

BOOK REVIEW

İbrahim Kamil, *Bulgaristan Türkleri ve Göçler. Bulgaristan Komünist Partisi Gizli Belgeleri (1944-1989) [Turks of Bulgaria and Migrations. Confidential Documents of the Bulgarian Communist Party (1944-1989)]*. 8 volumes, Ankara: AKDITYK Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi, 2018, ISBN 978-975-16-3528-0

vol. 1 (1944-1953), CCLVI + 281 p.;

vol. 2 (1954-1963), LXXXVI + 509 p.;

vol. 3 (1964-1983), LIX + 529 p.;

vol. 4 (1984-1985), LIV + 449 p.;

vol. 5 (1986-1987), LVI + 525 p.;

vol. 6 (January 1988-March 1989), XLIX + 469 p.;

vol. 7 (April 1989-June 1989), XLVII + 431;

vol. 8 (July 1989-December 1989), XXII + 471 p.

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The author of the book, İbrahim Kamil, Associate Professor of International Relations in Thrace University (Edirne), was born in Razgrad in Bulgaria in 1958 and migrated to Turkey after the Bulgarian-Turkish migration agreement in 1968. He belongs to the community of Turkish migrants from Bulgaria (Bulgaristan Göçmenleri) in Turkey. After studying Political Science in Istanbul, he dedicated his academic life to the Bulgarian studies with focus on Turkish and Muslim minorities in Bulgaria and

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Bulgarian-Turkish relations. As a result of decades-long research (since 1993), he prepared an eight-volume work of document collection from the Archives of the Bulgarian Communist Party related to the Turkish and Muslim minorities. The work is published by the prominent Turkish research institution *Atatürk Research Center* (Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi) in Ankara.

After the collapse of communism and regime change in Bulgaria, a big number of political parties were established and took part in the political elections. In this process the Bulgarian Communist Party changed its name to the Bulgarian Socialist Party. The Socialist Party decided in 1993 to deliver the Archives of the Bulgarian Communist Party consisting mainly of correspondence of the party secretary and Politburo and local party organisations to the Central State Archives while the local party archives were turned to local state archives. In the same year, the Turkish State Archives and the Bulgarian State Archives signed an agreement of document exchange. İbrahim Kamil was the first academician from Turkey who started to research in the Central State Archives of Bulgaria (p. xii).

One of the most crucial topics which attracted the interest of the researchers of the post-communist Bulgaria was the policy of the Communist Party towards the Turkish-Muslim minority called “Văzroditelen Proces” (rebirth / regeneration process) which was then condemned by the Bulgarian Parliament on 11 January 2012 as an “ethnic cleansing”¹ while the Turkish minority or migrant groups call it a “genocide” attempt.²

¹ “Deklaraciya. Osăzdašta opita za nasilstvena asimilaciya na bălgarskite myusyulmani”, Narodno Săbranie na Republika Bălgariya - Deklaraciya i obešteniya (parliament.bg), <https://www.parliament.bg/bg/declaration/ID/13813>; for more details, see: Tomasz Kamusella, “Between Politics and Objectivity: The non-Remembrance of the 1989 Ethnic Cleansing of Turks in Communist Bulgaria”, *Journal of Genocide Research*, 22/4 (2020): 515-532; Victor D. Bojkov, “Bulgaria’s Turks in the 1980s: A Minority Endangered”, *Journal of Genocide Research*, 6 (3) (September 2004): 343-469.

² See, for example, the memoirs of Ahmet Şerif Şerefli, *Türk Doğduk Türk Öldük (Soy Kırımı Yaşantıları) [We were born as Turk and we died as Turk (Genocide Experiences)]*, 1st ed. 1990, 2nd ed. Ankara: T.C. Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı, 2002. See also the inscription of the remembrance monument in Sütkesiği/Mleçino in Souther Bulgaria: “Totalitarizme ve Soykırımı Karşı İlk Protesto Mitingi 24.XII.1984 Tarihinde Burada Yapıldı” [The protest meeting against totalitarianism and genocide took place here on 24.12.1984]. The monument has also a Bulgarian inscription: “Tuk na 24.XII.1984 god. e proveden părviya protesten miting sreštu totalitarniya režim vāv vrăzka s t.n. Văzroditelen proces”. Here, instead of the word “genocide” they used the phrase “taka nareçen vazroditelen proces” [so called rebirth process] which also testifies that they regard the term “rebirth” used by the Communist Party as a “genocide”.

Several Bulgarian researchers published books and document collections on this sensitive issue of forced assimilation. Among the first studies, Ali Eminov, Valery Stoyanov and several other academicians wrote monographies on the Turkish/Muslim minorities and the issue of assimilation in a general perspective.³ There are also document collections directly focusing on the period of forced assimilation (1984-1989).⁴

The document collection by İbrahim Kamil aims to cover the whole period of the communist regime between 1945 and 1989. In eight volumes there are altogether 430 documents (Bulgarian original and a Turkish summary of content for each document). Each volume is dedicated to a specific period and, by using the selected documents, the author tries to give a general picture of the period in the introduction of each volume.

The first volume includes, however, also a general presentation of the history of the Turkish migration from Bulgaria in almost 200 pages. This part of the book consists of four chapters: the first chapter titled "historical background" deals with migrations during the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1878 and the Balkan Wars 1912-1913. The second chapter focuses on the "Migrations during the Cold War" covering the migrations of 1950-1951, 1968 Bulgarian-Turkish migration agreement and the migrations of 1969-1978, and forced assimilation policy 1984-1985 and the migration of 1989. A separate subchapter is dedicated to other oppression and assimilation confronted minorities such as Pomaks who the author calls "Muslim Pomak Turks". The third chapter focuses on the Bulgarian Communist Party, its organisation, congresses, offices etc. The fourth chapter discusses the content of the documents from the period of 1944-1953 and gives an overview of the developments in this period (p. cxci-ccxiii). Then follows the summary of 83 documents and the photos of the Bulgarian originals. In the end there is an extensive bibliography and an index (limited to the monographic part).

³ Ali Eminov, *Turkish and Other Muslim Minorities in Bulgaria*, London: Routledge, 1997; Valeri Stoyanov, *Turskoto Naselenie v Bălgariya Meždu Polyusite na Etničeskata Politika*, Sofia: Lik, 1998.

⁴ The document publications in Bulgaria in a chronological order: *Istinata za "Văzroditelniya Protes"*. *Dokumenti ot arhiva na Politbyuro i TsK na BKP*, Project director Ahmed Dogan, editor Samuel Levi, Sofia: Institut za Izsledvane na Integracijata, 2003; Veselin Angelov, *Strogo Poveritelno! Asimilatorskata kampaniya sreštu turskoto natsionalno maltsinstvo v Bălgariya (1984-1989)*. *Dokumenti*, Sofia: Fondaciya liberalna demokraciya, 2008; Veselin Angelov, *Sekretno! Protestnite aktsii na turtsite v Bălgariya, Yanuari-May 1989*, Sofia: Samizdat, 2009; Evgeniya Kalinova, Iskra Baeva (eds.), *"Văzroditelniyat Proces"*. Vol. 1: *Bălgarskata Dăržava i Bălgarskite Turci (Sredata na 30-te - načaloto na 90-te godini na XX vek)*, Vol. 2: *Meždunarodni izmereniya (1984-1989)*, Sofia: Dăržavna Agenciya "Arhivi", 2009.

The second volume on the period of 1954-1963 includes three parts, the analysis of the documents, the summary of 106 documents and the photos of their originals, plus a bibliography. The following six volumes follow the same schema: the third volume on 1964-1983 includes 28 documents, the fourth volume on 1984-1985 discusses 18 documents, the fifth volume on 1986-1987 includes 60 documents, the sixth volume on January 1988-March 1989: 49 documents, the seventh volume on April 1989-June 1989: 37 documents and the eighth volume on July 1989-December 1989: 49 documents.

Every kind of document selection has the potential to be subjective according to the interests of the editor. The document selection of İbrahim Kamil is also limited to the Muslim/Turkish minorities in Bulgaria. It is, however, a very successful attempt to publish the most important documents showing the plans and projects of the governing elite in communist Bulgaria regarding the Muslim minority.

The author has a very good command of the Bulgarian and Turkish languages and the information in the Turkish summary of the documents is reliable. For each document, the archive numbers are given in the book.

The only point to be criticized in this work is that the same bibliography consisting of 72 pages is repeated at the end of each volume, and altogether it takes a place of 576 pages. Instead, the bibliography only in the first volume would be sufficient. On the other hand, it lacks a common thematic index for the content of the Bulgarian documents for all volumes - could be attached to the last volume - which would be a very good orientation help for the readers.

Despite these small imperfections, this monumental publication creates new opportunities to the researchers, particularly in Turkey, who do not have access to the Bulgarian language or the Archives of the Bulgarian Communist Party.