²⁷⁶

This was an unexpected and crucial blow for the Zhivkov regime. Facing international isolation, (besides the constant pressure from Moscow), mass demonstrations, hunger strikes, popular discontent and on the top of this the anathema of the "creme de la creme" of the whole Bulgarian intelligentsia of best known academics, writers, scientists, and policy makers. The intellectual elite of the nation condemned the forceful assimilation campaign and its logical result asking to restore essential civil rights to the ethnic Turks. This clear message, even though expressed in the last months of the Communist years, was an illustration that the liberal values and traditions of ethnic tolerance and compatibility were not entirely dead after 35 years of Zhivkov's "ethnic consolidation". Under the intense pressure due to the ethnic crisis in the summer of 1989, Zhivkov was forced to resign. Supported by the Kremlin, the reformist wing of the BCP led by Alexander Lilov and Andrei Lukanov and Peter Mladenov, toppled Zhivkov's regime in one of the most velvet palace coups in recent history (days before Zhivkov resigned, the Foreign Minister, Mladenov, made an unexpected stop in Moscow. Days after this event, Mladenov became the general secretary of the Bulgarian Communist Party).²⁷⁷

²⁷⁶ Ibid. pp.63-65

²⁷⁷ See Ivaylo Grouev "The dawn of Bulgaria's new "tender" totalitarianism" in the "The Sunday Express", June 17, 1990 pp.26

The emigration of the Bulgarian Turks in 1989 led to serious economic problems, whose effects were felt most acutely by the population of mixed regions. Highly qualified specialists such as doctors, architects and university teachers were compelled to see to the rearing of livestock, to harvest crops and to replace the absent Turks in the building, extraction and processing industries, for which they were, of course, not trained. ²⁷⁸

²⁷⁸Ilona Tomova, "Turtsite v Bulgaria" (Kulturata, Ezik i nachin na zivot na Bulgarskite Turtsi sled Osvobozdenieto na Bulgaria ot Osmanska vlast) in Maltsinstvata v Bulgaria v konteksta na choveshkite prava, Komitet za zachita na pravata na maltsinstvata, Sofia, 1994, pp.17

The present situation

"I know that in the West, Bulgaria is perceived as a country of ethnic tolerance between Christians and Moslems. I not only agree completely with this, I also feel special satisfaction because of this perception of my country. The last ten years of my life were dedicated to this cause. In Bulgaria, we were able to achieve a peaceful solution to the complex relationships between the different ethnic and religious communities. This model is known in the West, as the Bulgarian model. The essence of it is the equal participation of different ethnic and religious communities in the political and cultural process of the country. A primary principle is the seeking out of common values among different communities and retreating from those values which may divide and antagonize them."²⁷⁹

Ahmed Dogan - chairman of MRF

"Before, we (Bulgarians and Turks) lived like brothers and sisters. Now everything is ugly. A narrow little Bulgaria was divided by 150 parties."²⁸⁰

1990 was the year of *Full Restoration* of the rights of the Turkish ethnic community. All limitations on the

²⁷⁹ an interview conducted on September 5th, 1995 in Sofia by the author with Ahmed Dogan - chairman of MRF.

²⁸⁰ statement from a Turkish respondent from the survey "Etnicheskite plashila v pechata i traditsionnite modeli na obshtuvane mezdu Hristiani i Miusulmani v Bulgaria", conducted by Donka Dimitrova, published in Vraski na saymestimost i nesavmestimost mezdu Hristiani i Muisulmani v Bulgaria, Fondatsia " Mezunaroden tsenter po problemite na maltsinstvata i kulturnite vsaimodeistvia", Sofia, 1995

application of religious and linguistic rights to Muslims in Bulgaria were lifted. First, their Muslim Arab names were reinstated according to the new Names of Bulgarian Citizens Act which was adopted in March 1990. All existing limitations envisaging the religious rights of the Turkish Muslim community were lifted as well.

According to the new Constitution adopted in 1991, the rights to freedom of thought, conscience and religion are regulated by the text in Article 13 and Article 37. According to this article, it is a fundamental, constitutional right for every Bulgarian to organise his/her life according to their adopted religion.

"With resolution no.5 of the 11th June 1992 on case no.11 the Bulgarian Constitutional Court gave a compulsory interpretation to Article 13, paragraphs 1 and 2 and to Article 37 of the Constitution, resolving that, in accordance with the criteria set on Article 18 of the International Covenant on civil and political Rights, "1. The right to a religion is a personal, fundamental, and incorruptible right of every institution separable from the State. State intervention and State administration in the internal organisation life and public activities of religious communities and institutions is inadmissible."²⁶¹

As result of that, the Muslims in Bulgaria enjoyed a real

²⁶¹ Plamen Bogoev "Bulgarskite Konstitutsii za pravata na maltsintstvata" in Maltsinstvata v Bulgaria v konteksta na choveshkite prava, Komitet za zachtita na maltsinstvata", Sofia, 1994, p.13

religious Renaissance. A large number of new Islamic mosques have been built in the last few years.

"At the present time, over 920 mosques are continuously active in Bulgaria. The Grand Mufti's office distributed 10 000 copies of the Koran among Bulgarian Muslims in 1990 alone. Shortly after this, the Koran was published both in Turkish and in Bulgarian. Religious literature in both languages is freely circulated. In 1991, Sunday schools for religious instruction were opened in the mosques. The Grand Mufti's office announced that in two years, 80 000 children had learned to read the Koran in Arabic. There are currently four secondary Muslim religious schools and an Islamic Ecclesiastical College.²⁸²

However, these numbers should not lead to the generalisation that the country as a whole is experiencing a fast process of Islamisation. Findings from one of the most ambitious and comprehensive sociological surveys on ethnic issues led by Dr. Peter-Emil Mitev "Trends of compatibility and incompatibility in inter-reaction between Christians and Muslims in Bulgaria", published in "Trends of compatibility and incompatibility between Christians and Muslims in Bulgaria", by Fondatsia "Mezdunaroden Tsenter po problemite na Maltsinstvata i kulturnite vsaimodeistvia" in 1994, proved just the contrary. Religion is becoming less and less

²⁸²Ilona Tomova, "Turtsite v Bulgaria" (Kulturata, Ezik i nachin na zivot na Bulgarskite Turtsi sled Osvobozdenieto na Bulgaria ot Osmanska vlast) in Maltsinstvata v Bulgaria v konteksta na choveshkite prava, Komitet za zachita na pravata na maltsinstvata, Sofia, 1994, pp.18

important for the large segment of the Turkish community. Islam is no longer perceived as a paramount leading factor in ethnic self-determination. According to the results of the survey there is an apparent secularisation particularly among the young and middle aged Turks. For them, religion is becoming increasingly less attractive and important. Just 30 per cent of the Turks responded that "Atheism is a sin", the remaining 70 per cent can tolerate and accept atheism in general. ²⁸³ According to findings from the same survey, religious intolerance is surprisingly low-just 3-5 per cent among Muslims and (not surprisingly) more among Bulgarians -10 per cent. This mutual religious tolerance is evident. 70 per cent of Bulgarians and 70 per cent of Turks react to stimulus such as Muslim or Christian rationally with understanding. The level of compatibility between the two ethnic groups seems to be surprisingly high just years after the disturbing events in 1985 which escalated into an open ethnic crisis in 1990. This is more pronounced among the Turkish community.

"Preliminary findings indicate that Turks made the same sort of distinctions concerning the group versus the individual as do the ethnic Bulgarians. They tend to have positive views of Bulgarian Christian neighbours but mixed

²⁸³ Dr. Peter-Emil Mitev "Vrazki na savmestimost i nesavmesimost v ezednevieto mezdu Hristiani i Miusliumani v Bulgaria", in Vrazki na savmestimost i nesavmesimost mezdu Hristiani i Miusliumani v Bulgaria, Fondatsia "Mezdunaroden Tsenter po problemite na Maltsinstvata i kulturnite vsaimodeistvia", Antonina Zheliaskova, Sofia, 1994, pp. 183-195

feelings about ethnic Bulgarians as a people. The findings also indicate that the Turks who returned to Bulgaria after 1989 and 1990 tend to associate themselves more closely with the Bulgarian state than with Turkey, but this may well reflect a desire towards reintegration into Bulgarian society. Where enmity was expressed, it was directed towards Communists and not towards the Bulgarian state." ²⁸⁴

This tendency to respect individual members of an ethnic group versus the ethnic entity as a whole could help to reveal why many Bulgarians openly opposed the assimilation campaign of 1989-1990 and why others simply resisted it passively.

"Although no concrete data is available, research suggests it was not uncommon for ethnic Bulgarians to avoid using the Bulgarian names ethnic Turks had been forced to adopt in public by the simple expedience of using no names at all, in public. In private, Turkish names were used. When Turks were departing for Turkey they sometimes entrusted their valuables to non-Muslim neighbours and a lively correspondence often resulted." ²⁸⁵

The traditional climate of ethnic tolerance and coexistence between the two ethnic groups - Bulgarians and Turks, as it was described above, was rather the norm than the exception and should not be surprising. What is surprising was the short period it took to rebuild the long tradition of

²⁸⁴ Ivan Ilchev and Duncan M. Perry "Bulgarian ethnic groups: "Politics and perceptions", *RFE/RL*, Vol.2 #12, March 19 1993, pp.37

²⁸⁵ *Ibid* pp.37

inter-ethnic compatibility. In Bulgarian folklore, there is a well known proverb that the best neighbour, the best "komshu", you may choose is not your fellow Bulgarian, but a fellow from the alien ethnic group, Turk in particular.

Restrictions on religious and all linguistic rights of the Turks in Bulgaria were lifted. A few months after the adoption of the new Constitution on December 20th, 1991 the 36th National Assembly ratified the facultative protocol for the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. According to this document, members of ethnic, religious and linguistic groups should enjoy the same areas of human rights as the majority. These principles are the focal point of guaranteeing to minorities the preservation and development of their unique characteristics and traditions.

"Article 15 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights acknowledges and guarantees the right to partake in cultural life. Article 13 of the Covenant recognizes the right to education. In discussions on the question of the rights of individuals belonging to minority groups to have their own culture and mother tongue, it follows that the principles set out in the UNESCO Covenant against Discrimination in Education be taken into account. ²⁰⁶

In the context of the new Bulgarian Constitution of July 1991, one may be lead to the conclusion "that the right to

²⁰⁶ Plamen Bogoev "Bulgarskite Konstitutsii za pravata na maltsintstvata" in Maltsinstvata v Bulgaria v konteksta na choveshkite prava, Komitet za zachtita na maltsinstvata", Sofia, 1994 pp.11

one's own culture is seen as the right of ethnic minorities; the right to profess one's own religion as the right of members of religious minorities; and the right to use one's own language as the right of linguistic minorities."²⁸⁷

As from 1991, four hours of Turkish lessons a week were introduced for (Turkish) children in the 2nd to 8th Class (age 8-14), and for children in the first Class (age 7), from 1994.²⁸⁸ Turkish language teachers are beginning to be trained in two colleges, while Turkish philology is again being studied at the St. Kliment Ohridski University in Sofia and at Shumen University.²⁸⁹

Newspapers and magazines in the Turkish language began to be published in Bulgaria. As well, local radio stations allocated air-time for broadcasting in Turkish. The national Bulgarian Radio also broadcast daily programmes in Turkish, though there are no such Turkish programmes on Bulgarian television.²⁹⁰

It should be outlined that, according to the new legislation, there are no judicial obstacles for the formation of cultural-educational associations based on ethnicity. However, as it was clarified earlier, the same principles do

²⁸⁷ Ibid pp.10

²⁸⁸ Ilona Tomova, "Turtsite v Bulgaria" (Kulturata, Ezik i nachin na zivot na Bulgarskite Turtsi sled Osvobozdenieto na Bulgaria ot Osmanska vlast) in Maltsinstvata v Bulgaria v konteksta na choveshkite prava, Komitet za zachita na pravata na maltsinstvata, Sofia, 1994, pp.18

²⁸⁹ Ibid pp.18

²⁹⁰ Ibid pp.18

not apply to the political parties based on ethnic grounds. Article 11(4) in the new Constitution prohibits the creation of political parties based on ethnicity, race and religion.²⁹¹ These parties were seen as being no different than those who were seeking to overthrow the government by force.²⁹² This is why MRF (The Movement for Rights and Freedoms) was created initially as a non-profit organisation. This movement was a logical reaction and an expected result after the ethnic crisis in 1990. The agenda of this movement was to encourage, protect and defend the interests primarily of the Ethnic Turks, but, as well, of Pomaks and other Muslims in the country. The movement was successful in registering under the Law on Persons and Family. However, in 1990, when an opportunity for a multiparty election arose and it was permitted that organisations registered as non-profit organisations could participate in the elections, MRF decided to benefit from these conditions. The Bulgarian High Court ruled that the organisation's existence was legal within the framework of its jurisdiction.²⁹³ As a result of the legalisation, MRF was able to obtain considerable support in

²⁹¹ Ilona Tomova "Ethnic minorities in Bulgaria" working paper, Sofia, 1996, p.101

²⁹² Kjell Engelbrekt, "The Movement of Rights and Freedoms to Compete in Elections", and "Nationalism Reviving," *RFE/RL Research Institute, Report on Eastern Europe*, vol.22, May 31, 1991, and vol.2, #48, November 29, 1991.

²⁹³ Plamen Bogoev, "Bulgarskite konstitutsii za pravata na maltsinstvata" in Maltsinstvata v Bulgaria v konteksta na choveskite prava, Komitet za zachtita na matsinstvata" Sofia, 1994 pp.12

the Parliamentary elections for the Great Assembly in 1990, 1991, and 1994.

"It gained 21 deputy mandates in the 1990 elections for the great National Assembly. In the December 1991 parliamentary elections and local authority elections, the Movement for Rights and Freedoms took 24 seats in parliament (out of a total of 240), 650 mandates for mayors, 29 for community mayors, and over 1000 for local community counsellors. Professor Lyuben Berov's government, which ran the country from 1992 to September 1994, was formed with the MRF mandate after the passing of a vote of no-confidence in the Union of Democratic Forces (UDF) and the failure of the Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP) to form its own government.²⁹⁴

In the Post-Communist political spectrum, the only logical and obvious choice for the MRF was to become a partner of the UDF (Union of Democratic Forces) which was the only strong political actor challenging the Bulgarian Socialist Party. During the last few years, the MRF has successfully played the role of a power balance in the bi-polar political space of Bulgaria. However, in the dynamics of Post Communist Bulgarian politics, MRF has experienced factional tendencies leading to the emergence of sub "ethnic" parties. In 1992,

²⁹⁴ Ilona Tomova, "Turtsite v Bulgaria" (Kulturata, Ezik i nachin na zivot na Bulgarskite Turtsi sled Osvobozdenieto na Bulgaria ot Osmanska vlast) in Maltsinstvata v Bulgaria v konteksta na choveshkite prava, Komitet za zachita na pravata na maltsinstvata, Sofia, 1994, pp.18

during the first non-Communist government led by Prime Minister Philip Dimitrov, the internal tension within MRF became more pronounced. There were obvious collisions occurring within the UDF-MRF coalition, which, a few months later in the fall of 1992, became so fragile that its survival was in doubt. According to the leader of the party, Ahmed Dogan, "there is no partnership at any price, there are common interests". However, he was expressing cautious optimism believing, "the past misunderstanding between the UDF and the MRF has already been overcome and it will be an important reminder for our future partnership". It should be mentioned that for some small numbers of MRF followers, the political stand of the party was perceived as "too little, too late", especially in its economic plan. The level of unemployment among Bulgarians is 14.4 per cent compared to 25.5 per cent of Turks.²⁹⁵ An additional factor was the negative impact of the long protracted agrarian reform.

"Overall, Bulgarian families had more and more fertile land. The average land area owned by Bulgarian families before its nationalisation was around 0.3-0.5 Ha., while Bulgarian Turkish families' land averaged 0.1-0.2 Ha. Now with considerably reduced industry, these lands today have to be returned to the erstwhile owners, heirs. This entails dividing up the Bulgarian Turks' property even more and threatens the livelihood of many of them."²⁹⁶

²⁹⁵ Ibid pp.19

²⁹⁶ ibid pp.19

The options in these economically depressed areas are not that many. The first one is to move to the main urban centres within the country. The second is to follow the tendency to emigrate to Turkey. The government's failure to provide a quick solution for the economically "depressed" areas and the general discontent over economic hardship was translated into the creation of a faction with a radical nationalist agenda, opposed to the consolidation and integration political platform of the MRF. However, it should be mentioned that this faction is rather the exception and marginalised by the Turkish community as a whole.

"The deterioration in recent years of the economic situation of the Bulgarian Turks and the clearly defined socio-economic stratification in this ethnic group shatter any confidence of the many MRF adherents that the Movement is effectively defending their interests. In 1992, the Turkish Democratic Party led by Adem Kenan (a former deputy of the Parliamentary group of the MRF) was formed. It expressed the extreme nationalist position of a small section of the Bulgarian Turks. This party does not carry the authority among the Bulgarian Turkish Community as a whole, but its leaders' appearances were instantly available to the general public by means of the mass media, and are used by the Bulgarian nationalists to arouse fear and consolidate mistrust towards the Turkish ethnic community in the country.²⁹⁷

It should be clear that at the present time the only justifiable and reputable representor of interests of the

²⁹⁷ Ibid pp.19

Turkish community in Bulgaria is the MRF. Despite its iron internal party discipline, MRF experienced factional tendencies, which have proven not to be able to challenge its integrity and political influence.²⁹⁸

²⁹⁸ Ibid pp.19; In 1994, a small number of MRF activists left its central leadership and parliamentary group and set up a new party for Bulgarian Turks - the Party of Democratic Change. Its leader is Mr.Memhmed Hodja, who is seeking political alliance with the UDF. His party is unlikely to prove to be an effective rival to the MRF.

Conclusion

It is symptomatic that the impact of the ethnic crisis of 1990 was the final, crucial factor ending the 35-year Zhivkov political legacy. One may raise several questions about the peculiarity of the ethnic crisis and its political resonance in the Post Communist Bulgaria. For example, why did the ethnic crisis in Bulgaria not lead to the known pattern of events in the former Yugoslavia? Why did Zhivkov not get the aura of a national saviour? Why he was not perceived, as Milosevic, as the defender of the interest of the majority ethnic group? Why, did Milosevic win the presidency in 1992 after the outbreak of the hostilities in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, getting 62 per cent of the votes while Zhivkov's reputation was negligible? Most of all, why, being in a situation of an acute political, social and economic crisis created on the ethnic issue, did this not lead to and not give birth to ethnic animosity, ethnic hate, and eventually to an open inter-ethnic conflict in Bulgaria? First of all, from the very beginning in 1985 when Zhivkov shifted his policy vis a vis the Turkish community from a gradualistic to a shock-therapy assimilation strategy, starting with the forceful name-changing campaign, the whole "Revival" process seemed to be far from being popular OR welcomed by the Bulgarian nation as a whole. Due to the long lasting tradition of a tolerant

ethnic climate, plus Bulgaria's positive image as a nation of calm, hard-working people, outside of Bulgarian politics, the Turkish threat to national security and territorial integrity (based on the speculations fabricated by the BCP that if the Turks will reach 10 per cent of the population they are eligible for granting political autonomy) was a hard sale for the majority of Bulgarians. Therefore, from the very beginning, inspired by the Ideological Department of the Central Committee of the BCP "nationalism from the top" faced a rather cold reception, and the campaign proved to be abortive in that it failed to produce strong populist anti-Turkish sentiments. Instead, in the pre-perestroika period of 1985 the result was the opposite from what was anticipated. The Bulgarian nation as a whole was rather demoralised, not being able to defend their Turkish fellow citizens. However, this situation changed drastically after the general relaxation of the political climate after 1988, when under the "pro-perestroika umbrella" a variety of independent associations emerged in Bulgaria. These associations became the prime defenders of the rights of the Turkish community. The peculiarity of the process of democratisation in Bulgaria was that the main vehicle for change was the restoration of the human rights of a minority ethnic group. Therefore, for Bulgarians and Turks the only way to fight and restore a civil and democratic society was to work together in a coordinated partnership.

The political bond, the drive for a democratic civil environment, appears to be stronger than the bond of ethnic self-identity.

The assimilation campaign was transformed into an acute ethnic crisis reaching its peak in the summer of 1989 due to the exodus of 370 000 Turks.²⁹⁹ This led to rapid catalization of Bulgarian politics. There were serious diplomatic, political and economic impacts due to this peaceful exodus (It seems that Turks instinctively followed Gandhi's principle of passive non-violent reaction. While leaving for Turkey there were no reports of any destructive acts or acts of revenge. This was quite opposite to the way Bosnian Serbs left the Sarajevo suburbs in 1996). This crisis of 1990 mobilized and antagonised the Bulgarian nation. It helped to end a deeply unpopular regime and as well as an unpopular assimilation campaign.

On the other hand, many of the 150 000 disillusioned returnees from Turkey realised this time that their real homeland was not Turkey, but Bulgaria, from which they had escaped. They felt betrayed and trapped in a political propaganda cross fire between two countries. Those who preferred to return felt eager to make Bulgaria a more attractive and comfortable place to live - a homeland where they would feel that their rights would no longer be violated.

²⁹⁹ Ilona Tomova "Ethnic Minorities in Bulgaria", working paper, Sofia, 1996, pp.100

The way to achieve this was through a truly free, multiparty, civil, and democratic society. Therefore, the creation of the MRF was a logically necessary step in guaranteeing that there would be no future abuses. The rationale behind the legalisation of the MRF was based on the assumption that

First: after 5 years of ethnic tension and one year of a pronounced ethnic crisis, the country as a whole needed a restoration of ethnic peace; a refusal to legalise the MRF would definitely have a negative impact on the process of "ethnic healing";

Second: it would be rather convenient for the political actors to have the "ethnic" vote under control, in order to manipulate it;

Third: it would be rather advantageous to channel and solve democratically through open political dialogue any future discontents related to ethnic tensions;

Fourth: because, from the very beginning, the MRF proved not to have a nationalist separatist agenda and to be loyal to Turkey. Instead, MRF proved to be loyal to the Bulgarian state and Bulgarian

nation in rebuilding the new civil society.

In conclusion, the years after the collapse of socialism in Bulgaria achieved considerable success in the restoration of the fundamental rights of the Bulgarian Turks and in creating the necessary conditions for their full participation in political life and the government of the country.³⁰⁰

³⁰⁰Ilona Tomova, "Turtsite v Bulgaria" (Kulturata, Ezik i nachin na zivot na Bulgarskite Turtsi sled Osvobozdenieto na Bulgaria ot Osmanska vlast) in Maltsinstvata v Bulgaria v konteksta na choveshkite prava, Komitet za zachita na pravata na maltsinstvata, Sofia, 1994, pp.18-19

CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSION

In the period between 1989-1994, Post Communist Bulgaria achieved significant success in restoring fundamental civil rights to its ethnic groups. The second largest ethnic group, the Turks, seems to have profited the most from this essentially new situation. Therefore, in Post-Communist Bulgaria the necessary conditions for a new, viable and workable ethnic contract were created: ethnic groups had full participation in Bulgarian society; they were permitted, as well, to become politically active in the multi-party arena.

The Bulgarian political actors expressed the political will to resolve the country's internal issues by implementing human rights standards as outlined in the main CSCE and UN documents. A consensus to follow these blueprints for human rights was crucial for a peaceful post-communist transition. These rights were implemented as individual rights and it represented a pattern for dealing with ethnic minorities. Therefore, minority rights were not collective, but rather individual. However, the biggest and most homogeneous ethnic minority, namely the Turks, obtained collective political representation. Again, consensus among the Bulgarian political actors was crucial in giving this right to the Turks.

In Bulgaria the "one-nation, one-ethnos" concept, launched during the late Zhivkov regime after 1971, was replaced with the current concept of "political nation". As is known, this conformity gives the supremacy to citizenship over all other self-identification characteristics and provides the accessibility to democratic participation. This was the conceptual model with which Bulgaria decided to comply, which seems to be the predominant pattern in most European states, as well as in the U.S. and Canada.

As it was mentioned already, with its new Constitution of 1991, Bulgaria followed the human rights "basket" developed respectively by the EC and the CSCE (OSCE), and the U.N. It was perceived by the Post-Communist political actors that "political nation" was the most reliable vehicle to achieve internal ethnic cohesion and political stability in Bulgaria in the context of the ethnically perplexing and troublesome Balkans.

As was mentioned above, playing a soft "ethnic", and not a radical political agenda, the Movement for Rights and Freedom was successful in registering under the Law on Persons and Family. However, in 1990 when an opportunity for a multiparty election arose and it was permitted that organisations registered as non-profit organisations could participate in the elections, MRF decided to benefit from these conditions. The Bulgarian High Court ruled that within the framework of its jurisdiction, the organisation's

existence was legal.

The Constitutional Court of Bulgaria decided to tolerate the existence of the Movement for Rights and Freedoms and allowed the party to have its own parliamentary group in the Bulgarian National Assembly.

Thus MRF was allowed to successfully play the role of a power balancer in the bi-polar political space of Bulgaria. Therefore, allowing MRF to become a major political player, the Bulgarian political actors proved that they had more political will and flexibility to reach a pragmatic and workable consensus within the political arena instead of allowing the emergence of ethnic tensions which could put in danger political stability and damage the still fragile image of country as democratic.

Both the president of the Republic of Bulgaria, Zhelio Zhelev, and Ahmed Dogan, chairman of the Movement for Rights and Freedoms, in answering the questions of the author, expressed their firm satisfaction with the ethnic situation in Post-Communist Bulgaria, stating that this was probably the most sound achievement of the country in this difficult and troublesome transition period.³⁰¹

After a deep internal ethnic crisis in 1985-1989 and the worrying example of the violent break up of Yugoslavia, the

³⁰¹ statements from interviews with the president of the Republic Bulgaria Zhelio Zhelev conducted in August 1995 in Sofia and with Ahmed Dogan - chairman of the Movements for Rights and Freedoms; the interview was conducted in September the same year.

preservation of ethnic peace and ethnic and religious tolerance and compatibility indeed seems to be at the top of the political agenda in post-communist Bulgaria. Many governmental state sponsored institutions, councils, NGO's and monitoring groups form part of the international human rights organisations that have been established in the country in the last few years: the Permanent Commission on Human Rights of the Bulgarian parliament (its mandate is to monitor the process of democratization in the country and to develop Bulgarian legislation in accordance with international human rights standards); the office of the special adviser to the President of Bulgaria on ethnic and religious issues (mandate to restore minority rights, reduce the level of inter-ethnic tensions, provide objective information about minority groups, and monitor problems and changes in their situation); a special body attached to the Council of Ministers deals with such matters; checking the conformity of Bulgarian laws with the internal statutes of various denominations, and registers their self-elected bodies. Some ministers have established special offices to deal with minorities (for example, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology has appointed four minority experts "a Turk, a Gypsy, an Armenian and a Jew to supervise education in their mother tongues in Bulgarian public schools").³⁰²

³⁰² See Ilona Tomova "Ethnic minorities in Bulgaria", working paper, Sofia, 1996, pp.103-104

However, this "ethnic contract" does not seem to be completely homogeneous. As is it known, neither Roma nor Pomak, nor Macedonians have their own "ethnic" political representation and they are not active and influential actors in the Post-Communist political landscape. The reasons for this inter-ethnic division within the political context was due to the specifics of these ethnic communities in general.

Pomaks have difficulties in their search for a unique ethnic self-perception, therefore they are not able to create an ethnically coherent and politically articulated agenda. Because of their acute identity crisis, they are inclined to identify with the two largest ethnic groups, Bulgarians and Turks, which politically is translated into voting behaviour on one side with BSP-UDF, and on the other side, MRF.

Roma also follows the Pomak pattern of lacking an ethnically coherent political agenda. In their case, due to acute inter-ethnic fragmentation, they were not able to present a consistent vision of their collective ethnic policy.

The hardships of the transitional period had the most severe impact on the Roma compared to other ethnic groups; the collapse of collective farming (48 per cent of Roma live in rural areas, and in contrast to Bulgarians, they do not possess land at all), the collapse of the social network, and, most of all, with almost no prospect of finding work. Roma are in a very difficult position to secure their social well being (there were reports of Roma selling their flats and houses in

order to feed their families) Roma are driven to semi-legal or illegal activities. As it was mentioned already crime among Roma was the highest compared to other ethnic groups.

That is why it is understandable that the inter-ethnic clashes between Bulgarians and Roma, are due not to populist xenophobic tendencies, but rather to spontaneous reactions to crime committed by Roma. However, it should be clear that the danger to trigger anti-Roma populist sentiments is there. The evidence is the disturbing climate of strong negative stereotyping in the mass media, as well as obvious lack of interest by the state institutions to deal with this issue.

In the case of the Macedonians, a similar pattern of an absence of any ethnically coherent and politically articulated agenda exists. It is mainly because they do not perceive themselves as ethnically different from Bulgarians, therefore, there are no grounds to pursue an independent ethnic agenda and strategy. In the 1992 census, 10 000 people identified themselves as Macedonians, however, just 1 500 among them were expressing the view that they should have a collective political representation rather than using the established political vehicles such as BSP and UDF.

In the case of the Macedonian community, it should be mentioned that in contrast to the Movement for Rights and Freedoms, which in fact is a political party on an ethnic basis, the same status was not granted to Macedonian ethnic party, UMO Ilinden.

It could be argued that the pragmatism of the Bulgarian political actors was under external diplomatic Eurocentric pressure, rather than a necessity based on the peculiarity of the democratic process within the country.

In my opinion, the crisis of 1985-1989 was not only the critical factor ending the 35 year Zhivkov regime. The repercussions from this crisis were also of critical importance in the process of rebuilding the civil society in Bulgaria. This is, in fact, the peculiarity of the political resonance in Post Communist Bulgaria. Instead of provoking ethnic animosity, ethnic hate, and eventually an open inter-ethnic conflict, the crescendo of the Communist anti-Turkish propaganda in 1985-1989 led to the collapse of the anti-democratic and oppressive regime, opening the opportunity for a democratic and political dialogue to find a solution to the excruciating ethnic crisis.

The conclusion from this fact is that:

First: in my opinion, in Bulgaria there is an outstanding tradition inherited from the long centuries of peaceful multiethnic and multi-religious coexistence during the Ottoman rule, expressed by a moderate, tolerant and, finally, more open minded attitude towards different ethnic and religious groups. To a certain extent, this climate of ethnic tolerance was due to the peculiarity of the nature of the ethnic policy of the huge, multinational Ottoman empire, which did not provide a clear distinction based on ethnic lines. It is also

known that the Ottoman empire was not famous for any strong *ethnic* assimilation policy. The accent, the core of the empire was rather of a religious-military nature.

The "exception of the rule" case is that Bulgaria was actually liberated from the Ottoman rule by the Russian Imperial army. Bulgaria did not liberate itself fighting the Turks as was the case with other Balkan states such as Serbia and Greece, experiencing inter-ethnic hostilities.

Second: After the liberation from 1978 up to today, Bulgaria acquired an image of an ethnically tolerant place, however, it should be mentioned in the context of the Balkans because it is known that for the last 120 years there were no inter-ethnic clashes, particularly between the Bulgarian majority and the large Turkish minority. Secondly: Bulgaria was able to save its Jewish and Roma community during WWII, which was an honourable and amazing achievement. The latest incidents of inter-ethnic clashes between Bulgarians and Gypsies were a response to anti-social behaviour on the part of the Gypsies and not because of a general pattern of a xenophobic mood. However, if there is no quick solution to the serious social problems which Roma are facing, there is a possibility of an escalation of already intense tension between the two ethnic groups.

Third: When in 1985, Zhivkov replaced the ethnic policy vis a vis the Turkish community from a gradualistic to a shock-therapy assimilation strategy, the so called "Revival"

process, this policy was unpopular with the Bulgarian nation, as a whole. This is a very significant factor. It proved that "nationalism from the top" was not able to induce the emergence of a strong "nationalism from below". In the case of Yugoslavia, (Serbia in particular) this scenario proved to be working. However, in the case of Bulgaria "nationalism from the top" faced a rather cold reception and the campaign failed to generate strong populist anti-Turkish sentiments. On the contrary, the crisis of 1985-1990 mobilized the Bulgarian nation to end a deeply unpopular regime, as well as an unpopular assimilation campaign. It should not be forgotten that it was the Bulgarian intelligentsia who became the most active and sound leader defending the human rights of the Turks. Therefore, because of the *mal calcule* populist response, Zhivkov created a dangerous political vacuum, facing increasing and insurmountable opposition and, in the end, was forced to resign. Therefore, in contrast to neighbouring Serbia, the experiment to induce strong populist nationalism did not succeed. In this aspect I believe, that Sugar's "popular nationalism" is applicable to Serbia, however, I argue that the same nationalism is not true for Bulgaria, at least during the ethnic crisis of 1985-89. I believe that there are strong indications that in the case of Bulgaria, "populist nationalism" seems not to be the dominant driving force but the liberal-democratic model for solving ethnic tensions.

Fourth: Many of the 150 000 disillusioned Turks who returned from Turkey were eager to make Bulgaria truly their homeland this time. The vehicle to achieve this agenda was a multiparty, democratic society. The creation of the MRF was a consistent and natural reaction within this line of thinking. On its side, MRF showed no signs of a nationalist separatist agenda. Instead MRF proved to be loyal to the Bulgarian state and the Bulgarian nation in rebuilding the new civil society.

On the other hand, it was perceived by the Bulgarian political actors that the country as a whole needed urgent measures to restore ethnic peace. Therefore, the refusal to legalise MRF would have a negative impact on the process of "ethnic healing". The Bulgarian political actors perceived that it would be advantageous to channel and solve democratically through an open political dialogue any future discontents related to ethnic tensions, rather than to refuse a democratic forum.

Fifth: It was inescapable to start the democratisation without a new workable ethnic contract. The fact is that, knowing that the voluntary Turkish exodus was the crucial factor toppling the Zhivkov regime, this automatically made the Turks, from the very beginning, an active political actor in the building of a new civil society in Bulgaria. Therefore, one of the peculiarities is that the main vehicle of the process of democratisation in Bulgaria was the restoration of human rights to minority ethnic groups. Therefore, for

Bulgarians and Turks, the only way to fight to restore a civil and democratic society was to work together, in coordination and partnership.

The ethnic bond was not the dominant, driving force, for democracy was stronger. This shows that, at least in the Bulgarian case, "nationalism from above versus nationalism from below" did not induce a protracted ethnic crisis. On the contrary, ethnic peace was preserved primarily because of the supremacy of the liberal-democratic model as opposed to the model of building an ethnically homogeneous state. This is the reason why the disturbing events in the winter of 1989 during the "Razgrad Republic" did not escalate into an open inter-ethnic conflict.

Sixth: according to a comprehensive sociological survey conducted by Dr. Peter-Emil Mitev published in "Trends of compatibility and incompatibility between Christians and Muslims in Bulgaria", Fondatsia "Mezdunaroden Tsenter po problemite na Maltsinstvata i kulturnite vsaimodeistvia", Antonina Zheliaskova, Sofia, 1994, the level of religious intolerance in Bulgaria is amazingly low: Religious intolerance is expressed by 3-5 per cent of Muslims. Among Bulgarians, this percentage is higher - 10 per cent. 70 per cent of Bulgarians and Turks react to stimulus such as "Muslim" or "Christian" rationally and with understanding. This climate of ethnic\religious tolerance seems likely to survive the economic challenges and hardships of the uneasy

transitional period. There is no immediate indication that in the near future Bulgaria may experience a radical change in its "ethnic contract".

I would like to finish this conclusion with a statement made by Ahmed Dogan, chairman of the MRF in answering questions of the author in the fall of 1995 in Sofia:

"In Bulgaria, we were able to achieve a peaceful solution to the complex relationships between the different ethnic and religious communities. This model is known in the West, as the Bulgarian model. The essence of it is the equal participation of different ethnic and religious communities in the political and cultural process of the country. A primary principle is the seeking out of common values among different communities and retreating from those values which may divide and antagonize them. The creation of a political party based on ethnic grounds usually hides the risks of separatist tendencies, however this was not the case with the MRF. Quite often, the exception to the rule becomes the beginning of a new principle and new rules. This was the case with the creation of the Movement for Rights and Freedoms as a party based on ethnic grounds. A priori, it was perceived that such a party would try to be inclined towards political separatism. It

is clear that in the case of MRF, it is not so. MRF began as an ethnic party of a national kind and it is moving towards becoming a national party on ethnic grounds. There is no surprise, just the opposite. Here we are experiencing an important precedent in the new, modern history. This is a new realisation of the major importance of ethnic parties in the context of the new political map of the world. Now these parties have the rare historical chance of performing a common creative function, based on common human and national values. This is the only chance for them to preserve their political existence and development. Therefore, the formula is the transformation of ethno-religious communities of potentially destructive factors into common and creative ones. MRF is a political instrument in the process of achieving this goal."³⁰³

³⁰³ quote from an unpublished interview, with Ahmed Dogan - leader of the MRF. The interview was conducted by the author in Sofia on September 5th, 1995.

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