THE TURKS OF BULGARIA

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The Bulgarian Government asserts that, some time between 1984 and 1985, its Moslem population "voluntarily and collectively" chose to change its Turkish names to Bulgarian ones and it has likewise decided to abandon a number of national customs and rituals. According to the official Bulgarian explanation, the reason for this turn of events was the "rebirth of the Bulgarian self-consciousness of Moslems". The Bulgarian account described the changes as "completely voluntary" and denied that there ever were violent actions to change names or suppress ethnic traditions. According to the same view, it was just like changing the names of cities, villages, rivers, lakes and places, just like calling the "Congo" of yesterday "Zaire" now or the present designation of the former "Southern Rhodesia" as "Zimbabwe". "Bulgarian Moslems", as they were now termed, were citizens of Bulgaria, and consequently, whatever transformations, conversions or reorganizations might take place, they were internal matters for Bulgaria.

Several conclusions may be deduced from these authorized claims: i.e., Moslems are not ethnic Turks, but Bulgarians now turning to their true awareness; the changes are spontaneous; they are, Moslems or not, Bulgarian citizens, and the whole issue is a matter for domestic concern only.

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The history of the Balkans during the Ottoman period as well as several bilateral and international treaties indicate that there have always been Moslem Turks living in Bulgaria since the Fourteenth Century. Some of these documents that clearly refer to the Moslem Turks also bear the signature of Bulgaria. Further, overwhelming evidence shows that Bulgarian authorities have forced the Turks to change their names to Bulgarian ones as well as to discourage ethnic and religious customs and to prevent the use of the Turkish language. It is reported

that Turks suffered inhuman treatment, arbitrary arrest and death. Evidence suggests that the ultimate objective of the Bulgarian authorities is to eradicate the identity of the Turks, who constitute the most numerous minority in that country.

Bulgarians openly admit that the names of their Moslem citizens have been changed. The Turks are compelled to have their newly-imposed names written on the gates of their houses. A fine is imposed on individuals who address each other by their original names. Speaking Turkish in public sometimes attracts a penalty, which is difficult to pay. Even Turkish names on tombstones are erased. Turkish schools are closed down. Bulgarian teachers replaced the Turkish ones. Several practices such as circumcision, fasting, pilgrimage, daily prayers and religious burials, in accordance with Islamic laws, are reported as prohibited. Circumcisers, as well as parents of circumcised children, are imprisoned. In their raid of Turkish houses, the Bulgarian security forces destroyed items that indicated Turkish identity. Organized gathering of Turks are forcibly disrupted. Travel for the Turkish minority is severely restricted. Curfews have been imposed on them. Some Turkish villages are sealed off. Turks have been forced to sign papers saying that they do not wish to emigrate to Turkey, and those who refuse are sent into internal exile.

The offical Bulgarian explanation for this unusual phenomenan is that the Moslems have instantaneously realized their Bulgarian identity. But this assertion is contradicted even by Bulgarian scholarly publications and offical statements prior to 1984. Even an offical Bulgarian history book, very fault-finding with Turkish presence in Bulgaria, admits that the **Turks** came over from Asia (that is, they are not Turkified Bulgarians), that they were the second (after the Bulgarians) largest ethnical group, that they settled there between the 15th and the 18th centuries.[1] A Sofia Press book is very clear on the subject. It says that the **Turks** constitute the largest minority group and that they settled at a time when the Balkan Peninsula formed part of the Ottoman Empire. The same source separates the **Turks** from the Pomaks, that is, the Bulgarians who embraced Islam.[2] Another important Bulgarian historical work underlines that the **Turks** constitute the largest ethnical minority and that they had come from Asia Minor.[3] A Bulgarian textbook of geography states that the **Turks** form about 9 percent of the population and that they had arrived from Anatolia. The book further enumerates the localities

[1] Nikolai Todorov, Lyubomir Dinev and Lyuben Melnishki, **Bulgaria: Historical and Georgraphical Outline**, Sofia, 1968, pp. 84, 198-199.

[2] Spass Russinov, **Bulgaria: A Survey**, Sofia, Sofia Press, 1969, pp. 14-15.

[3] Hristo Hristov, **Bulgaria: 1300 Years**, Sofia, Sofia Press, 1980, pp. 63 and 240.

where the **Turks** predominate.[4] An official publication, printed by the Sofia Press, as late as 1981, repeats the same fact: "In Bulgaria there are now several religious communities. The most numerous is that of the Bulgarians belonging to the East Orthodox Church. The second largest community, although by far less numerous, is that of Bulgarian **Turks** belonging to the Moslem religion..."[5] These quotations are not exceptional ones. Official or academic works on various aspects of Bulgaria acknowledged the existence of ethnic **Turks**, who settled in Bulgaria coming over from Asia.

Several statements by Todor Zhivkov, the President of the State Council of Bulgaria, made prior to 1984, are in line with the above facts. He acknowledged the existence of Turks on various occasions. He repeated the same in a speech delivered on May 28, 1962 in a Razgrad village, in a letter to the Turkish-language review **Yeni Hayat** (on the occasion of the latter's tenth anniversary) and in an exclusive interview to Robert Maxwell, the editor of the **Daily Mirror.** The interview is also printed in a book entitled **Todor Zhivkov, Statesman and Builder of New Bulgaria.**[6] Admitting the separate existence of the **Turks** of Bulgaria on the one hand and Bulgarian Moslems on the other, Zhivkov states that the **Turks** form the "second biggest faith", that there are "more than 1300 mosques, 8 distinct **mufti** offices with a chief **mufti** office and 570 district **imams**", that the mosques are "open at any time", that the **Yeni Işık** (with a 20,000 circulation) and **Yeni Hayat** (with a 10.000 circulation) is published in **Turkish**, that there are "regular daily 4-hour broadcasts in the Turkish language" as well as "artistic ensembles... in the towns of Shoumen, Kırjali and Razgard, which perform Turkish programs", that classical works of Turkish literature and by contemporary Turkish writers are printed and that "special text-books in Turkish are published.

Bulgarian publications and official statements stir a different course after 1984. Many assert that there were no Turks in Bulgaria to begin with and that they were "Turkified Bulgars" with the right to change their name. To change one's name if one wishes to do so contrasts dramatically with forceful change of names of a whole people. Some authors[7] made the incredible suggestion that the mother tongue of the Turks of Bulgaria were not the language of the Turkish nation. There may be

[4] Ljubomir Dinev and Kiril Mishov, Bulgaria: **Short Geography**, Sofia, 1975, pp. 154, 165-166.

[5] Mehmed Topchiev, **Mosques and Moslems in Bulgaria**, Sofia, Sofia Press, 1981, introduction.

[6] Pergamon Press, 1982, pp. 371-474.

[7] For instance: Orlin Zagorov, **The Truth**, Sofia, Sofia Press, 1987, p. 117.

minor differences in terms of choice of words or diction even among the citizens of the same nation-state, but this kind of differentiation is of secondary importance. What is sum and substance is the fact that the people of Turkey and the Turks of Bulgaria speak the same language — Turkish. Orlin Zagorov's book, which reflects official Bulgarian views (with occasional and highly objectionable personal explanations) is replete with factual errors. A host of fallacies, inaccuracies and misconceptions may be cited in a longer essay. Let me give only two examples. Zagorov mentions 1930 as the year of the death of Atatürk (p. 153) whereas the correct date is 1938. He misspells his successor's name (ismet İnönü) as "Yinbonu" (!). Another Bulgarian booklet (in spite of numerous evidence to the contrary, such as Armenian, Greek and Jewish daily papers, books, tapes and cassettes) has the audacity to state that only Turkish material can be released in Turkey.[8]

While many Bulgarian statements stress the delusion that today's Turkish-speaking people in Bulgaria were descendants of Bulgarians forcibly made Moslems, others (like another Sofia Press book)[9] assert that there were predominantly state representatives, who withdrew with the receding Ottoman army after the war of 1878. The truth is that, not only there were substantial civilian Turkish settlements, but many of their sons and daughters stayed behind, as evidenced by proper references to them in several treaties signed with the Bulgarians after 1878. The fact that some chose to remain on the land of their birth is no proof by itself that they are Bulgarians. For the Turks as well, that corner of the Balkans is their counrty, their place of habitation for centuries, where they own land, dwelling place and engage in work. Just like some Palestinians who stayed behind while some became refugees, some Turks preferred to remain in Bulgaria while others emigrated. The Sofia Press book tries to explain that Turkish publications were terminated because they were of "nobody's interest". What this official Bulgarian monograph describes as "nobody" happens to constitute 10 percent of the population.

The Turks of Bulgaria are **not** originally Bulgarians forcibly converted to Islam. There are, not only Turkish historians who produced scientific monographs supported by numerous and diversified documents, but a host of non-Turkish scholars who printed manifold works, all exposing the irrefutable fact that the Turkish tribes settled in all corners of the Balkan Peninsula, including Bulgaria.

[8] Stefan Solakov, **Dangerous Play: Notes of a Correspondent**, Sofia, Sofia Press, 1987, p. 28.

[9] **The Truth About Bulgarian Moslems**, Sofia, Sofia Press, 1986, p. 5.

Conversely, several Bulgarian sources state that the Bulgars were originally a Turkic ethnic group, later Christianized and Slavized.[10] **The History of Bulgaria** for the Tenth and Eleventh Grades of Bulgarian schools states that the proto-Bulgarians were originally Oghuz Turks, that they belong to the Turkish nomads who moved in the Second Century from Central Asia towards Europe, settling at first on the Caucasian territory between the Caspian and the Black Seas and that they were referred to as proto-Bulgarians for the first time in 334.[11]

The Turks who settled in Bulgaria are sometimes referred to as Turcomans, "Yürüks", Tatars, Koniars or as "Evlâd-ı Fatihân" (the Children of the Conquerors) in various academic expositions. Non-Turkish scholars such as Baker (**Die Türken in Europa,** 1879), Lejean (**Ethnographie de la Turquie d'Europe,** 1861), Oberhummer (**Die Türken und Osmanische Reich,** 1917), Tsakyroglou ("Die Yürüken", **Separatdrucks aus Ausland,** 1891), Truhelka ("Über die Balkan Yürüken", **Revue internationale des études Balkaniques,** 1934), Jirecek (**Das Fürstentum Bulgarien,** 1891), Vambéry (**Das Türkenvolk,** 1895), Gyula (**A honfoglalo magyarsag kialakulasa,** 1930), Bayraktarevic ("Yürük", **Encyclopedie de l'Islam,** IV) and others have all defined them as **Turks.** They are at times referred to by different names, not on account of ethnic differences, but because of their nomad way of life. They all indicate that some Turkish groups were described in accordance with the characteristics of their economic existence. For instance, some nomad Turkish tribes that moved from place to place were called "Yürüks" (from "yürümek", in Turkish, meaning to walk), but their mother tongue was Turkish, all being the descendants of the Turcomans (Türkmen) from Central Asia. Consequently, the people called Türkmen in the East, but Oghuz or Seljuk in the South were generally referred to as Yürüks in the Balkans. They are one and the same people. Research done by a host of leading non-Turkish historians portray their physical traits, way of life, language and religion.

Although the bulk of Turkish settlement in the whole of the Balkans, including Bulgaria, may be traced back to the appearance of the early Ottomans in the Gelibolu (Gallipoli) Peninsula in mid-Fourteenth Century, there are indications that several arms of the same people reached the Balkans from the north passing the Danube. Byzantium sources cite such settlements supported by the government in Constantinople. Large groups of Turks from Konya (Konia) in Central Anatolia

[10] Dimitr Markovski, **The Short History of Bulgaria,** Sofia, Sofia Press, 1982, p. 11; Nikola Todorov, **Bulgarian History,** Sofia, Sofia Press, 1975, p. 7.

[11] Al. Burmov, D. Kocev and Hr. Hristov, **Istoriya na Bulgariya,** Sofia, Narodna Prosveta, 1970, p. 23.

were rehabilitated by Byzantium as guarantee against the Bulgarians. Several historians (Traeger, Oberhummer, d'Espery) concur that the name given to these early Turks, that is the "Koniars", was on account of their association with that Anatolian city. Other Turkish dwellers from Konia continued to be sent to the Balkans in the later centuries. They are as Turkish as the Kuraishis are Arab, or the Andalusians are Spanish.

The Yürüks[12] set foot on Balkan soil starting with the Fourteenth Century. Earlier Ottoman historian-travellers (Evliya Çelebi, Aşık Paşazade, Oruç Bey, Lütfü Paşa) refer, in their classical works, either to their encounter with the Yürüks in several spots of the peninsula or their mere presence there. Evidence produced by Turkish and foreign sources establishes that influx from various parts of Anatolia continued uninterruptedly.

There were also Tatars among the first Turkish groups setting foot in the Balkans. More Tatar groups came to Bulgaria, especially in and around Filibe (Plovdiv) during the Timurite invasion. The Ottoman Empire later resettled some Crimean Tatars close to Dobrudja.[13] The term "Tatar" was mistakenly applied to many non-Tataric peoples as well. It was used at various times in a general linguistic sense to designate various Turkic peoples and in a general religious sense to name Moslem populace. They are actually the descendants of the Kypchak division of the Turkic peoples, who adopted Sunni Islam. The Kypchak are a tribe of the Uzbeks (also Turkic) who form a group (culturally and linguistically) between the Uzbeks and Kazakhs, the latter being closely related to the Kirghiz and the Karakalpaks (both Turkic). There are also the "Gagauz", who speak a Turkish dialect, but who belong to the Eastern Orthodox Church. They regard themselves as Christianized Turks.

The present Turks of Bulgaria are mainly descendants of the Yürük Turks. There is abundant information on the settlement and the organization of the Yürüks in the Laws Code **(Kanunnâme)** of Ottoman Sultan Mehmed I, in the tax registers, **waqf** (pious foundations) documents and other records **(tahrir defterleri)**. They all show their numbers, possessions and duties. Separate registers have been kept for different groups of Turks, who acquire names after their chiefs, some distinctive peculiarity or original place of residence. The Turks of Naldöken, Tanrıdağı (Karagöz), Selânik, Ofcabolu or Kocacık derive their name from one of these

[12] M Tayyib Gökbilgin, **Rumeli'de Yürükler, Tatarlar ve Evlâd-ı Fatihân**, İstanbul, Edebiyat Fakültesi, 1957.

[13] Müstecip Fazıl, **Dobruca ve Türkler**, Köstence, 1940.

attributes. There are official registers for all of them, indicating in detail the place and membership of each sub-division (**ocak**), their exact contribution to the army, their occupation and the taxes (if any) paid.

The names of the individual Turks themselves derive either from the original Turkish (Burak, Kılıç, Korkut, Saltık), after fauna (Atmaca, Arslan, Doğan, Karaca, Kurt, Şahin), nature (Ağaç, Budak, Kaya, Toprak), religious or Arabic attributes (Ali, Abdullah, Ahmed, Osman, Ömer), and derivatives from Turkish adjectives (Alagöz, Boz, Karaca) or verbs (Dursun, Güvendik, Gündoğdu). The names of villages and town are invariably and unquestionably as Anadolulu, Karahisarlı, Aladağlı, İstanbullu, Karamanlı). So are the names of pastures, woodlands, rocks, streams and springs (Çalıovası, Çatalorman, Kurtkayası, Tavşanderesi, Koyunpazarı, etc.). Detailed maps have been printed showing the Turkish settlements in Bulgaria, not only in general terms, but also specifically in respect to various groups classified by their origin. Consequently, as a noted Bulgarian historian admits, even the majority of the Sofia population was Turkish.[14]

The history of the Turkish minority press is another assuring evidence of the existence of the Turkish-speaking people. After the initial **Tuna** (in Turkish), published in Rusçuk (Russe) in 1865, around forty other Turkish papers were printed during the era of Bulgarian principality. Between the years 1908 and 1941, the number of the newspapers reached 67, and the Turkish journals totalled 13. If this number was reduced to zero in 1941, it was because the fascist junta then had closed them one by one, starting with 1934. The Turkish minority press was eradicated, not because the Turks had ceased to exist, but (as the post-1944 Bulgarian Government had put it) on account of the fascist era of "terror and darkness". After the Second World War, five Turkish newspapers and one Turkish journal started publication. However, the last issue of the last paper in Turkish, namely **Yeni Işık** (New Light) was printed on January 29, 1985. Since then nothing in Turkish has ever been printed.

Turkish minority literature in Bulgaria is another premise indicating the reality of the Turkish entity in that country. No poetry, short stories and novels in Turkish were published after 1969. Beginning with 1957, however, the "Narodna Prosveta" Publishing House had started with an anthology of poetry (edited by B. Çakırov and H. Karahüseyinov) but ceased printing Turkish titles after T. Tahsinov's prose work. The writings of no less than fifty-one Turkish authors were thus printed within the short span of twelve years. Literature in Turkish is simply discontinued.

[14] Todorov, **op. cit.**, pp. 38-39.

How can a minority disappear completely within a year? How can more than a million Turks be erased from the pages of history? The incredible official explanation that there never was a Turkish minority in Bulgaria has been greeted by an international chorus of ridicule. Even the Bulgarian report, dated August 15, 1984, and submitted to the United Nations accepts the fact that there are citizens of Turkish, Gypsy, Armenian, Jewish, Greek and other origins in Bulgaria. These forthright statements have disappeared from the 1986 Bulgarian report, issued seventeen months later.

With the experience gained and the success scored in the case of assimilating various smaller minorities such as the Gypsies, Pomaks, Macedonians, Armenians and Albanians, the Bulgarian Government laid hands on the sizable Turkish minority. It started with the smallest ones and finally engulfed the Turks.

How many people have heard about these minorities in Bulgaria? For instance, the Pomaks? They are estimated to be around 250,000. Their mother tongue is Bulgarian, but religion and customs Islamic. There were earlier reports that the Pomaks (and the Moslem Gypsies) were subjected to pressure to renounce their religious identity and exchange their Islamic names for Bulgarian ones. This coercion and discrimination went generally unnoticed. Or take the Gagauz, a Turkish-speaking Christian people. Although they were the descendants of the Seljuk Turks,[15] they were also assimilated.

Bulgaria also claims that the Macedonians, including those living in neighbouring Yugoslavia and Greece, are ethnic Bulgarians. The Greeks, on the other hand, consider them as original Greeks. The Macedonians, however, believe that they are neither. According to the Bulgarian population statistics of 1956, there were 189,000 Macedonians in Bulgaria, of whom 179,000 lived in south-western Bulgaria known as Pirin Macedonia. In other words, 63.6 percent of the population there was listed as Macedonians. After 1956, Bulgarian statistics considerably reduced their number and then no longer mentioned them, and Bulgarian writers began to explain why their country had the right to all of Macedonia.[16]

[15] Aurel Decei, "Le Problème de la colonization des Turcs Seljoukides dans la Dobrogea au XIIIe siècle", **Tarih Araştırmaları Dergisi**, V, I (1968), pp. 65-111; Machiel Kiel, "The Türbe of Sarı Saltuk at Babadağ, Dobrudja: Brief Historical and Architectionical Notes", **Güney-Doğu Avrupa Araştırmaları Dergisi**, 6-7 (1978), pp. 205-220.

[16] Stoyan Pribichevich, **Macedonia: Its People and History**, University Park, the Pennsylvania State University Press, 1982, pp. 250f.

The Bulgarization of the Turkish minority followed these earlier attempts. It was conducted at gun point. Reports from various credible sources (such as Amnesty International,[17] the Helsinki Watch Report[18] and the Norwegian Helsinki Committee[19]) have corroborated the harshness of the assimilation campaign. It is reported[20] that, starting on December 23, 1984, with the hamlet of Gorski Isvor in the southern province of Kirjali, the Bulgarian tanks, military, police force, fire vehicles and dogs, surrounded the Turkish towns, soldiers going from door to door with the mission to ensure that each one of the large Turkish minority agreed to change his or her name.

Bulgaria sealed off Turkish areas. The authorities prevented communication between Turks in Bulgaria and their relatives in Turkey by cutting the line of telephone conversations in Turkish and by returning letters addressed to the original names of the Turks to the sending party as stamped "addressee unknown". Various sources reported that as many as 100 resisters were killed during the initial campaign. Amnesty International compiled a list of names of more than 250 ethnic Turks who were arrested and imprisoned for resisting the name-change program.

Abdullah Yumerov, Hasan Durakov, Mumin Tasimov and Hasan Tasimov were among the first who were dragged away for refusing to sign the official forms declaring them "re-named". They and hundreds —or thousands— who followed them, became nameless and virtually disappeared. Once put in prison, even their close relatives did not know whom to ask for. Yusuf Bilâloğlu (re-named Yosif Yosefov) says: "Suddenly it was a crime to call to your child when he was about to be hit by a car".[21]

The Turks continued to protest as the campaign reached one village after another. Thousands appeared before the town hall of Benkovski. The Bulgarian soldiers and police are reported to have used fire hoses and tear-gas to disperse the crowd and finally fired, killing some and wounding others. Among the resisting Turkish farmers of Yablanova, over thirty was reportedly crushed by tanks and one of their leader hanged.[22] Other resisters were beaten, tortured and sent to the notorious

[17] Amnesty International, **Bulgaria: Imprisonment of Ethnic Turks**, London, 1986.
[18] Helsinki Watch, **Destroying Ethnic Identity: the Turks of Bulgaria, an Update**, New York, 1987.
[19] Den Norske Helsingforskomite, **The Repression of the Turkish and Islamic Minority in Bulgaria**, Oslo, 1987.
[20] Thomas Goltz, "The People Who Lost Their Names", **Reader's Digest**, November 1987.
[21] **Ibid.**, p. 116.
[22] **Idem.**

Belene Island prison. A concentration camp in Haskovo was enlarged in November 1984, and several thousand Turks were incarcerated there in early 1985.

Only a few of the ethnic Turks have been able to escape to tell their experience. Yusuf Bilaloğlu and two Metanoğlu brothers (Sait and Hüseyin), who dug a tunnel and escaped first to Greece and then migrated to Turkey, provided the first eyewitness accounts. Although brothers, the last two were given different surnames in order to split up the family's common heritage. For instance, Sait Mestanoğlu was named Svilen Kalagiev and his brother Hüseyin Mestanoğlu became Assen Mladinov.

The annual Guide to the P.R. of Bulgaria, dated December 20, 1984, lists (in p. 140) that Mehmet Topchiev is the Chief **Mufti** of the "Moslem **Turks**"[23] of Bulgaria. The same page lists "Bulgarian Moslems" separately, under **Mufti** Çavdar Iliev. The Guide of the following year (December 20, 1985), However, records (again in p. 140) the same person under a Bulgarized name (Miran Topchiev), this time as the Chief **Mufti** of the Bulgarian Moslems — Turks as such having ceased to exist (!).

Halil Ahmet İbişoğlu, a Turkish member of the Bulgarian Parliament from Medevetz (Varna) and who later fled to Turkey via Yugoslavia with two of his three sons, was re-named as Lyubomir Alexiev Avdjiev. Not only he himself was given a typical Bulgarian first name, but also his father's name was "changed" to be "Alexiev" (instead of the original "Ahmet"). İbişoğlu, who testified before the U.S. Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe (Washington, D.C., 1987),[24] stated that the Bulgarian authorities subsequently asked him to appear on TV and declare that he and others had changed their names voluntarily; he refused to make this announcement. The police wanted him to report to them the actions of his kinsmen; he did not accept this either. The Varna District Committee warned him that if he opposed the decisions of the Communist Party, he would, not only lose his membership in the Parliament, but also he would never be able to see his spouse and children.

The Bulgarian authorities summoned Turkish intellectuals to a meeting of the National Soviet in Sofia, read a "protest letter" addressed to the Turkish Prime Minister and forced them to sign it. There were about fifty of them, who did not know why they had been gathered there. They hesitated to sign, but nevertheless affixed their signatures under

[23] Italics mine.

[24] **Hearing Before the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, One-Hundredth Congress, First Session, Part I: National Minorities in Eastern Europe, the Turkish Minority in Bulgaria**, Washington, D.C., 1987, pp. 20-25.

pressure. The Turkish intellectuals included several social scientists with graduate degrees in history or philosophy, journalists (from the daily **Nova Svetlina**, the periodical **Nov Zhivot** and the Sofia TV), regional administrators from Kırjali, Tirgovishta, Silistre and Pleven, **muftis** from Burgas, Shemen, Tolbuhin, Plovdiv and Razgrad, heads of construction, mining and tobacco brigades as well as outstanding sportsmen.

The last-mentioned category included the celebrated Naim Süleymanoğlu (changed to Naum Shalamanov), world weight-lifting champion who later escaped to Turkey and stated in several occasions that he and others were forced to sign the so-called "Open Letter" and that the names of about a million and-a-half Turks left in Bulgaria were all changed under coercion. He defected while in Australia for the World Cup (1986). After he broke his 30th world record in the 1988 Seoul Olympics (competing in the Turkish team), his seven-member family (who had supposedly realized their "Bulgraian self-conciousness" and who had changed their names "voluntarily") were allowed to come to Turkey and immediately announced that all ethnic traditions were suppressed.

There are long lists of spouses and children, transmitted to the Bulgarian Government, still waiting for family reunification in Turkey. In quest for uniting families, the Turks would say that they want "Fatma", and the Bulgarians would reply that they have there "Finka" instead. As both sides refuse to use the other's designation, they sometimes speak of "Case 102".

Soon after news of the name-changing campaign leaked at the beginning of 1985, Turkey offered to accept the ethnic Turks who opted to immigrate. But Bulgaria is equally consistent, ever since the end of 1984, to deny the existence of a single Turk in the entire country.

Today, Turks, unable to present an identity card bearing a Bulgarian name, are subject to restrictions such as the following: (a) authorities do not issue a birth certificate to newly-born Turkish babies unless they are given a Bulgarian name; (b) the state refuses to pay money (including salaries, wages and pensions) to Turks unless they apply with Bulgarian names; (c) Turkish workers are refused access to their places of work without their new identity cards; (d) they cannot withdraw or deposit money in any bank unless they produce an identity card bearing a Bulgarian name; and (e) no marriage is registered unless the parties apply with Bulgarian names.

There are original "affidavits" in Bulgarian, which state the following: "I (name) the undersigned, do solemnly declare that I will speak

only Bulgarian in public places and at work and that I will answer only to my Bulgarian name. (Signature)". Turks were forced to make similar declarations at meetings or work-places. Those who did not comply were dismissed, exiled or imprisoned. The local Turkish religious leaders who exhorted their followers to refuse the new names are reported to have disappeared from their mosques.

Copies of several official Bulgarian documents circulate proving that the Turks are being penalized for their resistance to Bulgarization. For instance, "Order No. 5" by the Communal Council of Stambolovo, signed on August 3, 1984, states that "the wearing of **shalvar** by the Turkish population and the use of the Turkish language" are prohibited. The order continues that persons wearing them and speaking Turkish shall not be served in commercial premises, that everyone shall speak only Bulgarian in kindergartens and that measures will be taken against all those who violate the order. Turks are often found "guilty" for speaking in their mother tongue. For instance, a Turk, residing in Georgi Dimitrov Street, 90/3 in Kirjali and re-named "Saso Yordanov Stoyanov", was found to have committed an offense, as recorded in a Bulgarian document dated December 11, 1985, for speaking Turkish. Similarly, "Ordinance No. 21" of the Asenovgrad Krepost, dated January 16, 1985, and signed by engineer Z. Basamakov, states that the attendance sheets on the job should be kept with the Bulgarian names, that the same requirements apply to issuing travel documents, sick leaves and other manuscripts, that the use of the Turkish language should cease and that all individuals not presenting records with the new names would not be admitted to work.

Hence, once Abdullah, Ali, Cengiz, Halil, Hasan, Hüseyin, İbrahim, İsmail, Mehmet, Naim, Osman, Ömer or Yusuf became Assen, Alex, Jenyo, Mikhail, Ilko, Ivailo, Naum, Svilen or Yosif. With the stroke of a pen, a large minority of over one million people comprising 10 percent of the population "vanished". Bulgaria conducted a new census in 1985, at the conclusion of which it announced that there were no ethnic Turks in the country.

Even if all the Moslems were converts, which is false, this could in no way justify the forceful changing of names and the brute way of suppressing age-old customs or the general oppression of a people who believe themselves to be Turks ethnically and Moslems religiously. Prior to 1984, there was no nationalistic (or religious) movement such as demonstrations that could have created a fear on the part of the Bulgarian Government that the Turks there were preparing for an overthrow of

the existing authority. The "crime" of the Turks seems to be that they were becoming increasingly numerous as well as increasingly young whereas the Bulgarians tended to have only one child per family and turned into a geriatric society of lesser numbers. Whatever the reasons may be, when all manifestations of the Bulgarization policy and practices are considered, they seem to be those of discrimination.

Furthermore, the Turkish minority in Bulgaria represents a culture which may be defined as a complex whole including belief, morals, customs or other habits acquired by individuals as members of a group. Although there are theories underlining the unity of cultures, there is still emphasis on the plurality of local cultures. In spite of the debates between the theorists of the "culture patterns" and those of "social structure", the contenders generally recognize the existence of both "culture" and "society". According to the former, culture consists of patterns of behaviour acquired by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievement of human groups. Its essential core is historically-derived ideas and especially the values attached to them. Its simplest patterns include behaviour expressed in customs such as dress, diet or salutation. The complex patterns embrace social organization and the systems of religion, language and the like. Some of them persist for hundreds of years. They have psychological corelates in individual traits. The patterns persist in spite of changes in items of culture content. Patterns themselves may also "drift", but the issue of "continuity" and "change" is much more complex than the official Bulgarian suggestion of "collective voluntariness" and "spontaneity".

Consequently, cultural growth is a long historical process, related with the individual, group and environment. It is so multiple and cumulative that specific external causes, introduced at a particular moment cannot play a deterministic role. Within this context, changing the names of individuals cannot be compared to changing the names of places. Any cultural entity, including the Turks of Bulgaria, may be studied and restudied at different periods. Such entities may even show some changes in their doing, thinking and feeling. But there are standardized ways, or sets of rules, implicit or explicit, that link members of a group together. They form a total behaviour, including speech, association or even a simple ritual such as circumcision of male children. The prevention of this Moslem requirement adversely affect, not only the Turks, but also the Pomaks and the Gypsies in Bulgaria.

The issue of the Turks in Bulgaria has been raised in several forums at the United Nations. The Turkish Prime Minister referred to it in his

address to the General Assembly (October 22, 1985). In addition, as stated above, the U.N. Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination received two versions of a report by Bulgaria on its observance of the international convention on the matter. Signatories of that convention submit periodic reports to the U.N. Committee. Bulgaria forwarded two consecutive reports which contradicted each other. The first, on August 15, 1984,[25] differs fundamentally from the second, dated January 7, 1986.[26] The latter eliminates all references to the Turkish and other minorities. All the references in the first version to the people of "Turkish origin", to the publications in Turkish and their cultural development disappeared in the latter report, which was duly discussed by the U.N. Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. Many committee members raised the issue of the ethnic Turks and underscored differences between the first and the second versions of the report, as well the previous ones presented by Bulgaria. They had all asserted that an ethnic minority existed in Bulgaria. Several members expressed profound skepticism about Bulgarian explanations and suggested an independent investigation. The Bulgarian representative at the U.N. stated that his government would under no circumstances agree to such an inquiry.

It is beyond doubt that all the people of Bulgaria, whether speaking Bulgarian or Turkish or whether professing Christianity or Islam, are citizens of the People's Republic of Bulgaria. This fact was never challenged by any quarter. They are expected to be governed in accordance with their Constitution and the laws of the country. The question of minorities is basically a domestic matter. There are, nevertheless, international standards for the treatment of minorities as well as bilateral and multilateral agreements and conventions related to their protection, signed and duly ratified by Bulgaria.

Under international law, the Turks of Bulgaria have a national ethnic minority status. That legal status was established on the day Bulgaria was founded, first as an autonomous principality and then as an independent state. Article 4 of the Berlin Treaty (1878) referred to the Turkish Moslem minority in Bulgaria as "Turkish". Article 5 laid down the principles concerning the rights and freedoms of the minorities, and Article 12 referred to the real estate belonging to the Turks. The Istanbul Protocol and Convention between the Ottoman State and Bulgaria (1909) dealt with the organization and the property of the Turkish Moslem community. The Peace Treaty and the Convention, signed in

[25] Published on October 18, 1984, as document CERD/C118/Add. 17.
[26] Published on January 10, 1986, as CERD/C/118/Add. 17/Rev. 1.

1913 between the two, once again reiterated the minority rights in Bulgaria. Article 7 of the Peace Treaty provided that the Moslems living in territories annexed by Bulgaria would become Bulgarian citizens, but would have the option of chosing Ottoman citizenship within the next four years. Those remaining would receive equal treatment with the Bulgarians. The Neuilly Peace Treaty (1919), which described the status of post-war Bulgaria, contained articles on the protection of minorities as well. Minority rights were also dealt with in specific agreements called the Minority Treaties. The common provisions and the League of Nations guarantees were the two important features of these arrangements.

While there was an evolution towards a generalized system to place rights within the broad confines of non-discrimination, a Treaty of Friendship and a Turkish-Bulgarian Convention on Establishment (both in 1925) introduced further provisions to protect the rights of the Turkish minority. The minorities in Bulgaria were likewise protected within the general framework of the Bulgarian Peace Treaty (1947), signed after the Second World War. The Bulgarian Constitutions (of 1947 and of 1971) also state that all citizens are equal, that there will be no privileges or restrictions based on nationality or origin and that the humiliation of man because of race, national or religious affiliation is forbidden (Article 35). The Migration Agreement (1968) between Turkey and Bulgaria is another bilateral document, mutually accepting the existence of a Turkish minority in Bulgaria. In addition to regulating the migration of only 130.000 Turks who were close relatives of those already residing in Turkey, it referred to "Bulgarian citizens of Turkish descent" (Article 1).

There are other international documents which bind Bulgaria to the principle of the protection of minorities. They are: the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1947), the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (1965), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966), the International Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966) and the Helsinki Accords (1975). The last-mentioned document states, for instance, that "the participating States on whose territory national minorities exist will respect the right of persons belonging to such minorities to equality before the law, will afford them the full opportunity for the actual enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms and will, in this manner, protect their legitimate interests in this sphere".

The Helsinki Watch Committee, founded in 1979 to promote compliance with the human rights provisions of the Helsinki Accords,

gathered evidence, confirmed by the material in the Amnesty International Report, that the Bulgarian officials have no intention of admitting that the ethnic Turks exist or have ever existed. Throughout 1985, restrictions continued on the movement of foreign diplomats and journalists in regions inhabited by ethnic Turks. As reported by **The Newsday** (January 23, 1985), **The New York Times** (February 8, 1985), **The Christian Science Monitor** (April 3, 1985) and **The Economist** (December 14, 1985), diplomats and journalists were repeatedly refused entry into Turkish areas. Foreign embassies in Sofia received frantic calls from Turks, who were cut off by the authorities. Mail sent by and to Bulgarian citizens of Turkish origin were systematically intercepted. An Agence-France Presse correspondent was denied a visa for seven months after publishing an article criticizing the Bulgarian treatment of the Turkish minority. T.A. Goltz, a correspondent for AP, UPI and some papers or journals in North America and Europe, applied for a visa to Bulgaria in 1985; he did not receive a reply. He applied a second time in 1986 and was refused on the grounds that anything he might write about the state of the Turks would not contribute to better understanding between Bulgaria and the United States. His research, then, was of necessity conducted in Turkey, largely through the testimony of migrants.[27]

The Helsinki Watch Committee issued a first report in 1986. It also published an up-date in late 1987. When estimates of ethnic Turk killed ranged from 300 to 1500, with several thousand reported as wounded or arrested, the Helsinki Watch Committee sent a representative to Sofia to investigate at first hand the situation of the Turks. Travel to the affected areas was prohibited. He conducted interviews with Turkish refugees in Istanbul in 1985 and in 1987.[28] The interviewed Turks had graphic stories to tell. Before the campaign was launched most young men were recruited into the army reserve list so that the persons most likely to offer resistance were not available. Hunting guns were also collected before the campaign. The notorious concentration camp in Haskovo was enlarged as several thousand Turks were incarcerated there. 1500 or more were detained on the most fearful camp at Belene Island. Even the Department of Turkish of Sofia University being closed down, no classes in Turkish was held anywhere in Bulgaria, and not a word of Turkish was published. Even some Turkish cemeteries (for instance, the one at Razgrad Okrug) was reported as destroyed by tractors. To the claim that the country is a

[27] Goltz, **op. cit.**, pp. 115-120.

[28] The few visitors who had been permitted were accompanied or closely watched by Bulgarian officials and invariably reported that ethnic Turks were afraid to speak freely to foreigners.

homogeneous blend of Bulgars, a Canadian columnist replies: "Nonsense. Like all Balkan nations, Bulgaria is a patchwork of races, tribes, religions and cultures".[29]

The Bulgarian media commented on Amnesty International report. Beginning in April 1986, a series of articles appeared in **Sofia News** and whom the Amnesty International claimed as killed or disappeared. But **Sofioter Nachrichten,** which carried interviews allegedly with people these articles seriously misquoted the report. For example, the **Sofia News** of April 16, 1986 carried an extensive feature on a certain Felina Arsova, stating that the Amnesty International reported her as killed. She is not mentioned at all in any report. Neither was Temenouzhka Yulianova (formerly Fatma Yun), claimed as listed to have been killed in the Amnesty report. In other cases, articles carry interviews with people using their new Bulgarian names, making verification impossible. Further, when three members of the Hüseyinov family were reported as killed, the Bulgarian authorities claimed that one had died of lung cancer on May 21, 1976, the other was killed in a car accident on September 6, 1978 and another one passed away after a heart attack on April 27, 1980. Amnesty International has since interviewed the daughter of Mehmet Hüseyinov Aptullov, who stated that she had visited Bulgaria in July-August 1980 and that her father and her brother were both alive and that he had also seen Mehmet Hasanov Hüseyinov — that is, after the dates on which the Bulgarians said that they had died.

While the matter attracted the attention of world public opinion, various international organizations adopted resolutions. For example, a Council of Europe Report[29] (1985) called on Bulgaria "to put an immediate end to this repressive policy and to restore their rightful names to all members of the Turkish minority". The 16th Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers, held in Fez (1986)[30] expressed deep concern by alarming reports on coercive assimilation campaign and entrusted the Secretary General of the Organization with the task of appointing a Contact Group to examine the conditions of the Turks there. A joint statement of the Muhammadiyah Central Board and the Islamic Committee, made public in Jakarta (1987) criticized the Bulgarian oppression. The U.S. Government spoke out on the issue at many international meetings, including the Human Rights Experts Meeting (Ottowa, 1985), the Cultural Forum (Budapest, 1985), the U.N. Human Rights Commission (Geneva, 1986),

[29] Eric Margolis, "The Bulgarian 'Solution' ", **The Toronto Sun,** March 6, 1986.

[30] **The Plight of the Turkish Muslim Minority in Bulgaria and the Organization of the Islamic Conference (1985-1986): Documents,** Ankara, Turkish Historical Society, 1989.

the U.N. Economic and Social Council (New York, 1986), the U.N. General Assembly (New York, 1986) and at the CSCE meeting (Vienna, 1987).

In conclusion, the Turks of Bulgaria are citizens of that country, but of Turkish descent, whose mother tongue is Turkish and religion Islam, with cultural characteristics peculiar to themselves. Bulgaria is under contractual obligation to protect their rights, in accordance with various bilateral and multilateral treaties, including the International Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.