

# EMERGENCE OF BULGARIAN NATIONALISM

M. Vedat GÜRBÜZ\*

## ABSTRACT

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*The Balkan nations who gained their independences from the Ottoman state, established confusing nationalistic ideologies based on their national identities and goals. Historical ethnic and political problems of the Balkan nations became a fire ball with nationalistic blazes after the Ottoman rule. Under these conditions, nationalism in the Balkans became dangerous. Like the other Balkan nationalists, Bulgarian nationalists also read the history reverse and portrayed the Ottoman State scapegoat considering the Ottoman times as "dark era" for the Bulgarians. This paper argues that neither Ottoman rule was dark for the Bulgarians, nor, nationalism was grass rooted in Ottoman Bulgar society as this was claimed by Bulgarian nationalistic committees.*

**Keywords:** Ottoman, Bulgaria, Tuna Vilayeti, Rila Monastery, Tirnova, Father Paisii, Aprilov, Rakovski, Tersane Konferansı

## Introduction

At the beginning of the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, political nationalism began to influence the ethnic Bulgarians in the Ottoman State. Until the 1860s, there was not any serious political nationalistic movement in Bulgaria. The nationalistic intellectual elite was formed after 1860. Both a lack of proper secular, independent Bulgarian education and the Greek domination of Bulgarian culture resulted in Bulgarian nationalism arising relatively late.

Booming trade in the Black Sea basin gradually began to change living standards in the Bulgarian lands. By the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the ethnic Bulgarians began to enjoy the benefits of increasing trade and agricultural imports. When Bulgarians entered into trade by establishing trade colonies at

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\* Assoc. Prof. Dr., Kahramanmaraş Sütçü İmam Üniversitesi.

home and elsewhere, especially in Istanbul, Rumania, and Russia proper, poor Bulgarian peasants also prospered. This prosperity was due to a large European market for Bulgarian agricultural products. Economic prosperity supported the establishment of the nationalist intelligentsia. The Ottoman government hoped to make ethnic Bulgarians loyal to the state, and it politically supported the newly emerging Bulgarian artisan and merchant class. The government launched administrative, agricultural, and economic reforms in the lands of the Bulgarians in order to raise the people's standard of living.

Under changing economic and social conditions, ethnic Bulgarians began to create for themselves an identity. Emerging secular Bulgarian schools, which were supported by wealthy merchants, promoted the search for a collective identity and helped to create a Bulgarian nationalistic intelligentsia. Bulgarian merchants and students abroad, especially in Rumania and Russia, were influenced by nationalistic ideas, and they deeply influenced the emerging Bulgarian nationalism. Russia's political changes forced the abandonment of the idea of keeping the Balkan nations under a single Greek-dominated structure. Instead, the Russians adopted strong Pan-Slavist policies favoring Slav nationalities. Having its own national state under Russian influence had a deep impact on Bulgarian nationalism. This nationalism was prepared and started outside of the Bulgarian lands. Russia's adamant political, educational, and monetary support in the formation of Bulgarian nationalism was crucial. This nationalism was able to operate in Bulgaria with the support of Russia and of Bulgarian émigrés abroad. Interestingly, Bulgarian nationalism was never to become a widespread movement sweeping the country; however, the Russian military campaign against the Ottoman State dropped the autonomy of Bulgaria into the lap of the Bulgarian nationalists.

Although some scholars speculate that the Bulgarians had been struggling against Ottoman rule since the conquest, this explanation does not adequately account for the beginning of Bulgarian nationalism or its subsequent success. Ignoring the Ottoman rule in Bulgaria, merely considering it a bleak and repressive period in Bulgarian history, and giving attention to particular parts of Ottoman rule by ignoring the whole are commonly made mistakes in the search for the roots of Bulgarian nationalism.

## BULGARIA UNDER THE OTTOMAN RULE

Bulgaria's conquest by the Ottoman Turks was concluded in 1393, when Great Tirnova fell. Ottoman rule in Bulgaria lasted longer than the first and second Bulgarian empires. Ottoman rule abolished local dynasties and the aristocracy. The largest portion of Bulgarian land became Miri and was divided into the Sipahiliks. Ethnic Bulgarians enjoyed some military and administrative positions and duties such as Voynuks (warriors), Martolos (unpaid infantrymen), Derbentçi (road crew), Celepkeşan, and Sürsat. This last group was responsible for satisfying the needs of the army. Generally, people were exempted from paying taxes in return for the performance of these duties.

After the conquest, massive emigration of Turkish tribes to Bulgaria started. In 1418 the number of Turks in Bulgaria was large enough to start a revolt under Bedrettin Simavni's leadership. New settlers established towns and cities in Bulgaria. The Ottoman system was centered in and operated mostly in urban areas. Governmental, economic, literary, and cultural enterprises were located in urban centers, while the villages were not touched by the strong central authority and governmental investments. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, only one in fifty Christian Bulgarians lived in the towns. The villages were traditionally administrated by the local chieftains (Çorbacıs and Kocabaşıs). The Ottoman Millet system helped the Christian village dwellers to live according to their traditional and religious ways for centuries, and strict religious divisions prevented Christians from merging with Islamic culture.<sup>1</sup>

In 1394 the Tirnova Patriarchate was abolished, and Bulgarian religious affairs were subsequently controlled by the Greek Patriarchate in Istanbul. Tirnova Patriarchate was, however, abolished. The Rila Monastery functioned freely because of concessions granted by the Ottoman sultans. Until the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Bulgarian priests were dominant in Bulgarian churches. During the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Greeks were dominant in the Bulgarian churches, and Greek religious dominance deeply influenced Bulgarian culture.

Ottoman rule brought serenity to the Balkans. Endless ethnic and religious rivalries ended under this unified authority. The Ottoman systems of land tenure and taxation helped to keep peace in the Balkans. Peace and

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<sup>1</sup> Maria Todorova, "The Ottoman Legacy in the Balkans," *Imperial Legacy: The Ottoman Imprint on the Balkans and the Middle East*, Edited by L. Carl Brown. Columbia University Press, New York, 1996, p. 47.

religious freedom produced a common ground for the Christians to promote their cultures, which interacted freely under one authority in the whole of the Balkans. Religious authorities, especially the Greek clergy, enjoyed larger numbers of followers than ever before. The Ottoman period in the Balkans, up to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, was not a time in which non-Muslim ethnic groups endlessly struggled against the Ottoman authority, as some historians asserted. The Ottoman State was neither an exclusively Muslim state nor a Turkish one, but first of all a dynasty. The Empire neither pursued entirely religious goals nor followed any nationalistic policies. There were opportunities to be loyal to the empire, not only for Muslims but also for Christians. Centuries of cultural coexistence produced a common legacy,<sup>2</sup> one that embraced every sect of the Ottoman society. The creation of an advanced Europe inspired the Ottoman Christians to no longer participate in the Ottoman cultural and political structure; they favored instead participation in European culture and the formation of their own national states.

### CHANGING CONDITIONS OF THE BULGARIANS IN THE EMPIRE

Ideological movements require intellectual classes, and these classes come into existence through the creation of surplus wealth. Material prosperity and surplus money are invested in new enterprises or luxury. As a typical, widely popular 19<sup>th</sup> century phenomena, wealthy people invested their money in, first, a search for their family genealogy and, second, a quest for their ethnic identity. Mighty moneymakers extended their self-confidence, from the personal to the societal realm, in order to prove that they were part of a great heritage and culture, even though they were treated as a backward people because of their ethnic background. A Bulgarian ethnic identity was raised by the newly emerging Bulgarian merchants who supported the establishment of the intelligentsia, lay schools, and political societies. It was the merchant class that successfully obtained independence from the Greek Church. Naturally, merchants sought material gains and profits. A sizable number of Bulgarian merchants in Istanbul and elsewhere in the Empire were threatened by nationalist Bulgarians who were used to being supported by the merchant class. Nationalists turned against the merchants, who mostly wanted to remain in the

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<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*, p. 49.

Empire because of personal and ethnic gains. The nationalists saw the merchants as opportunists and traitors.

Until the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the Bulgarian economy was based upon guilds. The Ottoman guild system, based on a laissez-faire economy, gave the Bulgarians an opportunity to establish their own guilds. The Bulgarian guilds were free in their enterprises and guild commissions were authorized to make decisions and apply them. There were even some mixed Turkish-Bulgarian guilds in the lands of Bulgaria that worked smoothly. Interestingly, until the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Bulgarian guilds kept their records in Greek and not in Bulgarian.<sup>3</sup> The second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was the beginning of the Bulgarian nationalist movement. This date explains why the guilds did not see any need to keep their records in Bulgarian.

The industrial revolution in Europe increased agricultural demands in urban areas. By the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Black Sea trade routes began to allow for agricultural and raw materials to reach inner Europe. In the 1740s, Habsburg, France, and England received concessions in the Black Sea and Danube trade. By 1774, parallel to the political gains, Russia also achieved the upper hand in the Black Sea trade. Bulgarian peasants enjoyed remarkable prosperity because of the growing trade. Bulgaria had vast and fertile lands, and the Bulgarians were skilled farmers. Increasing agricultural demand from Europe and from the center, Istanbul, because of the loss of some agricultural supply links between Istanbul and a newly independent Greece, enormously increased the market for Bulgarian agricultural products. Cotton, tobacco, rice, and wax were the main Bulgarian exports. Emerging new markets helped Bulgarian agriculture to grow, in terms of both size and technique.

Bulgarian merchants benefited from the growing trade. There were strong Bulgarian merchant colonies outside Bulgaria--in the Empire and abroad. Edirne, Istanbul, Bucharest, Odessa, and Izmir were centers of strong Bulgarian merchant communities. After the revolution in Greece, Greek dominance in the Empire's bureaucracy and trade gradually decreased. The Bulgarians who were very loyal to the Empire and not yet influenced by nationalistic movements were now replacing the Greeks. There were now numerous job opportunities in Istanbul for handy Bulgarian artisans. Thousands of Bulgarians either

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<sup>3</sup> Richard J. Crampton, *A Concise History of Bulgaria*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1997, p. 67.

permanently or temporarily emigrated to the city. Many Bulgarians were successful in their investments. When Sultan Mahmut II formed a regular army, he wanted to equip it with a standard uniform. The new army needed a large number of uniforms, and handy Bulgarians were to make them. The Bulgarian language began to be heard frequently in Istanbul's famous marketplaces. By the late 1840s, the Bulgarian community in Istanbul had its own press. In 1848, Ivan Bogorov published the first Bulgarian periodical in Istanbul.<sup>4</sup> By the 1870s, some 40,000 Bulgarians were living in Istanbul.<sup>5</sup>

Successful Bulgarian entrepreneurs in Istanbul earned power and honor according to their wealth. Bulgarians opened churches and schools in Istanbul. The Bulgarian population wanted to be aware of its ethnic identity without pursuing any nationalistic feelings. Greek independence had brought an end to a strong Greek influence on the Bulgarians. A political and national identity and the pursuing of a national interest could not fit into a religious brotherhood, which was assimilating the Bulgarians into the Greek culture. With the strength of wealth and self-confidence, the Bulgarians of Istanbul fought to have a free Bulgarian church. The Islahat Fermanı of 1856 contained church reforms among others. The Bulgarians in Istanbul applied to the Porte to be allowed to elect their clerics to the Bulgarian churches. Istanbul Bulgarians informed their brethren at home about new opportunities and requested the election of their church representatives in order to pressure the Porte to gain election rights. Some twenty representatives from Bulgaria and forty from Istanbul assembled in Istanbul for their proposed goal. This campaign produced no tangible results, but it gave tremendous psychological strength to the Bulgarians.<sup>6</sup>

In 1858, the Seven Church Council headed by the Patriarch met in Istanbul. In this meeting, Bulgarian delegates demanded to be able to select the bishops for Bulgarian churches. The Bulgarians were not satisfied by a Greek promise to allow them to select one bishop. In this event, the Russian government sided with the Greeks, sending an official note to the Patriarch. The note stipulated that Russia would protect the Patriarchate everywhere and would

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<sup>4</sup> Richard J. Crampton, *Bulgaria 1878-1918 A History*, Columbia University Press, New York 1983, p. 8.

<sup>5</sup> L.S. Stavrianos, *The Balkans Since 1453*, Rinehart and Winston Publishing, New York, Chicago 1958, p. 368.

<sup>6</sup> Nicholai Genchev, *The Bulgarian National Revival Period*, Sofia Press, Sofia 1977, p. 111.

not tolerate any secessionist independent church in the European territories of the Ottoman State.

In 1860, Ilarion Makariopolski, head of the Bulgarian church in Istanbul, led another movement to gain church independence. He conducted services on Easter Sunday without gaining prior Patyriarchate permission. During the service the Sultan's name was mentioned in place of the Patriarch's. Some thirty other churches throughout Bulgaria repeated the same action. The Patriarch did not accept this separation of the church jurisdiction and convened the Church Council. The Council condemned Ilarion and anathematized the followers. All attempts made by the Bulgarians to gain church independence produced no results because of the Patriarch's stubbornness. In exchange, the Bulgarians threatened to reject the Orthodox faith if their demands were not met.

The Ottoman Government's sympathetic approach and changing Russian policies solved the problem. In 1864, General N.P. Ignatiev was appointed as Russian ambassador to Istanbul. Ignatiev was the major figure in Russia's emerging pan-Slavist policies. According to the new political trend, Russia abandoned the Greek-centered policy of influence in the empire and the idea of establishing a Christian state independent from the Ottoman State under Greek leadership. They replaced it with the idea of the formation of separate Slavic states favoring Slav solidarity and federation. According to Ignatiev, in order to keep Bulgarians in the Orthodox faith, in other words, to keep them under Russian influence, Russia needed to recognize church separation. The Ottoman government favored the Bulgarians in the church debate in order to keep them loyal to the state and to block Russian political maneuvers. The Ottoman State tried to create an Ottoman society through the pan-Ottoman movement. Muslim and non-Muslim nationalities would have equal rights within the empire's territorial boundaries. If the empire gave the Bulgarians what they wanted, the Bulgarians would feel that they were equally part of the Ottoman society, and they would reason to remain in this society.

The Porte set up a new initiative--with Ignatiev's support--to settle the debate. A commission, formed by three Bulgarian and three Greek delegates, was to solve the problem. The commission reached a solution by deciding to establish a national Bulgarian church. Due to the law, the agreement needed to be ratified by the Patriarch in order to be valid. The Patriarch never signed the agreement, and it became null and void. Finally, on March 11, 1870, the dispute

was solved by Sultan Abdulaziz's ferman. The ferman decreed the establishment of an autonomous Bulgarian church. The church was to be headed by an exarch elected by the synod. As was true for the former commission's decision, the Patriarch failed to ratify the ferman. The Greek Church again anathematized Bulgarian church followers. Greeks paraded in the streets of Istanbul, shouting, "Long live the schism. We will not be absorbed by the Slavs. We will not let our children be Bulgarianized."<sup>7</sup> An anti-Slav journal based in Athens accused Russia of exploiting the Greek element in favor of Slav interests. Finally, without the Patriarch's permission, the Bulgarians formed their exarchate in 1872, relying on the ferman.

Establishment of the Bulgarian exarchate deeply damaged the Megali Idea, and the Greeks in the empire leaned towards union with Greece, while Bulgarians began to seek the creation of their own nationalist movement.<sup>8</sup> The Bulgarian church had been created by the Bulgarian people and intelligentsia, but it was not a movement for national liberation.<sup>9</sup>

### FORMATION OF BULGARIAN INTELLIGENTSIA AND EMERGENCE OF BULGARIAN NATIONALISM

The formation of an intelligentsia cannot take place without secular education, and nationalist feelings could not be promoted without an intelligentsia. As a general rule, language is the prerequisite in the formation of any nationalism.

The Bulgarian language was widely spoken by ethnic Bulgarians, especially poor, illiterate Bulgarian peasants. In the church, in the commune, and in the schools Greek was most widely used. Dominated families and urbanized Bulgarians spoke Greek in order to attain a high social level. An educated Bulgarian was one who spoke Greek. If he could not speak it, at least he adorned his speeches with Greek phrases. All educational institutions in Bulgaria were totally Greek dominated. In 1815, the first Greek secular school was opened in Bulgaria. The Bulgarian graduates from this school were inspired

<sup>7</sup> Stavrianos, p. 375.

<sup>8</sup> Kemal H. Karpat. *An Inquiry into the Social Foundations of Nationalism in the Ottoman State: From Social Estates to Classes, from Millets to Nations*, Center of International Studies, Princeton University 1973, p. 90.

<sup>9</sup> Crampton, *Bulgaria 1878-1918*, p. 16



by Greek nationalism, and later they became Bulgarian nationalists. And, at first, they were opposed to Greek dominance of the Bulgarian culture and language.<sup>10</sup>

In 1834, Vasil Aprilov launched the first Bulgarian-language lay school in Gabrovo. Aprilov favored Russian over Greek. According to Aprilov, Slavic Russia held the key to Bulgarian cultural independence because of Russia's advanced education.<sup>11</sup> When the modern western ideas reached Bulgaria, the Bulgarian intelligentsia had a dilemma in choosing either pan-Hellenism or pan-Slavism. They chose pan-Slavism in order to obtain Russian support in the formation of a Bulgarian cultural and ethnic identity.

The Bulgarian intelligentsia had to create a national language for Bulgarian nationalism. With many dialects, Bulgarian was deeply influenced by Turkish and Greek. There were two options in creating a national language, Church Slavonic or living Bulgarian. The problem was solved in the 1870s by the favoring of a living language. The Bulgarian intelligentsia's deep involvement with pan-Slavism created another danger for the language. When the language began to purge Turkish and Greek elements, the emerging language was invaded by Russian.<sup>12</sup>

Bulgarians had few books written in their languages, and most were published outside of Bulgaria. Russian books flowed into Bulgaria, and Bulgarians went abroad to study. In 1840, the first book in Bulgarian was published in Bulgaria.<sup>13</sup> Venelin's and Bozveli's books influenced the Bulgarian students concerning ethnic consciousness. In 1829, Uri Venelin, a Ukrainian Slav, wrote his book about Bulgarian history, *Ancient and Modern Bulgarians*. Venelin defended the notion that ancient Bulgarians were Slavic, not Turkic. Nefoit Bozveli dealt with Greek and Çorbacı abuses of Bulgarians. Aprilov, who first considered being a Greek, was influenced by Venelin, and he became a defender of Bulgarian ethnic culture. Aprilov was one of the first explorers of Bulgarian folklore and ethnography. Under the influence of German romantic

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<sup>10</sup> Thomas A. Meininger, *The Formation of a Nationalist Bulgarian Intelligentsia 1835-1878*, Garland Publishing, New York, London 1973, p. 74.

<sup>11</sup> Meininger, p. 77.

<sup>12</sup> Marin V. Pundeff, "Bulgarian Nationalism," *Nationalism in Eastern Europe*, Edited by Peter Sugar and Ivo J. Lederer, University of Washington Press, Seattle, London 1973, p. 109.

<sup>13</sup> Crampton, *A Concise History of Bulgaria*, p. 64.

nationalism, Bulgarian intellectuals conducted studies to discover their national identity using folklore, grammar, and historical sources.

Modern Bulgarian historical literature paid great attention to Father Paisii's book about Bulgarian history. Father Paisii was a monk in the Rila monastery. The monastery functioned under special concessions given by Ottoman Sultans in a free religious environment. The monastery embraced all Orthodox faiths with a different ethnicity. Ethnic Bulgarians were fewer in number and less effective in scholarship at the monastery. Bulgarian students and instructors were under the linguistic and religio-cultural influence of Greeks and Serbs. In 1762, Father Paisii wrote that there was no reason to be ashamed about speaking Bulgarian. His book was written in Old Church Slavonic, and even highly educated Bulgarians found it very hard to understand. The book contained no scientific value; it was just a short personal expression. Father Paisii's purpose was not aggressive, but defensive. He raised a voice against his brethren who had looked down on the ethnic Bulgarians. He wanted the Bulgarians to overcome psychological pressure and hurt, but he failed to show that Bulgarians were a distinct ethnic group. First published in 1844, not in Bulgaria, but in Budapest, the book did not garner any attention for almost a century. In 1871, it was identified as being written by Father Paisii. To find a base for their thesis that Bulgarians were aware of their ethnic identity and had struggled for centuries for their freedom, the overwhelming majority of Bulgarian scholars argued that Father Paisii's book was the startling point in Bulgaria's nationalistic movement. Surprisingly, the book was unknown to the Bulgarian intelligentsia, and they were not inspired by it. Even if the intelligentsia had a chance to know the book, its rhetoric would not fit into a modern nationalistic ideology.

The backbone of the Bulgarian intelligentsia was formed by Bulgarian graduates abroad. Education, publication, and literary and political organizations were not significant in the lands of Bulgaria, but they were pretty active abroad at the beginning of the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. After the Crimean war, parallel to Russia's emerging pan-Slavist propaganda, Russia encouraged and financially supported Bulgarian students. A large number of Bulgarian students received their education in Russia and Romania, where the Bulgarian nationalist movements were centered. Besides Russia's financial support, Bulgarian merchants and literary organizations gave monetary support

to the students abroad. In 1869, some thirty-six Bulgarian students graduated from Kieven schools. Between the years 1850 and 1876, Russia granted fellowships for 500 Bulgarian students to study in Russia.<sup>14</sup> Vienna and Paris were other centers where many Bulgarians studied.

A sizable number of Bulgarian students studied in Istanbul. Missionary schools, especially Robert College and the Greek Kuruçesme University, received many Bulgarian students. Numerous Bulgarian students registered in the government's first high school, Galatasaray Sultanisi. Bulgarian students attracted the attention of the teachers of the Sultani because of their self-discipline and diligence. Ottoman schooling gave Bulgarian students a practical introduction to some of the West's advanced ideas and skills.<sup>15</sup> The establishment of the Bulgarian intelligentsia dated to the 1850s. In terms of both size and influence, the intelligentsia was weak in Bulgaria. It was more active in Istanbul than in the lands of Bulgaria. The nationalistic intelligentsia was far from mobilizing the masses to achieve national goals.

### POLITICAL BULGARIAN NATIONALISM

Political Bulgarian nationalism was fostered abroad, especially in Russia and in the Danubian Principalities. Bulgarian political organizations, which were established in Russia and the Principalities, propagandized in Bulgaria. The emerging pan-Slavic policies of Russia after the Crimean War were crucially important in political Bulgarian nationalism. Russia pursued a policy seeking to establish Slavic states in the Ottoman Balkans under Russian influence. Russia's priority of establishing a state unifying Ottoman Orthodox citizens in the Balkans under Greek leadership had been abandoned. The birth of the national state of Greece ended Greek assimilation of the Slavs. The Greeks had their own state, and they were pursuing their own national goals. Bulgarians no longer wanted to stay under Greek influence, and they struggled to gain their own national identity.

Russia, especially Odessa, was a Mecca for Bulgarian nationalists, while Wallachia, notably Bucharest, was their military and organizational base. The first volumes of Bulgarian history were written in Odessa, and Bulgarian students studied their history there. Odessa inspired students to expand

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<sup>14</sup> Karpat, *An Inquiry Into the Social Foundations of Nationalism in the Ottoman State*, p. 83.

<sup>15</sup> Meininger, p. 193.

nationalistic ideas when they returned to Bulgaria. Because of Bulgarian trade colonies, Odessa and Wallachia had a large Bulgarian population. Revolutionary nationalist Bulgarians first established their political organizations, later formed armed militias in the Danubian Principalities. The Bulgarian insurgents used to cross the Danube and enter Bulgaria in search of people who would participate in a revolt. When they failed they fled back to the Danubian Principalities. The Principalities welcomed the Bulgarian nationalistic movement but hesitated to allow armed Bulgarian militias to cross the Danube. The Principalities were tied to the Ottoman State under Russian protection. They did not want to jeopardize their autonomous status by taking a wrong step.

Bulgarian nationalists were not united in their ideologies. There were two main groups of nationalists; each offered a different way of achieving goals.

- 1- Reformists: This group was also called the Turcophils. Bulgarian nationalists in Istanbul and Bulgaria favored remaining in the empire, but gaining more political rights. Forcing the Ottoman State to give new reforms could have resulted in a better political and economic situation for ethnic Bulgarians. Western-educated Bulgarians also shared the same idea, that the Bulgarian question would be resolved by reforming or pressuring for the reform of the Ottoman State.
- 2- Revolutionaries: This group was also called the Russophils and was composed mostly of Bulgarians who received an education in Russia and supported revolutionary solutions to the Bulgarian problem. According to these groups, independence from the Ottoman State could be a permanent solution. Within this group, there were different ways of achieving this goal. First, group members realized that Russia was the only power able to liberate Bulgaria, but at the same time they were afraid of Russian domination, which would destroy Bulgarian sovereignty in a future free Bulgaria. Revolutionaries believed that they could not completely achieve their goal of freedom, so a Slavic Confederation with Serbia and the Danubian Principalities was the best way to gain some measure of freedom and consolidate Slavic power in the Balkans. The agenda of both Serbia and the Principalities was to establish national states, not a Slavic Federal State. This agenda alienated the Bulgarian nationalists. Revolutionaries either turned their faces to Istanbul to form a federal state with the Ottoman State that

would have equal political rights with their counterparts, or they began to rely on their own power to liberate Bulgaria then by establishing a national Bulgarian state that would receive foreign aid.

Bulgarians enjoyed improving economic prosperity in the nineteenth century, both in rural and urban areas. Emerging merchant and artisan Bulgarian classes in urban areas and peasant prosperity in rural areas strengthened feelings that Bulgaria should remain in the Ottoman State. The traditional Ottoman administrative policies in rural areas and a series of reforms to improve minority rights supplied a comfortable environment for Bulgarians to live in. In the countryside, the village commune played a crucial role in supporting Bulgarian cultural life. The foundations granted by the Ottoman authorities made the commune the basic institution available to all rural Bulgarians, whether common or privileged in status, for preserving their self-government and basic self-esteem functions that the village did not possess prior to the Ottoman conquest.<sup>16</sup> Bulgarians lost, however, their political leaders with the Ottoman conquest. They preserved their agrarian feudal groups until Bulgarian autonomy.<sup>17</sup> In the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, with the abolishment of the Sipahis, eighty-five percent of Bulgarian peasants owned their own land. A high rate of land ownership improved agricultural techniques, and the existence of a big market for Bulgarian agricultural products resulted in Bulgarians' loyalty under the Çorbacıs' leadership in rural areas to the Empire. The peasantry took a minimal political role in the Bulgarian revival. Pan-Slavic propaganda was not effective on the Bulgarian peasants, because their economic and political situation was better than that of the Russian peasants. The reformists were strengthened by the establishment of Tuna Vilayeti (Danube Province) and by the vigorous and enlightened administration of the Vilayet, Mithat Pasha. When the Ottoman State adopted the Vilayet system as the basis of new administrative units in 1864, Tuna Vilayeti was a model vilayet. The Vilayet was comprised of Ruscuk, Vidin, Sofia, Tirnova, Varna, Niş, and Tulca.<sup>18</sup> These territories covered the bulk of territory in today's modern Bulgaria. A series of economic and administrative reforms was initiated by Mithat Pasha. In a short time, the

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<sup>16</sup> Dennis P. Hupchick, *The Bulgarians in the Seventeenth Century, Slavic Orthodox Society and Culture Under Ottoman Rule*, McFarland & Company, Inc., London 1993, p. 52.

<sup>17</sup> Karpat, *An Inquiry Into the Social Foundations of Nationalism in the Ottoman State*, p. 15.

<sup>18</sup> Kemal H. Karpat, *Ottoman Population 1830-1914, Demographic and Social Characteristics*, The University of Wisconsin Press, 1985, p. 24.

province achieved admirable goals, and the successes increased prosperity and political rights there. Mithat Pasha established agrarian banks and built roads, bridges, and schools. Mithat Pasha was assisted by an administrative council, which was apart from the usual officials. The Council consisted of two Christians and two Muslims as representatives of their communities. At least once a year a General Council of the Vilayet had to convene to discuss the budget and the planning and organization of public services, as well as other economic problems, including taxation. Each of seven sancaks forming the Danubian Vilayet was entitled to four representatives in the General Council. The Vilayet's official periodical was the *Dunav* (Danube), which was published in Turkish and Bulgarian.<sup>19</sup>

### POLITICAL ORGANIZATIONS

Revolutionary nationalists formed some organizations abroad and functioned under these organizations' banner. In 1854, a group of Bulgarian merchants formed a "Bulgarian Board of Trustees" in Odessa. The organization's main purpose was charity, but it also helped the Russians to recruit volunteers for the Army. That same year, the "Central Bulgarian Trusteeship" was formed in Bucharest with a similar purpose.<sup>20</sup>

In 1853 in Bucharest and in 1858 in Moscow, Bulgarian Benevolent Societies were established by wealthy Bulgarian merchants. These societies aimed at providing for the welfare of the Orthodox and securing scholarships for young Bulgarians to study in Russia.<sup>21</sup> Benevolent societies had good relations with Ignatiev. The Moscow Benevolent Society convened a meeting in Odessa to discuss the establishment of a Yugoslav Tsardom united with Serbia. To support this idea, the Bucharest Benevolent Society met that same year and declared that "a brotherly union should take place between the Serbs and the Bulgarians under the name of Yugoslav Tsardom."<sup>22</sup> The Benevolent Society was willing to sign a protocol declaring Serbian and Bulgarian unification at the

<sup>19</sup> Plamen S. Tzvetkov, *A History of Balkans, A Regional Overview From A Bulgarian Perspective Volume I*, EM Text, San Francisco 1993, p 456.

<sup>20</sup> Tzvetkov, p. 435.

<sup>21</sup> Barbara and Charles Jelavich, "The Establishment of the Balkan Nationalist States, 1804-1920" *A History of East and Central Europe, Volume VIII*, University of Washington Press, Seattle and London 1977, p. 136.

<sup>22</sup> Assen Nicoloff, *The Bulgarian Resurgence*, Cleveland, 1987, p. 116.

end of the meeting, but Serbian representatives failed to sign this protocol. The Serbs felt that they did not need Bulgarian help to attain their independence and that the Slavic confederation was a utopia. After this meeting, the Society pursued the establishment of a dual Bulgarian and Turkish state friendly to Russia. The Austro-Hungarian Empire was a good example of their proposed model. In 1867, the Society sent a memorandum to Sultan Abdulaziz for the establishment of a dual Turkish-Bulgarian monarchy. According to the plan, a separate Bulgarian kingdom would be established; it would be ruled by Sultan's Christian deputy. The Bulgarian kingdom would have a constitutional autonomy and an independent church.<sup>23</sup> The submitted plan did not catch the Sultan's attention. In the aftermath of the memorandum, moderate Bulgarians tended to be more revolutionary.<sup>24</sup> Georgi Rakovski appeared to be the first revolutionary leader to challenge the political domination of the Ottoman State. Rakovski joined revolutionary movements at the age of sixteen. With the failure of the 1841 revolution in the Balkans, he escaped to France and then returned to Istanbul. He received his education at the Greek Kuruçeşme University in Istanbul. He fought in the Crimean War against the Turks. In 1863, he traveled to the Greek, Montenegrin, and Serb capitals to enlist support for the Bulgarian cause. Rakovski's political program counted on some outside help for the Bulgarians, but soon he discovered that outsiders sought to help themselves, not his countrymen. Rakovski was especially antagonized by the Greek attitude regarding the Bulgarian cause.

Since the early sixties, Serbia had been one of the centers of Bulgarian activity. The Serbian government aided Rakovski both in his organization of a Bulgarian Legion and in the printing of books and pamphlets. Rakovski had had his headquarters in Belgrade and in Novi Sad. In 1861, he founded the Journal *Dunavski Lebed* (Danube Swan). He was willing to enter into a federation with the Serbs and Romanians, but not the Greeks. Soon Rakovski and his followers clashed with Serb nationalist groups over the entire question of Balkan Slavic unity. When the Ottoman military forces shelled Belgrade in 1861, Rakovski moved his headquarters to Bucharest, but his connection with Serbia continued.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Genchev, p. 129.

<sup>24</sup> Roderic H. Davison, *Reforms in the Ottoman State 1856-1876*, Princeton University Press, Princeton 1968, p. 156.

<sup>25</sup> Jelavich, p. 136.

Rakovski was particularly influenced by the Italian Risorgimento and Mazzini's ideology of Young Italy and Young Europe. He sought to organize the bands' activities into a revolutionary movement, linking it with movements in Europe.<sup>26</sup> Rakovski believed that Ottoman power would be destroyed only by the armed action of its subject peoples; that is why he insisted on the unification of Slavic nationalities of the Balkans.

In 1866, Rakovski established "Bulgarian Secret Central Committee" in Bucharest. Rakovski did not have a chance to operate his organization for long. In 1867, he died at the age of forty-five from tuberculosis. Rakovski's sudden death created a great grievance among the nationalists, and his personality became a cult after Bulgarian independence.

After Rakovski's death, Vasil Leviski led the organization. In 1872, conflicted Bulgarian nationalist groups and their leaders held a meeting in Bucharest to unite around common nationalist goals. After the meeting, the "Bulgarian Revolutionary Central Committee" was formed. The committee included representatives from Bulgaria as well as from other emigrant organizations abroad. The committee decided on full independence. Liubien Karavelov was elected as president. Leviski and his chief assistant, Dimitur Obshti, were given the task of returning to Bulgaria to organize the revolution there. In 1873, Leviski and Obshti attempted to rob the Ottoman post office in Sofia, but they were caught. They confessed their crime and talked about their insurgent plans.<sup>27</sup> They were hanged in 1874 for robbery. After the death of Leviski, the Central Committee collapsed in Bulgaria.<sup>28</sup>

The ideology of Bulgarian revolutionary nationalism was perfected by Karavelov. He was the Mazzini of Bulgaria. He spent nearly ten years in Moscow, and he came to know official and revolutionary Russia well. He rejected the idea of a Turkish-Bulgarian dual state. Karavelov supported the idea of a Balkan federation that included Greece. According to Karavelov, each state would be autonomous in the federation. Karavelov preached that "liberty is not received, it is taken."<sup>29</sup> Karavelov was aware that Russia was pursuing only her own interests. According to Karavelov, Russia was responsible for the

<sup>26</sup> Pundeff, p. 110.

<sup>27</sup> Jelavich, p. 138.

<sup>28</sup> Crampton, *Bulgaria 1878-1918*, p. 19.

<sup>29</sup> Pundeff, p. 111.



exodus of thousands of Bulgarians from the Bulgarian lands and settlements of thousands of Tatars and Circassians in Bulgaria. He warned that "the well-being of the Bulgarians will not come from the North" and that to rely on Russia was "to suffer another century."<sup>30</sup> Karavelov asserted that "if Russia comes to liberate, she will be met with great sympathies, but if she comes to rule, she will find many enemies."<sup>31</sup>

In 1875, the Revolutionary Central Committee tried to start an uprising in Bulgaria against the central government, but failed. After this failure, the Central Committee in Bucharest broke up.<sup>32</sup> In 1875, a new Bulgarian Revolutionary Central Committee was formed in the Romanian town of Giurgiu on the Danube under Georgi Donkovski's leadership. The committee divided Bulgaria into four revolutionary districts with headquarters in Vratsa, Sliven, Tirnova, and Plovdiv.<sup>33</sup> The committee planned to start a general uprising in Bulgaria in April 1876.

#### APRIL UPRISING IN BULGARIA AND ITS AFTERMATH

Revolutionary Bulgarian nationalist groups diffused into Bulgaria, crossing the Danube to start an uprising according to the plan made by new Central Committee. The uprising was scheduled for April, but it started at the beginning of May. Bulgarian nationalists were not unified in the uprising. Only a small group supported the revolt. Uprising perpetrators targeted Bulgarian and mixed Turkish-Bulgarian populated villages for their propaganda. The revolutionaries convinced Bulgarian villagers that a nationwide uprising had started but that the central government's army was ruthlessly purging ethnic Bulgarians where they were found. The revolutionaries told the people that they were harbingers of an ominous destiny for the Bulgarians, and they informed villagers that the Russian army had crossed the Danube to crush the Ottoman army and liberate the Bulgarians. The revolutionaries recommended the killing of Turks before they (the Turks) started to kill Bulgarians and fleeing the villages to the mountains and the forests, waiting for the Russian army's arrival there to liberate them.

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<sup>30</sup> *ibid*, p. 112.

<sup>31</sup> Karel Durman, *Lost Illusions, Russian Policies Towards Bulgaria in 1877-1887*, Almqvist & Wiksel International, Stockholm, 1988, p. 15.

<sup>32</sup> Genchev, p. 149.

<sup>33</sup> Crampton, *Bulgaria 1878-1918, A History*, p. 22.

The propaganda was successful in some rural areas. Interestingly, Bulgarian peasants who were less affected by nationalist thought were carrying out a revolutionary nationalistic task. It was clear that even Bulgarian urban areas were not ready for a national uprising, but villages were enticed by the revolutionary nationalists, who took advantage of their ignorance. The timing was perfect to start an uprising in Bulgaria. The Ottoman army was suppressing the uprising in Serbia. There was a shortage of Ottoman military power in Bulgaria to maintain peace and security. However, the central government's military presence was weak in Bulgaria, but the demographic structure in Bulgaria was not suitable for the achieving of a successful nationalist uprising. The Bulgarian situation was remarkably different from that of the Serbs and Greeks. Bulgaria was the core of the Ottoman territories in the Balkans. The Turkish-speaking population was in the majority until Bulgaria's autonomy in 1878.<sup>34</sup> According to a 1876 account, there were 1,120,000 Turks, and 1,130,000 Bulgarians in Bulgaria.<sup>35</sup> The Bulgarian population in Bulgaria was mostly peasant in nature, and few ethnic Bulgarians actively sought independence, and those who were active were divided.<sup>36</sup>

Bulgarian revolutionaries aimed to start a suicidal uprising, sacrificing some thousands of Bulgarian lives in order to attract the attention of western public opinion to the Bulgarian cause. In the end, they were successful in achieving their aim. The revolutionaries earlier had adopted terrorist methods. First, they had planned to burn Istanbul and major cities, but they changed their minds and planned to massacre Turks in Bulgaria with an ill-organized revolt.<sup>37</sup> The revolt was repressed by a force consisting of mostly non-Turkish irregulars. According to historian Richard Crampton, most of the *Başıbozüks*, irregulars, who fought against the rebels were Bulgarian Muslims (*Pomaks*)<sup>38</sup> who spoke Bulgarian, not Turkish. After the Crimean War, some 100,000 Circassians and Tatars had settled in Bulgaria. They were active in the suppression of the revolt; they tried to prevent a Russian presence in Bulgaria and avoid Russian rule, from which they had escaped. Besides all these groups, an overwhelming

<sup>34</sup> Karpat, *An Inquiry Into the Social Foundations of Nationalism in the Ottoman State*, p. 83.

<sup>35</sup> Bilal N. Şimşir, "The Turks of Bulgaria and the Immigration Question." *The Turkish Presence in Bulgaria*, Publications of the Turkish Historical Society, Ankara 1986, p. 40.

<sup>36</sup> Richard Millman, *Britain and Eastern Question 1875-1878*, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1979, p. 124.

<sup>37</sup> Davison, p. 323.

<sup>38</sup> Crampton, *Bulgaria 1878-1918: A History*, p. 19.

majority of Bulgarian village administrators, Çorbacıs who used to be elected by village dwellers, sided with the Başıbozüks to suppress the revolt. Revolutionaries saw the Çorbacıs as traitors.

In June 1876, the first reports began to reach England that these Turkish irregulars had destroyed dozens of villages and massacred rebels and innocents alike. The English were particularly sensitive to the Bulgarian problem because they had fought the Crimean War to preserve the Ottoman State.<sup>39</sup> The British Ambassador to Istanbul, Henry Elliot, sent reports to London about the Bulgarian revolt. The Ambassador first received information from the Consulate of Edirne, which was the closest British consulate to Philippopolis, where the severest clashes occurred. He reported the data submitted from the Edirne Consulate to London. On May 24, Elliot reported that some 300 Bulgarians were killed during the clashes. In his May 27<sup>th</sup> report, the Ambassador reported to London that Bulgarians also killed many innocent Muslims.<sup>40</sup>

Former missionaries and instructors at Robert College in Istanbul, Professor George Washburn and Professor Albert Long, prepared a report about the Bulgarian revolt, relying on information given by Bulgarian students at the College. They submitted copies of their report to Ambassador Elliot and correspondents of *The Times* and *The Daily News* in Istanbul. *The Times* refused to publish this report but *The Daily News* wrote a story based on the report of June 23. *The Daily News* dramatically portrayed how innocent Christians were savagely killed, and the paper said that some 30,000 Bulgarians died during the revolt.<sup>41</sup>

British Foreign Minister Derby and Prime Minister Disraeli announced that the number of Bulgarian casualties was exaggerated. Due to public pressure and the Queen's curiosity, Ambassador Elliot dispatched two deputations, and Disraeli informed the Queen about the deputations. Elliot stated that the information about the casualties was based on Bulgarian and Russian sources and that the numbers were exaggerated. When the reports gave detailed information about Bulgarian casualties, they ignored acknowledging Muslim casualties. According to Elliot, the Ottoman State did not have any other choice

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<sup>39</sup> Stavrianos, p. 403.

<sup>40</sup> Millman, p. 126.

<sup>41</sup> *ibid.*, p. 30.

but to use irregulars to suppress the revolt, and the Government was trying to settle the unrest.<sup>42</sup>

Despite the European sentiment about "Bulgarian Massacre," which arose from the bloody repression of the revolt by Turkish irregulars, the Turkish sentiment regarded the revolt as a massacre of helpless Turks by Bulgarian rebels incited by Russia.<sup>43</sup> The Ottoman Government announced that some 1,000 Turks and 1830 Bulgarians were killed during the revolt. Three irregulars were hanged by the Government because of their involvement in these atrocities. According to the Government, the Bulgarians began to kill Muslims, and most of the villages were burnt by Bulgarians.<sup>44</sup>

British politician William Gladstone criticized Disraeli for not accepting the reality of the situation and for backing the Ottoman State. Disraeli pursued a policy designed to preserve the Ottoman State against Russian imperialism. In contrast to Disraeli, Gladstone defended the idea that the Ottoman State should leave the territories in the Balkans in favor of the Balkan states. Gladstone adamantly supported and publicized the Bulgarian case. He wrote a pamphlet--"Bulgarian Horrors and the Question of the East"--which sold fifty thousand copies in a few days.

The Bulgarian revolt achieved greater success in Europe than in Bulgaria. The rebels attracted favorable European public opinion. European opinion did not spare attention to the Bulgarian rebels as it had backed every single Christian case in the Ottoman State. A lack of political Bulgarian nationalists and revolutionaries in Bulgaria, a large Muslim population, and Ottoman loyalties among the Bulgarians were supposed to make Bulgarian autonomy and independence late. Due to changing European international politics and Russia's political and military accord, Bulgaria would gain its autonomy two years after the April revolt. This was unthinkable for the revolutionaries.

### BULGARIAN AUTONOMY

Bulgarian and Serbian revolts started a new crusade in Europe to pressure for more concessions on behalf of the minorities in the Ottoman State. At the "Tersane Konferansı," which started on December 23, 1876, in Istanbul, the

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<sup>42</sup> *ibid.*, p. 140.

<sup>43</sup> Davison, p. 323.

<sup>44</sup> Millman, pp. 143-154.

European powers unanimously made the decision that the Ottoman State had to launch new reforms on minority rights. During this conference, Russia pressured Bulgarian autonomy, but England and the Austro-Hungarians opposed the Russian plan.

The Tersane Konferansı aimed to dictate reform plans in the Empire, especially in the territories where the Slavic subjects of the Empire lived. The Ottoman government hastily declared a constitutional regime to prevent European involvement in domestic affairs.<sup>45</sup> The Ottoman government decided to reject the reform plans proposed by the conference. The government considered the conference's plan a violation of Ottoman sovereignty. A newly established Ottoman parliament would solve the minority problems. In March, 1877, Russian, French, English, Austro-Hungarian, and German and Italian delegates met in London. After the meeting, these European powers called the Porte to adopt the reforms, which were proposed at Tersane Konferansı. The Ottoman government once again rejected the European proposal. Ignatiev dispatched a mission to Europe, securing European neutrality in case of any quarrels between Russia and the Ottoman State. Russia and Austro-Hungary secretly agreed that the latter would not side with any party in case of Russian-Ottoman clashes. This agreement was a major dispatch in Austro-Hungary's international policies. Like the Ottomans, the Austro-Hungarian Empire--had large numbers of minorities. Traditionally, the Empire opposed international plans concerning minority rights, concluding that they would be too dangerous to the Empire's unity. Ignatiev also secured French, English, and German neutrality. With Gladstone's prime-ministership, England also abandoned her traditional policy, which was designed to preserve the Ottoman State. Now all European powers were united against the Ottomans' refusal to apply European-proposed reforms. For the first time, Russia was entirely free to exert its military and political power on the Ottoman State without any European opposition.

In April 1877, Russia declared war against the Ottoman State. Romania, Serbia, and Montenegro entered into the war, siding with Russia. The Russian troops crossed the Danube and began an occupation of the Bulgarian territories. The Bulgarians collaborated with the Russians.

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<sup>45</sup> Akdes Nimet Kurat, *Türkiye ve Rusya*, AÜ, DTCF Yayınları, Ankara, 1970, p. 278.

The Russo-Ottoman War of 1877-78 was one of the most disastrous conflicts in Turkish history. Rapidly armed Bulgarian bands and Don Cossacks, along with the Russian army, committed horrible massacres. According to one account, 200,000 to 300,000 Muslim civilians were killed during the war, and more than a million Muslims were uprooted in an area stretching all the way from the Danube to Istanbul.<sup>46</sup> According to another account, one-and-a-half million Rumelian Muslims were uprooted, and around 450,000 of them died.<sup>47</sup>

When the war ended in January 1878, Russian troops were stationed in Yeşilköy (San Stefano) ten miles from Istanbul, endangering the security of the Straits. The Russian army did not attempt to seize the capital because if it did so, the European powers would not approve the Russian action. And it would trigger another Crimean War against Russia. The European powers did not expect the Ottoman army to collapse that quickly, and they were shocked by the Russian success. To prevent European intervention, Russia hastily signed the San Stefano treaty with the Ottoman State on March 3, 1878. With this agreement, Bulgaria gained autonomy within its borders. According to Turkish diplomat Bilal Şimşir, none of the other states founded on the territory of the Ottoman State had devoured so many innocent Turkish victims as did the Bulgarian state.<sup>48</sup> The European powers opposed the Treaty of San Stefano, and the treaty was then revised at the Berlin Conference in June. The Berlin treaty reduced the territory of greater Bulgaria. According to the Berlin treaty, Bulgaria would have an autonomous status, having its own prince under Ottoman suzerainty.

In conclusion, Bulgarian political nationalism started at the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Bulgarian nationalism--especially in Bulgaria--was weak, and it emerged late in other Balkan countries. As was common among Balkan nationalisms, Bulgarian nationalism was blended with myths and false premises to legitimate itself. Russian pan-Slavist propaganda fabricated a myth that Bulgarian nationalism was great and complete. Bulgarian nationalism, however, was far from being true political nationalism and lacked strong, awakened the Bulgarian masses as a base. Bulgarian revolutionary nationalist organizations, which were established outside the lands of Bulgaria, could not find a large

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<sup>46</sup> Karpat, *Ottoman Population 1830-1914*, p. 49.

<sup>47</sup> Şimşir, p.40.

<sup>48</sup> *ibid*, p.41.

number of adherents in Bulgaria. Revolutionary nationalists were weak and disunited. The major movements for the revolutionaries were to cross the Danube and start ill-organized and sporadic revolts. The famous April uprising began in the villages, not in the towns, where nationalists were much stronger. In fact, the revolt was not purely nationalistic. Revolutionaries' propaganda recruited villagers for participation in the revolt. These villagers assumed that they were protecting their lives against a planned Turkish massacre. The revolt was suppressed in a month.

The grassroots communal life in the Balkans for centuries hardened the presence of nationalism in the peninsula. In the Bulgarian case, non-ethnic Bulgarians were a majority. To create one nation and to pursue a nation's interests were impossible in a multi-ethnic structured community. When the ethnic map of Bulgaria did not easily lend itself to the creation of one nation, the utopian nationalism started using ambiguous, imagined variables to justify their way of nationalism. Turks, Greeks, Vlahs and others either began assimilation into Bulgarian nationalism. Radical reinterpretation of the history in Bulgaria started in the 1870s and continued until contemporary times.

European attention to the April uprising made the revolt an important ethnic struggle. Biased European consideration about Bulgarian problems, and changing international policies among the European powers created an enormous fortune for Bulgarian revolutionaries as well as other Balkan revolutionary nationalists. The treaty of Berlin recognized some ethnic groups, such as the Bulgarians, Romanians and Serbs, as nations, while it ignored the claims to nationhood made by other ethnic groups. Precise Russian effort on behalf of Balkan nationalities and the European powers' collaboration with Russia gave birth to autonomous national Balkan states. Interestingly, the Berlin Treaty recognized national territories in the Balkans, territories that never existed before the Ottoman State. Inadequate national boundaries favored some Balkan nationalities but ignored others and created turmoil in the Balkans. Balkan nations strong in population and power tried to seize more territory for greater statehood. Attempts to ascertain and assimilate different nationalities into the sovereign nations created endless unrest in the Balkans, as was clearly seen in the Bulgarian nationalism case.

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## ÖZET

## BULGAR MİLLİYETÇİLİĞİNİN ORTAYA ÇIKIŞI

*Osmanlı Devletinden bağımsızlığını kazanan Balkan milletleri milli kimlikleri ve milli amaçları açısından karışık milliyetçi düşünceler tesis ettiler. Balkanlarda tarihten gelen etnik ve politik karışıklıklar Osmanlı'dan sonra milliyetçilik ateşiyle alevlenerek, hayali amaçlar peşinde koşup, tehlikeli mecralara doğru aktılar. Diğer Balkan milliyetçi gruplarında olduğu gibi Bulgar milliyetçileri de tarihi tersten okuyup, tarihin ve Osmanlı Devletinin doğal akışımın tersine bazı kurgulamalara gittikler. Kendi milletlerinin ne kadar önemli olduğunu, milli bilinçlerinin ne kadar eskiye dayandığını ve politik milliyetçiliğin Bulgarlar içerisinde ne denli hızla yayıldığını göstermek için harcanan çabalarda Osmanlı Devleti günah keçisi ilan edilip, Osmanlı Devleti karanlık dönem olarak nitelendirildi. Bu yazıda da görüleceği gibi, ne Osmanlı dönemi Bulgarlar için karanlık dönemdi ve ne de Bulgar milli bilinci milliyetçi-komitacıların iddia ettiği kadar Osmanlı Bulgarlarında derin bağlara sahipti.*

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Osmanlı, Bulgaristan, Tuna Vilayeti, Rila Manastırı, Tırnova, Peder Paisii, Aprilov, Rakovski, Tersane Konferansı.

*The Ottoman sovereignty in this region which had an excellent reputation as a peaceful structure, raised significant political doubts for the future of the region. The notions of independence Bulgaria, based on the historical process by forcing its relations with both regions and language, by the process which to secure the same religion and language and maintaining their differences. Some religious, cultural and economical rights, which Ottoman rule gave to the population of the "Miller Dişarı", caused that the notions of independence Europe, could prevent their religious, cultural and economical structures. The structure appeared in this way improved the economical and cultural situation of the nations of the region. Thus, the traditional Ottoman rule had positive influence upon the process of nationalist thoughts, which was to be appeared in the future and revolutions.*

*Key Words: Ottoman Empire, Balkan, Ottoman State, Miller System, Millet, Rila Manastırı, Türk, Rumeli.*

Be makalamin daha çabukki birin yeküneri, Almaniya'ya bir yeküneri, makbul, Bulgaristan ve Belgrad'da kütüphanelerinde makalenin nüshası ve tercümanları. Makalenin kütüphanelerinde nüshasına makale ya basıldı, aliminde yayınlanmıştır. "Soviet Literature" - Paris, Kasım (24.07.1988-11.03.1994), Beitrage an der Vernetzung "Jahres Literatur, 1988" - Berlin, Elisabeth Caswell, 26 Eylül 1994, Teutonia, Orient-Jahres der F.M.F. in Deutschland, Köln, 1995, S. 12-24. Buun kütüphanelerinde nüshası makalamin de, aliminde ya basıldı ya basıldı yayınlanmıştır. "The Functioning of a Millet System and its Development in the Ottoman Empire", European Review, Seri 3, 1997, S. 257-261. Be makalamin bir de, Aliminde kütüphanelerinde nüshası makalenin de, aliminde ya basıldı ya basıldı yayınlanmıştır. Prof. Dr. Ludwig Maximilian Üniversitesi Kültür Bilimleri Fakültesi, Vakıf ve İnceleme Enstitüsü, Doç. Dr., Karadeniz Teknik Üniversitesi Fen-Bilimleri Fakültesi, Çarşamba Dünden Trabzon

