

Nationality Policy in the USSR and in Bulgaria: Some Observations

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Soviet Nationality Policy to 1985

Until recently the long-standing goal of Soviet nationality policy had been the eventual merger or fusion of all nations and nationalities in the Soviet Union into a single Soviet socialist community. This merger was to be accomplished in two stages. During the first stage, through participation in a common polity and economy, members of various nations and nationalities were to draw closer together (*sblizhenie*). During the second stage they were to merge (*sliianie*) into a single socialist community.⁽¹⁾ Attempts to manage cultural diversity based on these notions have been called syncretic amalgamation. According to Cohen and Warwick (1983:11), "syncretic amalgamation represented an attempt to dilute or eradicate existing cultural identities through the creation of completely new bonds or cases of collective solidarity" through high levels of governmental interference in social relations. Syncretic amalgamation in its revolutionary form attempted to replace existing group loyalties with bonds deriving from class consciousness so that parochial loyalties are superseded by regime ideology. Cohen and Warwick (1983:11-12) elaborate:

In practice, fusionist policy generally made allowances for the existence and even temporary cultivation of traditional cultural practices, provided that such activities (were) essentially of a folklore or pro-regime character.

The rationale for the temporary cultivation of ethnic institutions was that once different groups became aware of their own identities through the development of their languages and cultures, they would become aware of the superiority of an international identity and willingly substitute proletarian internationalism for parochial nationalism. However, such policies in the Soviet Union and elsewhere in Eastern Europe contributed to the strengthening rather than diminishing of ethnic loyalties, ethnic chauvinism and ethnic antipathies, in the process

dampening the enthusiasm of leaders for fusionist policies. One result of this was the adoption on the part of these same leaders of "an evolutionary strategy to achieve revolutionary goals" by replacing the more "blatant sanctions of utopian normative appeals by more persuasive appeals and material incentives" (Cohen and Warwick 1983:12). The authors continue:

The expectation still remained that traditional cultural ties (would) eventually decay as a result of modernization, but it [was] acknowledged that this [would] be a very extended and gradual process. Moreover, although the merging of long-established identities(could) be encouraged and guided, this process require[d] methods more mild and subtle than those utilized by the earlier fusionist policies (Cohen and Warwick 1983:12).

This process of ethnic amalgamation was not based on the study of actual developments among various nations and nationalities in the Soviet Union; rather, it was determined a priori by party ideologues and presented as a historically inevitable process. Developments on the ground were expected to fit ideological requirements. Even though the persistence and resilience of parochial identities could not be denied, party ideologues kept insisting that the process of ethnic amalgamation was well under way. (2)

Soviet Nationality Policy under Gorbachev

With the advent of glasnost and perestroika a serious reexamination and rethinking of Soviet nationality policy began. During the January and July, 1987 plenums of the Central Committee of the Communist Party past approaches to ethnic relations in the Soviet Union came under serious criticism. Soviet social scientists were criticized for being too simplistic, rigidly dogmatic, and abstract in their discussions of the nationality question, painting "the state of nationality relations only in rosy colors" (Bagramov 1988:23). They were criticized for treating nationality relations in the Soviet Union "as a zone of general harmony, while anything that [didn't] fit into that harmony [was] tossed aside, branded as a phenomenon of bourgeois nationalism" (Bagramov 1988:24). Such a view of ethnic relations had little connection to reality and, as a result, serious problems in ethnic relations were ignored.

As a response to such criticisms, there came about a more realistic discussion of the complexity of ethnic relations in the Soviet Union. The search for simplistic and dogmatic solutions was abandoned. Gorbachev and his supporters came to the realization that there was no single, universal answer to the nationality question. Solutions to ethnic problems must emerge from a realistic study and analysis of developments among various nations and nationalities in the Soviet Union. It was recommended that greater attention be paid to the development of indigenous languages and cultures; and that more emphasis be placed on the flourishing of nations and nationalities and less on their convergence and merger.

Although Moscow has steadfastly refused to entertain any demands for outright secession from the Soviet Union, Gorbachev and his supporters have shown a willingness to grant greater autonomy to non-Russian republics in an attempt to mollify a restive non-Russian population. In a rare televised speech to the nation on July 1, 1989, Gorbachev noted the serious threat of ethnic conflict to the country. While firmly rejecting the demands of ethnic separatists, he indicated Moscow's growing willingness to accommodate the flourishing of ethnic consciousness among nations and nationalities in the Soviet Union. He advocated greater sensitivity and greater flexibility toward all legitimate ethnic demands and aspirations and called for free development of the languages and cultures of ethnic minorities. Gorbachev also admitted that the root causes of current ethnic conflict in the country are to be found in serious mistakes of the past, among which he identified "economic hardship, historical efforts to stamp out local cultures and the forced relocation of groups like the Meskhetians, all of which [have] sometimes been exploited by corrupt local officials to protect their power" (Keller 1989:3). The Central Committee of the Communist Party scheduled a special meeting to discuss ethnic issues in late July, 1989 but postponed it until September, then postponed it again until the Party Congress later this year. Already the second stage of ethnic amalgamation, that of merger or fusion of all nations and nationalities in the Soviet Union into a single socialist community, has been abandoned as unattainable. If non-Russian nations and nationalities are allowed greater autonomy to develop their languages and cultures, the first stage of ethnic unification too, that of drawing together of nationalities in language and culture, is likely to be reversed, each republic following a relatively independent course of linguistic and cultural development. Such a development would effectively nullify almost seventy years of nationality policy in the Soviet Union.

The new policies, however, still suffer from serious naivete, as did the traditional Soviet nationality policy. The traditional Soviet nationality policy largely ignored the sources of ethnic tension and ethnic conflict in the Soviet Union. Before the advent of glasnost and perestroika Soviet ideologues held that under socialism ethnic interests would be superceded by class interests. Class interests would transform ethnic consciousness into class consciousness initiating a process of ethnic amalgamation that would result in the emergence of a socialist community of Soviet peoples. The drawing together and the eventual merger of all nations and nationalities into a single Soviet nation was taken for granted as historically inevitable. The nationality policy under Gorbachev suffers from a different kind of naivete. Although acknowledging the existence of ethnic tension and conflict in the Soviet Union, it seeks to locate the source of such tension and conflict in the mistakes of overzealous party aparatchiks of the past. The proposed remedy for ethnic problems is to allow greater autonomy to the republics and to encourage the development of ethnic institutions and cultures. With a more favorable environment for the expression of ethnic interests, Gorbachev and his supporters believe, ethnic tensions and conflicts would disappear. The real sources of ethnic conflict, the fact that non-Russian ethnic groups were incorporated into the Czarist Empire through conquest, that these same groups were kept in the Soviet Empire by force, that additional groups were incorporated into the Soviet Union by conquest, have not been given serious scrutiny.

Ethnic grievances and animosities in the Soviet Union must be seen against the backdrop of Russian and Soviet history. In the past such grievances and animosities were held in check by authoritarian rule from the Kremlin. Glasnost and perestroika have created an environment for the freer airing of a host of ethnic grievances, leading to the formation of strong nationalist movements and demands for greater autonomy among many non-Russian ethnic groups, while others- the Baltic republics, Moldavia, Georgia, Azerbaijan- have called for outright independence from the Soviet Union.

Certainly, the primary target of ethnic grievances and animosities is the Russians who have ruled the non-Russian republics for so long. However, major disputes over borders, over economic, political, and religious autonomy, have arisen among non-Russian ethnic groups themselves. These disputes too have their source in Czarist and Soviet history. Boundaries of republics, autonomous republics and regions were established arbitrarily. Groups were moved/deported from their home regions to other parts of the country for reasons of political

expediency. As Hoffmann (1990: 1) observes, According to recent analysis, over 35 borders within the USSR are now disputed among different national groups. Some of these conflicts, such as that between Armenians and Azerbaijanis, have already had a major impact.

The Karelians claim parts of the Kola Peninsula; the Tadjiks and the Uzbeks have claims on each other's territory; there is a strong independence movement in Georgia but several groups within Georgia, such as the Abkhazians, Ossetians, Adzhars, and Meshketians also want greater autonomy within Georgia if not outright secession; the Meshketi Turks, who were deported to the Fergana Oblast of Uzbekistan during World War II, recently were targets of Uzbek violence and want to return to their homeland in Georgia; Crimean Tatars, another group deported to Central Asia during World War II, want to return to their homeland on the Crimean Peninsula; the Germans of Kaliningrad, the Poles of Lithuania and Byelorussia, and others want to be recognized as distinct ethnic groups and establish their autonomous republics (Hoffmann 1990:1-2). The Soviet Union itself has laid claim to parts of Lithuania if that republic decides to secede from the Soviet Union.

As Afanasyev, a Soviet historian and a radical parliamentarian in the Congress of Peoples Deputies, in a recent commentary observes, (1990:52) "the U.S.S.R. is not a country, nor is it a state ... It is a neighborhood of states and nations that are tired of their colonial and colonizing past, that have been tortured and humiliated by Stalinist efforts at unification. . ." He goes on to say that the Soviet Union as presently constituted has no future because many of the states and nations that make it up want nothing less than total independence from Moscow. The Lithuanian parliament has already declared its independence from Moscow (March 11). Estonia, Latvia, Moldavia, Georgia, and perhaps Azerbaijan, when elections are held there, are likely to follow suit in the future, other republics may want to exercise the right of secession from the Soviet Union if there is no fundamental alteration in their relations with Moscow.

The initial response from the Kremlin to the Lithuanian declaration of independence has been uncompromising. Gorbachev has called it invalid and illegal and stated that Moscow has no intention of negotiating the secession of Lithuania or any other Soviet republic from the Soviet Union until there is enabling legislation to do so. Although Gorbachev has promised a law which would spell out the procedures for secession, on this issue, the Soviet leadership finds itself between a rock and a hard place. If secession is made too easy, then, several republics are likely to exercise this option. If secession is made too difficult or impossible, then, the credibility of

Soviet leadership, both within the country and in the international arena, will be seriously undermined. Can Gorbachev and his supporters preside over the dismemberment of the Soviet Union and still remain in power? Or will they resort to force once again to maintain the unity and integrity of the Soviet Union? The only viable alternative to secession may be to give full sovereignty and political independence to the republics within a loose Soviet federation. That would require a willingness on the part of the Kremlin to relinquish most of its powers of control over the republics.

To date, the Kremlin has not shown any willingness to do so. Gorbachev's call for a strong executive presidency with extraordinary and extra-legal powers to dissolve parliaments of republics and to rule by decree if necessary, was debated in the Congress of Peoples Deputies on March 13. After Gorbachev made some tactical concessions on the extra-legal powers of the proposed presidency, the Congress approved it. The next day, on March 14, the Congress elected Gorbachev as the first executive president of the Soviet Union. The establishment of a strong executive presidency is one indication that in any negotiations with republics over secession, Moscow is going to dictate the terms of independence. Glasnost and perestroika may yet founder on the rock of nationalism and separatism.

Nationality Policy in Bulgaria

While Soviet leaders have been seriously considering the reversal of a failed nationality policy since 1985, the leaders of Bulgaria, on the other hand, who normally follow their Soviet colleagues closely in such matters, resorted to brutal force to achieve the assimilation of the country's minorities into the mainstream Bulgarian culture. What the Soviet Union had failed to achieve in almost seventy years, Bulgaria tried to accomplish in less than forty years.

The Bulgarian version of ethnic processes has included, in addition to the historical inevitability of ethnic amalgamation that Soviet ideologues had subscribed to until recently, a strong dose of romantic Bulgarian nationalism. This romantic nationalism, which became an explicit and integral part of the government's strategy to eliminate cultural diversity in the country between 1984 and 1989, saw the "nation as a basic and natural subdivision of humanity, a political unit" (Lunt 1986:729). Although such a definition of a nation did not imply that members of a nation speak the same language and live on the same territory, Bulgarian

ideologues considered both to be "natural and self evident peculiar characteristics of a proper nation" (Lunt1986:729). Lunt (1986:729-730) goes on to observe that Bulgarian ideologues, have taken for granted that nation = language = territory = whereby the term nation and language are absolutely equal and primary, while nation = language ordinarily equals territory, and finally nation = territory ought to correspond to state... Because the territory is Bulgarian, the dogma goes, the people who inhabit it are Bulgarian. Because they are Bulgarians, they must speak the Bulgarian language and should all be in a single nation state (emphasis in original).

According to this ideology of romantic nationalism, only cultural homogeneity legitimates a state's sovereignty. Ever since the Communist Party consolidated its power in Bulgaria after World War II, its program for the country's minorities has been clear-- the creation of a unified single-nation state through assimilation of all minority groups.

This virulent Bulgarian nationalism derives from a deep sense of misfortune or bad luck ingrained in the mindset of Bulgarian nationalists. Many Bulgarians feel that they have been frustrated by their neighbors in their attempts to resurrect and reestablish a greater Bulgaria within the boundaries of ancient Bulgarian empires. First, Bulgaria fell to the Byzantines during the thirteenth century; then Ottoman Turks ruled the country for 500 years. Several attempts to reestablish a greater Bulgaria after independence from Ottoman rule in 1878-- the Balkan wars, World War I and World War II also failed. Frustrations generated by these failures have found a convenient outlet in aggression toward minority populations in Bulgaria. The Turkish minority, being the largest and linguistically, culturally and religiously distinct from the majority, whose ancestors had ruled Bulgaria for five hundred years, has borne the brunt of nationalist aggression. They have been made the scapegoat for all Bulgarian problems, and the phrase "five hundred years of Turkish yoke" has frequently been invoked to explain away serious problems in the country. The extent of ill-feeling and hatred toward Turks among some segments of the Bulgarian population, mostly the less-educated and the less well off economically, were made apparent by large-scale nationalist demonstrations in Sofia and a number of cities with sizeable Turkish populations in early January, 1990 in response to the government decision to restore the human and civil rights of the Turks and Bulgarian speaking Muslims.

The ideological reconstruction of ethnic identities in line with the Bulgarian version of ethnic amalgamation and the romantic Bulgarian national myth began immediately after World War II. Pomaks (Bulgarian-speaking Muslims), were officially declared to be Bulgarians from

the beginning and have been counted as Bulgarians in all of the censuses since then. Macedonians were officially declared to be Bulgarians after the 1956 census so that by the 1965 census their numbers had been reduced from 187,000 to less than 9,000 (King 1973:262). Gypsies and Turks were recognized as distinct minorities into the 1970s.(3) For a time the government even encouraged the development of Turkish ethnic institutions, such as native language primary and secondary schools, teacher-training institutes and educational institutes, ethnic press, ethnic theaters, clubs and so on. With hindsight it is clear that such support was intended as a vehicle of assimilation of Turks because these same institutions were used to disseminate assimilationist programs and values. However, very quickly it became clear that the development of Turkish ethnic institutions was strengthening rather than weakening Turkish identity. Consequently, the government withdrew its support and between 1960 and 1970 most of these institutions were eliminated (See Eminov 1983).

In 1971 the assimilation of the country's minority populations became an explicit official policy. Party ideologues began frequently to declare that Bulgaria was well along the way of becoming a unified, single-nation state. The platform of the Bulgarian Communist Party for 1971 noted that "the process of development of the socialist nation will expand further" and "citizens of our country of different national origins will come ever closer together (Rabotnichesko Delo, 1971). Around 1973 the use of the term "unified Bulgarian nation" began to appear in the official press. In 1977 an article in the Party daily, claimed that Bulgaria was "almost completely of one ethnic type and [was] moving toward complete national homogeneity" (Rabotnichesko Delo, 1977). And finally in 1979 Party leader Todor Zhivkov claimed that "the national question has been solved definitively and categorically by the population itself ... Bulgaria has no internal problems with the nationality question" (Rabotnichesko Delo, 1979).

Unfortunately for the government, the members of the largest minority groups in Bulgaria- Pomaks, Gypsies, and Turks- were unwilling to change their identities voluntarily in order to comply with ideological requirements in order to bring social realities in line with official ideology, the Bulgarian government mounted a number of brutal campaigns between 1972 and 1984 to force Pomaks, Gypsies, and Turks to replace their Muslim names with conventional Bulgarian names. Between 1972 and 1974 Pomaks were forced to take on Bulgarian names. Between 1981 and 1983 the same fate befell the Gypsy Muslims. Finally, during the winter months of 1984-1985 close to one million Turks and the small number of

Tatar, Alevi, and Albanian Muslims were forced to assume Bulgarian names, so that in March, 1985 Bulgarian officials could confidently declare that Bulgaria was at last a unified, single nation state, that everyone living in Bulgaria was Bulgarian (Simsir 1986: 352-353).

High-ranking government officials were dispatched to "formerly" Turkish areas to tell Turks that they were henceforth Bulgarians. For example, Deputy Prime Minister Todor Bozhinov, in a speech given in the northern Bulgarian town of Ruse which has a sizeable Turkish population and reported in *Dunavska Pravda* On March 16, 1985 stated categorically:

Our countrymen who have reconstituted their Bulgarian names are Bulgarians
...They are the flesh and blood of the Bulgarian people. Bulgarian blood flows in
their veins, even though their national consciousness is beclouded...(Quoted in
Baest 1985:24; emphasis added).

Bulgarian historical texts were revised to reflect this new version of history. References to the existence of Turks in Bulgaria were deleted. Bulgarian historians went even further: they revised the history of the Balkans as well by eliminating all references to the existence of Turks in the entire Balkan Peninsula! Discussing the present ethnic make-up of the Balkans, Dimitrov (1982:14) wrote:

In terms of ethnic and linguistic affiliation the population of the Balkan states as a whole belong to the Indo-European group. In the Balkans there also live Russians, Armenians, Jews, Gypsies, Tatars, and other ethnic groups.

The government enlisted the aid of anthropologists and other scientists to collect evidence in support of the 'racial purity' of the Bulgarian people. An article published in July 25, 1988 in an official journal presented the "findings" of anthropologists from the Sofia Institute of Morphology, based on, according to the article, over 30 years of research in three ethnically mixed districts. These "findings" suggested that the Bulgarian people had remained pure and uncontaminated since their emergence as a people during the early Middle Ages. A commentary on the article in the Newsletter of the East European Anthropology Group (1988:16-17) observed:

According to anthropologists, the Bulgarian people took shape in the ninth and tenth centuries as a blending of Slavs, Thracians, and Asiatic tribes. This mixture evolved into a homogeneous entity, the people now called Bulgarians. The foreign invasions of the past 1,000 years left no racial mark, it seems. The minority are merely Bulgarians who happen to speak Turkish.

Between 1985 and 1989, Bulgarian authorities insisted that there were no Turks in Bulgaria; that all Turks had "restored" their original Bulgarian names and identities voluntarily and spontaneously during the winter months of 1984 and 1985. However these "voluntary Bulgarians" engaged in widespread demonstrations and hunger strikes in late May and early June, 1989 demanding the restoration of their Turkish names and their civil and human rights. Peaceful demonstrators were fired upon by Bulgarian security forces and scores were killed and injured. As a response, the Bulgarian government began to deport native Turkish intellectuals and leaders of human rights organizations to Western countries, primarily to Austria, and to send thousands of others to the Turkish border on very short notice. Between late May and August 22, when the Turkish authorities closed the border, over 320,000 Turks were forced to leave Bulgaria. This mass exodus caused serious social and economic dislocations in both countries. Turkey, already overburdened with Iranian refugees and Kurdish refugees from Iraq, lacked adequate resources to settle the new refugees. The attention of Western countries was diverted by developments in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union and the plight of the Turkish refugees was largely forgotten. The mass exodus of Turks exacerbated the already acute labor shortages in key economic sectors in Bulgaria that led to the downfall of the Zhivkov regime.

In an attempt to slow down the exodus from Bulgaria, the Turkish government reinstituted visa requirements for Turks who wished to emigrate to Turkey. Since August 22, 1989, emigration of Turks from Bulgaria to Turkey has slowed down considerably. In fact, Turkish refugees returning to Bulgaria from Turkey have far outnumbered those going to Turkey. To date, over half of those who emigrated to Turkey between late May and August 22, 1989 have returned to Bulgaria. Many Turkish refugees were rapidly disillusioned with conditions in Turkey. High unemployment, high inflation, lack of housing, lack of government resources to help them, hostile reaction from native Turks, and a lower standard of living in Turkey convinced many Turks that, at least economically, they were better off in Bulgaria. The

political changes sweeping across Eastern Europe gave them hope that the conditions of minorities in Bulgaria would improve.

Recent Political Developments In Bulgaria

On November 10, 1989, the long-time leader of Bulgaria and the architect of the forced assimilation policy, Todor Zhivkov, was ousted from power in a parliamentary coup. A number of close Zhivkov loyalists were also purged from the Politbureau and the Central Committee. The new leadership moved quickly to repudiate the excesses of the Zhivkov regime and promised to establish a more democratic political system. Restrictions on dissent were eased, and a special police unit which had been harassing human rights activists was dismantled. On December 29, 1989, the new leadership decided to reverse the forced assimilation policy against Turks and other Muslims by declaring it a "grave political error" and gave assurances that in the future "everyone in Bulgaria (would) be able to choose his name, religion, and language freely" (New York Times 1989:8). This decision triggered a well-organized Bulgarian nationalist backlash in early January, 1990. The nationalists demonstrated in Sofia, and in a number of cities with sizeable Turkish populations, such as Kurdzhali, Haskovo, Razgrad, Kolarovgrad and elsewhere in the country demanding that the government rescind its decision and submit the minority question to a national referendum. The depth of ill-feeling and hatred of Bulgarian nationalists toward Turks and other Muslims were apparent as demonstrators carried placards and shouted slogans such as "Death to Turks," "Turks to Turkey," "The Central Committee Has Sold Out the Bulgarian Nation."

The new leadership stood firm and insisted that there would be no retreat from its decision nor would the minority question be put to a national referendum which would risk bringing back the denial of human rights once again. The government called the leaders of ethnic and religious factions to a national meeting in Sofia. The government was able to convince the nationalists that the recognition and protection of the rights of minority populations was in the interests of the country. However, nothing was done to implement this decision. Local and regional party organizations in predominantly Turkish areas of the country took a wait and see attitude. Since it had been these same leaders who had had a direct hand in formulating, implementing, and enforcing the forced assimilation policy of the Zhivkov regime, they were in

no hurry to dismantle their own edifice. At the same time, human rights groups in the country, under the aegis of the Union of Democratic Forces, pressed for the formulation and enactment of enabling legislation to implement the decision of December 29, 1989. The government finally prepared a draft law for debate in the parliament in early March. The draft law has already drawn protests from Turks and Bulgarian Muslims as having too many legalistic and bureaucratic hurdles that would slow the procedure of restoring original Turkish and Muslim names. They have demanded a simplified procedure to expedite the name-changing process.

Conclusions

Heightened ethnic conflict in the Soviet Union, in Bulgaria and elsewhere in Eastern Europe is a clear indication that traditional nationality policies have failed. The new leaders in the Soviet Union and East European countries are seriously reexamining their nationality policies and trying to come up with more viable alternatives to the policies of the past. Gorbachev's reforms of glasnost and perestroika have opened the floodgates of pent-up ethnic grievances and animosities in the Soviet Union. Strong nationalist movements have emerged demanding greater autonomy and, in some cases, secession from the Soviet Union. So far no clear-cut alternatives to the policies of the past have emerged to deal effectively with these demands. For now it is difficult to predict what the outcome of these nationalist tendencies is going to be. The only certainty is that these tendencies will have a major impact on developments in the Soviet Union. In Bulgaria, the forced assimilation policy against the Turks and other Muslims in the country brought about the downfall of the Zhivkov regime in November, 1989. Since then, the new leadership in Bulgaria has taken positive steps to reverse the forced assimilation policy of the old regime and to restore the rights of minorities. Already, a number of rights which were restricted or denied in the past have been restored. Turks are allowed to speak Turkish in public once again. The restrictions on circumcision of young Muslim boys, the wearing of traditional dress by Muslim women, traditional Muslim funerary practices, traditional wedding ceremonies, the practice of the Islamic religion, among others, have been lifted. A draft law has been proposed to expedite the restoration of Turkish and Muslim names.

All of these developments provide hope for a better future for minorities but there is a sense of weariness too. The chill cast upon relations between members of minority groups and

Bulgarians by the brutal forced assimilation policy of the past and recent Bulgarian nationalist demonstrations remain. As one of my informants from Bulgaria in a recent letter writes, "The government may restore our language, names, and religion, but the fact remains that Bulgaria is a very inhospitable place for us. We are still second-class citizens in this country. We are still made to feel less than human. How are we expected to relate to our Bulgarian workmates and classmates who, not so long ago, marched through the streets shouting "Death to the Turks"? The psychological scars caused by five years of brutalization at the hands of the government are deep and are unlikely to heal any time soon. The elimination of the distrust and hatred generated by the assimilation campaign will require a long period of reeducation of all Bulgarian citizens. Recent events in Bulgaria demonstrate that at the threshold of the 21st century it is not possible to force a people to change their identity by force and/or administrative fiat. Even though the new leadership in Bulgaria has repudiated the assimilation policies of the past, serious problems remain. Continued prejudice and discrimination against Turks and other Muslims, the persistence of economic and political inequalities between the ethnic Bulgarian and ethnic Turkish populations, and unique and separate cultural and religious traditions will motivate Turks to assert themselves. For the time being as in the past, the manifestation of Turkish identity in Bulgaria will revolve around the activation of cultural and religious support systems to maintain Turkish ethnic identity and integrity. The continued use of Turkish language in carrying out important social and cultural activities is likely to be an important factor in maintaining the cultural, religious, and familial bonds among the members of the Turkish minority in Bulgaria, bonds that are essential for cultural survival.

Finally, in both the Soviet Union and Bulgaria, there are politically well-entrenched individuals and groups who are opposed to fundamental reforms. These individuals and groups will do all they can to slow down, if not scuttle, these reforms. It is a question of political survival for them. The final outcome is uncertain, but the tide of change is strong and the possibility of positive and fundamental changes in ethnic relations in the Soviet Union and in Bulgaria is real.

Notes

1. For a discussion of the theoretical underpinnings of pre-Gorbachev era Soviet nationality policy See Bromley (1971, 1979).

2. For an excellent discussion of the application of theory to nationality policy in the Soviet Union See Wixman (1986).

3. This section of the article concentrates primarily on Turks. Pomaks and Gypsies are mentioned only briefly. For a more detailed discussion of the experience of Pomaks and Gypsies in Bulgaria See Silverman (1984, 1986, and 1989) and Eminov (1987).

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