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The Muslim Minorities in Bulgaria

Historical background

Historians usually associate the entry of Islam in the territory of Bulgaria and the subsequent emergence of Turkish and other Muslim minorities, with the conquest of Bulgaria by the Ottoman Empire in the 14th century when the country was included in the boundaries of the Empire. There is no doubt, however, that the much-disputed roots of the ethnic and religious mosaic of present day Bulgaria are older than that. We have to emphasize the fact that, in the Balkans, history is not so much a science as a constructive element in the process of nation formation and an essential structure of national consciousness. The various scientific theses are often embedded into specific national doctrines and we should not be surprised at the radical discrepancies in every historical explanation of the same events or processes.

The different periods in Bulgarian historical science are dominated by two extremely contradictory theses about the Ottoman invasion and the origin of the Turkish population in Bulgaria. (Zheliakova: 1997, p. 14). The contradictory policies of the Bulgarian state in respect of the Turkish and the other Muslim minorities in the different historical periods were based on these major theses.

According to the first thesis, the cruel genocide of Bulgarians after the Ottoman invasion was followed by intensive colonization of the population in Anatolia (Asia Minor). This population was linked to the Ottoman military invasion and was an important element in the colonization policy of the invaders. After invading the Bulgarian lands, the Ottoman administration, military garrisons and the official religious authorities moved into the conquered towns. This military and administrative invasion, which is typical of any territorial conquest, was combined with other forms of migration within the Empire. AFree Turkish and other related rural nationalities from Asia Minor, nomadic shepherd tribes (Yürüks), dervishes spreading various religious cults, and others, all headed for the new territories. In the course of time this migration became the basis for the establishment of the Turkish population of the Empire, whose descendants now form the contemporary Turkish minority in Bulgaria.

The second thesis completely rejects any large-scale colonization of the population of Anatolia. The Turkish community in Bulgaria is considered to be a result of large-scale forced conversions to Islam of the local population, forced intermarriages (kidnapping of maidens for the Turkish harems), or voluntary conversion to Islam of parts of the Bulgarian population due to economic or administrative benefits. Gradually, the large-scale conversion to Islam (be it forced or voluntary) caused people to forget

their Bulgarian language and Bulgarian ethnic identity. Thus, a new Turkish community was formed which stood apart from the Areal Turkish nation and had little in common with it (Zheliaskova: 1997, p. 14).

These two basic theses and their variants include some more specific issues, such as the origin of the relatively less numerous community of Alevi (often called Kizilbash in Bulgaria) who are a modification of Shiite Muslims. The popular belief is that the majority of their forefathers migrated (or were forced to migrate) from Iran and Asia Minor in the period from the 15th to 17th century. One tradition associates the Kizilbash with various Sufi brotherhoods, among which the most important is the Bektashi order. Due to their close relation with the Janissary corps, the Sunni Muslim state tolerated the Bektashis until the year 1826 when Sultan Mahmud II dismissed the Janissary corps (Eminov: 1997, pp. 72-74).

At the time of the Ottoman Empire, people from other nations that were part of the Empire, also came to the Balkans. Gradually, they lost their identity and merged with the Turkish community without leaving significant traces of their presence. The histories of the Gypsies and Tartars are rather different and we will discuss them later.¹ We will also talk about the Bulgarian Muslims (Pomaks).

There are two main theses about the origin of the Bulgarian Muslims (Pomaks). The older of the two is the outcome of research of Bulgarian as well as many foreign scholars in the past (and less often nowadays). It derives the origin of this community from the Bulgarian (more generally Slavic) population, who adopted Islam in the period from the 15th to 18th centuries. Much historical, linguistic, ethnographic, topological and other evidence is used in support of this thesis. The issue of whether the conversion to Islam was forced or voluntary is the most disputed one. While historical data give evidence of voluntary conversion, the legend of forced conversion is far more popular in Bulgarian society. Unfortunately some proven historical forgeries are used to confirm this belief, such as the *The Chronicles of the Priest Methodii Draginov*. The name *Pomak* is most often derived from the Bulgarian word *Apomuchen* (one who has suffered), i.e. *forcibly converted to Islam*.

In more recent times, Turkish historical science and many foreign scholars have shared another thesis about the origin of Pomaks. Their origin is now related to the arrival of many Turkic tribes (Uz, Kumans and Peçenegs) in Bulgarian lands in the 11th century. Some of them remained in the Balkans and were partially integrated with the local populations or merged with them. They converted to Islam after the Ottoman

¹ For more details see the article "... by Elena Marushiakova and Vesseli Popov in Volume 3.

invasion and were transformed into a new community. The name APomak was derived from the Bulgarian Apomagach (helper), i.e. those who helped during the Ottoman invasion (Eminov: 1997, p. 25).

In modern times we often witness the emergence of widely popular quasi-historical or folklore-based explanations of Pomak origins related to the complex processes of identity development of the Bulgarian Muslims (Pomaks) (see below for more details).

The issues of the origin and ethnic identity of Bulgarian Muslims (Pomaks) are extremely painful for Bulgarian social consciousness, and the problem of including them in the modern Bulgarian nation incites continuous public emotions. Furthermore, some of these issues have already been integrated into Bulgarian national mythology, such as the quasi-historical legends of far-reaching atrocities during the forceful spread of Islam among the Bulgarian population in the Rhodope Mountains.

Muslims in the new Bulgarian state (1878-1944)

The Turkish minority in Bulgaria emerged gradually as an isolated community after the war between Russia and Turkey in 1877-1878 and the end of Ottoman rule in Bulgarian territory. The Turks, who only a short while before the end of the war had been dominant in the state and political life of the Ottoman Empire, remained within Aanother, Aforeign state, surrounded by a population with a new social status, separate from the development of the mother-state, where the process of new national consolidation had begun with the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the establishment of the new state of Turkey.

After the end of Ottoman rule in Bulgarian territory, the new Bulgarian state was obliged by international treaties (in particular the decisions of the Berlin Congress) to recognize and respect the major civil and political rights of the Turkish and other Muslim minorities. The free Bulgarian state voted for the Constitution of Turnovo, which declared that AVoters are all Bulgarian citizens of 21 or more years of age in full possession of their civil and political rights (Article 86). Since then Turks have been members of all the Bulgarian parliaments. The religious Muslim courts continued to exist, the state treasury supported the 12 Muslim muftis and funded the religious and cultural activities of Muslims. In 1885 a law was passed giving Bulgarian Turks autonomy in education, which allowed them to preserve their own schools where the language of instruction was Turkish. In the beginning of the 20th century there were

more than 1,300 such schools in Bulgaria.

Immediately after the liberation of Bulgaria and the establishment of an independent Bulgarian state, the Ottoman Empire and Bulgaria signed several treaties whose purpose was to guarantee the rights of their respective Bulgarian and Turkish population in the territories of each country. The Turks who remained in Bulgaria retained their lands and properties. The situation of the Turkish population who had left Bulgaria together with the withdrawing Turkish army during the war between Turkey and Russia, was more complicated. Although they retained the ownership of their properties, according to the Berlin Congress, in reality this problem was very difficult and slow to resolve.

Some Turks and Pomaks who did not want to or were unable to adapt to the new reality, emigrated from Bulgaria. The number of emigrants in the period from 1878 to 1912 was estimated to be about 350,000. The Pomak population of the Rhodope Mountains, in the Tumrush region, did not accept the existing new political realities. Despite the decisions of the Berlin Congress of 1878, they did not allow the administrative body of Eastern Rumelia to control them. The so called APomak republic did not receive legal recognition, but it remained in existence until the unification of the Principality of Bulgaria and Eastern Rumelia in 1885 when the Tumrush region became part of Turkey by force of the new agreements between Bulgaria and Turkey.

During the Balkan wars (1912-1913) there was a new flood of Turkish emigrants from Bulgaria. This time they were not leaving the Old Bulgarian lands but the former territories of the Ottoman Empire which had become part of Bulgaria. During the wars the situation of the Bulgarian Muslims (Pomaks) in the Rhodope Mountains became almost critical. Towards the end of 1912, almost simultaneously with the beginning of the Balkan wars and the advance of the Bulgarian armies in the Rhodope Mountains, the Bulgarian authorities undertook a massive conversion of the Pomaks. This conversion is known as APokrustvane (which carries the meaning of both AChristianization and Abaptizing) B a term which has henceforth remained in popular usage, since adopting the new Christian religion was accompanied by the change of Turkish and Arabic names into AChristian (i.e. Bulgarian) names. The conversion affected some 150,000 people in parts of the Western, Central and Eastern Rhodopes. It was coordinated by a special state committee. The initial concept was that voluntary baptism should be carried out by the Bulgarian Church, but in reality it was accomplished with the active participation of the local administration, voluntary armed forces and even army divisions, which led to cruel and bloody pogroms against

Bulgarian Muslims (Pomaks) in many villages. After Bulgaria's defeat in the Balkan wars and additional negotiations with Turkey about the situation in Aegean Thrace (already part of Bulgaria), and due to the influence of some internal political factors (the upcoming parliamentary elections), the government of Vassil Radoslavov took the following decision: Starting in autumn 1913, all Bulgarian Muslims (Pomaks) were allowed to revert to their Muslim religion and to restore their former names (which they did only too quickly, thus demonstrating the falsehood of the Avoluntary baptism thesis).

As a result of its participation in World War I Bulgaria suffered another national catastrophe, which ended with signing of the Neuilly Peace Treaty of 1919. Article 54, Section IV of the Neuilly Peace Treaty stated that:

Bulgarian nationals who belong to racial, religious or linguistic minorities shall enjoy the same treatment and security in law and in fact as the other Bulgarian nationals. In particular they shall have equal rights to establish, manage and control at their own expense, charitable, religious and social institutions, schools and other educational establishments, with the right to use their own languages and to exercise their religion freely therein (Simsir: 1986, p. 4).

These guarantees in the treaty were incorporated into the Bulgarian legal system. The Law Concerning the Establishment and Administration of the Mohammedan Religious Community adopted by the Bulgarian Government in 1919, closely followed the provision of the Neuilly Peace Treaty, as well as the Ottoman laws governing the status of non-Muslim millets. It provided the Muslim community with a substantial degree of autonomy in religion, education and other cultural affairs, as well as authority over all aspects of family life (Eminov: 1997, pp. 49-50).

By force of the Neuilly Peace Treaty Bulgaria lost some territories and initially the Bulgarian state policy was oriented entirely towards overcoming the treaty's restrictions. When the government of the Bulgarian Agricultural People's Union (BAPU), led by Alexander Stamboliiski, came into power, a twice defeated Bulgaria tried to improve the situation of the Turks and other Muslims in the hope that its neighbours would respond accordingly in their treatment of Bulgarian minorities (see Moutafchieva: 1995, p. 24). In support of this policy a Muslim religious college was established in Shumen at the beginning of the 1920s. A similar college opened in Sofia (until then such religious education was only available in Istanbul). Almost all Muslim

villages had at least one mosque, as well as many medreses (Quranic schools) funded by the Ottoman vakif (pious foundations).

The coup d'état of 1923 influenced the situation of the Muslims in Bulgaria. After the government of Alexander Stamboliiski was forced to resign on 9 June 1923, a number of social gains of the Turks and the other Muslims, which had been introduced by the Bulgarian Agricultural People's Union, were abolished. The state budget cancelled the financial assistance of 3 million Levs intended to support Turkish schools, the teachers in these schools were no longer entitled to pensions, and the schools' autonomy was restricted. The Turkish participation in Bulgarian political life was reduced, so that, compared to the 10 Turkish members of Parliament in 1923, in 1925 they were 5 and in 1933 only 4 (Stoyanov: 1995, p. 249).

A new stage in the development of the Turkish minority in Bulgaria and their relations with the mother-state was introduced by the victory of Kemal Ataturk in Turkey. Turkey was proclaimed a republic and many reforms took place geared towards modernizing the country. The reforms of Mustafa Kemal Ataturk transformed the remains of the poly-ethnic Ottoman Empire into the new nation-state of Turkey. They increased the all-Turkish identity of the people and replaced the dominant category of Muslim with the new one B ATurk. The influence of these ideas in Bulgaria went in two directions. On the one hand, those Turks who did not approve of the reforms in their country, emigrated to Bulgaria where some Turkish newspapers were still printed in Arabic script, the Muslim traditions for the most part remained unchanged, and ANjuvvab, the higher Muslim school, remained strictly religious. On the other hand, the reforms of Ataturk influenced the establishment, development and unification of the Turkish cultural, educational and sports organizations in Bulgaria into one union called ATuran. With time ATuran acquired and developed pro-Ataturk nationalist orientation and political activities, including the urge for Turkish election lists (Stoyanov: 1995).

In reaction to these activities, the Bulgarian authorities increased their pressure on the Turks in order to make them emigrate or Ajoin the Bulgarian nation, causing Bulgaria to become more ethnically homogeneous (the most dearly cherished wish of each Balkan state at any time of its existence). Some local Bulgarian Apatriotic organizations were especially active, such as the pro-fascist organisation ANative Defence, which was mostly active in North-Eastern Bulgaria and had the tacit support of the authorities. These organizations intimidated the Turkish population (made them speak Bulgarian, restricted their religious rights, exercised psychological pressure,

etc.). Of course, this led to greater aloofness on the part of the Turkish minority and a growth of intolerance on both sides of the fence.

In 1925, Turkey, under the leadership of Kemal Ataturk, and Bulgaria signed the so-called Ankara Agreement containing a number of provisions to safeguard the lives and properties of prospective emigrants (e.g. all emigrants should have the right to take with them all their movable property and savings, as well as dispose of all their immovable property). There is no precise statistical information on population migrations, but, according to research by some historians, as a result of the agreement about 1.5 million Turks migrated to Turkey from all the Balkan countries (Moutafchieva: 1995, p. 26). The major waves of Turkish migration from Bulgaria were in 1927, 1933 and 1935. They included not only Turks, but also Bulgarian Muslims (Pomaks). However, some of them could not adapt to life in Turkey and later came back to Bulgaria.

After the military coup of 19 May 1934, the situation of the Turks and other Muslims in Bulgaria grew considerably worse. The number of Turkish schools was reduced, Turkish periodicals were banned and their number was drastically reduced. Political parties and all kinds of organizations created on an ethnic basis were no longer allowed to exist; the ATuran union ceased to function and its members were placed under police supervision. Some of the union=s activists emigrated to Turkey, others went underground and established pro-Turkish nationalist and sometimes even terrorist organizations.

The Turkish response to the Bulgarian coup d'état of 19 May 1934 was a large-scale anti-Bulgarian campaign in Turkey with calls for military intervention. According to information released by the Bulgarian police, Turkey divided Bulgaria into military zones and encouraged the establishment of illegal formations that would incite uprisings in case of armed conflict (Stoyanov: 1995, p. 250). The pressure from the Bulgarian and the Turkish government to emigrate increased once again. The tension began to recede in 1936/37, after the two countries had agreed on the long-term emigration of 10,000 Turks from Bulgaria each year.

Nevertheless, the Turkish population of Bulgaria was still subjected to mental and physical violence. The fascist nationalist groups increased the pressure to force them to emigrate B they beat people up, burned men=s fez hats and women=s shalvar trousers, hung pig tails on mosque doors, dropped pieces of lard in water wells and other similar activities. The acts of uninhibited harassment increased to such an extent that the authorities were forced to recommend more moderate types of pressure.

The Bulgarian Muslims (Pomaks) living in the Rhodope Mountains received a different kind of treatment. In 1937, in the town of Smolian a group of young Pomaks organized the AMotherland movement. The initial concept of the organizers was to develop cultural and educational activities in order to make the Rhodope population more aware of their Bulgarian roots and integrate the Bulgarian Muslims into the Bulgarian nation as Abrothers of a shared origin, divided by different faiths. Education and propaganda were declared as the main tools of AMotherland. However, despite the intentions of its organizers, the movement soon came under the control of some pro-fascist circles who imposed a new type of activity, with the active support of the state and local administration. What followed were mass pogroms, the burning of women=s head scarves and men=s fez hats, forceful baptisms and the changing of Turkish and Arabic names to Bulgarian ones (some changes in legislation were deliberately introduced to accommodate this policy).

In some regions the Pomaks were not the only ones exposed to torture and pressure; Turks and later on Muslim Gypsies also suffered. In 1942 the police assisted in the forced baptizing and name changing of many Gypsies in Sofia.

Throughout this period autonomous education of the Turks in Bulgaria was gradually restricted in view of the internal political development of the country. From 1923 to 1928, the number of Turkish schools dropped from 1,300 to 920; in 1936, they were 605 and in 1944, there were only 367 Turkish schools left.

The development of the Turkish press followed a similar course and was equally influenced by the internal policy of Bulgaria. From 1878 to 1908, there were about 44 Turkish newspapers and journals; from 1908 to 1919, their number dropped to 15; from 1920 to 1934, the number of Turkish newspapers and journals increased to 62; and from 1935 to 1941, only 4 editions were published. In 1944, only the newspaper AMedeniet remained. It was written in Arabic script and was published by the ASociety for Protection of the Muslim Religion in Bulgaria, supported by the Bulgarian authorities.

During the Second World War the Bulgarian governments had to take into consideration the German policy on Turkey and its attitude towards the Turkish minority became somewhat milder. However, some available information indicates that it was actually a matter of the temporary postponement of the problems and careful consideration of a more radical future solution of the ATurkish problem.

The Socialist era (1944-1989)

After the communist take-over on 9 September 1944, the Turks in Bulgaria became the targets of a carefully elaborated policy carried out by the new regime. Different tools and means were used to ensure the success of this policy: decisions of the Communist party, state and administrative ordinances, manipulations of the structures of the different social and political organizations (most often the Fatherland Front, a union of all non-fascist parties in Bulgaria, created in 1942, which was later reduced to the status of a communist totalitarian organization) and so on. It is another matter as to how straightforward this policy was and, most important, how and to what extent did it work in reality.

In the beginning, in unison with the Soviet model the policy was adopted to accept Turks as an ethnic community within the Bulgarian nation with equal rights and their own identity, to involve them actively in the building of the new life, and to improve their economic and cultural level. The idea was to transform the Turks into a model of a socialist minority in the Balkans. Furthermore, Bulgaria was seen as the prospective strategic starting point for the future socialist revolution in Turkey and the Turkish minority would have to be trained to become the future tool of the revolution. This policy was controlled by Soviet specialists (such as A. D. Novitchev, a member of the Union Control Committee in Bulgaria and a professor at the University of Leningrad) (Moutafchieva: 1995, p. 27).

The new concept of the Turkish minority in Bulgaria was reflected and put into legislation in the so-called Dimitrov Constitution adopted by the National Assembly (Parliament) in 1947. It recognized the existence of minorities in Bulgaria and guaranteed their basic civil rights and their chances for ethnic and cultural development.

These principles were also applied to the Bulgarian Muslims (Pomaks). The activities of the Motherland movement in the Rhodopes were condemned, most of its leaders and activists were prosecuted by law, and the Pomaks were allowed to revert to Islam and restore their former Turkish and Arabic names.

In this initial period many efforts were made towards increasing the literacy level and the level of education of the rural Turkish population. Many Turkish schools (whose number was drastically decreased in the 1930s and 1940s) opened again.

Simultaneous to the aspiration to increase the level of education of the Bulgarian

Turks, the Bulgarian government initiated decisive steps to counteract the influence of religion among the Muslim population. Throughout the whole socialist period national and religious freedom for all citizens of the Republic of Bulgaria was guaranteed on paper and codified in the Law on Religious Denominations adopted by the Great National Assembly in 1949. The fight against religion as an opium for the people and a capitalist experience was led by means of atheistic propaganda and gradual closing down of religious offices. According to information from the British Embassy, the practice of the Islamic religion was discouraged but not actually interfered with (see Höpken: 1994, p. 187). All Quranic schools and all private (including Turkish) schools were nationalized in 1949, and a uniform curriculum was imposed on all of them. After 1952, the study of religion was banned from all public schools. The number of Islamic religious leaders and mosques dropped sharply and ANjuvab, the higher religious school in Shumen, was secularized.

This type of work among the Turkish population was defined as a responsible and constant task of the Party committees and organizations, of the popular councils, the Fatherland Front and the Union of Communist Youth, which were asked to work actively in order to integrate all the Turks completely into the building of socialism and to transform them into conscious and fully-fledged builders of socialism.

These initial measures did not yield any significant results; hence, the need to find a parallel option for the solution of the Turkish problem forced emigration. In the first post-war years almost no Turks left Bulgaria. However, 28,250 Turks left Bulgaria in the first nine months of 1950 (Eminov: 1997, p. 83). In the summer of 1950, the Bulgarian government addressed the Turkish government with an announcement that another 250,000 Turks wished to emigrate and had to be received by Turkey by 10 November 1950 (Höpken: 1994, p. 189; Eminov: 1997, p. 83). By the end of 1951, a wave of 155,000 Bulgarian Turks were either expelled (according to Turkish sources) or were allowed to leave (according to Bulgarian Communist sources). The number would have been far greater had Turkey, unable to absorb such a large influx of immigrants within such a short time, not closed its borders. This mass migration was explained primarily as a political escape, a running away from the consequences of the People's Democracy which coincided with the state policy to chase the Turks away since their acceptance of the communist vision of change remained unenthusiastic (Höpken: 1994, p. 189).

By the mid-1950s, border security had been significantly intensified the introduction of the Soviet concept of border zones, which meant the restriction of movement for

villagers and visitors. Many Pomak villages now fell within these zones and were thus isolated from the rest of the country. In 1948/49, many Pomaks were forcibly resettled from the region of the Greek border to the country's interior in an attempt to make the border more secure.

After a great number of Turks had left Bulgaria in 1950-1951, the Bulgarian government reverted to its previous policy of integration. On 19 January 1951, the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party took a decision which evaluated the differentiation of the Turkish-speaking population as an ethnic and cultural community. On 16 April 1951 the Political Bureau took another decision for special care when working with this population.

Based on the above decisions, the major departments of Sofia University Kliment Ohridski (the Departments of Philosophy and History, and Physics and Mathematics) opened special Turkish sub-departments (where the subjects were taught in Turkish). A special Department of Turkish Philology was opened at the University of Sofia, and three colleges for Turkish primary school teachers were established in Kurdjali, Shumen and Blagoevgrad. The students in these colleges were taught mostly by instructors from the Soviet Republic of Azerbaijan and a smaller number of local Turkish instructors who were communists. In some schools Turkish was a mandatory subject until the fourth grade. As part of the policy of affiliation, ethnic Turks were given preference when applying for colleges and universities. Thus, more than one thousand state-supported Turkish language elementary, middle and high schools were opened. Local sections of the Fatherland Front, the Turkish theatre in Kurdjali_ local cultural centres and reading rooms were opened. A Turkish department was established at the Narodna Prosveta Publishing House which published works by Turkish authors.

The membership of the emerging Turkish intelligentsia in the Communist Party and the Fatherland Front was greatly encouraged. All efforts were directed towards creating a Turkish nomenclature as a conductor of socialist ideas among the Turkish community (and if possible, in neighbouring Turkey as well). The results of these efforts were as follows: about 97 % of all Turkish children studied in the Turkish language schools, 4,000 Turks were members of the Communist Party and the Fatherland Front, and 18,000 Turks were employed in various levels of state offices (Moutafchieva: 1995, p. 29).

However, this was yet another short-lived policy. The new policy on minorities in Bulgaria began with the April plenary session of the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party in 1956. This plenum recommended important corrections to the

previous government policies towards the Turkish population. The new concept, adopted at the plenary session, explicitly expressed a single meaning: The Bulgarian Turks are an indivisible part of the Bulgarian people. Other related decisions of the supreme Party bodies were also accepted. On 1 November 1958, as a result of a decision of the Secretariat of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, the theses of the Central Committee of the Communist Party were introduced: A On Party Work among the Turkish Population. They laid the foundations for the fight against A manifestations of national and religious fanaticism among Bulgarian Turks, A regarding this population which until now has incorrectly been labeled as a >Turkish national minority=. At the plenary session of the Central Committee of the Communist Party the policy towards the Turkish population was corrected, A... gradually, beginning from the school year 1958/1959 the schooling of Turkish youth will be in Bulgarian. The Turkish language will be studied in the schools as an optional subject

Between 1959 and 1972, Turkish schools were merged with Bulgarian schools and Turkish language instruction was gradually and effectively eliminated.

The special attention of the party and the government was directed initially at non-Turkish Muslim minorities, such as Muslim Gypsies, Pomaks and Tartars. On 5 April 1962, the Politburo of the Central Committee of BCP voted for Decision A 101 A Approval of activities against the tendency of Gypsies, Tartars and Bulgarians of the Mohammedan faith to identify themselves with the Turks ... and to enhance their patriotic education. In compliance with the terms of this decision, A the Party committees and organizations, the local branches of the Fatherland Front, the Union of Communist Youth, the Trade Unions and other organizations, the organs of the ministries and departments, the elected councils and enterprises in localities with Gypsy, Tartar or Bulgarian Muslim populations, had to regard the elevation of political consciousness and activity in the workplace among this segment of the population as a priority task in their political and ideological work, as well as to make systematic and strenuous efforts to improve their culture, in order to gradually overcome their tendency to identify with the Turkish population, while also pursuing a tenacious ideological and political struggle against the Turkish chauvinistic religious propaganda, and pan-Turkish struggles and aspirations.

An additional provision obliged the Ministry of Justice, together with the Department of Local Councils at the Council of Ministers, to elaborate an instruction concerning the application of article 16 of the regulation about the registers of civil status, where A their rights should be explained to all citizens of non-Bulgarian origin B that if they are fully

convinced and have reached a clear personal decision, they can register themselves and their children as Bulgarians and change their first, middle and last names, without a ruling of the People's Court but simply by a legal request sent to the respective local councils. The Application of this instruction must be accompanied by extensive and systematic persuasion (Materials of the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party).

The process of name changing was far from a matter of course and was not met with a simple response from the people directly affected by it, which can be seen in the official documents from that time. On 12 May 1964, the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party took a decision on AWork with the Bulgarian Mohammedan population in the district of Blagoevgrad and certain deviations (from the Aright party line), reflecting some problems which had caused the 1964 unrest in some Pomak villages where the names had changed in 1962. The document also mentioned Athe emergence and growth of nationalistic moods among party activists and the Bulgarian population

Simultaneous to this change of names of the Bulgarian Muslims, the negotiations about the emigration of parts of the Turkish minority in Bulgaria were resumed in 1967-1968. In 1968, an agreement reopened the Bulgarian-Turkish border to close relatives of people who had left from 1944 to 1951. Also in that year a new migration agreement was signed concerning the unification of divided families. The agreement remained in effect from 1968 to 1978. Almost 100,000 people applied for Turkish visas and more than half of them managed to leave Bulgaria.

At the end of the 1960s, the Bulgarian Foreign Minister Ivan Bashev proposed the development of a comprehensive strategy to deal with the ATurkish problem in Bulgaria (Eminov: 1997, p. 85). In the mid-1970s a special committee was established within the Central Committee of the BCP to study the issue and make recommendations to the Politbureau. The activities of the socialist countries in Eastern Europe were smoothly synchronized. For example, they all issued decrees for settlement of Gypsy nomads; in the mid-1970s they all established research groups to study and develop strategies on work with minorities and the solution of their Aproblems. The recommendations were similar, and the respective materials were translated and secretly exchanged between the Socialist Block countries.

In the 1970s, the names of the Bulgarian Muslims (Pomaks) were still being changed. On 17 June 1970, the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party accepted the AResolution for the Purification of Class and Party Consciousness and

the Patriotic Upbringing of the Bulgarian Mohammedans. On 16 July 1970, a session of the Political Bureau confirmed the need to change the Turkish and Arabic names and the dressing-style of this population which has to be done without administration, with complete free-will and conviction. This was a sign to begin another campaign of changing the names of the Pomaks. Actually, these activities were reinforced by the military, the militia and armed groups of party activists. The unrest was most powerful in the Western Rhodopes and Pirin Macedonia. Some people fell victim and the rest of the population suffered repression. By 1974, the names of 220,000 Pomaks had been changed and their religious life was extremely restricted. Once this was accomplished, it was followed by an official declaration that the problem could be considered solved.

According to communist propaganda, this period was the beginning of the so-called process of revival, i.e. a process similar to the one experienced by the Bulgarians during the period of their national revival when they became aware of themselves as a nation and began the struggle for national emancipation. According to the official statement, the revival of the Bulgarian Muslim population was historically so late because the religion of Islam had set them apart from the rest of their compatriots. The brightest sign for the emergence of this revival was the change of names, which previously had set the Muslim communities apart from the rest of the population. Another sign of a return to their Bulgarian roots was the rejection of some backward traditional folk and religious holidays and rituals, as well as some styles of dressing typical of the Islamic religion such as the shalvar trousers of Muslim women and fez hats of Muslim men (actually these items of clothing were randomly replaced by a new type of uniform bearing the same identification as track suits for women and barrettes for men whose style corresponded to the Islamic dress code).

Part of the process of the new national revival had to be the universal acceptance of the progressive socialist system of holidays and customs. Specialists at the research institutes of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences developed special scenarios for each socialist holiday. The Bulgarian Academy of Sciences organized a special group for the study of the Rhodope past which began publishing materials, mostly dedicated to the forced conversion to Islam (the popular term for which was Turkification, i.e. being made Turkish) of part of the Bulgarian population during the Ottoman rule (the traditional term used to describe this period in Bulgarian history is Turkish yoke). These efforts came to their logical conclusion in 1978, when the Council of Ministers announced an obligatory system of socialist rituals and holidays to replace the traditional ones. The implementation of the new rituals was spelled out in

AGuidelines for the Development and Perfection of the System of Holidays and Rituals in the People=s Republic of Bulgaria (Eminov: 1997, p. 59). In accordance with these guidelines, the respective academic institutions developed specific scenarios for the holidays and customs for each district, region and town in the country (Stamenova: 1986).

The 1970s were also the beginning of step-by-step activities directed towards the integration of the Turks into the Bulgarian nation. The theoretical basis for the building of a developed socialist society included the Soviet thesis for gradual rapprochement and merging of the different peoples into one socialist nation. The natural course of development should have been a gradual merging of the separate minorities with the Bulgarians into a Aunified Bulgarian socialist nation. By 1972, all Turkish-language courses were prohibited, even at the elementary level. Only Turkish philology at Sofia University continued to exist. In keeping with the common logic, the Constitution of 1971 (the so-called Constitution of Todor Zhivkov) abolished all mention of minorities and their rights, merely preserving the vague definition of Aa citizen of non-Bulgarian origin (Art. 45, para. 7).

In 1974, the February plenary session of the Communist Party officially introduced the term Aunified Bulgarian socialist nation which began to appear more and more frequently in the media. Based on the achieved Asuccessful results, in 1977 the Party declared that Bulgaria consisted Aalmost entirely of one ethnic type and is heading towards complete homogeneity (Moutafchieva 1995, p. 31).

In reality, the processes were far from heading in the desired direction. On 7 June 1978, another resolution of the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party was accepted, the AResolution for the Improvement of Work among the Descendants of Islamized Bulgarians, intended for the regional party committees in Smolian, Blagoevgrad, Pazardjik, Kurdjali, Lovetch and Plovdiv. In order to prevent the fusion of Bulgarian Muslims (Pomaks) with the Turkish ethnic community, decisions on the economic development of the regions were accompanied by the following restriction, Ano moving of Islamized Bulgarian descendants should be allowed into areas with compact Turkish populations (Materials of the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party). These processes ran parallel to the change of names of the Muslim Gypsies. The name changing, which was not considered especially hard to accomplish, unfolded in three major stages in 1962, 1971 and 1981.

In the beginning of the 1980s Bulgaria was shaken by a series of acts of terrorist violence B explosions in the railway station in Plovdiv, on the train from Sofia to Burgas

(in the tunnel near the village of Bunovo), in a hotel in Sliven, at the Varna airport, as well as a few other attempts which failed. Two children were kidnapped from the International Hotel in Varna and held hostage by armed individuals who wanted to ensure their escape to Turkey. The incident ended tragically. Such events had so far been unknown to Bulgarian society and were accompanied by a multitude of rumours associating them with the activities of mysterious Turkish groups. The members of the main terrorist group were captured and executed, but public tensions still ran high. Even today not all of the questions around the terrorist attacks have been resolved (for example, it has turned out that most of the executed terrorists had been free-lance State Security officers).

In 1982, the authorities intercepted and banned the meeting of the few remaining and almost completely illegal Sufi orders in northeastern Bulgaria, the Naksibendi and Kadiri tarikats (Eminov: 1997, p. 74).

This policy came to its logical conclusion in 1984-1985, when all the efforts of various party and state institutions, public organizations and academic research were limited to Aproving the ABulgarian origin and ABulgarian identity of Turks in Bulgaria. The existence of other minorities was hidden, there was no official mention of them, and in practice they were declared Anon-existent. To this day we still do not know who decided to accelerate this process so much and who gave the single ultimate solution to the Anational question (the official version is that there are no official decisions for this policy in the archives of the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party). The investigations conducted after 1989 have revealed a ridiculous situation B no documents have been preserved and nobody is responsible for the entire Aprocess of revival.

The programme of Arevival was carried out in two stages. The first stage, lasting from end of 1984 until January 1985, forced all Turks and other Muslims living in the Rhodope region of southeastern Bulgaria (as well as Turks born in the Rhodope region and living in other parts of the country) to adopt Bulgarian (Christian or traditional Slavic) names and renounce all Muslim customs and clothing: 310,000 Bulgarian Turks were renamed by 14 January 1985 (214,000 in the region of Kurdjali, 41,000 in the region of Haskovo, 22,000 in the region of Plovdiv, 5,000 in the region of Pazardjik, 11,000 in the region of Stara Zagora, 9,000 in the region of Burgas, 3,000 in the region of Blagoevgrad and 3,500 in the region of Silistra).

The second stage of the campaign was in the second half of January and the beginning of February 1985. It affected the Turks living in the rest of the country. On 18

February 1985 Prime Minister Georgi Atanasov presented a report, and the Party and state leader Todor Zhivkov gave a special speech to the Central Committee of the Communist Party, dedicated to the conclusion of the process of renaming the Bulgarian Turks (Galabov: 1995, pp. 25-27). In recognition of the occasion, the first official information about the accomplished change of names was made available stating that not a single Turkish or Arabic name had remained unchanged in Bulgaria.

The official version was that this was a mass process of revived Avoluntary awareness of old Bulgarian roots and Bulgarian identity of the Turkish minority. Nevertheless, the so-called Aprocess of revival was imposed administratively and accompanied with atrocities and violence. Besides the militia and local authorities, army units also took an active part in the process. The usual tactics were as follows: armed units would block a village for a few hours until the enforced change of the documents of the whole population was completed. In the villages and towns with mixed population, violence was less open but it was still there. In some places there were open clashes between the Turkish population and the armed units and the exact number of the victims (including women and children) is still unknown (according to various information sources it is anywhere up to a few dozen people). Many Turks were exiled on the Danubian island of Belene (a former concentration camp in the 1940s and 1950s) or interned elsewhere in the country.

This process was accompanied by a widespread campaign for obliterating all signs of Turkish identity B specific styles of dress, religious customs, oriental music and others. Special attention was paid to the Turkish language. Speaking Turkish in public was forbidden, those who failed to obey were fined and refused services in administrative offices, shops and restaurants. This led to some ridiculous extremes B the appearance of notices in cafes and restaurants, which would have puzzled any visitor from abroad, such as Awe only serve Bulgarian-speaking customers, Aspeaking of foreign languages not allowed here, Aspeakers of French (a euphemism for Turkish) will not be served, etc.

Thus Bulgaria no longer recognized the Turks as a separate ethnic community, explaining that all the Muslims in Bulgaria were descendants of Bulgarians who had been forced into the Islamic faith by the Ottoman Turks. The Muslims would therefore Avoluntarily take new names as part of the Arebirth or revival process by which they would reclaim their Bulgarian identities. During the name-changing process citizens were issued with new identity cards with Bulgarian names. Birth or marriage certificates were issued only in Bulgarian names. Sometimes even gravestones with Turkish or

Arabic names were replaced.

In that period a huge number of scientific works were published approving the Bulgarian origin of the Bulgarians who had been forcibly converted to Islam. Following special orders, other works of art were created (such as the feature film *A Time of Separation*) also in service of this thesis. The organizations of the Fatherland Front published many free brochures of scientific studies and speeches by eminent representatives of the Turkish minority (intellectuals, artists, sportsmen) proclaiming their happiness at changing their names which they had done out of innermost conviction. And again some confusingly ridiculous situations occurred. For example, the famous weight-lifter Naim Suleimanoglu (whose name was changed to Nahum Shalamanov), after sharing publicly the sheer ecstasy of having a new name, emigrated to Turkey as soon as he was able to and was welcomed as a national hero.

The motivation for the 1984 assimilation campaign was fear of Turkish capitalist propaganda, as well as the disproportion between the birth rates of Turks and Bulgarians. According to a widespread belief in Bulgaria, consciously encouraged by the State Security, if one minority is over 10 % of the population, there exists a real danger that this will allow them to ask for autonomous status in their region. This is considered a real threat to national security, which might lead to the separation of parts of the Bulgarian territory and their incorporation into the Turkish State.

The resentment which the Turkish population felt at the process of revival was vented in the formation of a number of underground groups trying to oppose the state policy. Best known among them was the Turkish National Liberation Movement in northeastern Bulgaria, headed by Ahmed Dogan, at that time an academic at the Institute of Philosophy in Sofia. The movement was discovered and its leaders imprisoned.

In order to find a final solution to the problem posed by that part of the Turkish minority who refused or were not able to assimilate, the Bulgarian government opened the border with Turkey in summer 1989. The beginning of this process was marked by the mass demonstrations of the Turkish population in a number of towns and villages in northeastern Bulgaria in May, with demands for democracy in the spirit of *Perestroika*, including the demand to open the borders. Officially, the Bulgarian government then allowed all Bulgarian citizens to have international passports, but actually only the Turks could obtain passports immediately (the situation was much more difficult for Bulgarians). At the same time efforts were made to force the Turks to emigrate by psychological pressure, threats by the local authorities, spreading rumours of the

closing of the borders and other measures. There was widespread exploitation of the situation of the emigrants B their properties were bought extremely cheaply while the price of transportation to Turkey soared. The authorities organized demonstrations and protest gatherings, which were met with considerable support from the Bulgarian population living with the background of continuous nationalistic propaganda.

The emigration affected the economy and agriculture of 1989, when Bulgarians from all walks of life were recruited as agricultural labourers to replace the missing Turks. The shortage was especially acute in the tobacco industry, one of Bulgaria=s most profitable exports, and in wheat production. The media told dire stories about all the money withdrawn from the banks by the emigrating Turks, which was disastrous for the country=s monetary balance, and about stores left empty while enormous quantities of goods were being bought and exported by the Turkish Atourists. Rumours spread about Turks forging sabres to slaughter the Agiaours (infidels). All this strongly affected public opinion and was even worse for the inter-ethnic relations and attitudes towards the minorities in the country. At the same time the national television and all the newspapers were telling heart-breaking stories about conservative Turkish parents forcing their children to emigrate, young people committing suicide because they could not marry a Bulgarian or continue their studies in the country. All this served to confuse the Bulgarian population and inspire sympathy and pity for the emigrants. The Bulgarians were puzzled and divided and the obligatory meetings and demonstrations in protest against the emigrants made many people feel disgusted and silently opposed to what was going on.

The large-scale emigration of the Bulgarian Turks carried the euphemistic name of Athe great excursion, since officially there were no Turks in Bulgaria and the emigrants were merely people who had gathered all their belongings and decided to visit neighbouring Turkey. This was the biggest wave of Turkish emigration, when about 300,000-350,000 Turks left Bulgaria until the Turkish government closed its borders in August 1989, because they were unable to deal with the large number of refugees. The policy of the Turkish government regarding this wave of migration was also inconsistent; initially Turkey repeatedly declared its official acceptance of all their compatriots, but this promise did not materialize. The closing of the Turkish borders was another catalyst for the anti-Turkish mood in Bulgaria. All requests by the government of Turkey for a high-level meeting in order to reach a comprehensive migration agreement were rejected on the grounds that there were no Turks in Bulgaria.

A logical question comes to mind when we review the situation described above: was the Bulgarian government so genuinely naive as to hope that the truth about the nature of the Aprocess of revival would remain unknown in such a small country? Did they really believe that all the measures they undertook would yield the desired results? When we try to answer these questions and explain this phenomenon, we should remember the mystery of socialist accountability in all spheres of life, which told the rulers what they wanted to hear and saved them from the less pleasant facts. The result of the scientific research in this period was the same, it was either done according to the scientists= beliefs or subjected to auto-censorship in order to publish convenient ideas serving the government and its policy. So it would not be too unlikely to assume that Bulgarian party and state leaders sincerely believed in the urgency of reaching a final solution to the process of uniting all Turks and Bulgarian Muslims into the ABulgarian socialist nation. Hence, they also believed that the development of this process had gone so far that a swift action would bring the final solution with no essential resistance. However, the scenario did not go as planned and the authorities had to use force and the well-known solution of emigration. The contradictory responses, with which the authorities met Athe great excursion, also revealed their surprise regarding the course of events and their actual scope.

The time of changes (after 1989)

The wave of changes in Eastern Europe at the end of the 1980s arrived in Bulgaria in November 1989. On 10 November a plenary session of the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party accepted the resignation of the long-term party and state leader Todor Zhivkov. This was the beginning of a long and difficult transition period for Bulgaria. A transition to a modern economy, new social relations and the new organization of the state, accompanied by changes in social consciousness, which are still far from complete.

The problems of the Bulgarian Turks and the other Muslim minorities, which became especially poignant at the time of the A great excursion in summer 1989, were the target of public attention immediately after the changes. The first democratic rally, which took place on 17 November in Sofia, was in itself evidence of the complexity of these problems. Among the many speakers at the rally, the only one who demanded a return of the Turkish and Arabic names of the Bulgarian Turks, was Rumens

Vodenicharov, a representative of the Independent Society for the Protection of Human Rights which had been illegally established in spring 1989. The reaction of the majority, who had gathered to demand democratic changes, to his words was unanimous whistling.

In December 1989, a large group of Bulgarian Muslims arrived in Sofia (together with their wives and children) from the region of the Western Rhodopes. Assisted by Rumen Vodenicharov, they organized walks and night wakes before Parliament with the demand of having their Turkish and Arabic names back. On 29 December, a special joint decision of the State Council and the Council of Ministers permitted the return of the old names to all Muslims who wanted to restore their names. This decision was met with mass protest demonstrations by Bulgarians in the countryside, especially in the regions inhabited by mixed populations. The pretext for the protest was the manner of decision-making (most often people would ask "Why weren't we asked when they decided to give them their names back?"). On 31 December, in Kurdjali an "All People's Committee for Protection of National Interests" was founded with rapidly emerging local branches, which organized demonstrations against the restoration of the Turkish and Arabic names of Muslims. These events culminated in a national protest demonstration in Sofia on 7 January 1990. Under public pressure, all major political and civil organizations signed an agreement on 10 January in support of the decision for restoring the Turkish and Arabic names. Underlying the agreement, however, was a ban on establishing ethnic or religious parties.

According to the agreement, round table talks began in Sofia on 16 January to prepare the political transition to free democratic elections. The major political powers at the time were the Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP), an heir of the former Bulgarian Communist Party, and the newly established Union of Democratic Forces (UDF), a multifaceted coalition of parties and organizations with no clear political image, united on an anti-communist basis. Other political and civil organizations dominated by the BSP also had their representatives at the round table. For the first time the round table talks mentioned the need for the representation of the Turkish and other Muslim minorities when an argument arose about whether Ahmed Dogan (recently released from prison) should be allowed to participate in the discussions and in what manner. UDF claimed to represent minority interests and did not encourage their separation as a political power on their own. However, in January 1990, the Movement for Rights and Freedoms (MRF) was established, registered with the decision of the Sofia City Court, registration confirmed by the Supreme Court, and registered as a political power with a

right to participate in the upcoming elections granted by the Central Electoral Committee on 26 April 1990. Thus, the MRF was shaped as a political power representing the interests of the Turkish and other Muslim minorities in Bulgaria and took an active part in the political life of the country.

In June 1990, elections were held for the Great National Assembly which had to prepare the new constitution of Bulgaria. The elections were won by the BSP and its allies. MRF participated in the elections on its own and obtained 23 seats in Parliament, which made it the third major political power. Despite its active political presence, MRF did not manage to have any tangible influence on the preparation of the new constitution of Bulgaria, which was accepted on 12 July 1991.

The new constitution addressed the minority issues rather superficially and incompletely. Actually, the constitution itself made no mention of minorities, it merely accepted the most general and uncommitted statement that no restrictions of the rights or privileges, based on race, nationality, ethnic belonging, sex, origin, religion ... are allowed (Art. 6, para. 2). The only other mention of minorities in Bulgaria in the constitution is the definition of certain rights, Citizens whose mother tongue is not Bulgarian, have the right to study and use their native language along with the mandatory study of Bulgarian (Art. 36, para. 2); Everyone has the right to make use of the national and universal human values, as well as to develop his/her own culture in accordance with his/her ethnic belonging, which is guaranteed by the law (Art. 54, para. 1) (there is still no specific law in this respect), as well as the preservation of the restriction that no parties based on an ethnic, racial or religious principle can be formed ... (Art. 11, para. 4) (Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria, *State Newspaper*, no. 56, 13 July 1991).

During the discussions of the new constitution, the first disagreements within the MRF appeared. Member of Parliament Adem Kenan publicly opposed the constitution, insisted on official recognition of the Turkish national minority and left the parliamentary group of the MRF.

After a hunger strike by a group of UDF deputies, who were unwilling to sign the new constitution, and the subsequent parliamentary crisis in the summer of 1991, new parliamentary elections took place. At the elections on 13 October 1991, the MRF again participated on its own and obtained 24 seats out of a total of 240.² Thus, the MRF was not only established as a political power, it also acquired significant influence

² The Great National Assembly had 400 seats. Important for the number of MPs was the new election law based on the principle of proportion which defined a 4 % barrier for parliamentary representation.

on the new parliamentary configuration. Neither the UDF (who had won the elections with a relative majority), nor the BSP could appoint the new government without the parliamentary support of the MRF. The MRF was also successful in the local elections which took place at the same time. In a number of counties with a dominant Turkish population they represented the majority and gained participation in the local governments.

Although the new government of the UDF, headed by Philip Dimitrov, had no MRF representatives, it was elected with the support of MRF votes and at first the two political powers enjoyed good working relations. This was especially obvious during the presidential elections in January 1992. With the active support of MRF, the UDF representative Dr. Zhelio Zhelev won the elections, though with a very small lead (a fact which later on enabled his political opponents to accuse him of having become president thanks to ATurkish votes). A curious fact is that the main opponent of Dr. Zhelev at the elections, BSP representative Velko Vulkanov, ran in tandem with Rumen Vodenicharov (running for vice-president) who left the UDF group in parliament to join the extreme nationalistic position.

The cooperation between the UDF and MRF was short-lived and insignificant. Since the autumn of 1991 the optional study of the Turkish language was again permitted in schools. In February 1992 the Directorate on Religions at the Council of Ministers declared the former election of the Chief Mufti (religious leader) of the Bulgarian Muslims, Nedim Gendjev, who was elected during the Aprocess of revival, as Ainvalid. The seven regional mufti offices were declared Aillegitimate and new regional muftis were elected later on, along with a new Chief Mufti B Fikri Sali who had the confidence of the MRF.

In response to the request of the BSP to outlaw the MRF for violation of the constitutional ban on the existence of parties on ethnic and religious basis, a special decision of the Constitutional Court of 21 April 1992 confirmed the legitimacy of the MRF and its place in the political life of the country. On 31 July 1992, after prolonged discussions, a special law on names was passed which eased the procedure for the restoration of the Turkish and Arabic names of the Bulgarian Muslims, and at the same time protected them from unwanted ABulgarization through the addition of suffixes, typical of Bulgarian family names.

The economic reform of the UDF government posed serious problems to the MRF. The first steps of the new government were related to the restitution of industrial enterprises and houses, nationalized in the end of the 1940s by the former communist

regime, as well as to the closing of the existing Labour Cooperative Agricultural Farms and the restitution of the land to its former owners. These reforms dealt a heavy social and economic blow to the MRF supporters B the Turkish and other Muslim minorities. Most of them were living in villages, in the poorer mountainous and semi-mountainous regions, where the closing of cooperative farms left them with no livelihood, and the land which was restored to them was small and infertile. The acute crisis in the tobacco industry, related to the lost markets of the former Soviet Union, deprived them of their primary occupation. An additional factor for the plight of these people was the large-scale closing of small industrial enterprises in many villages, which in the past had been financially supported by the state. The supporters of the MRF began Avoting with their feet; the mass migrations to Turkey were resumed, the disappointment in the MRF grew.

Given the above situation, the attempts by the MRF to find a political solution for the problems of their voters failed in the end. In autumn 1992 the MRF began to exert parliamentary pressure on the UDF government. Their ally was President Zhelio Zhelev who was also displeased with the government, although for other reasons. This campaign led to the resignation of the government of Philip Dimitrov and split the parliamentary group of the UDF. After a long parliamentary crisis, the government of Luben Berov was formed, with a MRF mandate. However, the only MRF representative in the new government was Evgeni Matinchev, who was an independent expert within the MRF parliamentary group without being a MRF member. This government, though formally a government of the MRF, was called an Aexpert government and was supported by a strange parliamentary union of BSP in coalition with the MRF and some former UDF members who had left the UDF parliamentary group (the so called Ablue ants).

Despite the key position of the MRF in the new political situation, Aits government did not manage to pass any significant reforms improving the social and economic conditions of their voters (the Turkish and other Muslim minorities). The economic crisis grew, the migration movements to Turkey continued, and the internal conflicts within the MRF became more serious. Adem Kenan, who was dismissed from the MRF at the time of the Great National Assembly, declared the formation of a Turkish Democratic Party in December 1992 in his native village Yasenkovo, in the region of Razgrad, with the following goals: establishing the internal autonomy of the regions populated by Turks and basing the state on a federation principle. His activities were not supported by the Turkish population but gave rise to an anti-Turkish campaign in the Bulgarian

media. In November 1993 the Razgrad court decided to give Adem Kenan a one-month deadline to either register his party in court or cease his political activities. At the same time, other adversaries of Ahmed Dogan were trying to found other Turkish parties and organizations, such as the Union of Turks headed by Ibrahim Ali from Assenovgrad, the Turkish Social Democratic Party headed by Adem Hairula from the village of Mlechino, in the region of Ardino, the Minority Rights Committee, headed by Nuri Vehbi from Kurdjali, the group organized around the former MP in the Great National Assembly, Sabri Hussein, from Plovdiv, and others. All these attempts to create a political alternative to the MRF remained on the level of initial intentions with no significant progress and with no support from the Turkish community.

Other attempts to create an alternative to the MRF also emerged under the auspices of the major political powers in Bulgaria (BSP and UDF). At the end of 1993 the Democratic Party of Justice was registered, led by the former Chief Mufti from the Asocialist era Nedim Gendjev. Despite its emphatically Islamic programme, this party was accused of serving BSP interests. Member of Parliament Mehmed Hodja left the the parliamentary group and declared the foundation of a AParty of Democratic Change whose main goal was a union with the UDF at the upcoming parliamentary elections (which, however, did not materialize).

An interesting phenomenon was the emergence of the so-called Pomak party. In December 1992, Kamen Burov, the mayor of the village of Zhultusha, in the region of Ardino, proclaimed the establishment of a ADemocratic Party of Labour, which was supposed to express the interests of the Bulgarian Muslims, whom he declared as a separate ethnic community (Pomaks). His activity was not met with any significant support from the Bulgarian Muslims themselves; however, as Kamen Burov had close relations with the US Embassy in Bulgaria (including his visit to the US where, in his own words, his ideas had originated), this inspired a wide-spread campaign in the Bulgarian media accusing the United States of Aartificially creating a new APomak nation B a very sensitive topic within Bulgarian society.

The next extraordinary parliamentary elections were held in autumn 1994. The MRF received less votes and less seats in parliament (only 15) which was due to their voters= disappointment with the results achieved by the MRF while they were in power (at least formally), as well as due to the extensive emigration which had decreased the Turkish population of Bulgaria. The elections were easily won by the BSP. The government formed by the BSP was led by Jean Videnov, and the MRF became an opposition party. At the local elections in autumn 1995, the MRF managed to preserve

its presence in local governments. The pre-election situation was especially tense in Kurdjali where the results of the election were contested and the MRF's victory was only legalized in April 1996 through a decision of the Supreme Court.

One of the first measures of the new government of Jean Videnov was to legalize the schism among the Islamic religious leadership. On 3 November 1994, an Islamic conference elected a new Supreme Religious Council of the Muslims in Bulgaria, headed by Nedim Gendjev, as well as a new Chief Mufti B Basri Hadji-Sherif B who was registered on 22 February 1995 by the Directorate on Religions at the Council of Ministers and thus declared to be legal. The former Chief Mufti Fikri Sali convened another conference on 6 March 1995, confirming his election and appealed in court against the registration of the new Chief Mufti, but to no avail. With decision # 568 of 27 July 1995 the Supreme Court confirmed the right of the Department of Religious Faiths to carry out such a registration without mentioning the gist of the problem, i.e. although the constitution guaranteed the principle of non-interference of the state in religious affairs, its interference was a fact and two Chief Mufti offices were officially in existence in Bulgaria, supported by the different political powers.

On the whole, the socialist government did not pay any particular attention to the situation of the Turkish and other Muslim minorities and continued the previous governmental policy of ignoring their specific problems. Under the condition of social and economic hardships and hopelessness, the migration flow to Turkey continued uninterruptedly and the problem of divided families and the illegal traffic of children to Turkey now loomed large. Many people went to Turkey, managed to find jobs there, got settled and now wanted to be re-united with their children. However, their citizenship status in Turkey was uncertain and did not allow for family reunion. Smugglers of children were (and still are) caught at the Bulgarian-Turkish border almost daily, trying to find ways to take children to their parents illegally.

Not only did the government of the Bulgarian Socialist Party fail to contribute to the solution of the problems of the transition period, it also increased the already acute social and economic crisis. Under the pressure of people protesting on the streets at the end of 1996 and the beginning of 1997, organized by the UDF, BSP rushed to resign and shed the responsibilities of power. New parliamentary elections were held in January 1997. During the elections the MRF was still torn apart due to internal conflicts, with a partially new leadership, and was unable to reach a pre-election agreement with the UDF, despite the lengthy negotiations. (Furthermore, at the last minute the UDF included some of the people who had left the MRF as their candidates

for parliament; and the former vice-chairman of MRF Guner Tahir was elected to Parliament as a UDF member.)

In order to avoid political isolation, in the last minute before the elections Ahmed Dogan reached a pre-election agreement (the so-called Alliance for National Salvation, ANS) with a few small phantom parties, led by political figures who were no longer active in political life and who now returned to Abig politics thanks to the MRF votes. ANS was established as a political union of the MRF with the Green Party (headed by Alexander Karakachanov), ANew Choice (headed by Dimitar Ludjhev), the Federation AThe Kingdom of Bulgaria (headed by Hristo Kurtev), the Party of the Democratic Centre (headed by Ventsislav Dimitrov), BAPU ANikola Petkov (headed by Milan Drentchev). However, this step did not bring political dividends to Ahmed Dogan, but merely increased the disappointment with his policy among the supporters of the MRF. Hence the election results were not too favourable for the MRF; ANS won 17 seats, out of which 13 were for the MRF (later on one seat was lost since the young and promising local leader Yudzel Attila from Haskovo demonstratively withdrew from political life and left parliament).

After the elections the pressure exerted by the ruling power (UDF) to divide and conquer the MRF increased. MRF Member of Parliament Guner Tahir founded an initiative committee for the renovation of the MRF, and with the assistance of the new UDF government he tried to build up duplicate MRF organizations in the different regions, which would oust Ahmed Dogan and his supporters. Initiated by the UDF, a special law was passed giving free access to all former State Security files. As a result of this law, the names of the free-lance State Security associates Ahmed Dogan, Yunal Lutfi, Osman Oktai and Kamal Eyup (all MRF Members of Parliament, the leader of MRF and his deputies) became public knowledge. However, this information had no special effect on the MRF supporters. On the contrary, it seems to have united its voters, since they considered the revelations as part of the attempt to eliminate the MRF as an independent political power. The attempts of the UDF government to establish direct contacts with Turkey and to eliminate the MRF in order to impose its own influence on Turkish politics proved to be totally unsuccessful. Prime Minister Ivan Kostov contracted a huge project with Turkey for hydroconstruction, AThe Upper Arda, in the Kardjali region. This project has not been accomplished because problems arose on the Turkish side. Thus the economic situation of the Bulgarian regions populated by the Turks remained extremely severe.

The Directorate on Religions, controlled by the new UDF government, has tried to find a compromise regarding the unification of the two chief mufti offices (in the meantime Chief Mufti Basri Hadji-Sherif, who had the support of Nedim Gendjev, passed away, and, at present, there is only one chief mufti who is not registered by the Directorate B Fikri Sali). Local elections were held among the Islamic mosque boards of trustees for delegates to the conference of unification which was to elect a new mufti.

The conference was held at the end of October 1997. On the eve of the conference, Nedim Gendjev declared that the elections were manipulated by the MRF and his supporters withdrew from participation in it. The conference unanimously chose a new Chief Mufti Mustapha Hadji, the first Bulgarian Muslim elected as the spiritual leader of the Muslims in Bulgaria. The Department of Religious Faiths at the Council of Ministers immediately registered the new Supreme Council of the Muslims in Bulgaria and its chief mufti, and the former unregistered Chief Mufti Fikri Sali officially recognized the results of the new election. However, the election was disputed by a number of local religious Muslim leaders, supporters of Nedim Gendjev, who accused Mustapha Hadji of supporting the Islamic and fundamentalist sects preaching in Bulgaria. In the end, in

autumn 2000 the new Mufti Selim Mehmend from Assenovgrad was elected. Mustafa Hadji became head of the Muslim trustees. Nedim Gendjev himself vacated the building of the Chief Mufti office, thus showing that a compromise was indeed possible and unity in the religious leadership of the Bulgarian Muslims could be achieved.

In the parliamentary elections of 2001, the MRF gained 7.45 percent of the electoral votes and received 21 seats. The MRF made a coalition agreement with the new ruling political power, the National Movement for Simeon II, and received two ministerial seats and several deputy minister positions. The new government nominated representatives from the MRF to the position of county governors; other representatives entered the state administration at different positions. Thus the MRF gained real executive political power in the new government.

So far we have discussed mostly the Movement for Rights and Freedoms as a major political representative of the Turkish and the other Muslim communities in Bulgaria. Our approach can be explained by the fact that actually the MRF occupies an extremely important place as the spokesman of the underlying trends in the community's development. MRF organizations exist in every town or village with a Turkish or Bulgarian-Muslim population, and usually they are quite significant for the life of these communities (including their active participation in local governments). We can hardly speak about the development of a Turkish or other Muslims non-governmental sector in Bulgaria, even less about any NGO sector which would be independent of the MRF. At present the number of this type of organization (mostly funds, cultural societies and folklore groups) is insignificant, their activities are quite restricted and always under the wing of the MRF. The Turkish press follows the same road of development. The MRF newspaper, *Rights and Freedom* (written in Bulgarian and Turkish), has been in existence for a few years without becoming too popular, and its publication is temporarily on hold due to lack of funds. The attempt to publish an independent Turkish newspaper *Güven* (ATrust) was an even bigger failure (it is limited in circulation and is practically unknown among the Turkish minority). An important event in the life of the Bulgarian Muslim community was the election of Yashar Shaban as a member of the executive council of the Open Society Fund in 1997. This fund was then an extremely important factor in the life of Bulgarian society. However, this is rather an exception to the rule. Furthermore, Yashar Shaban is a former mayor and MRF activist who left the movement as a result of internal political conflicts.

It is interesting to look at the relations between the Turkish and other Muslim

minorities within the MRF. The Turkish minority itself is spatially distributed throughout the country. There are political differences between the leaders of the two major regions with a Turkish population B northeastern Bulgaria and the eastern Rhodopes. As far as the Bulgarian Muslims (Pomaks) are concerned, their position in the MRF is closely related to their complex group awareness (which we will mention later). The support for the MRF by the Pomaks is strongest in the western Rhodopes. In elections they bring many votes to the MRF, but their access to leadership positions within the MRF is relatively limited, and they did not have representatives in the last two parliaments (although one of the deputy-chairmen of the central council of the MRF, Airush Hadji, is a Pomak). As a result of the 2001 elections, there is one representative of the Bulgarian Muslims among the Members of Parliament (Arso Manov).

The representation of the Gypsy Muslims within the MRF is far more specific. These are mostly Gypsies with preferential Turkish consciousness,³ who are not accepted as ATurks by the surrounding population (including the Turks themselves). As soon as the MRF was established in 1990, its branches began to emerge randomly in the Gypsy quarters of many towns. The MRF leadership (at a local and national level) most often kept its distance from this clientele. Gradually, urged by the struggle to gain more votes, the MRF leadership has changed its restrictions regarding the Gypsies= representation within the MRF. The Gypsy sections were included in the general MRF structure, pre-election campaigns were organized in the Gypsy areas, and in the 1994 elections, some wards with no Turkish population (mostly in northwestern Bulgaria) were Agiven to Gypsies who campaigned as MRF members.⁴ The Gypsy votes were particularly important for the local elections in Kurdjali in 1995. However, on the whole, the separate AGypsy sections within the MRF did not help to overcome the negative attitudes towards Gypsies in general, and their access to leadership positions, even on a local level, is very restricted, thus preventing them from any actual influence on MRF policies.

In the 2001 elections the MRF established a pre-election coalition with one of the most influential Gypsy organizations, the political movement AEuro-Roma, headed by Tsvetelin Kanchev. Euro-Roma was given the opportunity to put forward its own candidates in those regions that were not inhabited by a Turkish population. Euro-Roma, however, did not receive enough votes and failed to provide its own Members of

³ For more details see the article ... of Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov in Volume 3.

⁴ See ... in Volume 3.

Parliament which lead to an end of the pre-electoral coalition.

The small Tartar community, the majority of whom have a preferential Turkish identity (see below for more details), do not have their own place within the policy and organizational structure of the MRF. The Tartars made some unsuccessful attempts at individual activities of their community. In April 1993, the Tartar cultural and educational association AAssabai (AKinship) was registered in Silistra, headed by Nevzat Yakub. -At the end of the same year and at the beginning of 1994, they tried to organize a national conference in order to elect their own candidates for parliament. These intentions, as well as the planned publication of the newspaper *Ushun* (ASpark) in the Tartar language, were never realized, and the Assabai organization is neither particularly influential nor active.

The separate religious community of the Alevi Turks stands apart from the general political processes. On the whole, they do not participate actively in the political life of the country. Their religious community, which is otherwise internally active, does not seek official registration and actually has not been legally registered. In elections the Alevi as a whole vote for the MRF; they elect the mayors of their villages from MRF members, but actually their representation within the MRF remains merely symbolic (enforced by the distant attitude of the Sunni Turks towards them).

An interesting element of the MRF is the participation of ethnic Bulgarians in the movement. Similar processes can be observed on local and national levels. Usually the ethnic Bulgarians are not actual MRF members, but they have been recruited as Aexperts, holding positions in local governments or seats in parliament. So far, all MRF parliamentary groups have had Bulgarian members (except for the 1997 elections when the pre-election strategy was changed); but, as a rule, they all used the MRF as a way to enter into political life, and then they left the MRF and terminated their relations with the movement.

At a first glance, it would be logical to assume that the policy of neighbouring Turkey would be an important factor in the development of the MRF as a political representative of the Turkish and other Muslim minorities. The reality, however, is quite different. Certainly, Turkey is far from being indifferent to the fate of the Muslim minorities abroad, but its attitude to the specific problems of these minorities has always been determined by the overall geo-political strategy and political life of Turkey itself. Bulgarian public opinion often suspects Turkey of trying to use the Bulgarian Turkish minority as a ATrojan horse for economic penetration and plans for the acquisition of Bulgarian territories. To placate these fears, a special item was added to

the constitution prohibiting foreigners from buying land in Bulgaria (which in the end worked against Bulgarian interests, since this has made foreign investments exceedingly difficult). However, the Turkish minority in Bulgaria is not satisfied with the policy of Turkey in respect of Bulgaria, especially with the absence of stable Turkish investments in the Bulgarian regions with a Turkish population.

The Bulgarian Turkish immigrants constitute an important element in the economic development of Turkey. Most often they are better educated and qualified, and more progressive than the local population. The immigrants' associations are another important factor within the internal political life of Turkey, especially the Association of Expatriate Organizations, which includes different groups of Bulgarian Turks, including the Association of the Turks from the Rhodopes (i.e. Pomaks). The relations of these organizations with the MRF are not too cordial. The Turkish government is markedly friendly towards the MRF, but this relation often remains on the level of protocol, with no steadfast political support. Until now, at least, Turkey does not seem to show any special kind of interest in the Turks and the other Muslim minorities in Bulgaria which might have become a priority of its foreign policy. This statement is confirmed by the comparison with Turkey's policy towards other expatriate Turks (a key element in Turkey's foreign political strategy), for example towards those in Central Asia or the events in Bosnia.

Bulgarian public opinion is particularly sensitive to the current developments in Islam. The fall of the former communist regime and its restrictions has brought to the lives of Bulgarian Muslims a freedom of religious expression, public performance of Islamic ceremonies, the reconstruction of old mosques and the building of new ones, the opening of new Muslim religious schools (in Russe, Shumen and Momchilgrad), opportunities for religious studies abroad and others, as well as religious propaganda of emissaries from abroad. According to incomplete information, there are 1,044 mosques in Bulgaria now with their respective boards of trustees. The state is gradually withdrawing its support and state subsidies ceased almost entirely in 1992. The necessary funds and donations for the construction of new mosques are supplied from abroad, from the World Muslim League and a number of Islamic charity organizations and funds (mostly in the Middle East and Iran).

The Bulgarian press often uses the increased influence of Islam and the likelihood of the penetration of fundamentalist sects to manipulate its readers. Some ostentatious police actions were held which ended in driving foreigners out of the country by accusing them of illegal religious activities or irregular address registration. Special

emphasis is given to the danger of the penetration of various Islamic sects (the name AMuslim brothers is most often given as an example). These warnings are most often given from the chief mufti=s office dominated by Nedim Gendjev and the actual dimension of this penetration of fundamentalist ideas is strongly exaggerated.

The reaction of Bulgarian public opinion to the minority issue, and in particular to the issue of the Bulgarian Muslims, is quite interesting. Bulgaria deliberately kept postponing its accession to the European Convention for the Protection of National Minorities adopted by the Council of Europe. Only in autumn 1997 was the convention signed by President Peter Stoyanov, after continuous pressure from the Council of Europe. Bulgaria was one of the last countries to sign the convention after it had already been ratified by a sufficient number of states and was going to be enforced irrespective of the Bulgarian position. The Bulgarian president gave his signature to the convention and immediately afterwards addressed the Bulgarian people, stating that the convention would be applied only after a public debate and its ratification by parliament with a special ratifying resolution. The MRF was the only political power that supported the signing of the convention with no preliminary stipulations (which would actually deprive it of its meaning). This opinion was shared by rather limited social circles.

The content of the public debate, despite its many nuances abounding in demagogy and apocalyptic fears, boils down to the following two positions: The first position supports ratification of the convention with the understanding that there are no national minorities in Bulgaria (supported mainly by the BSP and a number of small nationalistic parties). The second position would like to specify who are the ethnic groups (not minorities!) referred to in the convention (the position of almost all other political parties). The enumeration of ethnic groups has to exclude the differentiation of the Bulgarian Muslims as a separate minority. In response to this approach the leaders of the Democratic Labour Party (Kamen Burov and Ismail Mussa) publicly demanded that Pomaks should be mentioned as a separate minority at the Parliamentary ratification of the convention. On the whole, Bulgarian public opinion remains rather sensitive to the issue of Bulgarian Muslims B it would be sufficient to mention the stormy press reaction to the announcement that Greece had published a Greek-Pomak dictionary, which took place in 1996 and immediately resurrected fears that a APomak nation could be established. Any breakthrough in this attitude is highly unlikely.

Figures and emigration patterns

Defining the number of the Turkish and the other Muslim minorities in Bulgaria has turned out to be a rather complicated task due to the shortcomings of the statistical methods used at population censuses and due to the widely popular phenomenon of preferential ethnic affiliation. Some population groups (Gypsies, Tartars, Bulgarian Muslims) sometimes, for various reasons, prefer to declare themselves as belonging to another ethnic group (most often Turkish because of the syncretic concept of ethnic and religious affiliation in the Balkans). This specific phenomenon of feigned (or deliberately hidden) identity is a great obstacle to all attempts to obtain more precise information about the number of people belonging to each ethnic group in the Balkans. Often it is the reason for amazing discrepancies in the studies of different researchers. Even if the available statistical data from regular population censuses are used, they should be taken with a pinch of salt and always subjected to additional analysis and evaluation.

Population censuses became relatively regular in Bulgaria after the end of Ottoman rule and the establishment of an independent Bulgarian state in 1878. The last such census was held in 1992. A review of the data available from the censuses, combined with the data on the migration processes of the Turkish and the other Muslim minorities, can help to specify their number and the way this has changed throughout the years. However, we must explicitly state that the numbers are more or less approximate and their additional verification is often impossible.

We do not need to present all the data available, it would be sufficient merely to select the most important points which would give us a clear idea about the number of the Turkish minority. For example, in 1900, there were 531,240 Turks in Bulgaria or 14.2 % of the total population; in 1920, 520,339 Turks or 10.7 % of the total population; in 1946, 675,500 Turks or 9.6% of the total population; in 1956, 656,025 Turks or 8.6% of the total population; in 1965, 780,928 Turks or 9.5 % of the total population; in 1975, 730,728 Turks or 8.4 % of the total population, and the census of 1992 registered 800,052 Turks or 9.4 % of the Bulgarian population (Results of the Population Census: 1994, pp. XXV-XXVI).

The most recent population census in the Republic of Bulgaria was held in March 2001. Currently, more than one year after that census, the final data are not yet published. According to preliminary data from this census, 758,000 people declared themselves to be Turks, or 9.4% of the total population of Bulgaria. The majority of

Turks live in rural areas; 19.5% of the population in rural areas are Turks; in towns, Turks form 5.1% of the population. There are high concentrations of Turkish populations in the provinces of Kardjali (103,000 persons), Razgrad (70,000), Shumen (62,000), Burgas (61,000), Targovishte (50,000), Silistra (48,000). More than half (52.0%) of the Bulgarian Turks live in these provinces. The mother tongue of 771,000 persons (9.7% of the overall Bulgarian population) is Turkish. The Muslim population (Sunnis and Shiites) comprises 966,000 persons, or 12.1%.

These figures should be compared with the emigration data from Bulgaria, although these are also approximate and sometimes even not available (for example, there is no such information for the first twenty years of the 20th century, i.e. the time of the two Balkan wars and the First World War). According to statistics, we can discern four major waves of Turkish emigration from Bulgaria after 1930:

1931-1941: 100,000 persons

1947-1951: 156,000 persons

1969-1978: 114,000 persons

1989-1992: 362,000 persons

(Results of the Population Census: 1994, pp. XXVIII).

For the period 1992-2002 there is a lack of exact emigration data; estimates range from 200,000 to 300,000 persons. However, all data of this kind are only approximate and doubtful.

Unfortunately, there is no precise information about how many of these migrants are Turks and how many Bulgarian Muslims and Gypsies identifying themselves as Turks. Many such instances of preferential ethnic affiliation have occurred, but the policy of the host country (Turkey) towards them varies. Bulgarian Muslims are easily accepted, although they often do not speak Turkish, and are gradually integrated into the Turkish society. They (and their descendants) are quick in acquiring Turkish ethnic identity without losing entirely their group characteristic of ATurks from the Rhodopes (see the Association of Turks from the Rhodopes in present Turkey uniting the descendants of former immigrants from Bulgaria). The attitude towards the Gypsies trying to emigrate to Turkey is completely the opposite. The Turkish authorities are quite skeptical towards their claim of Turkish identity (although they can even speak Turkish) and often do not let them cross the border (usually this decision is taken on the basis of the phenotype). Each of the above listed waves of emigration has been accompanied by Gypsies attempting to present themselves as Turks and thus emigrate, and their

subsequent failure to cross the border. Certainly, there are some instances of Gypsy families or individuals who have managed to pass border controls and are now settled in Turkey, but these are more of an exception to the rule.

We have to emphasize the fact that these migrations do not always take place in one direction; however, their structure can be more complicated. The migration movements during 1989-1992 provide an illustration of this. Initially, during the so-called Agreat excursion in summer 1989, the wave of migrants moved in the direction Bulgaria-Turkey, and all the extended families comprising several generations participated in this migration. There is no precise information about the number of people who crossed the border in summer 1989 (until it was closed on the Turkish side); however, the approximate number given is more than 300,000. However, some migrants returned to Bulgaria, driven by the hardships of settlement and integration in Turkey, as early as autumn of that same year, and even more in the following year, when the communist regime in Bulgaria collapsed and democratic changes were on the rise. This phenomenon went hand in hand with a gender and age differentiation of the migrants; some of the younger people with no family obligations remained in Turkey. When emigration was resumed in 1991-1992, the migrants concerned were of another type: it was mostly the able-bodied work men and women fit to work who left for Turkey, whereas the older people stayed behind to take care of the children.

Given this unstable situation of increased transborder mobility of the Bulgarian Turks (and of the Bulgarian population in general after the borders were opened), a population census was held on 4 December 1992. It was preceded by a long public discussion about the need for it and whether the data to be obtained would or would not legitimate the existence of national minorities B an issue which is the permanent focus of speculation of various political parties. The underlying principle of the census was also a subject of dispute; since everyone was free to define his ethnic affiliation by himself, the results were bound to be ridiculous. People insisted on a historical approach to the issue (which was actively used during the Aprocess of revival). This controversy was reinforced by an explanatory statement of Decision No. 14 of the Constitutional Court of 14 November 1992, explaining that Athe social features of race, nationality, ethnic affiliation and origin are determined by birth.

After long arguments, the final decision was that a census should be held using the three controversial criteria of ethnic affiliation, mother tongue and religious affiliation, besides all other questions. The questionnaire had the following parameters (among others):

Ethnic group

Possible answers: Bulgarian, Turkish, Gypsy, Tartar, Jewish, Armenian, Kozlbas, Cherkez, Gagaouz, other (specify).

Mother tongue

Possible answers: Bulgarian, Turkish, Gypsy, other (specify).

Religion (specifying the Ahistorically defined affiliation of the individual or his/her parents and ancestors to a given religious group)

Possible answers: Eastern Orthodox, Catholic, Protestant, Sunni Muslim, Shiite Muslim, Jew, Armenian-Gregorian, other (specify).

This questionnaire caused a lot of comments, especially the expression Ahistorically determined religious affiliation, which neglected the freedom of individual religious choice (or the lack of religious affiliation).

In the census, the population of Bulgaria was determined as a total of 8,487,317 persons, split as follows:

Ethnic groups

Bulgarians	7,271,185
Turks	800,052
Gypsies	313,396
Tartars	4,515
Jews	3,461
Armenians	13,677
Others	81,031

*Mother
tongue*

Bulgarian	7,275,717
Turkish	813,639
Gypsies	310,425
Other	87,536

Religion

Eastern Orthodox	7,274,592
Catholic	53,074
Protestant	21,878
Sunni Muslim	1,026,758
Shiite Muslim	83,537
Jews	258
Armenian-Gregorian	9,672
Others	643
Followers of Peter Dunov	315
None	8,481

These numbers should by no means be perceived as a precise reflection of the

actual situation in Bulgaria. As we have already mentioned, they are especially uncertain in respect to Gypsies, whose actual number is approximately 2-3 times higher. Nevertheless, the results of the census provide sufficient material for additional analysis, especially as far as the correlation of data from different indicators is concerned. Based on the above, and considering other additional factors and circumstances, we can present a demographic overview of the Turkish and the other Muslim minorities in Bulgaria.

There is no doubt that the Turks are the biggest Muslim minority in Bulgaria, although their number, as given in the census, should not be taken at face value. The phenomenon of Apreferential ethnic affiliation applies especially to the Bulgarian Gypsies. Their preferential affiliation most often is Turkish B especially concerning the Turkish-speaking Gypsies scattered in Eastern Bulgaria. These Gypsies can be encountered in big cities, as well as in a number of rural areas. Their exact number is hardly to estimate, as well as the degree of their changing (or already changed) identity. According to a confidential document from the time of the Aprocess of revival, more than half of the Gypsies in Bulgaria pretend to be Turks; however, this statement is rather exaggerated. Similar processes of pretended Turkish identity can be observed among some Bulgarian Muslims (see below for more details). The calculations regarding Bulgarian Muslims are more complicated, but we can expect that the actual number of the Turkish population in Bulgaria is less than the number declared in the census, which keeps dropping because of continuous emigration to Turkey.

In terms of territory, the Turkish minority concentrates on specific provinces of the country, mostly in Eastern Bulgaria. The data from the census can be used to give at least an approximate idea about the concentration of the Turkish population in each province. These provinces (defined according to the former districts) are Burgas (about 60,000), Varna (more than 30,000), Veliko Turnovo (about 20,000), Kurdjali (about 140,000), Pazardjik (more than 20,000), Pleven (about 15,000), Plovdiv (about 50,000), Razgrad (about 80,000), Russe (about 35,000), Sliven (about 20,000), Stara Zagora (about 20,000), Silistra (about 50,000), Dobrich (about 35,000), Turgovishte (about 50,000), Shumen (about 65,000), Haskovo (more than 30,000). In the other provinces, the number of people who defined themselves as Turks in the census is less than 10,000, except the region of Blagoevgrad (more than 35,000), but this is a more specific situation which we will discuss later (the so-called AYakoruda case).

The majority of Bulgarian Turks are Sunni Muslims, far less numerous are the Shiite Muslims, the so-called AAlevi, who are often called AKizilbashi by the surrounding

population. The AKizilbash item was included in the census with the rather obvious intention of defining their community as an ethnic minority different from the Turks. However, this intention yielded no results. According to the 1992 census there are 83,537 Shiite Muslims in Bulgaria (most of the Alevi do not know that they are Shiite Muslims, since this term itself is unknown to them), and Turkish is the Amother tongue of 58,060 of them. For 18,342 of the Shiite Muslims the Amother tongue is Gypsy, but in reality Gypsies can hardly gain access to the closed Alevi communities. The Alevi are internally divided into Asects (such as the Bektashi in the province of Kurdjali) and most of them live in villages in the provinces of Razgrad, Turgovishte, Silistra, Dobritch, Shumen, Haskovo, Kurdjali and others.

Another relatively large Muslim community in Bulgaria are the Bulgarian Muslims (Pomaks). The greater part of this primarily rural population live mainly in the region of the Rhodope mountains. Furthermore, there is a small Pomak enclave (a few villages) along the northern slopes of Middle Stara Planina (the Balkan mountain) in the area around the town of Teteven. In the 1950s and 1960s many Bulgarian Muslims migrated towards northeastern Bulgaria (the provinces of Razgrad, Turgovishte, Veliko Turnovo and others), where they live in villages, scattered among the local Turkish population. Their preferential ethnic affiliation has a rather interesting geographically determined structure. For example, in the Western Rhodopes the Bulgarian Muslims pretend to be Turks, in the Middle Rhodopes they pretend to be Bulgarians, and in the Eastern Rhodopes and northeastern Bulgaria they prefer to describe their ethnic identity with the neutral term AMuslims. In some places there is a tendency to create another identity, uniquely their own, which is most often related to the term APomaks. A quasi-historical mythology is created on the level of folklore to support this belief, such as legends telling of Arabs who settled in the Rhodopes as far back as the time of the Byzantine Empire (8th-9th centuries) and brought Islam to the land and its people.

The number of this population cannot be defined precisely. According to the 1992 census, there were 170,934 Sunni Muslims living in Bulgaria, whose mother tongue was Bulgarian. According to unofficial information by the National Institute of Statistics, this figure has been Acorrected (which would hardly be something unprecedented for Bulgarian statistics). However, the actual data from the census were the following: about 120,000 people declared themselves as Bulgarians practicing Islam, whose mother tongue was Bulgarian; about 60,000 declared themselves as Turks practicing Islam, whose mother tongue was Bulgarian; about 65,000 defined their ethnic affiliation as APomak. Certainly, we should always be careful to view these figures with some

scepticism, but based on the category of Apreferential ethnic affiliation, we can roughly estimate the actual number of the Bulgarian Muslims (Pomaks) to be about 250,000 persons.

According to the preliminary results from the census of March 2001, 83,000, persons or 1.2% of the population declared themselves to be Bulgarian Muslims. This figure demonstrates once again that the processes of changing ethnic identity continue to be dynamic.

The number of Muslim Gypsies is equally unclear. According to the 1992 census, 104,831 persons were registered as Muslim Sunni Gypsies and 18,342 persons as Muslim Shiite Gypsies whose mother tongue is Gypsy. We have to consider not only the instances of Apreferential ethnic affiliation, whereby some Gypsies pretend to be Turks (some of these Muslim Gypsies are Turkish-speaking), but also the specific Gypsy religious consciousness.⁵ In general terms, Muslim Gypsies live in the provinces with a high Turkish population, and in western Bulgaria they are ATurkish Gypsies (i.e. Muslims) only in their memories, since they have changed their religion over the last hundred years and converted to Christianity.

The Tartars settled in Bulgarian lands at the time of the Ottoman Empire, and their settlements grew after the Crimean war when the Paris Treaty of 1856 allowed Tartars and Cherkez from the Crimea to leave Russia and settle in the Balkans. Some Tartars from the Crimea migrated to Turkey at different periods, others remained in Bulgaria and still live there. They underwent a long-lasting process of losing their mother tongue and identity which finally caused them to blend with the Turkish minority. In the 2001 census, 4,515 persons declared themselves to be Tartars, and 7,883 persons declared Tartar to be their mother tongue. Their actual number is probably 10,000-15,000, living mostly in the provinces of Dobritch, Silistra, Russe, Shumen and others.

Most Cherkez living in Bulgarian lands left the country after the war between Russia and Turkey (1877/1878), and the few who stayed behind are almost completely assimilated to the Turkish minority. At present the Cherkez in Bulgaria no longer exist as a separate community. These 573 persons who declared themselves as Cherkez in the 1992 census probably are no more than a few remaining individual cases.

When we speak about the Turkish minority in Bulgaria, we usually mention the group of AGagaouz. These are Turkish-speaking people, practicing Orthodox Christianity and living mostly in the provinces of Varna and Shumen. Many hypotheses have tried to explain the origin of the Gagaouz. Two theories are now dominant. The

⁵ For more details see the article on the Gypsy minority in Bulgaria in Volume 3.

first is that Gagaouz are descendants of Turk peoples (Old Bulgarians, Uz, Kumans) who came from the north during the First Bulgarian Kingdom. The second theory claims that they are descendants of Turk people who came from Asia Minor and settled on Bulgarian territory during the Ottoman Empire. At present, the Gagaouz are actively assuming Bulgarian identity, and in the 1992 census 1,478 persons declared themselves as Gagaouz. Their actual number must be in the range of 5,000 to 10,000 persons.

The disadvantages of the census, as well as the heightened sensitivity of Bulgarian society fostered by political activities, culminated in some bizarre events, the most curious being the AYakoruda case. As early as the eve of the 1992 census, the Bulgarian press started a strong campaign against the dangers of turning the Bulgarian Muslims into Turks. In response to this campaign, on 19 November 1992 the parliament organized a special inquiry committee, comprising representatives of all that parliamentary groups and headed by Vassil Zlatarev (UDF), to investigate the problems in the Western Rhodopes. In the 1992 census, 35,975 persons in the region of Blagoevgrad, mostly in the Gotse Delchev and Yakoruda counties, had declared themselves as Turks with Turkish as their mother tongue. These figures stirred up the media and society even further. Having visited the areas of Gotse Delchev and Satovcha, the committee delivered a report to the Parliament, signed by all the committee members (representatives of BSP and UDF), except of Arif Mustakli (MRF). Some of the conclusions and recommendations made in the report deserve mentioning:

The population in the villages along the Mesta river, in the Western Rhodopes and Eastern Rila Mountains neither use nor know Turkish [...] The Mohammedan religion is identified with Turkish ethnic national affiliation which serves a foreign doctrine. [...] The toponymic system, seen in all its aspects, refers to the presence of a Bulgarian population from older times until nowadays. Throughout the years and centuries, Bulgarian family names, Bulgarian place names, including Christian customs, have been preserved. [...] Due to the systematic mistakes of the census-takers, and due to other reasons as well, the results in items 11, 12 and 13 of the census lists (ethnic affiliation, mother tongue and religion) will be deformed. The characteristics in these items are interrelated, they interact with each other, hence the final combinations (between ethnos, religion and mother tongue) are impossible as a total combination; and the results are

illogical, instead of historically true (Bulgarian, Mohammedan, Bulgarian mother tongue). [...] The principle of voluntary determination of ethnic affiliation and mother tongue of the students as well as of the whole population, was not internally violated and instances of direct physical violence were not registered. [...]

The analysis of this abundant information shows that the active participation of local authorities and administration has been geared towards making Bulgarian Muslims believe that they are Turks. At the same time, the Bulgarian Christians are being pressured, they feel uncertain and hopeless, reinforced by the complete lack of interest of state institutions.

All attempts to inspire Turkish ethnic self-consciousness should be interrupted immediately. A comprehensive policy towards this population should be adopted in order to achieve national consolidation and true national unity.

On the basis of these observations the Inquiry Committee suggests that the Parliament should take the following decisions:

1. To declare invalid the results of items 11, 12 and 13 of the census, held in December 1992 (ethnic affiliation, mother tongue and religion)
2. [...] To make all materials collected available to the Council of Ministers and the Prosecutor's Office in view of obtaining their opinion on the issue. [...]
3. The parliamentary groups, through their authorized representatives, should make a statement in Parliament regarding the nature of Bulgarian Mohammedans B Bulgarians who were forcibly converted to Islam after 1628 or Turks who have forgotten their language as a result of Bulgarian violence after 1912.

The report of the Inquiry Committee was subjected to parliamentary discussions on 21 January 1993, but the debate did not start before 21 May 1993. After several stormy debates, on 17 September 1993 parliament voted in favour of a special decision, declaring invalid the results obtained from items 11, 12 and 13 of the census (ethnic affiliation, mother tongue and religion) held in the Yakoruda and Gotse Delchev counties as Airrelevant to the actual circumstances. The decision was supported with 165 votes out of 186 (the representatives of BSP and UDF voted in favour of the decision); the parliamentary group of MRF (whose government was in power at that time) opposed to this decision.

The population census of 1992 does not present us a last insight into the situation of

the Turkish and the other Muslim minorities in Bulgaria. As we have already mentioned, emigration to Turkey is continuing. The queues in front of the Turkish consulates in Plovdiv, Burgas and Varna are an every-day phenomenon. The problem of separated families and the illegal smuggling of children to Turkey is especially poignant.

In Turkey, now there are big quarters of Bulgarian Turkish immigrants, mainly in Bursa and Istanbul. Most of the migrants from the last period of emigration are already Turkish citizens; about 350,000 persons emigrated from 1989 to 1993. Another 200,000 immigrants from Bulgaria now live in Turkey with an uncertain status; about 100,000 persons hold temporary residency permits and have the right to apply for citizenship, the others are merely illegal. These numbers are approximate, because there is no precise statistical information in Bulgaria or Turkey. There are certain discrepancies in the data. For example, according to Gultekin Karaman, leader of the immigrant organization ABalkanlarar, the number of immigrants from Bulgaria to Turkey for the period 1989-1997 is 750,000 persons, out of which 450,000 have received Turkish passports. The latest idea in Turkey was to introduce so-called Agreeen cards and cancel the visa requirement. However, it is not yet clear whether or not this idea will become reality.

The attempts of the Turkish and Bulgarian governments to regulate the multitude of problems have so far yielded no tangible results. The problems have been discussed many times, at different levels, including at talks between the two heads of state, prime ministers and foreign ministers. Both sides lack a clear-cut position on how the problem should be solved. Be it a special agreement for immigration, dual citizenship status or another form of regularizing the current situation. The UDF government succeeded in concluding an agreement for the payment of pensions to the emigrants from Bulgaria, and in 2001 the Turkish government unilaterally abolished the visa obligation for Bulgarian citizens. In this way the problems were alleviated and temporarily subdued (without reaching an ultimate solution).

If we have to summarize the outcomes of the latest wave of emigration (from 1989 to the present), the conclusions we have drawn will seem somewhat paradoxical. What the former communist regime tried to achieve (emigration of the greater part of the Turkish and other Muslim minorities) and could not achieve by means of the Revival process, political decisions and forceful administrative actions, was actually accomplished in the period of transition towards democracy and modern economy under the influence of the ongoing social and economic processes. That is why the following episode of Bulgaria's most recent history should not be perceived as

ridiculous B after a long Ahouse arrest former party and state leader Todor Zhivkov visited a local festival in the region of Yundola in the Rhodope mountains in summer 1997. Todor Zhivkov, who personally was responsible for the Aprocess of revival, received a warm welcome from large groups of Bulgarian Muslims B the very same people who were the first and maybe the most seriously affected victims of the policy of the communist state, who held up arms against the attempts to change their names in the 1960s and 1970s and were among the first to restore their names after the political changes in 1989.

Concluding remarks

The Turkish and other Muslim minorities in Bulgaria have walked along a lengthy and complex road. We can hardly expect their development have reached a conclusion or their present situation to be the final one. On the contrary, we have to remember that we are living in very dynamic and continuously changing times. The changes will affect not only the migration movements, but the quantitative parameters of the Turkish and other Muslim communities as well. We are now witnessing a rapid development of a number of Aqualitative parameters, such as key tendencies of identity development, which are most typical of Bulgarian Muslims.

In this respect, the future of the smaller Muslim communities (except the Turkish community, or at least its majority) is hard to predict. Most probably, some of the Asmaller Muslim communities will gradually begin to gravitate towards the Turkish minority, but an end of these centuries-long processes is not to be foreseen. We cannot expect to see a strict division of the ethnic and religious identities which are still connected and intertwined in a syncretic unity. Maybe the Bulgarian Muslims will develop from an ethnic and religious community to an ethnic community only (though the tendencies for such a trend are still rather weak at the present stage of community development).

We should not forget that the development of the Turkish and the other Muslim minorities is greatly influenced by the social, economic and political situation in Bulgaria and the changes (or absence of such) in the social consciousness of the Bulgarian people.

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