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BULGARIA

ETHNIC MINORITIES

The Fate Of The Turkish Minority  
In Present Communist Bulgaria

SOURCE MUNICH : No information.

DATE OF OBSERVATION : Current.

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In 1923 an agreement was signed between Bulgaria and Turkey for the exchange of ethnic minorities. Immediately Turkey took advantage of the provisions of this agreement and forced thousands of Bulgarians to leave Eastern Thrace and ISTANBUL. Bulgaria left to the Turkish minority to decide voluntarily whether to emigrate or remain in the country, and in its majority it preferred to stay in Bulgaria and share the fate of the Bulgarian people.

In spite of the 500 year occupation and the war of 1912 - 1913, Bulgarians and the Turkish ethnic minority lived together very well, and built up friendly relations, which cannot be easily destroyed, even by the measures of the present Bulgarian Communist Government toward the Turkish minority in Bulgaria. Until 9 September 1944 the Turkish ethnic minority in Bulgaria, as well as the Pomak-Bulgarians (Bulgarian speaking, but of Moslem confession) were Bulgarian citizens enjoying equal rights, Bulgarians and Turks mutually respected their traditions and religions.

Following 9 September 1944, the situation changed entirely, both for the Turkish minority and the Bulgarian people. The rude measures of the forcibly established Communist Government regarding private property, religion, traditions and individual freedom deeply affected the Turkish Minority as well as the

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whole Bulgaria population . The tension in the relations between Soviet Russia and Turkey automatically affected the relations between Bulgaria and Turkey too. The Communist Government in Bulgaria adopted an attitude of mistrust and hostility toward the Turkish Minority, which in its majority struggled with all its strength against the present regime in Bulgaria and started turning its eyes for help and salvation toward neighboring free Turkey.

In its hostile attitude toward Turkey and toward the toughly anti-Communist Turkish minority in Bulgaria, the Bulgarian Communist Government dug out of its files the old Turkish - Bulgarian agreement of 1923, and from autumn of 1950 until October 1951, some 154,671 Turks were made to emigrate to Turkey.

During the summer and autumn of 1951, the Bulgarian Government badly felt the lack of the industrious working hands, which the emigrated 154,671 Turks represented for the Bulgarian rural economy, and created imaginary reasons for stopping the further emigration of the Turkish minority from Bulgaria.

The attitude of the present Communist Government in Bulgaria toward the Turkish minority depends in the first place, upon the anti-Communist sentiments of the latter, and then upon the forcibly planted and artificially inflamed Bulgarian antagonism against Turkey, which by far does not correspond with the feelings of the Bulgarian people, and is a sentiment of an artificial nature observed primarily in high Party circles.

All Bulgarians, Turks, Pomaks and other nationalities, who deny the present regime in Bulgaria, are subjected to the same persecution. Expulsion from the border zones, imprisonment in concentration camps, political terror, expropriation etc. are not applied only against one national group, but against all Bulgarian citizens.

It is true that the situation of all Turks who have applied for emigration to Turkey is very bad, because this act of theirs is accounted for by the present regime as an anti-Communist attitude which exposes them to most severe persecution.

The attitude of the present Com-

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unist government toward representatives of the Turkish minority who are followers of the present regime in Bulgaria is more than friendly. Many of them are placed in highest Party and administrative posts it is they who blindly apply the governmental policy toward the Turkish minority and make the most severe propaganda against Turkey. To them and their children all possibilities and privileges are open, just the same as to the Bulgarian Communists.

Until 1952 the youth of the Turkish minority, together with a considerable number of freedom-loving Bulgarian sons, were performing most strenuous physical labor in the ranks of the Military labor units. Since the spring of 1952 the Turkish youth has been obliged to serve in the regular army, but only those who are followers of the present regime. The statement that the class of 1932 was composed almost entirely of ethnic Turks is not true. It is also practically impossible. Most probably it concerns some single army unit located in South-Western Bulgaria, into which Turkish youths, living primarily in Eastern Bulgaria, have been drafted. This is more of a propaganda measure for winning the Turkish minority for the Communist cause, because the present governors of Bulgaria know very well that this youth in time of war will never fight willingly for the cause of Communist Bulgaria.

In general, the policy of the Bulgarian Communist Government toward the Turkish minority in Bulgaria can be compared with a constant low and high tide of terror, the final aim of which is, if not to be won for the Communist cause, at least to curb its resistance, so that it could be used as a beast of burden, together with the whole Bulgarian people, for the building of "Socialism" in Bulgaria. For the achievement of this aim all measures are being applied, and all means are permitted.

EDITORS' COMMENT: This item was prepared by a member of the Bulgarian Evaluation Desk, to clarify the apparently contradictory nature of our Items Nos. 14323 and 14329/52. It should be considered in conjunction with those items.