

Araştırma Makalesi / Research Article

From Integration to Assimilation and Forced Migration: An Evaluation of the Bulgarian Communist Party's Turkish Minority Policy*

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Abstract

Minority regulations in Bulgaria from the communist takeover to the end of the Stalinist era were shaped under the influence of socialist internationalist policies, which envisaged the preservation of ethnic and cultural differences for generating class solidarity among the Bulgarian citizens. However, in practice, the constitutional safeguards and promises given to them were often ignored by the state for the sake of constructing a modern socialist society. The discrimination increased further during the post-Stalinist years in parallel with the regime's ideological shift away from communist orthodoxy towards nationalism. The state-sponsored discriminatory policies had far-reaching consequences for the Turks, the largest and most culturally aware of all ethnic minorities. Perceived as an alien element of the Bulgarian society, throughout the entire socialist period, Turkish minority was subjected to integrationist/assimilationist policies and

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forcibly expelled from the country at times when these policies did not produce the desired results. This article focuses on the discriminatory policies and practices forced upon the Turkish minority by the Bulgarian Communist Party during the era of state socialism, and intends to inquire into their results.

Keywords

Turkish Minority, Bulgarian Communist Party, integration, assimilation, revival process.

Introduction

The coexistence of proletarian internationalism and nationalism under state socialist regimes as two diametrically opposed ideologies is widespread in history. The period of state socialism in Bulgaria (1944-1989) under the pro-Soviet Bulgarian Communist Party (BCP) is a typical example of this type of ideological symbiosis. In theory, Bulgarian policies were guided by the principles of socialist internationalism which disregarded ethnic distinctions in favor of class solidarity and protected ethnic and cultural differences. Nevertheless, in practice the state nurtured ethnic Bulgarian culture along with socialist multiculturalism and pursued discriminatory policies against the minorities.

In the early years of Stalinist Socialism, minority discrimination was implicitly actualized through cultural, economic and religious policies embedded to the totalitarian project of building a modern socialist society. Deviation from the Stalinist ideological reference points in minority policies has become more visible with Todor Zhivkov's rise to power in 1954. In his more than three decades of rule, Zhivkov blended the Marxist values with elements of ethnic and traditional Bulgarian culture, gradually phasing out the former in favor of the latter as evident in the Unified Bulgarian Socialist Nation thesis and the National Revival Process in the 1970's and 1980's respectively.

Turks as the largest of the ethnic minorities living in Bulgaria suffered most from regime's efforts to blend the socialist multiculturalism project with nationalist policies. Turkish minority and their institutions were perceived as alien elements of the society to be assimilated into a mainstream cultural context which was strongly paired with the culture of ethnic Bulgarians. On the other hand, the public use of Turkish was systematically restrained under the pretext of integrating Turkish minority to the Bulgarian society. These policies were complemented with the so-called voluntary migration of them from Bulgaria. Although migration seemed to be a voluntary choice, in practice it was a tool in the hands of the regime to homogenize Bulgaria by lowering down the proportion of the Turkish minority in the general population.

The present research has focused on the discriminatory measures taken against the Turkish minority in socialist Bulgaria. It argues that Turkish minority was perceived as a threat for the Bulgarian society and state, and exposed to various forms of discrimination, over the course of the socialist period. The general hypothesis of the study posits that discrimination against the Turkish minority was a continuous process that has taken place in implicit and explicit ways uninterruptedly from 1944 to 1989. In this regard, it is argued that, from the early Stalinist period until the promulgation of the Zhivkov constitution in 1971, discrimination was exercised in more implicit and indirect ways which can be observed in the exclusionary statements of the BCP rulers, as well as their less tolerant and more unlawful attitude, towards the Turkish minority compared to other national minorities. It is also argued that, from 1971 until the end of the regime in 1989, discrimination was exercised in more direct and explicit forms (eg. legislative regulations) and in the shape of open antagonism, as well as, physical attacks and denial of the existence of the Turkish minority identity.

There is an extensive literature on the minority policies pursued under the Socialist regime in Bulgaria which discuss its discriminatory nature (e.g., Savova-Mahon Borden 2001, Büchschütz 2004, Bates 1994, Kofos 1961, Mahon 2001, Sygkelos 2011). The relevant literature also focuses on the discrimination against the Turkish minority and gives insights into its various aspects (Aleksandrieva 2019, Bakalova 2006, Bojkov 2004, Dayıoğlu 2005, Dimitrov 2000, Eminov 1983, 1989, 1990 1997, 2000, Kamil 2016, Karpat 1991, Mohan 2001, Şimşir 1988, Tahir 2015). Scholarly discussion about discrimination against the Turkish minority is established and wide-ranging, but as yet it seems that there is still room to round out them by attempting to explore its implicit and explicit forms.

To lay the foundation for this argument, the first section gives a theoretical framework to describe, and analyze the minority policies of the BCP. The second section discusses the main features of the BCP's minority policies during the Communist period with an attempt to emphasize its discriminatory nature. In the third section, BCP's discriminatory policies and practices towards the Turkish minority are investigated to explore both its implicit and explicit forms. To this end, this article draws on various

archival materials in Bulgarian including the excerpts of the minutes of discussion from the BCP Plenums regarding Turkish minority.

Marxism, Nationalism and Ethnic Minorities: A Theoretical Perspective

The minority policies under the Socialist regime in Bulgaria needs to be approached in conjunction with Marxism's relation with nationalism and national/ethnic minorities. Therefore, the main theoretical background for this research draws upon Marxist understanding of the national question. Despite providing valuable insights, neither Marx, nor the subsequent generations of Marxist scholars up to late 19th century have developed a holistic approach to the phenomena (See, e.g., Nairn, Hechter, Orridge). This caused the socialist movements of the later years to face with the absence of a roadmap to deal with either nationalism or the problem of national/ethnic minorities while building modern socialist societies (Avineri 638).

As national movements grew in Russian and the Austro-Hungarian Empires in the early 20th century, the concepts have begun to be discussed more thoroughly by various Marxist theoretical currents including the Austro-Marxists and Bolsheviks (See, e.g., Ezergailis 3). On the other hand, the Bolshevik takeover of Russia in 1917 reinforced the ideas of leading Bolsheviks on the subject. The 1913 conceptualization of the nation by Georgian Bolshevik, Joseph Stalin (12) as: "a historically evolved, stable community of language, territory, economic life, and psychological makeup manifested in a community of culture" has since become accepted as the most orthodox definition (Blaut 143). Stalin also defined nationalities (ethnic minorities) as ethnic groups that have failed to qualify as nation. They are thus fated to dissolve politically through assimilation (Blaut 143). Vladimir Lenin was another crucial figure in the development of Soviet minority policies. He believed that people's cultural differences would be superseded by collective solidarity and patriotism. Until then, however, it was necessary to develop a temporary stage of tolerance for them (Eminov 1990). In this regard, the Soviet Union's early minority policies were known for the slogan "national in form, socialist in content" in reference to the limited linguistic and cultural autonomy provided to the ethnic minorities.

However, such policies proved extremely difficult to maintain on the ground and pushed the Soviet leaders in the opposite direction by the

1930s. Accordingly, the pre- and early revolutionary efforts on building a socialist society on the basis of tolerance, the right to self-determination, cultural autonomy, and federalism were replaced with the policy of Russo-centric Sovietization of non-Russian minorities. This entailed promoting Russian culture and language by making Russian the Soviet Union's *lingua franca*. It then became extremely difficult to differentiate between policies of Sovietization and Russification. Minority policies changed little in the post-Stalin periods as the Soviet Union's leaders continued the policy of Russification of minorities under the banner of Sovietization.

Faced with similar problems, Eastern Europe's state socialist regimes in the early years of their experience with state socialism, attempted to integrate minorities into the society in accordance with communist internationalist principles. However, various obstacles including lack of legitimacy resulting from their poor economic and political performances, prevented them from achieving a universal socialist class identity. Ultimately, the Communist regimes of Eastern Europe, one by one reconciled with nationalism (Sygkelos 9-10). In a pragmatic manner, they generated a political climate in which nationalism became the main dynamic in the society. The rise of nationalism continued with an increasing trend in the Soviet sphere of influence with the consent given by Khrushchev in the mid-1950s to national Communism. Eventually, their minority policies also shared the same destiny with that of the Soviet Union they resigned themselves to the forces of majority nationalism and imposed policies of linguistic and cultural uniformity (Gustavsson 62). All in all, theoretically, the Communist Regimes in Eastern Europe including the BCP followed the Soviet path in ethnic minority issues.

Bulgarian Ethnic/National Minority Policies under State Socialism (1944-1989)

Since the late 19th century, the Bulgarian Communists had been in a constant search for an appropriate response to the minority strategy to be implemented under a future socialist regime in Bulgaria (Bojkov 346). The absence of a Marxist roadmap on the national question, which is discussed in the previous section, has also left them in obscurity about the best policy to be implemented. Despite a certain degree of nationalist deviation from Marxist ideals, they were generally subservient to the principles of Socialist

Internationalism, therefore, remained (until the consolidation of power) committed to the idea of a multi-ethnic communist society with equal citizenship rights irrespective of sex, religion, race, or nation (Sygkelos 112). Accordingly, after the coup of 9 September 1944, the Communist-led anti-fascist Fatherland Front (FF) coalition made no major theoretical revision of the Soviet nationalities model and adopted a non-national communist minority policy. In this regard, their approach to the ethnic minority problem is quite similar to the above discussed ideas of Lenin. In this sense ethnic minorities were given cultural concessions and promised the protection of their ethnic, albeit not religious identities (Sygkelos 113). Besides being a natural outcome of the Marxist thinking, the adoption of a more-or-less tolerant minority policy was a pragmatic move to secure as much support from ethnic minorities as possible for the new communist system (Kamusella).

The brief period of relaxation and political pluralism came to an end in 1947 with the speeding up of Bulgaria's transformation to Soviet model authoritarianism (Warhola and Boteva 260-264). However, the restrictive nature of the regime was barely detectible in the legal documents. Under the Soviet inspired Dimitrov constitution of 1947, named after the Stalinist BCP Party Secretary Georgi Dimitrov, state recognized the existence of national minorities, allowed them to retain their cultural identity through granting of certain rights in the context of Soviet internationalism. Besides the rights such as developing minority-language education and other national characteristics, certain measures were taken as part of the policy of Sovietization/modernization through education to increase minorities' level of education with the intention of creating minority elites loyal to the regime (6-toto Veliko Narodno Sabranie). However, restrictions were placed on the cultural freedoms of the minorities (Dimitrov and Sassoon 7). For example, the provisions protecting the cultural rights of the ethnic minorities were reverted through tightened central government control on minority cultural institutions including schools, and religious institutions (Kofos 40).

The repressive minority policies were furthered by Dimitrov's successor Vulko Chervenkov (1949-1954) who marginalized all the pluralist provisions of the constitution based on Stalinist assumption that the diversity of the

society was threatening the security of the state by increasing foreign claims upon Bulgarian citizens (Crampton 174). One exception to this was the use of the minority languages as the medium of instruction in the schools which was believed to promote better and more effective indoctrination of minority children to communism. On the other hand, Chervenkov started the so-called “cultural revolution” of Bulgaria, a series of modernization efforts aimed at speeding up Sovietization and the building of a classless atheist society devoted to the Communist ideology (Znepolski, et al. 313-314). In this context, the anti-religious campaigns pursued since the beginning of the communist period, developed into a fight with Islam, the faith of the majority of the Bulgarian minorities. Such acts as confiscation of the properties of Islamic charities and the abolishing of Quran schools became common practices across Bulgaria (Jalamov 248). Through the extremely prohibitive Denominations act of 1949, the religious activities of the Muslims were put under strict control of the Office of the Chief Muftiate, which was no more an elected body but a bureaucrat appointed by the BCP, (Mahon 256).

The enforcement of Stalinist orthodoxy in minority policies slowed down when Chervenkov was deposed as BCP party secretary by Todor Zhivkov in 1954 (Nikova) and totally ended two years later with Chervenkov's dismissal as prime minister. Following the footsteps of Khrushchev, Zhivkov embarked on comprehensive changes in the course of Bulgarian minority policies. He was determined to reverse the policies followed by his predecessors, whom he accused, in his memoirs, for leading to a multinational Bulgaria and causing disunity among the Bulgarian people by isolating minorities (Zhivkov 444). Accordingly, the official narrative is transformed to socialist nationalism which was a Marxist-nationalist symbiosis. With this new variant of state socialism, ethnic Bulgarian culture, which was already the de facto dominant culture of Bulgaria, was officially incorporated into the project of building a socialist Bulgarian society (Gruev and Kalionski 27).

The ethnic minority policies of the BCP eventually resigned to the forces of social uniformity and nationalism. Zhivkov began to pursue a Bulgaro-centric Sovietization of the non-Bulgarian minorities through the imposition of linguistic and cultural uniformity. As put by Avramov (34) since the 1960's, minority policies in the country gradually shifted from “tolerant

disintegration” of cultural identity to “intolerant integration”. This shift was predominantly attributed to the legitimacy problem of the BCP that resulted from poor economic and political performance and its subsequent failure in creating a universal socialist class identity. Accordingly, the new party line under Zhivkov was to foster the assimilation of certain minorities like Roma, and Macedonians whose Bulgarian origins were reinforced by state sponsored historians, and alienate other minorities like Turks, who were used as a tool for consolidating Bulgaria’s ethnic majority around Bulgarian nationalism.

In the early 1970’s Zhivkov introduced new social reforms with lasting consequences for the Bulgarian minorities, most important of which was the adaptation of Brezhnev’s thesis of the unified Soviet people to Bulgaria as the unified Bulgarian Socialist people (Stojanov 143). These reforms, which were the formalization of the discriminative policies that de facto existed since the late 1950’s, entailed creating one nation one language Socialist state by eliminating distinguishing features of the minorities.

Bulgaria’s 1971 Constitution, introduced the unified Bulgarian Socialist people thesis, which was the final stage in the marginalization process of ethnic minorities. Opening the era of more explicit and direct discrimination against the minorities, the new constitution, unlike the old one, made no explicit reference to national minorities, and the term itself was replaced by citizens of non-Bulgarian origin (5-o Narodno Sabranie).

The impact of the principles of the 1971 Constitution was felt shortly after its promulgation, through more systematic and explicit assimilation campaigns exercised on ethnic minorities by the BCP according to the constitutions’ homogenously formulated definition of the Bulgarian society. For instance, the old identity cards of the citizens replaced with new ones that do not state nationality (Savova-Mahon Borden 270). The first victims of the assimilationist policies of the 1970s were the Pomaks whose names were attempted to be unsuccessfully changed by the state between 1971 and 1973 (Büchschütz 86).

In 1979, Zhivkov claimed publicly that Bulgaria had no minority problem as the question of minorities had been definitively solved by the people themselves (Eminov 8). His public statement was a prelude to the last act of

the state in the 1980's to achieve linguistically and culturally homogenous Bulgaria. As a product of this idea, large-scale assimilation campaigns have started against the Turkish minority in the last days of 1984 (Mahon 257). The ongoing persecutions in the second half of the 1980's went hand in hand with protests against the regime's resistance to the wave of liberalization in Eastern Bloc countries marking the end of the BCP's decade-long integrationist and assimilationist policies, and its own demise in 1989.

The Era of Implicit Discrimination: Turkish Minority from the Stalinist Period to the Promulgation of the 1971 Constitution

When the communist dominated FF took power in 9 September 1944, there were approximately 750,000 Turks in Bulgaria living primarily as peasant societies mainly in the southeastern provinces of Kardzhali, Haskovo, Stara Zagora, Plovdiv, Sliven and northeastern provinces of Razgrad, Rousse, Shumen, Targovishte, Silistra, Dobriç and Varna. During the pre-Stalinist transition to socialism (1944-1947) the BCP had to win over the members of the Turkish minority to its side in order to consolidate a power base against strong political opponents in the FF. Therefore, a number of concessions were made to the Turkish minority such as giving back their rights that have been taken over the past decades, amelioration of their adverse economic situation prevalent since the early 20th century, as well as giving small size lands to the landless Turkish peasants. However, the mood of optimism did not last long. Soon after, the Stalinist regime started its harsh and punitive ideological homogenization policies (Şimşir 136).

After the signing of the Paris Peace Treaty (February 1947) and promulgation of the Dimitrov constitution (December 1947), the Stalinist BCP, began nationalizing the Turkish minority schools which were then transformed into state-controlled centers of communist indoctrination (Şimşir 155). Bulgarian became a compulsory course in these schools in order to create a bilingual Turkish youth and a Bulgarian speaking Turkish intelligentsia. Moreover, Bulgarian publishing houses opened Turkish branches and published Turkish language books, journals and newspapers with communist propaganda material. On the other hand, a Turkish Philology department was established at the University of Sofia responsible for the standardization of the written and spoken Turkish in line with the communist needs. In

a similar vein the State radio began broadcasting Turkish programs with ideological context (Eminov 140).

In theory the Stalinist BCP has provided the Turks, like all the other minority groups, with constitutional right that protected their ethnic and linguistic identity (TİKA 217). However, in practice, unlike the approach to Roma, Macedonians and to a certain extent Pomaks, the BCP regime implicitly deprived the rights of the Turks to establish cultural institutions of their own (Sygkelos 112). The suppressive policies such as the purges in the Turkish community schools became the order of the day (Crampton 148). The regimes shift in its attitude towards the Turkish minority was evident in the words that Dimitrov spoke in a speech he addressed to the BCP leadership: “Full rights to national minorities, but concerning the Turks - circumspectly” (Kalinova and Baeva 81). Dimitrov was also known for his categorization of minorities as the ones affiliated with a friendly nation and an enemy one (Sygkelos 112), in this regard the Turks as a minority was affiliated with an enemy nation.

On the other hand, the BCP was very concerned with Turkish minorities' ties with neighboring Türkiye (Eminov 140). In 1945, Bulgarian Ministry of Interior reported on Turkish minority's affiliation to a hostile nation (Türkiye) and that Ankara was increasing its engagements in Bulgaria since the end of the Second World War with aim of using the Bulgarian Turks as a fifth column (Ministerstvo na vatreshnite raboti, Dekemvri 1945 33). According to the Bulgarian Ministry of War documents, the Turkish minority in South East Bulgaria bordering Türkiye, comprising of the majority population in the region, was an imminent security threat. Therefore, to eliminate the threat, the Ministry was proposing to encourage the voluntary emigration of as many minority Turks in the region as possible to Türkiye. The plan also aimed at resettling the region with ethnic Bulgarians to create an ethnic balance and to fill the vacuum in the economy caused by the deportation of the Turks (Ivanov, M. and Jalamov, I. 579-580). It was hoped that the remaining Turks would then assimilate into the Bulgarian culture, abandon the “Great-Turkish aspirations”, and embrace Communist values (Ministerstvo na voynata, Generalen Shtab 1947, 103 - 104; 109 - 111) These were necessary steps to build a bright future for the People's Republic (Ministerstvo na voynata, Generalen Shtab 1947, 103).

Reports of various ministries on the threat that the Turkish minority posed will resonate in the closed plenum of the Central Committee (CC) of the BCP in August 1948. Georgi Dimitrov, complained that there was a persistent problem on Bulgaria's southern borders due to a population of non-Bulgarian origin (referring to the Turkish minority) and added that "as a party and government, stands before them the question of finding a way to remove them from there and settle our Bulgarian population" (Ivanova 62). Following Dimitrov's sudden death in July 1949, finding a solution to this question fell to his successor Chervenkov.

For Chervenkov, Bulgarian Turks were different from ethnic Bulgarians, and their cohesion as a community made their integration into the Bulgarian Communist people almost impossible (Kostanick 41). On the other hand, the solution that Chervenkov proposed for dealing with the problem of Turkish minority in South East Bulgaria was to forcefully expulse them from the country. The eagerness of the Turks to leave the country as a result of oppression and ill-treatment they were exposed to, was an excuse for the implementation of this policy. On the 18th of August 1949, the CC of BCP agreed on sending Türkiye of Turkish minority in South East Bulgaria who no longer wanted to stay. It was also agreed to forcibly relocate the remaining Turks to other regions within Bulgaria. More than 250,000 visa applications were made in the first few months of the process majority of which were peasant Turks who lost their lands due to the collectivization policies. Most of the missing paperwork were deliberately ignored by the authorities to maximize the number of emigrants (Poulton 118-119). Over 150,000 people had left Bulgaria until the closure of borders in 1951 by Ankara (Büchschütz 124).

After the 1950-1951 emigration, the BCP followed a softer approach towards the remaining Turkish population, introducing the "special care" plan with the goal of reducing the social unrest, and discouraging their extant desire to leave Bulgaria. Accordingly, modernization plans were put in force to increase their standard of living (TİKA 220).

The BPC leaders argued that Stalinist concessions to the Turks have led the undesirable result of strengthening their national consciousness. The attempts to infiltrate into the Turkish minority life and integrate them into the communist society resulted to a great extent in vain (Kofos 41).

Therefore, the end of Stalinism in the Soviet Union and easing of Moscow's control over Bulgaria has given greater freedom of action to those who were not satisfied with the Stalinist minority policies. The policies shifted more pronouncedly from Zhivkov's early years onward. Discrimination was felt most through the linguistic and cultural barriers put in front of the Turkish minority.

The new trend gained momentum with the introduction of 'theses for work among the Turkish population' adopted in the special plenums of the BCP Politburo in June and October 1958 whereby a more intensified struggle started against the so called 'display of nationalism and religious fanaticism among the Turkish minority' (The Central Party Archives of the BCP, Fond 1, Record 5, File 353). In this regard, major de-facto limitations were introduced on the use of Turkish language and practice of Islam which were seen as driving forces behind the national unity of the Turks and a stronghold of their resistance to integration (Stojanov 133-134). Accordingly, the Turkish and Bulgarian schools were merged by the state based on the "unity in language thesis" and the high school curriculum was taught exclusively in Bulgarian with the exception of elective Turkish courses (Marinov 506). Meanwhile, number of Turkish-language newspapers and magazines decreased drastically and remaining ones became bilingual (Gruev and Kalionski 113).

The 'theses for work among the Turkish population' also aimed at weakening the ties of Turkish minority with religion. From 1959-1960 onwards, Islam was suppressed through closure of Mosques, reduction in the number of Muslim Turkish clergy, confiscation of religious literature and introduction of the state appointment system, replacing the previous system of election for local imams (Ministerstvo na vätrešnite raboti, November 1959).

External factors also played an important role in the shaping of the BCP's Turkish minority policy throughout the 1960s. After the outbreak of the Cyprus crisis in late 1963, the Turkish minority came to the fore as an irredentist threat to the Bulgaria. According to the Bulgarian authorities, the intercommunal crisis on the island was a demonstration of the conflict potential that the Turkish minority possessed. However, the Cyprus crisis did not have a long-term impact on the minority conditions and a period of relaxation started with the improvement in Bulgaria-Türkiye relations

following the 1964 Johnson's letter crisis. Ankara's search for a rapprochement with the Soviet Union following the crisis, caused Moscow to show its good intentions by ordering Sofia to repair its relations with Ankara, as well as to soften its attitude towards the Turkish minority (Bishku 85).

The bilateral relations between Bulgaria and Türkiye developed further with the launch of the Détente period. The softening of international conflict environment was crowned with Zhivkov's official visit to Ankara in 1968, during which the two sides signed a new Bulgarian-Turkish immigration agreement, called the Close Relative Migration Agreement. Under this agreement, Bulgarian citizens of ethnic Turkish origin whose close relatives had migrated to Türkiye by 1952 were to migrate to Türkiye between April and November of each year until 1978 (Şimşir 255).

However, the improving relations between Türkiye and Bulgaria did not have a lasting effect on Turkish minority. By the end of 1960s Bulgarian authorities were once again voicing their disappointment with the failure of the linguistic homogenization policies. (Bojkov 355-356). As a result of the calls for more radical steps, the BCP's CC passed a resolution in February 1969 to "carry out party activities for the Turkish minority". The aim of the resolution was described as the achievement of the cultural advancement of Turkish minority and accelerating the natural process of overcoming ethnic differences. The mechanisms of this process which was deemed to be natural and progressive were: facilitating the coexistence and work of ethnic Bulgarians and ethnic Turks; promoting mixed marriages between Turkish women and Bulgarian men; improving educational infrastructure in the mixed regions (Büchschütz 131).

Beginning of Explicit Discrimination: The 1971 Constitution and Beyond

The decades long de facto discrimination of the Turkish minority turned to de jure politics following the promulgation of the Zhivkov constitution, which no longer referred to national minorities in Bulgaria. After the constitution came into force in 1971, the number of attempts to systematically erode the Turkish minority from the public domain increased tremendously. There was an increased level of anti-Muslim and anti-Turkish rhetoric in media, which resulted in a change in the ethnic Bulgarians perception about the Turkish minority. The Turks who continue their traditional way of life and

attachment to Turkish nationalism were marginalized and accused of being national traitors, and agents of Türkiye (Engström 81).

Accordingly, a new official history of Bulgaria was created, with very little emphasis on the Turkish minority. Historians were delegated the task of revising the old history books and writing new ones which would provide the scientific basis of regime's claim that there are no Turks in Bulgaria and there is no Turkish influence in Bulgarian history and culture (Dechev 40). On the other hand, there was an increasing emphasis on the antiquity of Bulgarians through extensive use of symbols and rituals from the periods of the medieval Bulgarian Empire, and the Bulgarian National Revival. In this regard one of the strongest symbols used in the new history writing was the term "Turkish Yoke" which was used in reference to Bulgaria's suffering under Ottoman-Turkish rule (Mahon 150-151).

In 1974, the BCP adopted new measures intended for the ideological and political inclusion of the population of Turkish origin. The goal was to strengthen the integration of the Turkish minority to the Bulgarian society by separating Turkish Muslim children from their families who were believed to be interfering in the success of modern communist education (Tahirov 57-62). The state-built hostels and boarding schools for Turkish students, to which, a third of all ethnic Turkish students have been attending by the late 1970s (Ivanova 133-134). By 1975, all the Turkish courses were dropped from the school curriculum while atheist propaganda was strengthened as a mean to weaken the religious ties of the conservative Turkish Muslim community (Gruev and Kalionski 85).

The BCP's attitude towards the Turkish minority became more suppressive in the 1970's due to Türkiye's military intervention in Cyprus (Neuburger 71). The intervention of the Turkish Armed Forces in 1974 was instrumentalized in the domestic political discourse to nourish threat perceptions and anti-Turkish prejudices (Bojkov 355). The BCP, to spread fears among the Bulgarian population, propagated that Türkiye would repeat the "Cyprus scenario" in Bulgaria to support Turkish minority in South East Bulgaria (Dimitrov 12).

Discrimination in the Late Socialist Era and the Revival Process (1980-1989)

Living up to the hype created around the Cyprus issue, the intelligence reports from the 1980s claimed that Ankara was planning terrorist attacks on Bulgarian territory through secretly founded organizations which recruited the most reactionary members of the Turkish minority (Ministerstvo na vatreshnite raboti, May 1980. 806). Reportedly, the Turkish Intelligence Organization (MIT) was attempting to undermine the moral and political unity of the Bulgarian People and government efforts for the inclusion of the Muslim population in the construction of Communism (Ministerstvo na vatreshnite raboti, May 1980. 809). Other sources reported that Türkiye would propose administrative autonomy for regions with Turkish populations in Bulgaria (Ministerstvo na vatreshnite raboti, Fevruari 1982 829). Accordingly, Georgi Dzhagarov, a prominent ideological pundit of the BCP argued that current living conditions, confining ethnic Turks within their communities, was making them a tool of international powers to damage Bulgaria's security. He further argued that ethnic differences should be overcome for the security of the state (Avramov 78).

The coercive identity politics of the BCP culminated in large-scale assimilation campaigns by 1984. In mid-1984, the Politburo discussed a detailed report on the failed integration of the Turks. Then, two consecutive resolutions have passed, in May and June, underlining the necessity to further the attempts for involving Turks in the cause of socialism (Prava i Svobodi, Nr.5, 18.3.1991, p.12). Finally, the regime started a systematic assimilation campaign on 10 December 1984, under the code name "national revival process". The campaign of the forced change of names of the minority Turks in South East Bulgaria started the very same day. Bulgarian police and army units, acting under the official orders of Bulgarian Minister of Interior Dimitar Stoyanov, surrounded the villages and towns inhabited by Turks in Momcilgrad, Krumovgrad, Kardzhali and Dzebel (Gruev and Kalionski 135-136). The operation was held under strict secrecy. Entrance of foreign observers and visitors to the region were not allowed and communication with the outside world was completely cut off (Avramov 99). By 14 January 1985, a month after the beginning of the Revival Process, 550,000 Turks had been given ethnic Bulgarian names in South East Bulgaria (Büchschütz 172). The BCP Secretary Georgi

Atanasov, in his address to the first secretaries of the local committees on 18 January 1985, described the Revival process as a historical act with which the last scar from the Turkish yoke upon the Bulgarian people was removed, creating new conditions for the national unity and the enhancement of the moral-political cohesion” (Atanasov, G., 18 January 1985 7-20). At the same meeting, Zhivkov stated that the Turks were descendants of Slav Bulgarians who had converted to Islam under Ottoman rule, a statement which he later on repeated to the general public (Neuburger 6).

The same name changing procedure was then repeated in Ludogorie (Deliorman) region of northeast Bulgaria, including the municipalities of Razgrad, Shumen, Sliven, Rousse, Dobriç, Varna and Targovishte. When the name changing process was completed by 11 February 1985, the number of minority Turks who were forcibly given Bulgarian names reached to 822,588 (Avramov 110). No official statement was made about the ongoing campaign until March 1985 and then, it was presented as an entirely voluntary act by the local population (Dimitrov 10). On 30 March 1985, in the Politburo meeting of the BCP, Zhivkov said that the Turkish minority problem of Bulgaria was not completely resolved, but a decisive step was taken in this direction. He added that everything will be forgotten in 15-20 years (Lubanska 55-96).

The National Revival Process continued throughout the second half of the 1980's with additional discriminatory practices, such as ban on speaking Turkish in public, performing religious rituals (including male circumcision), and wearing traditional clothing (Asenov 94). There was resistance among the members of the Turkish minority, who pursued justice through organizing street protests, forming underground organizations and showing passive resistance. Those who opposed the name changing process were punished by the regime through dismissals, torture, fines, and imprisonment (Tsoneva 12). The ones who were arrested were sent to the infamous Belene Prison which was reopened in 1985 for Turkish prisoners after being closed for many years. After their release from prison, Turks were sent to other regions of Bulgaria with an obligation to stay there for one to three years (Sharlanov and Ganev 6).

The waves of protests to the ongoing Revival Process grew in size in the early 1989. Increased demands for migration to Türkiye were initially ignored,

as the BCP was planning to resettle the Turks in other parts of Bulgaria. However, by early 1989, the Ministry of Interior started preparing special application forms for international passports and distributed them among the Turks (Bakalova 235). On 29 May 1989, Zhivkov gave a live speech on state television and radio, stressing the Bulgarian origin of Turks while also saying that those who wanted to leave could do so. During the same speech he also called on Türkiye to open borders. As a response to Zhivkov's speech, Turkish government opened borders in 3 June 1989, through which started one of the biggest migration waves in the modern times, known as the "Great Exodus". More than 300,000 Turks left Bulgaria for Türkiye until the Turkish authorities, under a state of emergency, closed the borders on 21 August 1989. Meanwhile tens of thousands of others were still waiting to cross the border.

On 7 June 1989, the BCP's Politburo CC held a meeting of all high ranking BCP members to discuss the nationwide protests in which the revival process was presented as necessary and migration was considered more than welcome for the protection of Bulgaria's national security (Dalekova, 7 June 1989 87). The Revival Process officially ended on 10 November 1989, when the party leadership, under great pressure from the international society, forced Zhivkov to step down. On 22 December 1989, all the imprisoned protesters were released under an amnesty. On 29 December 1989, a CC special plenum of the BCP, dominated by the reformist wing of the party, condemned Revival Process, declared Zhivkov and his close circle as responsible for the events (Baeva 68) and allowed Turkish minority to restore their names (recognized by law in March 1990)

Conclusion

Despite the multi-ethnic character of the socialist Bulgarian state, minorities in the country were considered as alien elements to be suppressed and assimilated to a mainstream cultural context which was strongly paired with the culture of the ethnic Bulgarians. The circumstances from the 1940s to the mid-1950s mandated an ideological orthodoxy which the BCP rulers must exhibit in all spheres of society, the realm of minority policy being no exception. State-minority relations had to be organized based on the Soviet model of nationalities that recognizes the existence of various ethnic minorities with equal rights and opportunities. However, the promotion

of ethnic Bulgarian culture remained the de facto policy by means of the privileged position that is granted to it. The move towards assimilation became explicit in the early years of Todor Zhivkov's rule through the gradual shift away from communist orthodoxy to nationalist ideology and reached its zenith with the adaptation of the Unified Bulgarian Socialist Nation thesis and one nation one language policy.

This paper intended to inquire into the results of the discriminatory attitude towards the Turkish minority that came to the fore in both implicit and explicit ways in the policies of the BCP regime. It is argued that from the Stalinist years until the promulgation of the 1971 constitution, discrimination was present in more implicit and indirect ways. It is observable in the high degree of marginalization of the minority Turks compared to other minorities, and in the discourses of the BCP rulers in closed party meetings or intra state exchanges of documents. In this regard, discrimination was implicitly practiced in various forms such as the linguistic (Bulgarian language monopoly since the late 1950s), and cultural (exclusion of the Turks from the national history, mythology etc. since the late 1960s) policies followed by the BCP. Next, discrimination was transformed into more explicit forms after the promulgation of the 1971 constitution. Legislative regulations paved the way for action against the Turkish minority, which was followed by verbal antagonism, as well as, physical attacks and denial of their minority identity until the demise of the regime in 1989.

Bulgarian archives and books in Bulgarian, English and Turkish provide rich primary and secondary source material for researchers who study the history of the Turkish minority in Socialist Bulgaria. The topic is also chosen as case studies by various researchers who used different lenses of social sciences (e.g. economics, political science, international relations, sociology, social psychology, etc.) to explore the answers to their research questions. However, research in social sciences is moving towards more interdisciplinary endeavors. Therefore, future research should address the topic from the combined lenses of the relevant fields of social sciences.

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There is no conflict of interest with any institution or person within the scope of this study. There is no conflict of interest between the authors.

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Entegrasyondan Asimilasyona ve Zorunlu Göçe: Bulgaristan Komünist Partisi'nin Türk Azınlık Siyasetinin Bir Değerlendirmesi*

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Öz

Bulgaristan'da komünizmin iktidara gelişinden Stalinist dönemin sonuna kadar geçen sürede azınlıklara yönelik yasal düzenlemeler sosyalist enternasyonalizm ilkelerinin etkisi altında şekillenmiş, Bulgaristan vatandaşları arasında sınıfsal dayanışma bilincinin geliştirilmesi amacıyla etnik ve kültürel farklılıkların muhafaza edilmesi öngörülmüştür. Gerçekte ise, azınlıklara sağlanan anayasal güvenceler ve verilen sözler, modern sosyalist toplum ve kimlik inşası uğruna, görmezden gelinmiştir. Stalinizm sonrası dönemde ise komünist ortodoksiden milliyetçiliğe doğru gerçekleşen ideolojik kayışın da etkisiyle ayrımcı politikalarda artış yaşanmış. Devlet eliyle sürdürülen ayrımcı politikalar Bulgaristan'daki etnik azınlıklar içinde en kalabalık ve kültürel farkındalığı en yüksek azınlık olan Türkler için geniş kapsamlı sonuçlar doğurmuştur. Sosyalist dönem boyunca Bulgar toplumunun yabancı bir unsuru olarak algılanan Türk azınlık, devletin entegrasyonist/asimilasyonist politikalarının öncelikli hedefi olmuş, istenilen sonuçlar alınmadığında ise Bulgaristan'dan zorla göç ettirilmiştir. Bu makale,

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devlet sosyalizmi döneminde Bulgar Komünist Partisi'nin Türk azınlığa dayattığı ayrımcı politika ve uygulamaları ele almakta ve sonuçlarını incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler

Türk Azınlık, Bulgaristan Komünist Partisi, entegrasyon, asimilasyon, yeniden doğuş süreci.

От интеграции к ассимиляции и вынужденной миграции: оценка политики Болгарской коммунистической партии в отношении турецкого

меньшинства*

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Аннотация

Положения о меньшинствах в Болгарии от коммунистического переворота до конца сталинской эпохи формировались под влиянием социалистической интернационалистической политики, которая предусматривала сохранение этнических и культурных различий для создания классовой солидарности среди болгарских граждан. Однако на практике данные им конституционные гарантии и обещания зачастую игнорировались государством в угоду построению современного социалистического общества. Дискриминация еще больше усилилась в постсталинские годы параллельно с идеологическим сдвигом режима от коммунистической ортодоксии к национализму. Спонсируемая государством дискриминационная политика имела далеко идущие последствия для турок, самого многочисленного и культурно осведомленного из всех этнических мень-

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шинств. Воспринимаемое как чужеродный элемент болгарского общества, на протяжении всего социалистического периода турецкое меньшинство подвергалось интеграционистской/ассимиляционистской политике и насильственно изгонялось из страны в периоды, когда эта политика не давала желаемых результатов. Эта статья посвящена дискриминационной политике и практике, навязанной турецкому меньшинству Болгарской коммунистической партией в эпоху государственного социализма, и намерена исследовать их результаты.

Ключевые слова

Турецкое меньшинство, Болгарская коммунистическая партия, интеграция, ассимиляция, процесс возрождения