

Accommodation of Minorities in Nation-States during the Twentieth Century: The Turkish Minority in Bulgaria and the Policies of Communist Rule between 1945 and 1989

Abstract:

Since the fall of Ottoman Empire and the creation of new nation states, the Balkans have experienced many conflicts and border issues. The early years of the nineteenth century witnessed massive wars and adjustment of the borders in line with the demands of the new nation states. Bulgaria emerged in late nineteenth century as a newly independent nation with a large Turkish minority. Treaties signed with Turkey and the Ottoman Empire aimed to protect of the rights of the Turkish minority going forward. Nevertheless, in the second half of the twentieth century, the communists took power, and decided to follow a different path. Ignoring Bulgaria's commitments in international treaties and other bilateral documents, they decided to embark on an assimilation policy supported by partial migration that would keep the numbers of Turks in Bulgaria low, in order to balance the unwanted population growth. This article discusses the inconsistency of Bulgarian policies towards the Turks, who are Bulgaria's largest minority group. Documents from the Bulgarian state archives are used in order to depict the environment in which the so-called assimilationist policies were adopted.

Keywords: Turkish minority, Bulgaria, Communism, nationalism, migration.