



## Imagery Produced by Turkish Minority Related Bulgarian Socialism of 1980s\*

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### Abstract

In socialist and post-socialist period, members of the autochthonous national Turkish minority of Bulgaria created various images about the socialist regime. Most of them related with 1980s' traumatic period. During the 1980s, accurately 1984-89, under the Bulgarian socialist regime was implemented one of the largest and most accelerated episodes of ethnic genocide in Europe's contemporary history. The most prominent and violent application of it was namecide. This article explores patterns of the imagery, related with the 1980s, which are from memories, autobiographies, poems, everyday life, the cemetery, the park and albums created by the national Turkish minority of Bulgaria. This study is based upon oral history and observations over a thirty year period. Exploring the patterns of imagery about socialism can demonstrate how the national Turkish minority perceived and reacted to the regime and developed strategies to survive.

**Keywords:** Bulgarian socialism, autochthonous national Turkish minority, ethnic genocide, namecide, imagery, memory

**Received Date: 15/11/2018****Accepted Date: 10/12/2018**

\* The article was presented in the International conference 'Balkan and Baltic States in a United Europe: History, Religion, and Culture 3', Vilnius, Lithuania, October 9-11, 2017. The article uses the data obtained from oral history interviews and observations under the project of "Sosyalist Bulgaristan'da 'Etnik-Kırım', 'Ad-Kırımı', 'Etnik Ayrımcılık' ve 'Etnik Temizlik'in Tanıkları: Bir Sözlü Tarih Projesi". The project was supported by the Unit of Scientific Research Projects (BAP) of Uludağ University, between 2012-2014 and coordinated and conducted by Vildane Dinç and Artum Dinç.

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## 1980'lerin Bulgar Sosyalizmiyle İlişkili Olarak Türk Azınlığın Ürettiği İmgeler

### Öz

Sosyalist ve sosyalizm sonrası dönemde, Bulgaristan'ın yerli ulusal Türk azınlığı mensupları sosyalist rejimle ilgili çeşitli imgeler ürettiler. Bunların çoğu 1980'lerin travmatik dönemiyle ilgilidir. 1980'lerde, en yoğun olarak da 1984-89 yılları arasında, Bulgar sosyalist rejimi tarafından çağdaş Avrupa tarihinin en geniş kapsamlı ve hızlandırılmış etnik soykırım uygulamalarından biri gerçekleştirildi. Bunun en önemli ve şiddetli boyutu, adkırım uygulamasıydı. Bu makalede, Bulgaristan'ın ulusal Türk azınlığı mensupları tarafından üretilen anı, otobiyografi, şiir, gündelik yaşam sohbetleri, mezar taşları, park, aile albümleri vs. boyunca 1980'lerin Bulgar sosyalizmiyle ilgili ortak imge kalıpları keşfedilmeye çalışılmaktadır. Bu çalışma, otuz yıllık bir süre boyunca biriken grup-içi gözlemler ve son birkaç yılda gerçekleşen sözlü tarih görüşmelerine dayanmaktadır. Sosyalizm hakkındaki imge kalıplarını keşfetmek, ulusal Türk azınlığın rejimi nasıl algılayıp tepki gösterdiğini ve hayatta kalabilmek için hangi stratejileri kullandığını da gösterebilir.

**Anahtar sözcükler:** Bulgar sosyalizmi, yerli ulusal Türk azınlığı, etnik soykırım, adkırım, imge, bellek

**Gönderme Tarihi:** 15/11/2018

**Kabul Tarihi:**10/12/2018

## **Образы созданные турецким меньшинством, связанным с болгарским социализмом 1980-х годов**

### **Резюме**

В социалистический и постсоциалистический период автохтонного национального турецкого меньшинства Болгарии создавали различные образы о социалистическом режиме. Большинство из них связаны с травмирующим периодом 1980-х годов. В течение 1980-х годов, точно в 1984-89 годах, при болгарском социалистическом режиме был осуществлен один из самых крупных и ускоренных эпизодов этнического геноцида в современной истории Европы. Самым выдающимся и насильственным применением этого был имецид. В этой статье рассматриваются образцы образов, связанных с 1980-ми годами, которые взяты из воспоминаний, автобиографий, стихов, повседневной жизни, кладбища, парка и альбомов, созданных национальным турецким меньшинством Болгарии. Это исследование основано на устной истории и наблюдениях за тридцатилетний период. Изучение моделей образов о социализме может продемонстрировать, как национальное турецкое меньшинство воспринимало и реагировало на режим и разрабатывало стратегии выживания.

**Ключевые слова:** болгарский социализм, автохтонное национально-турецкое меньшинство, этнический геноцид, имецид, образность, память

**Получено: 15/11/2018**

**Принято: 10/12/2018**

## Introduction

One of the greatest problems of the post-socialist period is the inadequate definition of violence and victims during the socialist past. This problem is especially evident in the case of Bulgaria. Another problem is that research on memories of minorities regarding Bulgarian socialism is rare. It therefore follows that various images from these personal memories have also been overlooked in the scope of studies from the socialist period. These studies, intentionally or not, have traditionally focused on the memories and narratives of the dominant ethnic group.

As a beginning, it is important to define the status of Turks of Bulgaria in international law. At the same time, the political violence on the Turks in the 1980s under socialist regime should also be appropriately defined. If the position of this minority and the political impositions upon it are not well known and defined, the images produced by the minority are not understood sufficiently.

However the vast majority of studies on the Turkish population of Bulgaria do not show any interest in creating a systematical definition of this group. In these studies, intentionally or unintentionally, the word „minority” is not used for Turks in Bulgaria, sometimes even the word „Turk” is not used. They are generally called „Turks” or today increasingly „Muslims”. However, under the socialist regime, and still today, Turks remain the largest ethnic minority community in the country despite there being three massive Turkish exoduses in 1950-1951, 1969-1978 and the ethnic sweep of 1989.

Tove Malloy is one of the few writers who describes the Turkish population of Bulgaria appropriately. Malloy, a senior research associate with the European Centre for Minority Issues, describes Turks of Bulgaria as an autochthonous national minority. Malloy<sup>1</sup> writes the following:

*“... national minorities are not the religious and immigrant minority groups that exist in most multicultural states. On the contrary, national minorities are a specific type of minority; they are autochthonous. While not entirely uncontroversial, the term autochthonous refers to a minority that is native to a particular region, in this case certain regions of Europe that were once either independent or belonged to a neighbouring state. The autochthonous minority’s present minority status is a result of incorporation into a larger political unit or the change of borders after major conflicts in modern times. ... They include, but are not limited to, Hungarians in Slovakia, Romania, Slovenia, Serbia, and the Ukraine; Turks in Bulgaria and the Balkans; Albanians in Kosovo and Macedonia; Rusyns, Russians, Romanians, Slovaks, and Belarussians in the Ukraine; Moravians in the Czech Republic; German-speaking Austrians in northern Italy ...”*

During the socialist regime in Bulgaria, the historical goal of the Bulgarian political authorities was a form of ethnic sweep of the national Turkish minority to decrease the Turkish population as well as reducing their socio-cultural power/capital. The goal has been achieved through various methods and techniques from prison and concentration camps to murder and expulsion from the country. The prevalent reaction of the Turkish population when faced with this massive repression was to flee en masse. A high percentage of them took refuge in Turkey. For the most part, the refugees have preferred not to speak about their oppression and victimization under the socialist regime.

One of the most prominent acts of political violence that took place in the 1980s was when socialist regimes entered the process of demolition in the east of Europe. The „most accelerated” practice of cultural and ethnic annihilation in Europe was carried out on the

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<sup>1</sup> Tove Malloy, *National Minority Rights in Europe*, Oxford University Press, 2005, 21-22.

national Turkish minority in the People's Republic of Bulgaria. For that reason, imagery of 1980s Bulgaria needs to be especially focused.<sup>2</sup>

During the debate on crimes of communist regimes at the Parliamentary Assembly of Council of Europe's January 2006 part-session, the Head of the Bulgarian Parliamentary delegation called the political violence committed on Turks between 1984 and 1989 "ethnic genocide". In those years ethnic genocide was conducted on the national Turkish minority by the socialist political authority with the official thesis known as "revival process (възродителният процес)". During ethnic genocide, all elements of Turkish culture were systematically banned by a political authority. Moreover, within the scope of ethnic cleansing (ethnic sweeping), almost 360,000 Turks were expelled from Bulgaria. Nearly all took refuge in Turkey. In January 2012 the Bulgarian Parliament called that expulsion "ethnic cleansing".

The paper seeks to discover common patterns among the images created by witness-victims who experienced ethnic genocide, namecide and ethnic sweeping under communism in 1980s Bulgaria.

## Images of Namecide

Namecide is to change systematically with political force the names of persons who belong to ethnic, national, religious etc. minority groups into the names that belong to the dominant culture in the nation-state, as in the case of Bulgaria.<sup>3</sup> Özkan proposes that *namecide* concept also defines the systematic change, with political force, the names of cities, towns, villages, mountains, hills, rivers, streams, fields, mosques, fountains, gravestones, etc. belonging to ethnic, national, religious etc. minority group's culture into the names belonging to the dominant culture in the nation-state. In socialist Bulgaria *namecide* was also committed on other ethnic and national minorities (Tatars, Romas, Macedonians, Pomaks etc.).

The namecide concept defines a political violence that was carried out on more than 1,000,000 members of the national Turkish minority in the recent socialist past of Bulgaria. Although namecide was conducted on a massive scale in the 1980's, and in particular from 1984-89, upon the Turkish minority, including Tatar Turks and Turkish Gypsies, there are Turks who tell of their native Turkish names being forcibly changed to Bulgarian ones before the 1980s.

Within the scope of namecide each member of the national Turkish minority was forcefully given Bulgarian/Russian names instead of their native Turkish names. The namecide is a process that its influence today continues wherever victims of namecide live: in post-socialist Bulgaria, Turkey, and another countries also including many European countries.

During the socialist regime, the greatest resistance of the autochthonous Turkish minority in Bulgaria was against the process of "namecide" in 1980s.<sup>4</sup> In dominant literature that

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<sup>2</sup> In a previous study of the writers was studied the imagery of Bulgarian Socialism in memory of national Turkish minority from inauguration of socialist regime until 1970s. See. Vildane Dinç & Artum Dinç, "Imagery of Bulgarian Socialism in Memory of National Turkish Minority: From Inauguration Until 1970s", In *Recent Advances in Sciences: An Interdisciplinary Approach*, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, (2018): 13-29.

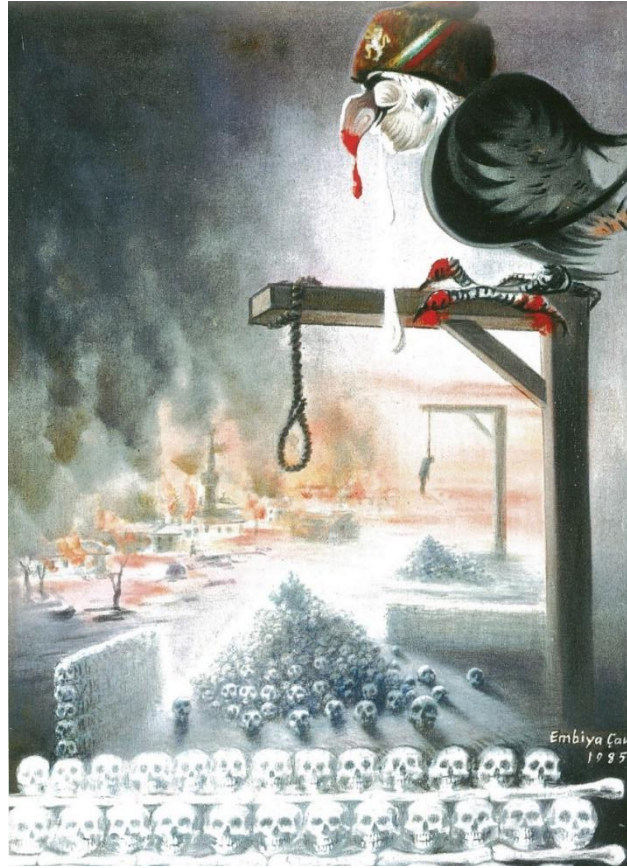
<sup>3</sup> Vildane Özkan (Alieva), "Effects and appearances of the namecide process from socialist to post-socialist Bulgaria", *Visnyk NTUU «KPI». Seriya Politolohiya. Sotsiolohiya. Pravo*, Vol. 16, No. 4 (2012): 32-36; Vildane Özkan, "Bulgaristan'da Siyasi Otoritenin Ulusal Türk Azınlığı Üzerindeki Politikaları: Belene Toplama Kampı Örneği (1985-86)", *Hacettepe Üniversitesi Türkiyat Araştırmaları Dergisi*, Vol. 20, Spring (2014): 117-162.

<sup>4</sup> Özkan (Alieva), "Effects and appearances of the namecide process from socialist to post-socialist Bulgaria", 32-36; Özkan, "Bulgaristan'da Siyasi Otoritenin Ulusal Türk Azınlığı Üzerindeki Politikaları: Belene Toplama Kampı Örneği (1985-86)", 117-162.

namecide is known as “forcefully changing names (in Bulgarian: насилствената смяна на имената; in Turkish: zorunlu ad deęiřtirme)”.

National Turkish minority have produced some images on namecide. Here is showed just some of them.

In the paintings of Embiya Çavuř, Bulgarian socialism, from inauguration to end, is directly related with *death* and *killing*. Embiya Çavuř was born in 1926 in Bulgaria. Under the Bulgarian socialist regime he was detained for a total of 16 years in prisons and concentration camps. In 1978 year, he fled from the ethnic discrimination and repression of the Bulgarian socialist regime and took refuge in Turkey. Thus, he did not directly witness the practices of the socialist regime directly after 1979. However, Çavuř painted the adulterations of Todor Jivkov on the Turkish minority in the 1980s and the most encompassing of them in late 1984. In Figure 1, Todor Jivkov’s bloody action and depicted people in Turkish villagers as skeleton.



**Fig. 1:** Embiya Çavuř. *Crocodile tears of Todor Zhivkov* (1985). Oil painting on canvas. 50x70ins.<sup>5</sup>

After 1985, everybody had two names. One is a native Turkish name, the other is a forcibly given Bulgarian/Russian name. The 1980s meant namecide. Most of the 1980s’ images are related to this crime. After 1989, after the socialist regime collapsed, petitions for the withdrawal of Turkish names began to be given. It is seen in Figure 2 that Kadriye Mustafafova Bodzhukova withdrew the name forcibly given „Katya” back and taken her native name „Kadriye”. Such documents are in the hands of many Turkish victims. This document is one of the strongest imagings about the period.

<sup>5</sup> Embiya Çavuř, *Yařadıklarımız Bir Daha Yařanmasın / Let What We Live Not To Be Repeated*, Second edition, İzmir: Tunaser Yayınları, 2006, 43.

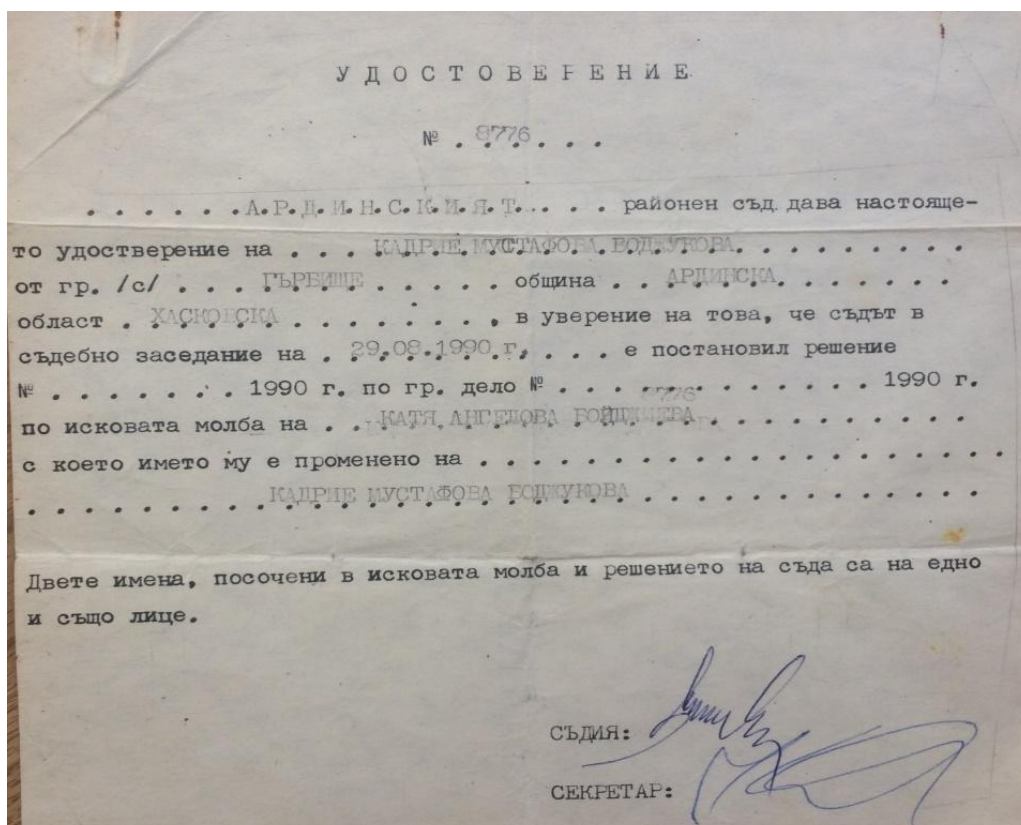


Fig. 2: A document of a victim of namecide.<sup>6</sup>

## Images of Belene

The word of „Belene” has itself become one of the basic symbols of the 1980s pressure. The Turks, who opposed the crimes of the 1980s, were driven to the island of Belene. At the same time, in prisons and camps in other parts of the country they were also driven, but Belene was the most popular symbol of oppression. Below there are three figures regarding Belene. The photo and two items shown in the first two figures belong to Süleyman Türksöz.

Süleyman Kazımov Saadettinov (Türksöz) was born on 9 April 1951, in the village of Bashevo, Kardzhali province, Bulgaria. Süleyman Saadettinov resisted against namecide implemented by Communist Party in December 1984 and refused to change his Turkish name to Bulgarian. He was arrested and sent to prison and concentration camp in Belene. Süleyman was expelled with his family from Bulgaria in the summer of 1989, before the collapse of the socialist regime. He and his family found refuge in Turkey.

Süleyman told that the photograph in Figure 3 was secretly taken at a moment when Belene concentration camp prisoners were removed from the camp to work outside of the camp area. In the working area Süleyman and his friends saw a photographer, taking photos of ordinary workers. They asked the unknown photographer to take photo of them. The photographer secretly took the photo of the group of prisoners and a week later brought them the developed photograph. When Süleyman was set free from the camp, he took the photo with him.

<sup>6</sup> Source: Archive of participants.

Süleyman is on the right of the picture, the man crouching and with moustache. According to the testimonies of the victims, this is the only photo from 1985 to 1986 period of the Belene concentration camp.



*Fig. 3: Turkish prisoners in Belene Concentration Camp; June 1985, Belene.<sup>7</sup>*

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<sup>7</sup> Source: Album of participant Süleyman.





*Fig. 4: Woman in Turkish bath and box of Belene, produced by Süleyman Türksöz in the Belene Concentration Camp; 1985, Belene.<sup>8</sup>*

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<sup>8</sup> Source: picture taken by authors.

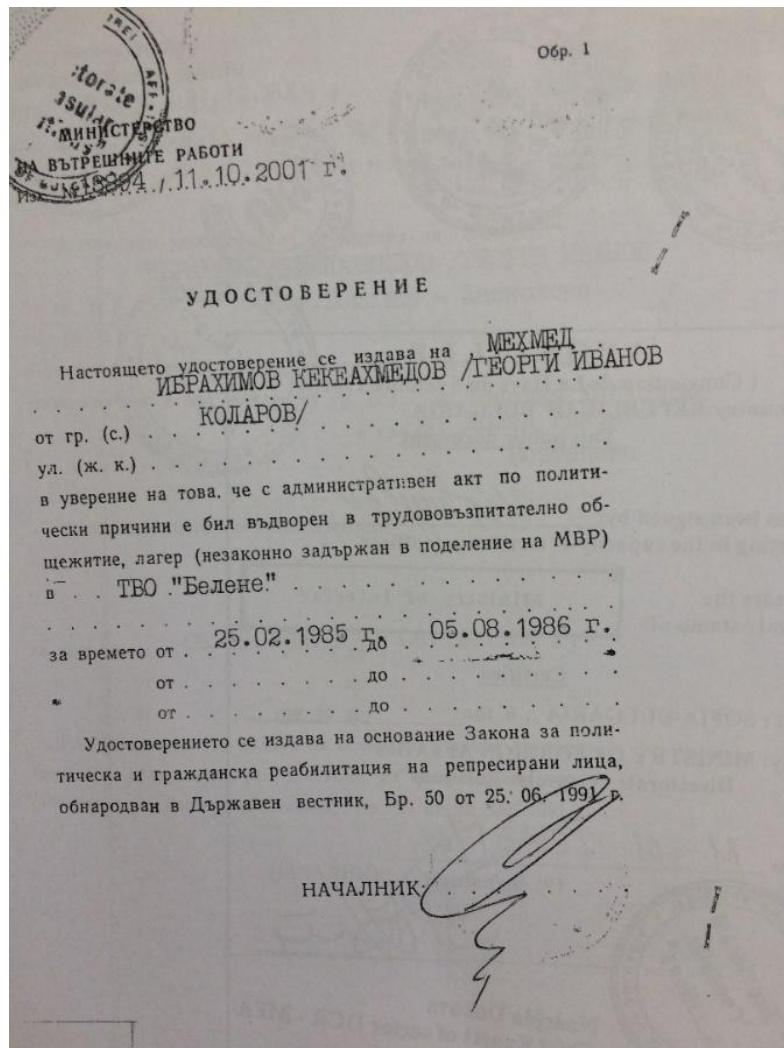


Fig. 5: An official document writes that the victim was being held at the Belene camp for political reasons; 2001, Sofia.<sup>9</sup>

## Images of *Türkiyecilik*

*Türkiyecilik* ('Turkeyism') is a dominant reaction pattern of members of national Turkish minority to ethnical discrimination in Bulgaria. At the same time, *Türkiyecilik* reaction facilitated the political authorities enforcing the three major exoduses of Turks in 1950-1951, 1969-1978 and 1989. While socialist political authorities implemented the policy of decreasing the Turkish population in Bulgaria, the reaction of *Türkiyecilik* stated there were no opportunities for a good life or a chance of survival in Bulgaria, but only in Turkey. Collective reactions and images of *Türkiyecilik* were fostered by the Turkish minority due to the inexorable living conditions for them in socialist Bulgaria.

In Figure 6, there is one of the Turkish minority's image patterns, which involve not only the twentieth century socialist regime, but also the years after the 1878 creation of the Kingdom of Bulgaria. This image can be named either "Expulsion or Escape from Bulgaria to Turkey" or *Türkiyecilik* in the native language. For their surviving were two options: to Bulgarianized or to escape to Turkey. Most of them select the second. See Figure 6.

<sup>9</sup> Source: Personal archive of participants.



*Fig. 6: Ethnic sweep on Turkish minority in Bulgaria. The minority taken refugees in Turkey.<sup>10</sup>*

## **Images in Monuments and Memorial-Parks**

There are some monuments dedicated to the victims of political violence in the 1980s. They are both in Bulgaria and in Turkey.

Most of these monuments in Turkey are opened in a small parks and the park is given the name of the symbol on the monument. These can also be called memorial-parks.

The main monument symbolizing 1980s is Türkan Çeşme (Fountain) Monument. Türkan Çeşme is memorial to Ayşe Hasan, Musa Yakup and 17-month-old Türkan Feyzullah (also known as „Türkan baby”), who were killed by the police in the resistance against the ethnic genocide on 26 December 1984. Later on, the resistance became one of the symbols of the victims and the 1980s. Türkan Çeşme Monument was planted in the place where they were killed. In recent years, monuments in the name of Türkan baby have begun to be planted in Edirne, İzmir and Bursa. This west region of Turkey is place where the Turks, who expelled from Bulgaria in 1989, live intensively.

In name of Nuri Turgut Adalı, who is one of the main names of the resistance of the Turks in Bulgaria, there is a monument and memorial-park in Bursa, Turkey. Nuri Turgut Adalı, a Turkish poet and teacher was born in Bulgaria in 1922 and died in Turkey in 2004. He spent 23 years in prison, concentration camps and exile in socialist Bulgaria. In 1989 he was expelled from Bulgaria. He took refuge in Turkey like thousands of others. Adalı witnessed the entire socialist period in Bulgaria, much of it from behind bars. For him and the victims of socialism a monument has been built and dedicated to him in Bursa—see Figure 7.

<sup>10</sup> Source: private archive of participants.

The monument represents image of Turkish repression under the socialist regime in Bulgaria. Nuri Turgut Adalı is in the forefront of the monument with barred windows to his left representing the prison, concentration camp and exile, where he and other Turks were sent. On his right, there are two men and a woman in chains who represent victims of the Turkish minority. The chains create a vision of socialism as a prison and Turks as slaves under the socialist regime.



Fig. 7: Nuri Turgut Adalı Park-Running Way and Monument, October 2015, Göçmen Konutları, Nilüfer, Bursa.<sup>11</sup>

## Images in Literature and Art

In post-socialist period, the witnesses of 1980s' Bulgarian socialism wrote many literary works: Erendoruk 1989<sup>12</sup>, Adalı 1994<sup>13</sup>, Türker 2004<sup>14</sup>, Güler 2010<sup>15</sup>, Özgür 2011<sup>16</sup>, Topaloğlu 2011<sup>17</sup>, Kitapçı 2013<sup>18</sup>. Most of them are written in Turkish. Most of the authors live in Turkey, most of them are visiting frequently their homeland Bulgaria. Those who write on 1980s in their books are often former camp and prison detainees during 1980s. In the books, the image of the 1980s can be summarized as „torture on us, Turks, in beautiful homeland Bulgaria”. Authors write poetry, novels and their memories in the books.

<sup>11</sup> Source: private archive of authors.

<sup>12</sup> Ömer Osman Erendoruk, *S.O.S. veya Üçüncü Mezar*, Erenler Matbaası, 1989.

<sup>13</sup> Nuri Turgut Adalı, *Hapishaneden Sesler*, Bursa: Balkanlarda Türk Kültürü Yayınları, 1994.

<sup>14</sup> Mehmet Türker, *Belene Adası*, Third edition, İstanbul: Çağrı Yayınları, 2004.

<sup>15</sup> Şaban Recep Güler, *Bizim İçin Geçerli Değildir*, Konya: Dizgi Ofset, 2010.

<sup>16</sup> Havva Pehlivan Özgür, *Ezerçe'den Çıktım Yola*, İstanbul: Akademi Yayınları, 2011.

<sup>17</sup> İsmet Topaloğlu, *Topal Yusuf*, İzmir: Berke Ofset Matbaacılık, 2011.

<sup>18</sup> Ahmet Kitapçı, *Göktepe Diyarından Belene Cehennem Adasına*, (Individual edition), 2013.

The witnesses of the 1980s, sometimes also participate in conferences and speak about the period of 1980s' Bulgarian socialism. The most active victims in this regard are the former detainees of the Belene Concentration Camp.

Ayrin Ersöz was born in Kyrdzhali, Bulgaria, in 1975. She is a dancer, choreographer, actress, and academician. She lives in Istanbul. She wrote and performed "House of Names"<sup>19</sup>, which is on namecide and ethnic sweeping of 1980s in socialist Bulgaria.

## **Images in Everyday Life and Around Famous Figures**

The members of Turkish minority of Bulgaria, who live in Turkey after 1989 expell, make a trace from Bulgaria in many places where live in Turkey. It is possible to come across memories, images, symbols regarding Bulgaria. Even with their densely inhabited neighborhoods in Turkey are jokingly also referred to by name of „little Bulgaria”. For example, there is a cafe in Bursa. The owner of the cafe were expelled from Bulgaria in 1989 and took refuge in Turkey. The view on the wall of the cafe is the town of Dzebel (Cebel) in Bulgaria, where homeland of the cafe's owner.

In New Görükle Cemetery in Bursa, on stones of graves are full with that place of birth is „Bulgaria” and place of death is „Turkey”. This cemetery is one of the most striking symbols of the violence of Bulgarian politics of the 1980s.

Until 1980s, among the famous figures who came among members of Turkish minority are Kadriye Latifova, Koca Yusuf, Embiya Çavuş, Sabahattin Ali, Şaziye Moral, etc. However, there are two famous figures related to 1980s: world champion weightlifter Naim Süleymanoğlu and world famous jazz artist Yıldız İbrahimova.

## **Images in Oral History**

Despite the previously mentioned images of paintings, monuments, literature, etc., members of the autochthonous national Turkish minority generally have kept silent about socialist repression in the 1980s. In Figure 8, there are some photos reproduced from personal and family photo albums belonging to people of Turkish minority. Generally the people who have been affected by this treatment (keep silent on repression during 1980s) prefer to speak directly about the good dimensions of the socialist Bulgaria and indirectly or not at all about the bad dimensions of it. It is as if they are in denial. When they speak about good dimensions of their life in Bulgaria, they often show their beautiful photos of their life from socialist Bulgaria.

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<sup>19</sup> Ayrin Ersöz, "İsimler Evi / House of Names", <https://vimeo.com/8591642> (10.12.2015), 2008.



*Fig. 8: 1980s' photos from albums of members of national Turkish minority of Bulgaria, 2018, Bursa.<sup>20</sup>*

<sup>20</sup> Source: family albums of participants.

## **Conclusion**

Bulgarian socialism has been implemented in various ways on ethnic minorities in the country. It is important to correctly define these practices and to accurately determine how they are perceived by minority's members, in order to understand multi-dimensional Bulgarian socialism.

Today the history of socialist regimes and its images, including that of Bulgaria has been written. In practice, the witnesses' narratives about their experience of socialist regimes are registered. However, history has not included the narratives of all witnesses in the process of writing the history of socialism. This article is an example of some uncovered images of witnesses from the Turkish minorities in socialist regimes. If we do not include the narratives from the national Turkish minority, who have a unique pattern of reaction and imagery about the Bulgarian socialist regime during 1980s, a comprehensive research of socialism and its history is likely to be incomplete.

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