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RELIGION AND SOCIETY IN CONTEMPORARY BULGARIA

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Religion and Society in Contemporary Bulgaria

At the beginning of 2012 the “Commission for the Opening of State Police Files” in Bulgaria published a report according to which 11 of the 15 current members of the Holy Synod, the highest administrative committee of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church, were agents of or informal collaborators with the Bulgarian secret police, the “Committee for State Security” (Komitet za daržavna sigurnost) during the socialist era. Individual bishops then apologized for their collaboration with the secret service while others denied ever having worked for the state police. The case triggered an intensive public debate on the role of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church during the Cold War and shows that the church still has difficulties in coming to terms with its own past. However, the commission’s report also inspired new research on the church’s past, as historians now have access to more sources due to the large-scale opening of archives. In this issue of *Euxeinos* Daniela Kalkandjieva will elaborate on the state’s infiltration of the church as well as the church’s scope of action at the national and international level during the socialist era.

Bulgaria is for the most part characterized by Orthodox Christianity, but the country also has a significant Muslim minority (Turks and Pomaks), which the articles by Marina Liakova and Evangelos Karagiannis deal with. The Turkish minority, which accounts for approx. 8.8 % of the population, is indeed well represented in politics and public administra-

tion, but the type of representation – almost exclusively through the party “Movement for Rights and Freedoms” (DPS) – is indicative of the ethnic isolation of the Turks in Bulgaria. They are also frequently economically and socially disadvantaged compared to the Bulgarian majority population. In his article Evangelos Karagiannis compares state policy towards the Pomaks, the Slavic-speaking Muslims, in Southern Bulgaria and Northern Greece. It is apparent that both countries have pursued entirely different strategies in dealing with this Muslim minority. However, due to the Bulgarian assimilation policy a significant part of Bulgarian Pomaks regard themselves as Bulgarians nowadays.

In her article Sonja Schüler deals with a current political development: a spontaneously emerging environmental protection movement, which successfully resisted plans to soften nature conservation regulations in the Bulgarian forestry law in the summer.

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Stefan Kube (born 1978) studied Catholic theology and history in Münster and Sarajevo. Since 2009 he has been the main editor of the journal “*Religion & Gesellschaft in Ost und West*” (“*Religion and Society in the East and West*”); Research foci: churches and religious communities in South-Eastern Europe.

Foreword from the editors of Euxeinos

The current issue of Euxeinos “Religion and Society in Contemporary Bulgaria” originated in cooperation with G2W – “Ökumenisches Forum für Glauben, Religion & Gesellschaft in Ost und West in Zürich” (Oecumenical Forum for Faith, Religion & Society in the East and West - Zurich) (<http://www.kirchen.ch/g2w>). The G2W regularly publishes the magazine “Religion & Gesellschaft in Ost und West” (RGOW). The articles published here were originally published in German in the magazine. The director of G2W and main editor of RGOW, Stefan Kube, is the editor of this issue of Euxeinos.

RELIGION & GESELLSCHAFT

IN OST UND WEST

Presentation of the magazine

“Religion & Gesellschaft in Ost und West”

The monthly magazine “Religion & Gesellschaft in Ost und West” provides information in German on current themes and events in the churches and religious communities of Eastern, Eastern-Central and South-Eastern Europe. It places particular emphasis on oecumenical and inter-faith dialogue. The analyses of the political, social and cultural developments of the individual eastern European countries also provide valuable background information. The magazine is published by the G2W Institute (www.g2w.eu) with headquarters in Zurich.

“Religion & Gesellschaft in Ost und West” comprises four categories:

- Overview: Current issues in the church and society
- Background articles on special themes by professionals from academic, religious or journalistic backgrounds
- Project report: Presentation of civil society initiatives
- Book announcements: Presentation of important new publications

The Bulgarian Orthodox Church and the Cold War

by Daniela Kalkandjieva, St. Kliment Ochridski University Sofia

The recently published reports of the "Commission for the Opening of State Police Files" regarding the agent activities of church dignitaries have triggered an intensive debate among the Bulgarian public about the role of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church during the Cold War. The large-scale opening of the archives gives us better insights into the history of the Church during the Cold War.

The Cold War experience of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church (BOC) was a taboo for scholars under communist rule. The study of the church was triggered by the fall of Todor Zhivkov. It allowed a decodification of the Communist Party's archives that provided detailed information about its religious policy, especially during the Stalinist period (1944-1953). It also benefited from the rich collection of documents of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church kept in the Central State Archive. Their study pointed to the victimhood of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church in the beginning of communist rule (Kalkandjieva 1997). The discovery of some facts about the Church's development in the 1970s and the 1980s, however, revealed a different picture: it acted as a collaborator of the totalitarian state. How did this happen?

The answer to this question is hidden in the Cold War archives, Bulgarian and foreign ones. In this regard some progress was made in recent years, when scholars obtained broader access to the files of the Committee of Religious Denominations, which were kept in the Bulgarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In fact they became the major source of a recently published study on the Bulgarian Orthodox Church during the totalitarian rule (Metodiev, 2010). Thanks to the process of democratization an enormous part of the the communist State Security archives was also declassified. Not less important are the files of the Council on the Affairs of the Russian Orthodox Church

(CAROC) in the former Soviet archives that shed additional light on the Cold War in the religious sphere. (Volokitina 2008, pp. 160-214) All this allowed a more systematic study of Bulgarian church history after Stalin's death.

In the light of the above described situation this article will take on the modest task of summarizing the existing studies on the subject. On their grounds two main stages in the development of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church during the Cold War can be distinguished: domestic and international. The first of them was characterized by the Church's subjection to the communist state and its involvement in the orbit of the Moscow Patriarchate (Kalkandjieva 2010). Meanwhile, the second was marked by the BOC's membership in international organizations and activities in the areas outside the socialist camp (Metodiev 2010, pp. 345-375).

The Conditions

The Cold War destiny of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church was conditioned by political factors such as the establishment of Soviet military control over Bulgaria and the key positions in the Fatherland Front government taken by the local communist leaders on 9 September 1944. Still there are important ecclesiological aspects that are often neglected. One of them was the BOC's peculiar status by the end of World War II. On the one hand, it

was a schismatic body and thus was unable to enter in communion of prayer and liturgy with the then existing canonical Orthodox churches. On the other hand, the isolation was partly overcome by the BOC's participation in the interwar ecumenical movements. In this way, the Bulgarian Orthodox hierarchy received moral and material support from many Western European Protestant churches as well as from Orthodox ones, e.g. the Serbian and the Romanian patriarchates supplied it with the holy oil necessary for its sacraments. In February 1945, the BOC succeeded in solving its most serious ecclesiastical problem – the schism which the Patriarchate of Constantinople had declared in 1872 was finally abolished (Kalkandjieva 1997, pp. 39-54). This new canonical status, however, determined the Cold War fate of the Bulgarian Church.

The declassified communist archives revealed important details about this act and its aims. The schism was not only a canonical problem for Orthodoxy, but also a serious obstacle for postwar politics. The first difficulty stemmed from the location of the headquarters of the Bulgarian Exarchate in Istanbul, i.e. next to those of the Patriarchate of Constantinople, while the second concerned the exercise of its jurisdiction over eparchies that remained outside the Bulgarian state territory, namely in Turkey, Greece and Yugoslavia. This situation complicated the Allies' plan for dividing the postwar Balkans into zones of influence. It also impeded the realization of Stalin's idea of transforming the Moscow Patriarchate into an "Orthodox Vatican" (Shkarovskii 1999, p. 285) because no canonical Orthodox Church was able to enter in canonical communication with the schismatic Bulgarians. Therefore, the Kremlin used its military representatives in Sofia to mediate unofficial negotiations between the Russian and Bulgarian churches about the

abolishment of the schism. As a result, on 21 January 1945, when Metropolitan Stefan of Sofia was elected as the Exarch of Bulgaria, his Synod decided to move the BOC's headquarters from Istanbul to Sofia. In this way, the Orthodox Bulgarians observed the canonical regulations on Istanbul as a city reserved for the see of the Patriarch of Constantinople. They also asked the latter to abolish the schism but there was no answer until the intervention of the newly elected Patriarch of Moscow, Alexii.

On 7 February, he persuaded the heads and representatives of the patriarchates of Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem who attended his elections to sign an agreement about the conditions that had to be fulfilled by the Bulgarian Exarchate in order for the schism over it to be abolished. According to them, its hierarchy had to apologize to the Patriarchate of Constantinople for the unwarranted schism, to accept the subjection of the Bulgarian clergy in Turkey to Constantinople jurisdiction, and to restrict the territorial jurisdiction of the Synod in Sofia within the postwar borders of Bulgaria. In case of their fulfillment, the document also foresaw the grant of full autocephaly to the Bulgarian Orthodox Church (GARF, f. 6991, op. 1, d. 16). Finally, on 22 February 1945, the Patriarchate of Constantinople abolished the schism by proclaiming the Bulgarian Exarchate as a canonical autocephalous Orthodox Church with a territorial jurisdiction fixed within the Bulgarian borders. This solution of the gravest ecclesiological problem of the Orthodox Bulgarians, however, exempted their Church from the control of such Orthodox powers as the Patriarchate of Constantinople and facilitated its involvement in the orbit of postwar Soviet politics. Nevertheless, until the Paris Peace Treaty (10 February 1947) when the sovereignty of Bulgaria was guaranteed, the Bulgarian

Synod successfully resisted the pressure from the Moscow Patriarchate as well as the local communist authorities to take an anti-western stand and particularly its efforts to interrupt its contacts with the ecumenical movement. This balanced position was broken in the summer of 1948 when a Bulgarian church delegation took part in the Moscow Pan-Orthodox conference. This event became a turning point that bound the Bulgarian church leadership with the Cold War politics of the Soviet Union and the Bulgarian Communist Party (Kalkandjieva 2010).

THE COLD WAR AND THE BOC: DOMESTIC STAGE (1948-1961)

The effect of the Cold War on the Bulgarian Orthodox Church between 1948 and 1961 was a function of the consolidation of communist power in the country as well as within the socialist camp under Moscow's guidance. Initially the Fatherland Front government avoided direct anti-religious attacks. Its measures seemed justifiable from the point of view of the common struggle against fascism, i.e. the trial of some Orthodox clerics by the People's Court (1944-1945), or of a democratization of society by the means of its secularization that reminded the French *laïcité*, e.g. the separation of church and state, secularization of church lands or the replacement of church wedding with civil marriage. In 1948, however, the Bulgarian Communist Party stopped hiding its ambition for establishing political monopoly in the country and for building an atheist society. With the help of the Kremlin, it secured the participation of a Bulgarian church delegation in the Moscow Pan-Orthodox Conference (8-18 July 1948), whose resolutions against the Vatican and ecumenism brought the polariza-

tion of the Cold War to the Christian world. In this regard, it is important to mention that their texts as well as those of the other documents and papers presented and adopted by this forum were approved in advance by the Soviet party leaders (Kalkandjieva 2004, pp. 355-384). At the same time, the CAROC took measures on the spot to secure the signatures of all heads of the Orthodox churches from the so-called people's democracies, including Exarch Stefan – one of the founders of the ecumenical movement. During the conference he was also announced as the author of one of the concluding documents of the Moscow Pan-Orthodox Conference – its "Appeal to All Christians." The recently declassified archival documents, however, reveal that every detail of that forum has been preliminary discussed and approved by the Kremlin. Therefore, it is difficult to believe that the Soviets allowed the Bulgarian Exarch to draw up the discussed appeal alone. In 1948, however, they had full control of information and succeeded in their efforts to discredit this hierarch in the eyes of his western friends. In this way, Stefan's future attempts to join the World Council of Churches were blocked. Meanwhile, the Bulgarian communist authorities organized a Synodal coup against him (Kalkandjieva 1997, pp. 210-241). As a result, on 8 September, on the eve of the fourth anniversary of the communist overthrow in Bulgaria, the Synod removed Stefan from his office as Exarch of Bulgaria and Metropolitan of Sofia. Two days later this act was approved by the Politburo of the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party. On 17 September 1948, the Bulgarian Council of Ministers issued a decree that confirmed Stefan's overthrow and recommended the Sofia Synod to start negotiations with the patriarchates of Moscow and Con-

stantinople for the restoration of the ancient patriarchal dignity of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church. This initiative was justified as a necessary countermeasure in the fight for “democratic Orthodoxy” with the religious allies of western imperialists – the Vatican and the World Council of Churches (TsDA, f 1466, op. 5, a.e. 605).

The church interregnum (1948-1953) was used by the Bulgarian communists to select a hierarch who would accept the new rules of state-church relations, including a new BOC’s Statute drawn by the state officials. He also had to observe the Moscow line in the religious sphere. In this regard, they consulted their decision with the CAROC. The Moscow Patriarchate also played a role in this process (GARF, f. 6991, op.1, d. 988). It highly appreciated the active stance of Metropolitan Kiril of Plovdiv in favor of the church peace movement initiated by the Russian Orthodox Church. Within the Bulgarian Church his promotion was resisted by many metropolitans, but had the support of the Union of Orthodox Priests whose leadership was dominated by the Communist Party’s members. In parallel the Bulgarian State Security began to recruit its first agents among the Orthodox clergy and church officials. It is interesting that the nomination of the candidates for the Bulgarian patriarchal throne, held in the Synodal Palace in Sofia on 10 May 1953, was also attended by the delegation of the Moscow Patriarchate that had arrived in Bulgaria for this event (GARF, f. 6991, op. 1, d. 1101). In this way, all undesired developments were prevented and despite some internal resistance Metropolitan Kiril became Patriarch of Bulgaria.

His elections were followed by an official declaration about the restoration of the Bulgarian patriarchal dignity that had been lost during the Ottoman conquest in the end of the

fourteenth century. This act, however, was rejected by the Orthodox churches on the other side of the Iron Curtain. The Patriarch of Constantinople accused the Bulgarian Church of “deviating from the existing canonical and ecclesiastical order to arbitrarily ascribe to itself patriarchal dignity and honor” and breaking the promise made during the abolishment of the schism to ask the blessing of the Patriarchate of Constantinople – the mother-church of Orthodox Bulgarians before initiating any elevation to patriarchal dignity (Kalkandjeva, 1994). As a result, the patriarchal status of the Bulgarian Church was recognized only by the Orthodox churches in the Soviet bloc as well as by the Patriarchate of Antioch. This new isolation well served the Kremlin’s plan for the incorporation of the BOC’s into the Soviet orbit and enhancing the influence of the Russian church leadership over the Bulgarian one. The situation changed in 1961, when Khrushchev’s detente brought relaxation in the religious sphere. Hence, the Bulgarian Patriarchate was recognized by the churches of Constantinople, Alexandria, Jerusalem, Greece and Cyprus.

Meanwhile, the initial rigorousness of the Cold War left its imprint on the domestic development of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church. Despite the 1951 Statute that preserved the Synod as a collegial body of church government, it was de facto suspended by the communist authorities who secured an unofficial monocracy of Patriarch Kiril. Meanwhile, they used the state security agents in the Church to prevent the establishment of stable alliances between the synodal members (Metodiev, 2010). Despite these efforts, it turned out that the BOC’s collaboration with the communist regime had certain limits. The initial reading of documents of the declassified archives of the communist state security services points

that even the most loyal Orthodox hierarchs were not able to grasp the socialist understanding of “freedom of religion.” Their obedience to the Party’s orders did not block their efforts to rescue the parochial life and care of clerics thrown in jail by the communist state. The reason for this behavior was rooted in the upbringing of this generation of Bulgarian metropolitans whose religious and world views were shaped before 1944. Therefore, the State Security preferred to control rather to re-educate them. At the same time, it concentrated its efforts on the preparation of the next cohort of Bulgarian bishops. In this regard, the totalitarian government faced a serious difficulty: it was not able to intervene directly in the production of new Orthodox bishops because their consecration was a sacrament and only canonical bishops were able to do it. Therefore, the State Security had to elaborate special methodology able to control the pre-selection of the potential bishops. Much easier were the elections of metropolitans or patriarchs where the non-sacramental nature of these acts and the participation of civil people allowed a direct intervention of the communist state.

THE COLD WAR AND THE BOC: INTERNATIONAL STAGE (1961-1989)

The study of the international stage of the BOC’s Cold War development is still in its very early stages. In January 2012, the declassification of documents previously kept in the Archives of the Ministry of Interior revealed that 11 of the 15 current metropolitans of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church collaborated with the communist State Security. Some earlier investigations in the same archive indicate that by 1989 almost all Synodal members were agents. This discovery provoked acute debates in Bulgarian society and inspired new research on

this issue. By this moment, the existing publications allow some preliminary conclusions to be made that are subject of further investigation and precision.

In ecclesiastical terms, the 1961 recognition of the BOC’s patriarchal dignity by all canonical Orthodox churches facilitated its activation on the international scene. At the same time, the newly accessible archival sources indicate that the State Security received the task to prepare Orthodox clerics and lay activists for work abroad in the late 1950s. Generally, these foreign activities of the Bulgarian Church were channeled in two main directions that can be defined as ideological and national.

The ideological direction concerned the restoration of the BOC’s ecumenical activities by joining the World Council of Churches (WCC) and participating in such organizations as the Christian Peace Conference and the Conference of European Churches (Metodiev, 2010). Within their framework it had to assist the efforts of the Moscow Patriarchate to prevent the attacks of Western Christianity against the persecution of religion in the socialist countries. These memberships were also used for the aims of the propaganda of socialism and the fight against socio-economic inequalities, especially in the Third World countries. Not less important was the BOC’s contribution to the relaxation in the military sphere. As in the pre-communist period many Bulgarian hierarchs considered ecumenism as incompatible with true Orthodox Christianity and thus resisted the BOC’s participation in the WCC. Similar tensions appeared in 1965 when the Bulgarian Orthodox Church sent its observer to the Second Vatican Council. Such international contacts, however, were important for the communist rulers as they assisted the communication of the socialist Orthodox

churches with those on the other side of the Iron Curtain. At the same time, the Bulgarian Synod also benefited from these contacts, especially from those with the Patriarchate of Constantinople and the Greek Orthodox Church. Thanks to them, it restored communications with the Bulgarian monastery in Mount Athos after its interruption in 1947 when several Russian and Bulgarian monks were tried in Thessaloniki. The restored intra-Orthodox dialogue facilitated the discussion of some ecclesiological problems within the framework of the Rhodes Orthodox conferences (1961-1964) and the later Inter-Orthodox meetings at Chambésy, Switzerland (1968-1986) (Metodiev 2010, pp. 384-387; Eldarov 2002, pp. 74-81).

The BOC's national activities abroad reflect one of the most specific features of the Eastern European Orthodox churches – their link with a particular nation, state, history and culture. This specificity resulted in intertwined devotion to Orthodoxy in general and to a particular nation among the representatives of one or another such Church. Therefore, some Bulgarian Orthodox hierarchs used to perceive their collaboration with the atheist regime on the international scene not so much as an ideological task, but rather as a fulfillment of their patriotic duties, i.e. to keep the national identity of Bulgarian emigrants by means of the BOC's eparchies and parishes abroad. It is interesting that this tendency was stronger in the United States than in Australia (Metodiev 2010, pp. 399-491). To a great degree it was result of the greater number of Bulgarian émigrés in the former, as well as their longer traditions and better organization. In the case of the Bulgarian eparchy in America, the BOC's collaboration with the communist government was also motivated by the specific interest of this religious institution in restor-

ing property rights over the local temples and buildings of the Bulgarian church communities that had been under the jurisdiction of Sofia Synod before the Cold War.

In this respect, the situation in Western Europe was quite different as the BOC had neither permanent émigré structures nor such properties before World War II. Therefore, the Sofia Synod developed a special policy for Europe. It made use of the parishes established by Bulgarian gardeners in interwar Hungary. In the late 1979, Patriarch Maxim sent Bishop Simeon as his vicar to Budapest. This hierarch had an important advantage: as a vicar of the Bulgarian Metropolitan in America he obtained US citizenship that allowed him to travel freely across Europe (Metodiev 2010, pp. 492-501). It facilitated his efforts to establish Bulgarian churches mostly in capital cities that attracted many Bulgarian émigrés. In comparison with the USA, however, this process was a more diplomatic than religious enterprise as it needed separate negotiations with each European government in accordance with its legislation. As a result, about a dozen parishes were created in Western Europe. In 1986 they were united in one Western European Eparchy of the Bulgarian Patriarchate.

In this way, the BOC not only restored its pre-1945 jurisdiction but expanded it over new areas, namely Australia and Western Europe. In turn, the communist state received an opportunity to exercise more effective control over its opponents among the Bulgarian émigrés. The collapse of communism shook this church-state collaboration on the international scene, but did it close the Cold War page in the development of the BOC?

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GARF [State Archives of the Russian Federation], f. [fund] 6991, op. [inventory] 1, d.

[file] 16, p. 33 – Agreement on the abolishment of the Bulgarian schism signed by the representatives of the Orthodox churches who attended the election of Patriarch Alexii of Moscow and All Russia, 7 February 1945.

TsDA [Central State Archive - Bulgaria], f 1466, op. 5, a.e. [archival unit] 605, p. 37 - Decree No. 29 of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Bulgaria, 17 September 1948.

GARF, f. 6991, op.1, d. 988, pp. 139-142 - Proposals by the Council of the Affairs of the Russian Orthodox Church about the position of the Moscow Patriarchate concerning the candidature of Metropolitan Kiril as future Patriarch of Bulgaria, 6 November 1952.

GARF, f. 6991, o. 1, d. 1101, pp. 83-85 - Recorded conversation of the Chairman of the Council of the Affairs of the Russian Orthodox Church, G. Karpov, with Moscow Patriarchate's delegates who attended the elections of Metropolitan Kiril as Patriarch of Bulgaria, 19 May 1953.

ARCHIVES CONTAINING MATERIALS ON THE BULGARIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

- Архив на Комисията за разкриване на документите и за обявяване на принадлежност на български граждани към Държавна сигурност и разузнавателните служби на Българската народна армия [Archive of the Committee for disclosing the documents and announcing the affiliation of Bulgarian citizens to the State Security and intelligence services of the Bulgarian National Army]
- Централен държавен архив [Central State Archive]
- Архив на Министерство на Външните работи [Archive of the Ministry of For-

eign Affairs]

- Църковно-исторически и архивен институт [the Church, Historical and Archival Institute of the Bulgarian Patriarchate]

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Daniela Kalkandjieva, Dr., is a researcher at the St. Kliment Okhridski University in Sofia with a focus on the history of the Eastern Orthodox Churches during Communism and the Cold War. Recent publications: Bulgarian Orthodoxy and the European Court of Human Rights: The Case of the Holy Synod of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church. In: Evert van der Zweerde, Alfons Brüning, eds., 2012. *Orthodox Christianity and Human Rights*. Eastern Christian Studies Series, 13. Leuven: Peeters, pp. 315-336; A Comparative Analysis on Church-State Relations in Eastern Orthodoxy: Concepts, Models and Principles *Journal of Church and State*, 2011 53 (4), pp. 587-614.
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The Turkish minority in Bulgaria

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The Turks constitute the largest ethnic minority in Bulgaria. The Turkish minority is well represented in politics and public administration, but it only marginally takes part in social and economic life in Bulgaria. In the public perception of the ethnic Bulgarians negative attitudes towards "the Turks" and Islam prevail, which can be traced back to the Ottoman era.

According to the results of the last census in 2011, there are 588,318 ethnic Turks living in Bulgaria. This corresponds with 8.8 % of the entire population. However, the significance of Turkish population in Bulgaria should be measured not only by its size, but also by its important role in the political, economic and cultural relationships between Bulgaria and Turkey.

The ethnic Turks primarily inhabit the regions in the North-East and South-East of Bulgaria. The latter directly borders Turkey. Until 1989 this area was very significant: in geopolitical terms it formed not only the international border between Bulgaria and Turkey, but also the border between two socio-economic and political systems: Until 1989 Bulgaria be-

longed to the Eastern Block, while Turkey had been a NATO member since 1952. After 1989 the importance of this region seemed to decline. Since 2004 Bulgaria has been allied with Turkey as a NATO member. The Eastern Block has become something for the school books. The free movement of people and goods between both countries has continually increased in recent years.

After 1989 the position of the ethnic minorities in Bulgaria also changed. Bulgaria's minority policy regarding the Turks has never been clear and constant since the foundation of the Bulgarian nation state in 1878: the approaches spanned from integration attempts with the recognition of minority rights¹ to attempts at assimilation. For example, the Muslim names of the Bulgarian Turks were forcefully replaced by Slavic names during the so-called "renaissance process" in 1984 and 1985. Since the political transition after 1989 however, there has been a clear trend towards legally codifying and *de facto* guaranteeing minority rights. These rights were indeed also *de jure* guaranteed in the socialist laws and constitutions (1947 and 1971), but they were *de facto* disregarded. Only in 1994 were all ethnic groups granted the right to school instruction in their mother language. The radio and television law of 1998 stipulates the right of all ethnic groups in Bulgaria to broadcast programs in their own languages. During the democratization process all previously *de facto* disregarded civil rights of all Bulgarian citizens (freedom of opinion, freedom of religion, freedom of information, the sanctity of private property) were placed under protection.

1 In this regard the Turks were even privileged *de facto* compared to other minorities. See Büchsenschütz, Ulrich, 2000. *Malzinstvenata politika v Bǎlgaria*. Sofia, p. 130 et seq.

How have the improved macro-conditions impacted the situation of the ethnic Turkish groups in Bulgaria? Have they led to changes in their participation in social activities and to an increase in their social recognition and acceptance?

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION

Since the political transformation the Turks have been well represented in the political and administrative hierarchy of Bulgaria: currently 30 parliamentary representatives, one minister and over 500 mayors are of Turkish origin. Representatives of the ethnic Turkish groups have been members of all parliaments since 1989. However, these figures should not be interpreted as a sign of the successful participation of the Turks in social affairs. The type of their political participation instead points to ethnical "closure": The Turks primarily view themselves as best represented by the Movement for Rights and Freedoms (DPS). Most ethnic Bulgarians, by contrast, do not feel represented by the DPS and define the movement as a "Turkish Party". Sixty-nine percent of Bulgarians believe that the ethnic Turks have taken on too many positions of political leadership in Bulgaria. (Kǎnev et al. 2005) Sixty-four percent of Bulgarians would never vote for an ethnic Turk in parliamentary, presidential or municipal elections, even if the candidate of Turkish origin is "honest and competent" and belongs to the party that one favors. Only 30% of Bulgarians agree to a representative of the Turkish minority being appointed as a minister, even though there have been ministers of Turkish origin in Bulgarian governments for years already. Moreover, 65 % of Bulgarians are against Turks becoming officers in the Bulgarian army.

With regard to economic participation,

significant differences can also be discerned between Turks and Bulgarians: the ethnic Turks are disproportionately affected by the ongoing economic crisis in the country. According to a study by the Open Society Institute in Sofia, the number of ethnic Turks employed decreased from 66% in 2007 to 49.1% in 2010. (Pamporov 2012) By comparison, the number of employed ethnic Bulgarians increased from 62% to 67.1%. One potential explanation for this negative development in the economic participation of the ethnic Turkish group lies in their geographical dispersion: the Turks inhabit the poorest towns in south-eastern Bulgaria. In addition, the Turkish population primarily lives in smaller village communities. According to data from the National Institute of Statistics 37.6 % of Turks lived in a city in 2011 and 62.4 percent in rural areas. By contrast, the number of ethnic Bulgarians that lived in a city in 2011 was 77.5 %. According to World Bank data, the inhabitants of rural areas are most threatened by poverty. (The World Bank Report 2002)

DIFFERENT LEVELS OF EDUCATION ATTAINMENT

An additional potential explanation for the poorer economic situation of the ethnic Turks in Bulgaria can be traced back to their relatively low level of education attainment. According to census data from the past two decades the large differences in education attainment between ethnic Turks and Bulgarians have hardly changed since 1989: while 8.94 % of all Bulgarians had a higher education degree and 17.94 a secondary level degree (upper secondary or intermediate technical education) in 1992, these figures only amounted to 0.4 % and 10.38 % for Turks at that time. The illiteracy rate and primary school drop-out rates among

the ethnic Turks amounted to 7.42 %, but only 1.03 % among the ethnic Bulgarians. (Nacionalen Statističeski Institut 1992)

According to data from the past census from 2011, the number of ethnic Turks who had acquired a higher education degree increased to 4.9 %. However, this still remained low in comparison to the percentage of Bulgarians with a higher education degree (25.6%). There has also been an increase in the number of people with intermediate secondary school degrees: in 2011, 29.7% of the ethnic Turks had an intermediate secondary degree (Bulgarians: 52.3%). The illiteracy and primary school drop-out level among the Turks remained relatively high at 7.5 %, while it dropped to 0.9 % for Bulgarians. A potential improvement of the economic situation of the Turks living in Bulgaria is linked with an intensification of the trade relationships between Bulgaria and Turkey. According to data from the Turkish-Bulgarian Chamber of Commerce, which was established in 2004, the export rate for Bulgarian goods to Turkey amounted to 2,474,620 US Dollars in 2011. Ten years earlier in 2001, Bulgarian firms only exported goods valued at 367,420 US Dollars to Turkey.² Due to their language skills, members of the Turkish minority who generally speak Bulgarian and Turkish fluently have good career opportunities in firms operating in the import-export branch with Turkey. However, a prerequisite for this is an increase in the level of education attainment of the ethnic Turks. Bilingualism can only be a decisive employment factor when the applicants have the necessary education degrees and skills.

2 See Turkish-Bulgarian Chamber of Commerce: http://www.tbcci.bg/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=120&Itemid=161&lang=bg

The economic crisis and the poorer level of education among members of the ethnic Turkish group can be viewed as the main reasons, but not as the exclusive motives for their complicated economic situation. The attitudes of the Bulgarians towards the Turks can also have a negative impact in this regard. According to results of an opinion research study, 75 % of Bulgarians have nothing against working together with people from the Turkish ethnic group. However, 35 % of Bulgarians believe that the Turks cannot be trusted and that one cannot rely on them. (Kănev et al. 2005, pp. 45, 47)

PERCEPTIONS OF THE TURKS IN PUBLIC DISCOURSE

Several sociological analyses since the 1990s have determined a negative image of the Turks among the public in Bulgaria. According to the first representative study, which was carried out after the transformation in 1992, the Bulgarians associate the word "Turk" with characteristics such as "sly" (43 % of those surveyed), "ungrateful" (34 %), "cruel" (53 %), and "greedy" (41 %). (Georgiev et al. 1992, 32; Grekova 1995, 115) A study carried out among Bulgarian students in the 1990s also revealed a "predominantly negative image of the Bulgarian Turks" (Roth 1996, p. 56). In a study carried out in 2005, 60% of Bulgarians claimed that the Turks are "religious fanatics" and 35% believed that one cannot trust them. (Kănev et al. 2005, p. 45)

Current surveys from this year also demonstrate that old negative attitudes still exist. The social distance and the rejection of the Turks by the Bulgarians are still at a high level. However, a trend towards improved attitudes towards the ethnic Turkish group can also be discerned. Among the surveyed Bulgarians,

29.4% indicated that they would be willing to marry an ethnic Turk. (Institut Otvoreno obsestvo 2012, 53, 55) In 2008 this figure only amounted to 21.7% and in 1992 only 14%. In addition, 62.7% of Bulgarians did not have anything against members of the Turkish ethnic group living in their neighborhood (1992: 52%).

The primarily negative social perceptions of the Turks in Bulgaria are not a new phenomenon. The construction of images of Turks by Bulgarians can be traced back to the era of the Ottoman Empire. Different perceptions of Turkey and the Turks have existed and continue to exist in Bulgarian discourses. It is indisputable that many areas of everyday life in Bulgaria, in particular the culinary diversity and the language, have been influenced by Ottoman culture. However, the impact of the Ottoman Empire on the cultural and social development of Bulgaria is disputed.

Individual authors emphasize the positive influence of the large markets of the Ottoman Empire on the economic development of Bulgarian society. (Hadžijski 1974, p. 186) Several academics stress the religious tolerance of the Ottoman Empire in their writings and the resulting cultural and religious autonomy of the Christian population. (Mutafčieva 1994, p. 3-36; Zelyaskova 1990) Individual positive images of the Turks can also be found in Bulgarian literature. (Jowkov 1976, pp. 22-31) However, the narratives about the Ottoman Empire, which every Bulgarian knows, are the negative ones. Despite all the variations in the images of Turks and the Ottoman Empire, Bulgarians are overly exposed to the negative narratives. According to these dominant narratives the Turks are: "different" and "not part of the Bulgarian nation and religion". They "threaten the territorial sovereignty of Bulgaria". They are "uncivilized" and "non-European".

an". They are presented as "violent criminals" and "enslavers". Most Bulgarian schoolbooks on history and literature since the foundation of the Bulgarian state in 1878 depict, above all, the military disputes between Bulgarians and Turks. The "peaceful" periods and trade relations between both population groups are hardly taken into account. The period of Ottoman rule from 1396 until 1878 is presented as a period of "slavery", in which the Bulgarians were the victims and the "Turks" the "enslavers". References to those Bulgarians, who made it into the elite of the Ottoman Empire despite their ethnic and religious affiliation, are omitted. As a rule, the Islamization of the Bulgarians is portrayed in schoolbooks as having been violent; most schoolbooks are completely silent about cases of voluntary Islamization.

One potential explanation why such images are so wide-spread is linked to the different geopolitical positioning of Bulgaria and Turkey during the Cold War, during which the school history books had to correspond with official state policy. After 1989 attempts were made to publish new school books on history with more updated interpretations of the past. In some of these interpretations the peaceful co-existence of Bulgarians and Turks in the Ottoman Empire is emphasized more strongly. The animosities between Bulgaria and Turks are downplayed in the "spirit of tolerance, anti-discrimination and European understanding" – a fact which is currently being controversially discussed among the Bulgarian public.³

3 With regard to this debate see the interview with Prof. Evgenia Ivanova in: http://www.dnevnik.bg/intervju/2012/08/23/1893235_prof_evgeniia_ivanova_albumi_s_ikoni_ili_uchebnci/?ref=email_mynews, as well as the analysis by Stefan Popov in: <http://www.trud.bg/Article.asp?ArticleId=1522002>.

Another factor for the spread of negative image of the Turks is the participation of the *Movement for Rights and Freedoms* (DPS) in government. The movement was founded in 1990 and has had the aim of politically representing the interests of the Turkish minority in Bulgaria. In several political decisions the movement played the role of the decisive third-party that "tipped the scale". (Riedel 1993, p. 111) In the legislative period between 2005 and 2009 the DPS was part of the governing coalition, but there were public speculations about "massive involvement of this party and Dogan himself (the leader of the DPS) in corruption and economic activities". (Schüler 2011, p. 55)

NEGATIVE IMAGE OF ISLAM

The particularities in the construction of the Bulgarian national identity and "oral history" also play an important role in the large-scale dispersion of negative images of "Turks" and "Islam". Precisely the rejection of Turkish and Muslim culture is one of the main pillars of Bulgarian national mythology, in which the Bulgarians are depicted as the victims of Islam, Islamization and the Turkish-Muslim conquerors.⁴ The Bulgarians, by contrast, are the heroes, who suffered but survived every-

4 More on the construction of the Bulgarian national mythology in Liakova, Marina: „Europa“ und „der Islam“ als Mythen in den öffentlichen Diskursen in Bulgarien, In: Hahn, Hans-Henning; Hein- Kircher, Heidi (eds.): Politische Mythen im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert. Perspektiven historischer Mythosforschung. Marburg 2006, pp. 225-242. See also Marinov, Tchavdar: National Myths in Post-Communist Bulgaria and Their Criticism. In: Euxeinos 2 (2011), pp. 5-12; available at: <http://www.gce.unisg.ch/~media/Internet/Content/Dateien/InstituteUndCenters/GCE/Euxeinos%20Folder/Euxeinos%202011.ashx?fl=en>.

thing and who saved Europe from Islamization through their suffering.⁵

After 9/ 11 the fact that the ethnic Turks living in Bulgaria primarily believe in Islam had a negative impact on their public perception: the negative reporting in the Bulgarian media, which presented Islam in the context of terror, increased again.(Liakova, Halm 2009, pp. 131-137)

SUMMARY

One reason for the weaker acceptance of the ethnic Turks living in Bulgarian lies in the difficulties that the Bulgarian public and the Bulgarian state have dealing with the Ottoman past.

Despite the legal codification and granting of minority rights in Bulgaria, the negative attitude of Bulgarians towards the Turks still persists. Even though the political participation of Turks in Bulgaria is at a relatively high level, they are still perceived by the Bulgarians as "others". Symptomatic of this are the public discussions, which are conducted with regard to the participation in elections by those ethnic Turks with Bulgarian citizenship, who live outside the borders of Bulgaria. Although they have unconditional active voting rights as Bulgarian citizens, the exercise of their voting rights, - usually in favor of the DPS - is perceived by political opponents as "manipulative".

The establishment of a political élite

5 This "bulwark myth" can be found in all Balkan societies. See Dimitrova, Snezhana: "Edna Golgota, edno Vazkresenie, edna bariera, edin most ... i tehните vechni vragove. Za njakoi ot mitovete i utopiite na balkanskite natsionalizmi". In: Konev, Iliya ed. 1997. *Predci i predteči. Mitove i utopii na Balkanite*. Blagoevgrad, p. 352.

among the ethnic Turks in Bulgaria in recent years did not lead to broader social participation of the Turks in Bulgaria and therefore cannot be seen as a sign of successful societal participation of the Turkish ethnic group. In particular in the areas of education and employment, there are still large differences between the different ethnic groups in Bulgarian society: in this regard, the ethnic Turks fare worse than the ethnic Bulgarians. The lacking economic and educational advancements among a broad part of the Turkish minority also has prevented the emergence of a more positive image of the Turks within the Bulgarian public.

Translated from the German by Michael Dobbins

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The Pomaks in Bulgaria and Greece: Comparative Remarks

by Evangelos Karagiannis, University of Zurich

The Pomaks are Bulgarian-speaking Muslims living in Southern Bulgaria and Northern Greece. Both countries developed different strategies to deal with the minority. While Bulgaria's policy aimed at both the cultural assimilation into the Bulgarian nation and the socio-structural integration into the Bulgarian society, Greek policy resulted in the assimilation of the Pomaks into the Turkish minority of Greece.

The term Pomaks refers to the Bulgarian-speaking Muslims, who live in the western and central Rhodope Mountains on both sides of the Greek-Bulgarian border. Due to their Slavic dialect and their Muslim faith they are viewed as the counterpart of the Bosnian Muslims in the eastern part of the Balkan Peninsula. Since 1919 the Pomaks have been divided into a Greek and Bulgarian population segment. As they are not counted as a separate group in the Bulgarian or Greek census figures, we do not know their exact number. However, they are estimated to be around 250,000 people.

The Pomaks are nowadays well-researched. The considerable improvement of the research conditions in both countries after the political transformation of 1989 resulted in the publication of a series of empirical studies (cf. Trubeta 1999; Velinov 2003; Brunnbauer 2004; Karagiannis 2005). However, all existing studies deal either with the Bulgarian or the Greek Pomaks. What is still lacking is a comparative study of both Pomak segments. Such a comparison is indispensable for a better understanding of the minority. First, only such a comparison could systematically uncover the remarkable divergent development of the Pomaks since their separation after the First World War. Second, a comparison could shed new light on relevant developments on both sides of the border. The objective of this paper is to present the principal lines of such a comparative analysis.

SIZE OF THE TWO GROUPS

But first, two fundamental remarks are essential in order to highlight the different relevance of the Pomak issue in Bulgaria and Greece. The number of the Bulgarian Pomaks is considerably higher than that of the Greek Pomaks. There are an estimated 200,000 to 220,000 Bulgarian Pomaks, while in Greece not more than 40,000. Similarly, the overall Muslim minority of Bulgaria (primarily Turks, Roma and Pomaks) is much larger than in Greece. A series of sources estimate there to be around 1.5 million Muslims in Bulgaria, amounting to 15-20% of the entire population. By contrast, the number of Muslims in Greece is estimated to be 150,000, thus 1.5 per cent of the Greek population.

The size of (religious) minorities in a country is not *per se* significant. However, if nation formation is based on cultural homogeneity and, further, entangled with a certain religious tradition, the size of the deviant religious population can become a very explosive issue. The Balkan nations have pursued a variety of strategies in order to achieve cultural homogeneity. The most important event in the history of the consolidation of the Greek nation is the population exchange between Greece and Turkey in 1923. To a large extent, this event created the conditions for the construction of a culturally homogenous nation in Greece. Since the Muslims (and thus the

Pomaks as well) from Western Thrace were excluded from the population exchange, they have been a “small exception” within a culturally highly homogenous population since their official recognition as a minority (Karagiannis 2010). There is no comparable event in the history of the Bulgarian nation. Bulgaria’s efforts at cultural homogenization failed miserably, even though the Bulgarian authorities took every possible measure in this regard.

CONTACTS WITH THE NEIGHBORS’ NATIONALISM

The Bulgarians focused their attention on the Pomaks much earlier than the Greeks (approximately 40 years). The category “Pomaks” is in its own right a by-product of Bulgarian nationalism: Up to the 19th century there is no evidence in the sources of the existence of the Pomaks as a separate group. The term “Pomaks” was first introduced in the mid 19th century as a collective name for several local Slavic-speaking groups of Muslim faith, who were previously called differently. The emergence of a universal term for all these local groups epitomizes a new view towards this population, which was shaped by Bulgarian nationalism.

The (early) Bulgarian interest in the Pomaks was by no means a matter of course and inevitable. The language of a people is not *per se* important for their national affiliation. It is the political selection of the language as a criterion of national inclusion which makes it relevant. In principle, the language of a population can also be entirely ignored as a criterion of nationality. For example, in the 1980s the Bulgarian government declared the Turks of Bulgaria to be Bulgarians, who in the past had lost their Bulgarian language as well as their Bulgarian faith. Greece, by contrast,

never considered the Greek-speaking Muslims living in the country to be Greeks. On the contrary, during the Greek-Turkish population exchange they were declared to be Turks and had to leave the country. So, it was not the common language which attracted the interest of Bulgarian nationalists in the Pomaks, but rather the other way around: motivated by genuine interests, Bulgarian nationalism invented the meaning of the common language. As a criterion of national inclusion it was very important for the prospects of Bulgarian irredentism. By contrast, the linguistic criterion was never politically expedient for Greek nationalism. Only the adherence to the Greek-Orthodox faith could justify the Greek state’s claim to territories with Slavic, Albanian and Turkish-speaking populations. Accordingly, the country’s Muslims (regardless of their mother language) were systematically ignored.

Although Bulgarian nationalists at times strongly emphasized language as a criterion of national affiliation, they never succeeded in offering the Pomak Muslims a serious concept of ideological inclusion. The affirmations of the Bulgarian origins of the Pomaks were always accompanied by lamentations for their alleged violent conversion to Islam (during the Ottoman rule over the Balkans). The ideological efforts which aimed at including the minority into the Bulgarian national community thus never implied the reconciliation of Bulgarian nationality with Islam. By contrast, they implied the expectation that the Muslims in a free and independent Bulgarian state return to the heart of the Bulgarian nation by converting to Christianity.

Even the first encounter of the Pomaks with Bulgarian nationalism was conflictual: They took part in the repression of Bulgarian rebellions and vehemently resisted any Bul-

garian control over their settlement area (Karagiannis 2005, pp. 67-77). When the Bulgarian troops conquered the Rhodope Mountains during the Balkan Wars (1912/13), the Pomaks were violently Christianized on a mass scale in order to justify Bulgaria's claims to the area primarily inhabited by Muslims (Georgiev/Trifonov 1995). For the first time in history the Pomaks were forced to change their Muslim names to Christian ones. In that historical period, Greece encountered the Pomaks for the first time and attempted to capitalize on their aversion to Bulgarian nationalism. Greece and the Greek-Orthodox Patriarchate of Constantinople condemned in the strongest of terms the measures carried out by the Bulgarian church and paramilitary organizations. Bulgarian historians even report that Greek bishops sent irregular forces to the area in order to remove the Christian symbols (icons and crosses) from the houses of baptized Pomaks (Shishkov 1914, p. 19). Even though these formal conversions to Christianity were short-lived (in 1914 they had to be reversed due to international pressure), they were trend-setting with regard to how the Pomaks were treated in the Bulgarian state. The fact that the measures were limited to the Pomaks exclusively (Turks were not affected by them) also reflects a distinction made by the Bulgarian state between "more and less foreign" Muslims. This distinction corresponded to the view that some Muslims could be won over for the Bulgarian cause more easily than others. And this reveals a fundamental difference in the treatment of the Pomaks by the Bulgarian and Greek states: *In contrast to Greece, Bulgaria never regarded or treated its Muslim minority as a uniform entity.*

This difference was most apparent in the school education of the Pomaks: Bulgarian Pomaks always visited regular Bulgarian schools. The Greek Pomaks, by contrast, vis-

ited minority schools, which were tailored to the needs of the Turkish minority (lessons in Greek and Turkish) (see Kanakidou 1994). Unlike the Bulgarian Pomaks, the Pomaks in Greece never had the opportunity to be taught in their mother language. While the schools in Bulgaria strongly enhanced both the cultural assimilation as well as the structural integration of the Pomaks, they made both processes unlikely in Greece. They instead facilitated the assimilation of the Pomaks into the Turkish segment of the Muslim minority. This comparison exemplifies another important difference in the treatment of the Pomaks in Bulgaria and Greece. Bulgaria's policy aimed at *both the cultural assimilation and the socio-structural integration* of the minority (the latter after the Second World War). In Greece neither of these occurred.

ASSIMILATION AS BULGARIZATION AND TURKIZATION

After the Christianization campaign of 1912/13 the Bulgarian Pomaks were confronted with violent assimilation campaigns two more times. The primary aim of these campaigns was to separate the Pomaks from their Turkish neighbors and thus to limit the Turkish influence on the minority. The first of these campaigns was carried out by the cultural and educational organization *Rodina* ("homeland"). *Rodina* was founded in 1937 by the Bulgarian ethnographer Petar Marinov, but was spearheaded by young Pomak "intellectuals" who made it their objective to promote the Bulgarian national consciousness among the Pomaks through propaganda and work in the educational field. Over the course of time the *Rodina* campaign took on very violent characteristics, and the Pomaks were again forced to change their names and relinquish numerous

symbols of their faith (Neuburger 2000, pp. 186-190). It was the Bulgarian Communists who put an end to *Rodina's* repressions. In 1944 the Pomaks were allowed to take back their Muslim names.

However, the liberal treatment of the Pomaks in Socialist Bulgaria did not last long. In the mid-1950s the Communist Party initiated an anti-Islamic campaign, which increased slowly but steadily and lasted until the collapse of the regime. In the early 1960s the Pomaks were increasingly recommended to change their names. Most Muslims were not willing to do so though and accepted several disadvantages due to their decision. What was to be done "voluntarily" in the 1960s became mandatory soon after. In 1970 all Pomaks had to take Bulgarian names by decree. In the early 1980s the anti-Islamic campaign reached its peak. The numerous restrictions and regulations (including the name changes) were abolished only after the collapse of the Communist regime (Karagiannis 2005, pp. 107-116).

The developments in Greece go in the opposite direction. In the initial years after the Treaty of Lausanne, which excluded the Muslim minority of Western Thrace from the population exchange, the Greek state supported the traditional religious and anti-Kemalist forces within the minority. However, this changed radically after the Greek-Turkish Friendship Agreement of 1930. As a result of the agreement, the decisively anti-Kemalist leadership of the minority was replaced by a Kemalist one. This allowed Turkish nationalism to take roots in Western Thrace. After a short deterioration of the Greek-Turkish relationships in the 1940s, a rapprochement of both countries took place as they were to join NATO in the early 1950s. The most important modification in Greek minority policy at that time was the recognition of the entire Mus-

lim minority of Greece as a Turkish minority. Along these lines, the word "Muslim" was replaced by the word "Turkish" in all official documents. The bureaucratic Turkization of the Greek Pomaks coincided with the anti-communist imperatives of Greek policy at that time. This was aimed not least at preventing any potential Bulgarian claims to Western Thrace (cf. Trubeta 1999, pp. 84-85). Despite the Cyprus crisis and the pogroms against the Greeks of Istanbul (1955) Greece did not revise its minority policy until 1969. The Greek junta first re-introduced the word "Muslim" to refer to the minority and began to deny its Turkish identity. This is still official Greek policy.

A comparison of the above described developments in Bulgaria and Greece is very instructive, in particular if one considers the time periods in which the various turns in policy took place. There are grounds for assuming that the turns in Bulgarian and Greek minority policies were related to one another. It can hardly be seen as a coincidence that - after the installation of Turkish-nationalist leadership over the Muslim minority of Greece - Pomaks with a Bulgarian nationalist orientation would assume leadership over the minority in Bulgaria attempting "to protect them from Turkish influence". A similar situation can also be identified in the 1950s. The anti-Islamic policy of the Bulgarian state, which involved a strong emphasis of the internal diversity of the Muslim minority, was introduced after Greece declared all Muslims on its territory to be Turks. The new revision of Greek minority policy in 1969 (reintroduction of the term "Muslim minority") had no impact on the developments in Bulgaria, because it was not accompanied by any serious measures to prevent the influence of Turkey on the minority. The renaming of the minority even coincides with the introduction of the so-called "principle of reciproc-

ity", which made the treatment of the minority in Greece dependent on the treatment of the Greek minority by the Turkish state. Thus, the Muslims of Greece were practically declared to be foreigners, which significantly increased the level of solidarity among them.

SOCIO-STRUCTURAL INTEGRATION VS. MARGINALIZATION

An additional important difference in the treatment of the Pomaks by the Greek and Turkish states pertains to the socio-cultural integration of the minority. The Communist leadership of Bulgaria was the first to take serious efforts to win over the Pomaks with a large-scale modernization of their settlement area. In the Central Rhodope Mountains, where good agricultural lands are rare, industrialization and urbanization radically changed the character of the region. The illiteracy rate and unemployment dropped drastically and the standard of living of the native population considerably improved (Karagiannis 2005, pp. 90-96). Irrespective of its aggressive assimilation policy, Socialist Bulgaria thus strongly promoted the socio-cultural integration of the Pomaks, and it is not surprising that even resolute anti-Communists recognized this contribution of the Communist regime.

Greece, by contrast, never used its economic and social policy as a vehicle to assimilate minorities. Thus, the country's Muslims were never among the beneficiaries of the modernization and economic upturn. In clear contrast to Bulgaria, Greece consistently ignored its Muslims.

CONCLUDING COMPARISON

Even if Bulgarian and Greek policies to-

wards the Pomaks can be described as anything but success stories, a comparison clearly shows that state policies in both countries proved to be decisive formative factors of the identity of the minority members. The various efforts of the Bulgarian state to win over the Pomaks yielded fruits. Thus, a significant part of the Bulgarian Pomaks has a Bulgarian national consciousness nowadays. Accordingly, only few Pomaks in Bulgaria regard themselves as Turks. With the increasing establishment of religious freedom in Bulgaria, those who consider themselves to be Pomaks (probably most of them) indeed view this identity as compatible with Bulgarian citizenship.

In Greece the ethnic identity of the Pomaks even more obviously reflects the state's minority policy. The treatment of the Muslim minority as a uniform entity and/or as a Turkish minority strongly facilitated the Turkization of the Pomaks. It is no wonder that the overwhelming majority of the Greek Pomaks consider themselves to be Turks. Even those who view themselves as Pomaks regard their ethnicity as compatible with the Turkish nationality. The Turkish self-perception of the Greek Pomaks should also be viewed against the background of their future prospects, as Turkey offers opportunities to at least the highly skilled Pomaks. This does not hold for Bulgarian Pomaks since they do not speak Turkish. The assimilation of the Pomaks of Greece into the Turkish segment of the Muslim minority is reflected in particular in the numerous Pomak-Turkish marriages, a phenomenon which occurs quite rarely in Bulgaria. Finally, the fact that there are no Greek Pomaks who regard themselves as Greeks should not be a surprise, as Greek policy never pursued such a goal.

Even if the increasing liberalization of the policy towards the Pomaks in Bulgaria and

Greece since the political transformation of 1989 will not cause any noteworthy shifts in the identity of the Pomaks, the deepening of democracy in both countries remains the only possible way to reconcile the Pomaks with the countries in which they live.

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Street Protests in Sofia: On Environmental Protection and the “Critical Public” in Bulgaria. A Commentary

by Sonja Schüler, University of Fribourg

In June, protests against the loosening of environmental protection provisions in the Bulgarian forestry law took place in the capital city Sofia. However, the feared environmental damage was not the only cause of the protests. Instead, the protests also articulated a general dissatisfaction with the social and political situation. The author examines the potential for the emergence of a critical public in Bulgaria.

In June of this year, street protests took place in the capital of Bulgaria against the political legitimization and legalization of construction activities in designated public nature conservation and forest areas. The direct cause of the protests in Sofia was the passing of amendments to the applicable forestry law by the parliament on 13 June 2012. Before the Christmas holidays of 2011 and in violation of the legally stipulated public consultation time period of 14 days, the government of the liberal-conservative party “Citizens for European development of Bulgaria / GERB” under Prime Minister Borisov presented the national assembly the bill to be passed. The new forestry law abolished the obstacle of structural reallocation of land into construction grounds, which was previously mandatory and associated with high costs. This amendment gave investors de facto a quick possibility to obtain rights of usage for and begin construction on public forests and meadows at no cost, for example to build skiing and golf facilities while circumventing strict environmental protection regulations. The previously applicable construction ban in protected public nature parks was removed. Furthermore, due to the amendments existing ski slopes and other state-owned sporting facilities could be turned over to private investors for usage on the basis of a mere decision of the agriculture minister – without the requirement to allocate rights of usage after public bidding procedures. In ad-

dition, the amendments laid the legal foundations for the intensification of logging activities.

Since the beginning of the present year environmental protection associations such as “Green Balkans” had publicly criticized the legal amendments as a lobbying initiative for the sell-out and large-scale destruction of nature. It was seen as a violation of both applicable national and European legislation. The public authorities justified the amendments with references to the potential for regional development and as a means of improving the infrastructure for tourism and skiing. The parliamentary opposition which consists of the Socialists (BSP) and the conservative alliance “Blue Coalition”, which has 99 seats in the National Assembly, did not make use of its existing possibility to block the law.

The lobbyism accusations are indeed justified. Within the past few years the investment-related pressures from the tourism branch on the political system and environmental protection regulations has continuously increased, while offshore firms, in particular, have realized semi-legal and illegal large construction projects on protected lands time and time again. The tourism complexes on the Black Sea coastline and the expansion of the Bansko ski resort into the Pirin National Park are two of many examples of the uncontrolled construction boom.

Within just hours after the passing of the

law in June 2012, the opponents of the amendment, who were mainly under 30 years old, spontaneously organized by means of electronic and personal networks, in particular Facebook and SMS. Based on the motto “Block the Eagle Bridge” they adopted the style of the Occupy Movement and flash mobs in order to block off the busy intersection in the center of Sofia. On the evening of June 13th, they peacefully chanted slogans such as “You stole everything and now you want to rip the skin off Bulgaria” or simply “mafia” and demanded a presidential veto. The protesters described themselves as “friends of nature” and as the “young generation” and both implicitly and explicitly distanced themselves from any partisan or associational affiliations. On the following evenings far more than a thousand people peacefully followed the calls from personal networks and electronic media to continue the protests until the law was overturned. The hundreds of policemen who arrived did not make any serious attempts to forcefully disband the unregistered demonstrations, which were initially demonstratively downplayed by politicians, as reflected in statements of the Prime Minister. The feared environmental damage from business lobbying was the trigger, but not the only motivation behind the most recent wave of protests. They took place in a country which, after years of Soviet-style socialism, embarked on a rocky process of transformation and socio-economic restructuring after 1989/90 aimed at establishing democracy and a market economy as well as complying with the stability criteria for EU membership. Bulgaria was becoming a country, in which new means of participation and development, fundamental rights and freedoms coexist with numerous socio-economic structural problems and functional deficits: for example, in the form of political influence

of corrupt clientelist networks and economic interests, electoral fraud and blatant representational deficits of political parties and actors, as well as the undermining of competition rules and the abuse of structural funds from the European Union. The democratic deficits also include unfettered influence of the Prime Minister on areas of activity of other political decision-makers and institutions and political and corporate control of the – with few exceptions – skewed and selective pro-governmental media landscape, which is far away from the ideal-typical notion of media “checks and balances”. The verbal attacks of the journalist Diana Najdenova from the largest private broadcaster BTV, who described the demonstrators as aggressive, unprincipled hooligans, and accusations leveled at the protesters by the broadcaster in reaction to the scandal that broke out due to their statements in internet forums are just a few examples of this. The wide-spread disappointment and political apathy among the population are not to be understood as a general rejection of democracy as the political order, rather as the consequences of the perception of political governance as a “dirty business”. Beyond their wish to maintain the nature conservation areas, protesters accordingly also expressed their more general critique of the oligarchic structures, the lacking compliance with European “rules of the game” due to the pseudo-democratic political practice, and the perceived absence of a “real” grassroots democracy, the rule of law and actual means of participation. Finally, the protests can also be viewed as part of the overall youth protests which have taken place around Europe and the world and been motivated by lacking opportunities for socio-economic advancement, fears of the future and the perceived alienation between political elites and the population. However, can the protests in

Sofia be seen as a potential and indicator for the emergence of a previously lacking critical public as part of society which is willing and able to express and publicly articulate its problems and demands – and which also could bring about political alternatives based on clearly defined political demands resulting from a consensus of opinion and values? Skeptical references to the potential political manipulability of diffuse, amorphous masses and the fact that a mass of people generally can only be mobilized for short-term and less risky forms of protest are absolutely legitimate in this context. Equally legitimate is the argument that the protests say nothing about the intensity and sustainability of the commitment of the protesters and that they can be understood as an expression of potentially quickly changing sentiments, an expression of a youth sub-culture, or as a momentary “fad” to become involved in environmental protection which may quickly fade away. It is also legitimate to refer to the superficiality of the “information consumption” through new media and social networks, which could lead to the depletion and flattening of any ideological convictions within the protest culture, in particular within the younger generation, just as it is legitimate to point out the limited impact of the internet with regard to promoting substantive and discursive debates. There is also justification for the objection that a “new protest generation” cannot be expected, because the protesters were primarily young members of a more highly educated urban segment of society and that a broader societal mobilization is hardly possible for socio-economic reasons and due to the absence of an issue- and value related consensus. One must also consider that due to the deliberate distancing of the participants from the political sphere the protests did not bring about any leading fig-

ures and coherent general political demands aimed at gaining political influence and that a substantial foundation for the mobilization of political alternatives does not exist. Moreover, the existing critique of cartelized democracy and corrupt neo-liberalism is not adequately conveyed in public. It is also reasonable to question the opportunities for establishing independent political alternatives in a pseudo-democratic political and journalistic reality characterized by “populist re-politization” (A. Todorov) and aimed at preserving the *status quo*.

Anyway, attempts to interpret the protests as a mere manifestation of the apolitical lifestyle of a “transitional generation”, which has been socialized in anonymous irresponsibility and with the information overflow of the internet, and as the “rebellion of naïve individualists” who are protesting because environmental protection is “sexy” at the moment come up too short. The authenticity, spontaneity and peaceful character of the Sofia protests are notable in their own right. Young people gathered on short notice without being mobilized or politicized by individual actors in order to carry their critique of the endangerment of the nature conservation areas into the public. Electronic and personal networks played a key role in the dispersal of information, the development of an awareness of the problem and the mobilization of protesters. The protesters not only “reminded” politicians about the traditionally strong significance of the environment as a public good worthy of protection in the collective social consciousness and system of values. The forum for the critical public created by the protests also served to enable implicit and explicit criticism of undemocratic elements of the political elites. With an emerging spirit of optimism at the grassroots level, which was somewhat reminiscent of

the protests for environmental protection and democratization in 1988/89, the commitment to environmental protection once again provided a channel and “motor” for conveying more profound critique of the perceived lack of moral responsibility, the alienation of the political establishment from the citizens, and the functional and structural deficits of the political public. It created a public expression of the demand for alternatives to the political *status quo* “from below”, which agitated the system as a political issue. This is evidenced not only by concessions from the Prime Minister to engage in talks with the protesters and to announce the compliance with the public consultation time period in future legislative processes. It is also reflected not only by populist attempts to seize on the protests by the political opposition, whose representatives jumped on the critique and demands of the protesters. Further evidence of this is provided by the political and journalistic attempts to discredit and censor the protests and to silence them by means of staged counter-protesters. Above all, it demonstrated by the veto issued on 16 June 2012 by President Plevneliev against the amendment which was described as incompatible with national and EU law and the ensuing negotiations initiated with environmental protection activists while drawing up the final version of the law. Ultimately, the parliament to a large extent followed the demands of the environmentalists as the stricter provisions from the old forestry law regarding the construction of ski resorts and facilities remain intact in the new version of summer 2012.

The fundamental dispute with business representatives and advocates for the development and expansion of tourist and skiing centers will doubtlessly continue, which is shown by the counter-protests initiated after the passing of the most recent forestry law. In general

though, it has become clear that the protesters acted in public through a process of consensus mobilization and developed a political threat potential for critical opinions. One can hope that in the future more information and discussion forums will promote and strengthen the general awareness of problems and the readiness to publicly express criticism. The participation in the discursive spread of information and critique begins at an individual level, but is the responsibility of all democratic forces.

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