European Master's Degree
In Human Rights and Democratisation

Awarded Theses
of the Academic Year
2014/2015

"The 'insignificant' other. Bulgarian ethnonationalism in past and present policies towards the Roma"

Thesis *by* Desislava Ivanova

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FOREWORD

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E.MA is a one-year master's course aimed at preparing professionals to respond to the requirements of daily work in international organisations, field operations, governmental and non-governmental bodies, and academia. The programme offers an action and policy-oriented approach to learning about human rights, democratisation and international relations from legal, political, historical, anthropological, and philosophical perspectives. This interdisciplinary nature and wide-ranging scope of E.MA reflect the benefits of true European inter-university cooperation in human rights education. It is an interdisciplinary programme that reflects the indivisible links between human rights, democracy, peace and development.

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• Genevey, Moana, *Fear, Hatred, and the Limits of Law. A Critical Analysis of French Political Discourse Following Terrorist Attacks*, Supervisor: Dr. Natasa Mavronicola, Queen's University, Belfast.
• Ivanova, Desislava, *The "Insignificant" Other. Bulgarian Ethnonationalism in Past and Present Policies Towards the Roma*, Supervisor: Prof. Adalberto Perulli, Ca' Foscari University, Venice.
• Repetto, Elettra, *Duty to Disobey? A Perspective on the New Civil Disobedience, Between International Actors and Digital Media*, Supervisor: Dr. Graham Finlay, University College Dublin - National University of Ireland.
• Ruppacher, Raphael, *Not That Kind of Gay. Credibility Assessment and the Concept of Sexual Orientation in European Asylum Law*, Supervisor: Prof. Helena Pereira de Melo, New University of Lisbon.

This volume includes the thesis *The "Insignificant" Other. Bulgarian Ethnonationalism in Past and Present Policies Towards the Roma* by Desislava Ivanova, and supervised by Prof. Adalberto Perulli, Ca' Foscari University, Venice.

BIOGRAPHY

Desislava Ivanova holds a European Master Degree in Human Rights and Democratisation from EIUC, Italy, and a Master Degree in Law from Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski". Additionally, she has studied Law of the EU in Ghent University, Belgium and is a recipient of the

"Bulgarian Young Leaders Program Award" for a year-long education in Political Sciences at The University of Missouri - Columbia, USA. Her main points of interest include the fight against gender inequality and ethnic/racial discrimination and has pursued them in her practice as a lawyer, as an intern at Sofia District Court and most recently as a consultant to the Bulgarian National Commission for Combating Traffic in Human Beings.

ABSTRACT

A lot has been written about Bulgaria's Roma since the state opened itself to the scrutiny of the international institutions in the 1990s. The focal points then were "tolerance and integration"; in the 2000s, they were replaced by "acceptance and inclusion." Whatever the trend in the politically correct discourse, the facts remain the same: lowest educational levels, highest mortality rates, poorest living conditions in all of Europe. With all international and domestic legal instruments in place, one has to wonder: *why is nothing changing?* Various human rights institutions and civil society organisations have identified pervasive discrimination, caused by extreme negative stereotyping as primal cause for Roma's impoverishment. This research takes a step further. The thesis argues that the reason for Roma's continuous marginalisation lies within the very essence of Bulgarian national identity: its ethnic nationalism. Conceived in the era of National Liberation Movements, it was programmed to protect and liberate our own, and to distrust and exclude all others. In support of this argument, the thesis unravels the specificities of Bulgarian nationalism, and follows its manifestations in state policies towards the Roma from the first years of the New Bulgarian State until present day. The inevitable conclusion is that Roma inclusion will not be possible until the nation "re-imagines" itself and transitions from its exclusive ethnic concept to an inclusive civic interpretation. The demographic surveys attest that this is no longer a matter of choice, but one of survival.

Like past editions, the selected theses amply demonstrate the richness and diversity of the E.MA programme and the outstanding quality of the work performed by its students.

On behalf of the Governing Bodies of EIUC and E.MA and of all participating universities, we congratulate the author.

PROF. MANFRED NOWAK
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European Master's Degree
in Human Rights and Democratisation

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DESISLAVA IVANOVA

THE "INSIGNIFICANT" OTHER
BULGARIAN ETHNONATIONALISM
IN PAST AND PRESENT POLICIES TOWARDS THE ROMA

To mom and dad
who helped
whithout me asking,
without them knowing,
and most importantly,
without understanding.

BAS	Bulgarian Academy of Sciences
BCP	Bulgarian Communist Party
BHC	Bulgarian Helsinki Committee
CC of the BCP	Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party
CEM	Committee of Electronic Media
CPD	Committee for Protection of Discrimination
ECHR	European Convention of Human Rights
ECRI	European Commission against Racism and Intolerance
ECtHR	European Court of Human Rights
ESC	European Social Charter
GNP	Gross National Product
RB	Republic of Bulgaria
SAC	Supreme Administrative Court
UNHRC	United Nations Human Right Council

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1.

INTRODUCTION

In the first days of July 2015, Sofia is immersed in social unrest. This is the most recent in a series of inter-group clashes between ethnic Bulgarians and Roma, to which the media continuously refers as "ethnic conflicts." This time the "buzzword" is Garmen, last month it was Orlandovtsi, the month before – Garmen again[1]. The story is similar every time: several Bulgarians insult a couple of Roma (or vice versa), they start to fight, someone gets heavily injured, the police takes them into custody, the next day Bulgarians start protesting against having Roma in their neighbourhood. The most recent episode did not deviate much from the script, with one exception: the protestors, endorsed by the local authorities managed to demolish four illegal Roma dwellings and promised to take more down. It took an official letter from the European Court of Human Rights to cancel the demolition of another two houses. Had it not been for the Court, the authorities would have gone through with the plan in full knowledge that they have no alternative housing to offer to the residents: local authorities have a long tradition in demolishing Roma dwellings[2].

In a similar situation last month in Orlandovtsi, several young Bulgarians and Roma were injured in a scuffle, producing another highly publicised protest. A police officer, sent there to prevent potential clashes, posted a picture on the Internet with the caption "let them [the authorities] untie our hands... if you are more tanned, you burn." The comment of the Chief Prosecutor of the Republic of Bulgaria of her actions was that she may not have done the best thing "but everyone is

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[1] Garmen is a small village in South West Bulgaria and Orlandovtsi is a neighbourhood in Sofia.
[2] See p. 54.

entitled to their own opinion. Let's show her some respect for wearing a uniform[3]."

Two main observations can be made from these accounts: 1) the growing cases of ethnic tension between Bulgarians and Roma are now transcending individual stories and have the potency to engage the masses, and 2) the authorities, are not only unable to diffuse the tension, but seem also unwilling to do so, showing tacit (and sometimes even overt) support for the majority. Even though these problems in Bulgarian society are in no way recent, their current escalation makes the subject of this research all the more timely. Over the years, populist and racist discourse has played on Bulgarians' fears to the effect that the majority now fervently objects to the adoption of any measures that could improve Roma's way of life. It becomes increasingly clear that Roma cannot be included where they are not wanted. Does that then mean that it will never happen? Will Roma *ever* be wanted?

This research will attempt to explain why they will not. Then, it will attempt to explain why they must be; and finally – how to do it.

The thesis' premise is that Bulgarian ethnocentric nationalism by necessity rejects the practical implementation of egalitarian values by putting the "other" in a position of subordination, reminding him/her of his/her "insignificance." This attitude transcends individual experiences and finds expression in state policies, which in turn, teach the majority to fear and exclude.

This research shall be limited to the minority policies of the Bulgarian state towards the Roma (from 1878 until present day), and shall not explore the policies toward other minority groups in Bulgaria, insofar as they differ in scope or means. With that regard, it is beyond the purpose of this research to present an exhaustive catalogue of all relevant minority policies that have been implemented by the state over the course of the given period.

The term "Bulgaria" shall signify the official state apparatus, responsible for the creation and implementation of policies; it shall not be used to describe the territorial entity, or as a synonym to the "Bulgarian nation." The author shares the civic understanding of the nation, according to which Bulgarians are all persons with Bulgarian citizenship,

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[3] "Tsatsarov Defended Police Officer Anna Vitanova" ('Цацаров защити полицайката Анна Витанова'), 24.06.2015, available (in Bulgarian) at http://www.dnevnik.bg/bulgaria/2015/06/24/2559740_cacarov_zashtiti_policaikata_anna _vitanova/.

regardless of their origin, ethnicity, culture, or religion. Nevertheless, for the purposes of this research, the term "Bulgarians" shall refer solely to the ethnic Bulgarian population. With regard to the term "Gypsy," due to the significant negative connotations that it has accumulated over the years, its use shall be avoided, unless this defeats the point being made, or relates to historical accounts before 1989. In any case, none of its uses shall in any way imply a condescending, insulting, or humiliating attitude towards members of the Roma community.

This research shall be approached from several different perspectives. First of all, to reveal the characteristics of Bulgarian nationalism, it shall borrow concepts from political science theory. In describing the specific policies, employed by different governments over the course of the history of the New Bulgarain State, the leading approach shall be a historic one. To examine the impact of the proposed solutions, the final chapters shall combine the analysis of sociological and economic data.

2.

FRAMING BULGARIAN NATIONALISM

2.1. IN SEARCH FOR THE *RIGHT* THEORY

There is no mutual agreement between scholars on the relationships between nation, nationalism, ethnicity, and state[4]. Perhaps the only thing that social scientists and historians can agree upon nowadays is that "nationalism" and "nation" are inextricably linked. From then on the debates begin: what is nationalism; what is a nation; *who* is the nation; *when* is the nation; which one came first? In its most simplistic sense, nationalism has been described as the "myth of the people as a cohesive group[5]." It is a myth because historical accounts tell us that civilised society has never been homogeneous, hence it should be common sense that it can never exist as such. Yet, "a nation," and its "nationalism" are concepts so powerful and pervasive that they have redefined societies and reshaped histories, and they still are, and they still do[6]. Today nations provide the absolute foundation for the functioning of societies worldwide. The rule of law cannot exist without a nation and its appertaining state (the question of weather the state appertains to the nation, or the nation appertains to the state is much too philosophical to be explored here). In all its obscurity and vagueness,

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[4] Smith, 2002, p. 24.

[5] Rigaux, 1991, p. 11, in Roter, 2001, p. 225.

[6] Nations, nation states and nationalism are understood here as defined by Smith, 2002: *nation* – "named populations possessing a historic territory, shared myths and historical memories, a mass, public culture, a single economy and common rights and duties for all members"; *nation state* – "sets of autonomous, public institutions with a legitimate monopoly of coercion and extraction in a given territory, and sovereignty in relation to those outside its borders"; *nationalism* – "the ideological movement for the attainment and maintenance of autonomy, unity and identity on behalf of a population deemed by some of its members to constitute an actual or potential 'nation.'"

the nation is a concept, which existence is undisputable, so much so that it often escapes us that nations are recent phenomena. States and nations did not use to be, and neither did nationalisms. It is only after the Westfalian peace settlement of 1648 that we can speak of states and after the French Revolution that we can talk of nations[7]. As far as nationalism is concerned, its origins are by far the most ambiguous of the three. They have been traced all the way from the prehistoric era to modern society. Considering these vast discrepancies between the moments of conception of the three, it is hard to disagree with Anthony Smith on the point that "clearly nations, states, and nationalisms do not often coincide and [...] this is the immediate cause of so much of the conflict and turbulence that we witness throughout the world today." It is against this backdrop that a look into the origins of nationalism seems necessary to discover the reasons behind its omnipotence, since only through history can the question "why are so many people prepared to risk their lives defending 'kith and kin' and 'hearth and home' find its answer[8]."

Tracing the roots of nationalism has posed a challenge for both political theorists and historians alike. There have been many attempts to catalogue the existing currents of political thought, the most prominent of which remains the classification offered by Anthony Smith. Notwithstanding the valuable contributions of other authors, and for the sake of conciseness, this chapter will follow Smith's categorisation, as provided in his "Theories of Nationalism[9]." In his work, Smith distinguishes between four major paradigms in modern political thought concerning the origins of nationalism: primordialism, perennialism, modernism and ethnosymbolism. According to him, primordialists believe that the nation is founded upon primordial (prehistoric, innate) attachments. Pierre Van den Berghe for example sees these attachments as genetic: deriving from the reproductive drive of the individuals, ultimately resulting in a nepotistic behaviour, which aims to maximise their "inclusive fitness[10]." The problem that Smith sees with this theory is that there is no certain way of knowing if these "myths of presumed ancestry" can match biological ties of descent, not to mention that

[7] Roter, 2001.
[8] Smith, 2002, p. 3.
[9] Ibidem, p. 2.
[10] Van den Berghe, 1995.

it is somewhat daring to draw answers for the origins of the millions of people compiling a nation from the little kin groups of prehistoric society. Edward Shils and Clifford Geertz understand primordialism anthropologically, in terms of culture and hold that kinship, language, religion, race and territory create bonds between people in response to their innate need for emotional security and life-improvement[11]. Like Van den Berghe, Shils and Geertz draw the attention to the significance of popular attachments, kinship and culture for the explanation of nationalism. Their concept however runs the risk of neglecting the considerable role of social and cultural changes that would occur on a later stage, and which have been powerful transformative forces for society's development.

Smith links prennialist theories to the scholars who regard nations as immemorial (perennial), but do not perceive the nation as a natural consequence of primordial attachments. Nationalism in their view is the ideology and movement for an already existing nation. In other words – nations came first, nationalism second. Like primordialism, perennialism has two forms: one that considers the nation *continuous* and *immemorial* (usually nationalists on behalf of their own nation, but not necessarily on behalf of others) and the other, which views nations as *recurrent* (perceived as one of the basic forms of association throughout recorded history, which can be found in every age and continent[12]). If we accept that perennialists are right and nations have always been there, then we risk omitting the basic fact about nations today: they are nothing like any form of association that existed in the pre-modern era.

Modernism is what Smith considers "the current orthodoxy" in theory of nationalism. The debate, however, quite naturally, does not stop here – there are presumably five forms of modernist theory, all of which approach nationalism from a different point of view: socio-cultural, economic, political, ideological, and constructionist. Despite their differences, they all share the core notions that: 1) "nationalism," the "nation," and the system of international order based on nation-states are all modern concepts; 2) they were born in the 18th century (nationalism), or slightly earlier (under the strong influence of the Westfalian peace settlement of 1682); 3) all three are the product of

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[11] Shils, 1957; Geertz, 1973.
[12] Hastings, 1997.

recent phenomena, non-existent in pre-modern times (capitalism, bureaucracy, industrialism, urbanisation, secularism, to name a few). The socio-cultural approach is most prominently endorsed by Ernest Gellner, who argues that nationalism, normally absent in nature, and foreign to the human condition, has emerged as a response to society's need to live in an industrial and growth-oriented organisation[13]. He supports his argument by drawing a line between the pre-modern (agro-literate) society, where nations and nationalism did not *need* to exist, and therefore they did not, and modern (industrial) society, where populations *need* to be "mobile and literate, fluid and homogeneous" to answer to the technologically advanced, growth-oriented demands of modernity. Enter nationalism: "the cement for mobile populations in industrial societies." Gellner illustrates his point by conjuring the image of a great tidal wave, originating from its homeland in the West, and sweeping through societies across the globe at different times and with varying speed. He argues that this wave of modernisation created two sets of consequences: 1) it eroded traditional structures of family, religion and community by driving a massive influx of migrants into the anonymous, impersonal setting of cities, and 2) it produced a new kind of conflict between the newcomers and the older inhabitants – the "us-them" dichotomy. In the wake of such unprecedented social turbulence, it was nationalism that rose to the occasion in creating the nation – a literate, effective, homogeneous workforce, consisting of the former villagers, freshly transformed by the mass, standardised, public education system. Nationalism is the reason, Gellner contends, why we have large nations, but not empires: where the "moral chasms" of religion, pigmentation, customs and language fervently divide social groups, their calls for secession in search of their own separate nation-states often bring results. Gellner's reading of nationalism has provided a foundation for many authors who adhere to his general ideas, while bringing their own interpretations to the fore. One example is Tom Nairn, who like Gellner derives nations and nationalism exclusively from the character of modern social and economic development, divorcing them from any pre-existing relations[14]. For Nairn, however the emphasis is not on industrialisation, but on imperialism. He claims that

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[13] Gellner, 1964 and 1983.
[14] Nairn, 1977.

the interests and activities of the great powers in the "periphery" of the developed world have distributed capitalism unevenly, leaving behind helpless subjugated elites, whose only means to counteract to their conquerors was to engage the force of their native populations. This is why, Nairn explains, nationalism has always been a populist movement, nurtured by cultural Romanticism.

Despite providing a strong basis for discovering the genesis of nationalism, Gellner and his followers fail (or deliberately choose not) to take into consideration the particularities of the various societies and settings, in which nationalisms have grown and flourished. In that sense, a one-size-fits-all approach may prove too broad to be precise. What is more, economic theories, such as Nairn's idea that nationalism started as a form of rebellion against the imperialistic agendas of colonisers, have famously been criticised by Walker Connor who points out that nationalism has been known to appear in an array of contexts – among rich and poor populations, in both advanced and backward regions[15]. Therefore, social discontent is not the necessary and sufficient condition for the blooming of nationalism: other ingredients are required. In the words of Anthony Smith, "in the absence of shared culture and ethnic community no amount of socio-economic modernization and social discontent will produce a nationalist movement[16]." It follows then, that the pre-existence of a self-aware ethnic community is the decisive factor in the genesis of nationalism.

Unlike Gellner and Nairn, constructionists are not satisfied with attributing nationalism to the transformative processes of modernity. Their claim is that nations were not the natural consequences of such developments, but deliberately created entities – social "constructs," fabricated by various elites. If nations had not existed in pre-modern times, then they could not be regarded as latent forces "waiting to be awakened," and so it would be incorrect to speak of processes of "national awakening." According to Hobsbawm, in creating *the nation* the elites in question manufactured a system of fabricated national history, symbolism, and mythology, engaging the masses into a new form of organisation, aimed at facilitating the exercise of control[17]. This was especially true, the author continues, for the ethno-linguistic nationalisms of Central

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[15] Connor, 1994.
[16] Smith, 2002.
[17] Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1983.

and Eastern Europe that emerged in the end of the 19th century. It is interesting to note that despite the fervent nationalisms, which raged in the aftermath of the communist collapse in Eastern Europe, Hobsbawm considers the nation and its nationalism almost obsolete in the era of prodigious migrations and transnational markets. Benedict Anderson, another constructivist, disagrees on the matter[18]. He sees nations and nationalisms as our omnipresent companions, having more to do with kinship or religion than with ideology. He speaks about death and language as the "twin fatalities of human existence," which constantly fuel nationalism through our human desire to "avoid" death and achieve immortality by prospering in our own community, distinct from all others by virtue of its spoken language. It was precisely the language, in Anderson's opinion, that played a pivotal role in "the imagining of the nation." Nationalism, he claims, is the by-product of "print-capitalism" – a process started with the invention of the printing press and epitomised by the arrival of the mass-produced vernacular book. In the time of decline of the great sacred monarchies print-capitalists reached for the vernacular markets, guided by the Protestant appeals that every believer should be able to read scripture on his/her own. This process lead to the standardisation of official vernacular languages, which gradually formed "reading communities." The emerging newspapers with their socially relevant subject matter gradually transformed these reading communities in "imagined political communities, and imagined as both finite and sovereign[19]." With regard to the question whether these communities are, following Anderson's logic, merely imaginary, and are therefore lacking any material attributes in reality, Adrian Hastings makes a relevant point. He argues that although a certain degree of imagination was necessary to bring about a sense of togetherness, this imagining was not completely unfounded in nature – it was building on certain important shared characteristics that were already there[20]. This brings us back to Connor's argument, and to the notion of that special, vital ingredient for the rise of nationalism – the ethnic factor.

The impact of the modern, centralised state on the formation of nationalism remains undisputed. Nevertheless, in confining its genesis solely to the realm of political movements, modernism fails to address

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[18] Anderson, 1991.
[19] Anderson's definition of the nation, ibidem.
[20] Hastings, 1997.

the ever-present identity concerns that fuel the emotional mass appeal of nationalism. Denouncing modernists' restrictive approach, Anthony Smith and John Armstrong offer a different method – *historical ethno-symbolism*. It examines nation-formation from two aspects: 1) the importance of historical heritages, myths, memories and symbols for the formation of a cultural community, and 2) the role of ethnic communities (or ethnies) as basis for the emergence and endurance of nations[21]. Unlike the modernists, Smith sees the formation of nations as modern, yet not wholly novel, as they are formed over long-time spans, around pre-existing pre-modern ethnic cores[22]. Therefore, he argues, nations are not utterly detached from ethnies, neither are they fixed in time and content, but constitute "a moving target." This is the reason why nationalism does not cease after independence has been claimed, but is constantly renewed by attempts to achieve a specific version of nationhood. In his effort to "correct" modernism, Smith leaves open the possibility of the existence of some nations in earlier times (giving the example of England, Ireland and Scotland), but does not go as far as to claim that nations in general have existed in a latent state since primordial times, awaiting their rekindling by modern nationalists. There are two main routes to modern nation formation, Smith contends – *lateral* and *vertical* (three, if we consider the nation formation in immigrant societies – the *pioneering* route). The *lateral* way involves the upper-class ethnic communities with relatively low "entry boundaries," who have no cultural interest in the lower classes but merely seek to exploit them (the Normans, the French). The *vertical* route, on the other hand, involved a much more compact community, where "barriers to entry" were higher and where classes shared a common (often religious) culture. It proved most successful in smaller ethnic communities, subject to imperial rule, such as the ones living in Eastern Europe. Members of those communities, who managed to receive education in the schools and cultures of their rulers, would come back to their native communities and seek to modernise and politicise them. There, they would join forces with indigenous intellectuals, and set out to restore the pride and dignity of their communities by rediscovering and

[21] Armstrong, 1982.
[22] Smith defines *ethnies* as named human populations with a common myth of descent, shared historical memories, one or more elements of common culture, a link with a historic territory, and a measure of solidarity, at least among the elites. Smith, 2002, p. 3.

appropriating their ethno-histories and linguistic cultures. By redirecting popular religious sentiments into political channels, they would engage the attention and support of small traders, clerks and peasants. In the process of "vernacular mobilisation," the secular (civic) nationalism of the elites morphed into an ethnic nationalism with a strong religious aura that was attentive to the needs of the mobilised people.

2.2. THE CIVIC VERSUS THE ETHNIC NATION

Smith's *lateral* and *vertical* routes to nationhood ultimately lead to the creation of two opposing models of a nation – a *civic* and an *ethnic* one (which respectively inspired their own *civic* and *ethnic nationalisms*). In the Balkans (as in the rest of Eastern Europe) the "forgotten peoples," living under alien domination, heard the slogans of the French Revolution and in them they found their "catalyst for the transition to a new political ideology[23]." The concepts of a "nation" and a "nation-state" took roots just as strongly as they did in the West, but the circumstances in the South-East of Europe could not have been any more different. As Kitromelides explains, early modern Balkan society was politically unified by the Ottoman sultan and culturally homogenised by the Orthodox Church: an ecumenical "polity in captivity," holding on to the Byzantine legacy of a unified Christian community[24]. The ideas of secular statehood and nationality born in the Enlightenment shook the foundations of both the Ottoman rule and the Orthodox unity, giving each of the Balkan peoples an incentive to fight for their own church and state. Separate churches emerged along ethnic lines (Bulgarian, Serbian, Romanian Orthodox Church), which served as unifying centres[25]. In the absence of centralised state structures, native language, culture, and religion marked the translucent boundaries of aspired states. Thus, "the nation" in the East was conceived *ethnically*, as a unity of all people with common descent and native culture, regardless of the territory they inhabit. This ethnic concept of a nation differed greatly from the original notion, born in the aftermath of the French Revolution. In the civic (Western) sense, Smith explains, the members of a nation

[23] Kitromelides, 1994, p. 55 and p. 61.
[24] Ibidem, p. 152.
[25] Roter, 2001, p. 230.

are related merely through territorial birth and residence[26]. In theory as long as those members possess citizenship and are integrated by a unified legal system and a mass public culture, they are considered as part of the nation – "barriers to entry" are low. The *ethnic* nation on the other hand, is arguably united by its language, customs, religion, myths of common descent, and a strong sense of native history, and therefore "entry barriers" are high. Even though the civic model of a nation is often labelled *inclusive*, and the ethnic – *exclusive* with regard to newcomers or minorities, both of them can be equally harmful to the "outsider" who does not meet the "eligibility criteria." While the "ethnic nation" marginalises such individuals, by deeming them unfit to participate in political life, the civic one allows everyone in, but only after a specific form of "cleansing" has taken place – one that would assimilate newcomers into the language, culture and history of the dominant ethnic population, and strip them almost entirely of their diverse cultural markers. The price to pay for such "inclusion" is in fact so high, that one wonders if it can be considered "an inclusion" at all.

A lot has been written with regard to the *ethnic-civic* dichotomy. Considerable amount of sources have even gone as far as to claim that one is "good," and the other – inherently "evil." A prominent example of this tendency is the proliferation of books and articles, which appeared in the wake of the Yugoslav crisis in the 1990s, offering an "essentially racist interpretation" of the Balkan type ethnonationalism, claiming that Balkan peoples "are somehow genetically programmed for violence and thus equally to blame for the cataclysm[27]." In his work, Sfikas invalidates such Balkanist[28] interpretations by pointing that part of the reason for the explosive nature of Balkan nationalism is "the interplay of the great powers' rival imperialisms with the aspirations of the Balkan peoples themselves." Indeed, categorising nations and nationalisms in such absolute terms is counterproductive for the purposes of this research and where distinctions are to be made, it shall be done without ascribing any subjective "human" qualities to either of the concepts.

[26] Smith, 2002.
[27] Magas, 1993, in Sfikas & Williams, 1999.
[28] Sfikas draws the term *Balkanism* from the already existing *Orientalism*, which in modern times is used to describe the general, patronising imperialist (often racist) attitude which Western politicians, scholars, and nobles assumed in the past with regard to their relations with the Middle East, Asia, and Northern Africa. *Balkanist* here is used to distinguish such patronising Western attitudes towards the Balkans (Sfikas, 1999).

Brubaker has also rejected the "Manichean" view of "good" (civic) and "bad" (ethnic) nationalism, stating that the distinction between civic and ethnic nationhood and nationalism is "both normatively and analytically problematic[29]." He claims that ethnic groups and nations are not the real substantial, enduring, internally homogeneous and externally bounded communities they have been portrayed to be. Smith's contribution on the debate has been to suggest a third type of nation, a *cultural* one, claiming that the strict categorising of nations into either civic or ethnic is incorrect and essentially misleading. The *cultural* nation, he contends, is a mixed version of nationhood in which civic membership and territorial residence, intertwine with a dominant vernacular culture and ethno history. Thus, he puts forward the idea that nations do not idly exist in a political vacuum, but continuously evolve through the years, in line with the changing historical context. In that sense, "all nations are both civic and ethnic, and sometimes appear as cultural variants of both[30]."

2.3. BIRTH OF BULGARIAN NATIONALISM

2.3.1. Formation of the Bulgarian Ethnic Identity

Of all suggested theories on nationalism, Smith's ethno-symbolist approach, which recognises the connection between nationalism and certain pre-modern ethnic characteristics, is the most adequate to address the particularities of the Bulgarian nation-building and nationalism. Like Anderson, this research argues that Bulgarian elites have helped construct the notion of the Bulgarian nation, but unlike him, it contends that this process had its roots in pre-modernity through the historic memory, language and religion. These pre-modern links were roused during the National Awakening, which took place in the 18th and 19th centuries. Maria Todorova also follows the ethno-symbolist approach, understanding nationalism as the merging of the ethnie (the gradually developed distinct self-awareness of the community during the National Awakening of the 18th and 19th century) and the state[31]. The ethnic

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[29] Brubaker, 1998.
[30] Smith, 2002.
[31] Todorova, 1995.

identity, she contends, unlike the single criterion dividers, such as race, religion, language, etc., is a complex of different definitions, which are used for the demarcation of an ethnic boundary. What is crucial here is that even though a certain ethnicity may include a list of particular shared characteristics, the ethnic identity of the individual cannot be discovered as a sum of those characteristics. Even if all prerequisites are present, the ethnic identity only becomes viable in the wake of an act of conscious self-determination on the part of the individual in question – otherwise it does not exist. To trace the origins of Bulgarian identity, Todorova applies Miroslav Hroch's three stages of the national awakening process: 1) stage of the scholastic interest of the elites in the language, culture and history; 2) stage of the national agitation, when the mobilisation of patriots outside the lines of the elites starts taking place; 3) stage of mass national movements[32]. The first stage (middle of the 18th century - the 1820s) was characterised by the arrival of the first Bulgarian histories, the most influential of which has been *A Slavo-Bulgarian History* of Father Paisiy[33]. This is also the period when the first books in the Bulgarian vernacular were published, and an acute interest to replace the mixed Greek-Bulgarian schools with Bulgarian secular schools appeared. Todorova links Hroch's second stage to the formation of three distinct political goals: 1) emancipation of the education system, 2) religious independence and a Bulgarian autonomous church, and 3) a political and national independence. During the third stage (1860s-1870s), those goals were realised in a mass movement for religious and political independence. It is important to note that the struggle for religious independence was in fact not of religious character at all, but a political movement against the policies of the new-born Greek state, which ended with the recognising of the independence of the Bulgarian Exarchate from the Patriarchate of Constantinople in 1870. This introduced the Orthodox religion as an important divider in the formation of the Bulgarian ethnie, establishing the Christian faith as one of the most important ways to legitimise nationhood[34]. Thus, Todorova concludes, the formation of Bulgarian ethnic identity was completed around 1878, the year of liberation from the Ottoman rule, which is also considered the birth of Bulgarian nationalism.

[32] Hroch, 1985.
[33] *A Slavo-Bulgarian History*, written in 1762 by the monk Paisiy Hilendarski.
[34] Neshev, 1994.

2.3.2. Characteristics of Bulgarian Nationalism

Like all Balkan nationalisms, Bulgarian nationalism was construed on the basis of ethnicity. Originally, it shared the characteristics of neighbouring national movements, which together formed Balkan nationalism. The most prominent feature of Balkan nationalism is that all Balkan national movements nurtured the idea of a "great" nation-state. On this particularity Nedelcheva observes that the Balkan nationalism in its positive implications lead to the liberation from Ottoman rule and to the creating of own nation-states. On the other hand however, it carried the risk of potentially turning aggressive towards neighbouring countries[35]. Unlike Western nationalisms, which tend to be more rational, Balkan nationalisms, on the contrary, are based on the irrational – the myths of the past and the hopes for the future. They are typically expressed in the romantic idea of uniting all members of the ethnic group in one state, which instantly becomes problematic, as all Balkan countries have population within the borders of neighbouring states. In its early beginnings, Bulgarian nationalism is ideological: it attempts to build a new ideology as a response to the centuries-long Ottoman rule[36]. Perhaps the first and most vivid expression of Bulgarian nationalism was the already mentioned *A Slavo-Bulgarian History*, which reveals some of its most salient characteristics, that are still valid in present day. Namely, these are the defensive characters of Bulgarian nationalism, and the importance of Bulgarian language. This defensiveness, Todorova observes, is typical for all Balkan nationalisms, but is especially sharp with the Bulgarians, because their self-determination developed through the negation of the irredentist programmes and earlier nationalisms of neighbouring countries. Bulgarians were not struggling only against their Ottoman oppressors, but against Greeks, and Serbians as well. This is made clear in Paisiy's history, where he condemns those who are ashamed to call themselves Bulgarian and seek to adopt the Greek culture[37]. "One observes strong defensive pathos, a feeling of humiliation and a struggle with an inferiority complex, simultaneously presented with sharp accusations and pride of the glorious past[38]." Because of this

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[35] Nedelcheva, 2007.
[36] Neshev, 1994.
[37] Hilendarski, 2000.
[38] Todorova, 1995, p. 59.

defensiveness, Bulgarian language surpassed the importance of religion in the formation of Bulgarian ethnicity, distinguishing the latter from both Muslim Ottomans, and Orthodox Greeks and Serbs. With its deep impact, Father Paisiy's work confirms Anderson's findings for the vital role of the elites for the "imagining" of the nation, by reconstructing its historical past. In the words of Marko Semov, "*A Slavo-Bulgarian History* is as much unveiling peoples' character, as is laying the foundations of its main characteristics. Paisiy is one of the first [...] who try to suggest what Bulgarians should be like, rather than say much about who they are[39]."

2.3.3. Bulgarian National Identity and the Roma

Ultimately, as the Bulgarian nation was being awakened/constructed, the Bulgarian ethnic community was being united. And while this process was meant to include some, it was just as much aiming for the exclusion of others.

As discussed above, Bulgarian ethnic identity (and consequently the Bulgarian nation) was based upon two principle ethnic markers – Bulgarian language and Orthodox religion. Therefore, all those who did not bear them were automatically considered outsiders to the community. During the formation of the Bulgarian ethnic awareness, the Roma could not satisfy the "entry criteria" on both accounts. Those who spoke Bulgarian, had also retained and were using their own language amongst themselves, and many of those who had once converted to Christianity had later taken Islam for the advancement of their social status within the Ottoman Empire. These "inconsistencies" with the Bulgarian ethnie, along with the solid build-up of prejudice endorsed by the Orthodox Church, became the basis of Roma's exclusion in a time when the image of the Bulgarian was being constructed, and the attitude towards the "other" was being forged. As many of these prejudices persist until present day, a look into their origins seems necessary[40].

The historical evidence of the exact time of the Roma settlement on the Balkans, and in Bulgaria in particular, is insufficient to claim anything with certainty[41]. Crowe argues that the first Roma possibly

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[39] Semov, 2009, p. 102.
[40] This chapter will follow the work of Tomova, 2013.
[41] One of the go-to sources for the dating of Roma's settlement in the Balkans has been

settled in Bulgaria during the Byzantine rule (1018-1185) but the Byzantine chronicles are rather ambiguous on the matter[42]. We do however have knowledge of some Roma presence in other parts of the Byzantine Empire, dating from the 7th century. The historical accounts of that time speak of their rejection by the Church as "pagans" or "sinners[43]." Soulis points to several sources showing the numerous attempts of the Church to discourage the contacts between local Christian populations and the newly settled Gypsies. Due to their occupations in fortune telling, performing magic to cure diseases or solve problems, Gypsies were viewed as "servants of the devil," teaching "Satanist things[44]." As unfaithfulness and "serving evil powers" in the Middle Ages were perceived as the greatest sins, that one could commit, it is understandable how the stereotype of the immoral, sinful Gypsy that should not be interacted with, took roots in the pre-modern mind. These stereotypes naturally hindered close encounters between Gypsies and the Christian population, even where they were not restricted by the Church[45]. For centuries the portrayal of the sinful gypsy who engages in satanic practices, and his client – the easily fooled person who seeks his services, have inspired Orthodox literature, paintings and lithography, engraving these stereotypes in the Christian consciousness, where superstitious prejudices and fears of the Roma persist to this day[46]. Even though in later years many Gypsies converted to Christianity and bore Slavic names, the doubt in their religious piety were persistent and they were never wholly accepted as part of the community[47]. This distrust

King Ivan Shishman's Charter 1378, which allegedly granted to the Rila Monastery some villages partially inhabited by sedentary gypsies (Fraser, 1995; Kenrick, 1998). Other authors however have disputed the validity of these arguments, claiming that they were based on the interpretation of an unclear text (Marushiakova & Popov, 1993).

[42] Crowe, 1999.

[43] Soulis, 1961, and Liegeois, 1995, in Tomova, 2013.

[44] Soulis writes about a circulatory letter that the Patriarch of Constantinople (Athanasius the First) sent out to the clergy, instructing them to prevent Christians from communicating with the Gypsies, and "in particular not to let Gypsies enter their homes as they teach Satanist things," Soulis, 1961, in Tomova, 2013.

[45] During the 15th century, a new ban on communication with the Gypsies was imposed by the Byzantine Church. Five years of excommunication was awaiting anyone who sought Gypsies' fortune-telling services, ibidem.

[46] One of the earliest and most famous representations of the Gypsies is Dimitar Zograf's painting in the Rila Monastery, depicting them as sinners – fortune tellers and witches. Their "clients" (the non-Roma who disobey the Church's orders and seek their "satanic services") are also presented as sinners who will go to hell. Tomova, 2013.

[47] According to the Ottoman tax registries from 15th to 17th centuries, the majority of the Roma were Christians with Slavic names. To accept the local population's naming system

was likely fortified by the Gypsies' adaptability to different settings, and people. As previously mentioned, starting from the 18th century many Gypsies converted to Islam in search of a better economic and social position, to the effect that the Muslim Gypsies outnumbered the Christian ones. According to the historical accounts, the Ottomans too were suspicious of the Gypsies as the latter "were celebrating together with the infidels the infelicitous holiday of the painted eggs, with the Muslims – the holiday of the offering, and together with the Jews – the cane holiday, not accepting either of the religions[48]." Therefore, Muslim Gypsies were also obliged to pay the *cizye* tax, which was only due by the non-Muslim population, unless they systematically proved that they were performing properly Muslim rituals[49]. A well-known historical fact is that the Ottoman Empire did not attempt assimilation, by forcing its language, culture and religion in the conquered European lands[50], which is why all ethnic communities living in its territories, including the Roma, were able to preserve their identities and traditional way of life[51]. The tolerance of the Ottoman rulers was also transposed among the local populations, which coexisted peacefully together. Still, the attitude of the Christians and the Jews towards the Roma remained hesitant. The latter were still viewed as backward and "impure." Historians explain that apart from the prejudice of performing "Satanist services," this might also have to do with the fact that Gypsies would often take up crafts, with low generated income and declined prestige[52]. They were willing to perform services the rest of the population was unwilling to do, but which were still sought for[53]. As the occupation of the pre-modern person was directly linked to his social status, this affected negatively Gypsies' image in society.

would mean that the Gypsies must have been in close contact for a long time, and had spoken its language. Ibidem.

[48] Çelebi, 1972, in Tomova, 2013.

[49] The Gypsies were also not allowed to help in the Ottoman army, to become Muslim clergy, and to vote in the elections of imams. In this regard, the position of the Muslim Gypsies was similar to the non-Muslim raya. Tomova, 2013.

[50] This happened much later, in the Armenian Genocide of 1915, proving once more that nationalism is the product of modernity.

[51] Unlike the Austrian-Hungarian Empire, which attempted to assimilate its Gypsies over a short period of time. Ibidem.

[52] Georgiev et al., 1992, in Tomova, 2013.

[53] They would work for example as executioners, gravediggers, animal slaughterers, and also as prostitutes, a profession which was generously paid, but extremely shameful and socially isolating. Tomova, 2013.

Thus, toward the end of the 19th century, Bulgarian revolutionaries "awoke" to the idea of a "necessary victim" in the face of the Gypsies. The fact that the majority of the Roma were Muslims was reason enough to regard them as a threat, even though they were never perceived as such in earlier times. In the context of growing ethnocentrism during the Bulgarian Revival, the turning against the Roma seems understandable: by being Muslim they were similar to the natural enemies, while in the same time unlike the Turks, they were weak and unable to defend themselves. In addition, during the 18th and 19th centuries Gypsies had started falling behind in their social, educational, and cultural development, which reinforced their marginalisation and made acts of violence psychologically easier to commit[54]. Battling with feelings of inferiority as the last ones to remain under Ottoman rule, Bulgarians possibly sought the comparison with someone who was more inferior to them, and in the face of the Gypsies, they found an appropriate candidate. During the preparation and the realisation of the April Uprising (April to May 1876), there have been two documented cases of violence towards Gypsies (forced baptising, murder), which aimed to demonstrate the power of the revolutionary leaders, and unite the peaceful Bulgarian population under their command.

It is against this backdrop that Bulgarian ethnic community was formed separating itself from its "natural enemies" (the Turks), the attempting assimilation neighbours (Greeks and Serbians) and the backward and suspicious "sinners" (Gypsies), all of whom now formed the group of *the others*. Thus, from the very beginning to be *Bulgarian* meant to be "under attack." The perception of a constant outside threat prompted people to withdraw within the ethnic group and defend its *Bulgarianness*. Upon the country's liberation and the foundation of the New Bulgarian State, that same defensiveness would become the backbone of Bulgarian nationalism.

2.3.4. Birth of Bulgarian Nationalism

1878 is considered the birth of Bulgarian nationalism – the year of its biggest triumph and its greatest defeat[55]. The Treaty of San Stefano,

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[54] Ibidem.
[55] Todorova, 1995.

signed by the Russian and the Ottoman armies on 3 March 1878 established the great autonomous Bulgarian Princedom, with territory from the Black Sea to Ochrid, and from the Danube to the Aegean Sea. Its borders followed the dioceses of the Bulgarian Exarchate, which is why it was believed that they most accurately matched the natural ethnic (language and religious) borders of the Bulgarian nation. The opposition of the Great Powers to the creation of such a vast Balkan state (perceived as a future Russian satellite) lead to the revision of the Treaty of San Stefano on 13 July 1878 at the Congress of Berlin. The princedom was severed into five parts: Bulgaria now constituted only 1/3 of its original territory – the small piece of land in the North between the Danube and the Balkan Mountain Range. The Southern part, was named Eastern Rumelia and was returned to the Ottoman Empire under a Christian governor; Macedonia was entirely returned to Constantinople. Thus, the San Stefano Peace Treaty became a unique metahistorical event in the development of Bulgarian nationalism – a dream come true and an *idée fixe* for decades to come[56].

Bulgarian nationalism has changed dramatically since its beginnings in 1878. It has been moulded by the political developments of the 20th century, once again confirming Smith's argument that nations and their nationalisms are no constants in the equation of history. During the first half of the 20th century, Bulgarian nationalism was constantly "looking out." Its primary concern was the reclaiming of its "proper" territories and the reuniting of its lost populations. Its ethnocentrism was finding expression predominantly in external policies, dictating the state's political decisions in peace and war. The second half of the 20th century brought a change. Behind the Iron Curtain, the state turned its gaze, and "looked in," at the people living within its territories. In its minority policies, the state revealed its ethnocentric character once more.

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[56] Crampton, 1983, in Todorova, 1995.

3.

MANIFESTATION OF ETHNIC NATIONALISM IN POLICIES TOWARDS THE ROMA (1878-1989)

3.1. NATIONAL UNIFICATION PROGRAMME (1878-1918)

As already established, 1878 laid the foundations of a long national unification campaign that affected the political choices of Bulgaria for the first half of the 20th century. The first decisive moment in the evolution of Bulgarian nationalism after the "heartbreak" of 1878 was the unification of the Bulgarian Princedom with Eastern Rumelia in 1885, and the following war against Serbia. The mass gathering of volunteers and the unexpected victory of the national army became a powerful force for the formation of a united national loyalty[57].

The nationalistic agenda obsessed over the territorial integrity of the new Bulgarian state, which is clear from the mass movement in 1912 insisting on a war with Turkey[58]. A clear enough proof of the latter is the Preface to *Bulgarians in Their Historical, Ethnographical and Political Borders* written by Dimitar Rizov[59]. The cardinal question of Bulgarian nationalism in general, Todorova observed, is already present in the first sentence of the text: "Bulgaria" is used as a synonym of both the Bulgarian people (the ethnic Bulgarians) and the Bulgarian territory. "The nation," according to Rizov were those who share the Bulgarian language[60]. The text is a great example of the programme for national

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[57] Todorova, 1995.

[58] Pundeff, 1969, p. 134, in Todorova, 1995.

[59] Rizov, 1917.

[60] It is precisely the language that is the overarching marker of Bulgarian ethnicity. It has been consistently used over the years as an argument for the accession or subtraction of ethnic groups to the Bulgarian nation. The communist regime argued that Pomaks (Bulgarians who have taken Islam) are Bulgarians because they share the language of the Christian community. The existence of a Macedonian nation has been denied, due to the fact that it does not have a language of its own. Todorova, 1995.

unification of Bulgarian state nationalism that was formulated and implemented between 1878 and World War I. It was rather typical for a whole genre of literature, published and diffused intensely during the 1920s. The document was written in the midst of World War I and in the wake of two of the three Bulgarian "national catastrophes." Todorova argues that despite the dire political and social turbulence in Bulgaria during that time, the spirit of the text is not one of acquiescence, but on the contrary – one of challenge, and even optimism, in line with the irredentist determination to correct the "Berlin wrongs" and unite all Bulgarians in one state.

Despite the state's obsession with the "Bulgarian national question," in the years after the liberation, it was clear that Bulgarian nationalism like all Balkan nationalisms, was developing as an empowerment of ethnic Bulgarians. "It had borrowed the German model of the nation: one nation state designed to guarantee the political, economic, social, and cultural reign of the dominant ethnic group[61]." This is Brubaker's so-called "nationalizing nation-state," which "experiences itself traumatically" as a "still unformed nation-state." Other ethnic and religious groups are seen as "alien" and "undesirable communities," who should either "go away," or assimilate in the majority, but always remembering their lower place in the social hierarchy[62]. The first signs of these attitudes came with the strengthened police and administrative control over the representatives of those "undesirable" communities. The most salient and effective tool for the *ethnic* Bulgarian nation-building was the introduction of a normative, mandatory national language and education system. The process of standardisation of the Bulgarian language was completed in 1899 with the introduction of the spelling of Drinov and Ivanchev[63]. Even though the Bulgarian Roma were among the first to vote in Europe, their political rights were often violated through manipulation, and vote-buying. The media however would not be too concerned with the perpetrators in the political elite, but stigmatised individual Roma violators. This caused additional social friction and as a result, a Law on the Amendment of the Electoral Law was adopted in 1891, depriving non-Christian and non-sedentary Roma

[61] Tomova, 2013.
[62] Brubaker, 2004.
[63] Rusinov, 1985, p. 2, in Todorova, 1995.

from the right to vote[64]. The shrinking of the national markets in the new-born Bulgarian capitalism after the liberation lead to a crisis of craftsmanship which inevitably affected the Roma. With the decrease in the demand for their services, the negative attitudes toward them amplified. They were perceived as useless, and even parasitising on the majority, lagging behind the modern development of society. Despite the social prejudice and stigmatisation, in the beginning of the 20th century the Roma were able to create their own cultural, educational and sports organisations, and began to publish their own newspapers.

3.2. THE CRISIS OF BULGARIAN NATIONALISM: REVISIONISM (1918-1944)

The two national catastrophes of 1913 and 1918 – after the Second Balkan War and World War I, gave rise to a deep social dissatisfaction, transferred from one generation to the next that can be felt even today. The economic crisis together with the deep social problems "turned the Neuillé Treaty (1919) into the same thing that the Versailles Treaty became for Germany[65]." The response of Bulgarian nationalism was one of humiliation and bitterness. The difference now was that nationalism had lost its monolithic mass appeal and struggled to survive amidst officers, intelligentsia, bourgeoisie and the refugee organisations[66]. This was the time when various nationalistic organisations preached revisionism and capitalised on the social discontent with the post-war arrangements. On the doorstep of World War II Bulgarian radical nationalism reached its worst form – various fractions began propagating social Darwinism with racial, fascist, and even Nazi overtones. After 1940, when Bulgaria joined Nazi Germany, the discrimination against Gypsies increased substantially. Even though the anti-Jewish Law for the Protection of the Nation did not mention Gypsies expressly, they were not allowed to use public transport, nor visit the central parts of the capital and other large cities. The food coupons were lowered significantly and were now less even than those for the Jews. Many Roma from Sofia and other large cities were sent to labour camps along

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[64] Marushiakova & Popov, 1993.
[65] Todorova, 1995.
[66] Ibidem.

with the Jews[67]. There have also been cases of forced baptising of Roma in the neighbourhood *Fakulteta* in Sofia in 1942[68]. Nevertheless, these radical expressions remained marginal for the public opinion, as they did not manage to attract the masses. Well-known historical facts are the protests of ordinary citizens against the sending of Bulgarian Jews and Roma to Nazi concentration camps. As a result, King Boris III stopped the trains from departing, claiming before the Nazis that the Jews and Roma were necessary for the work in factories. This event has received a lot of controversy over the years, as historians often point out that the Jews and Gypsies in Bulgarian occupied territories were still sent to their death in the Nazi concentration camps. Still, this does not defeat the argument that the majority of Bulgarian population was against the ethnic cleansing judging from its engagement in the protests. In literary terms, this second stage of the genesis of Bulgarian nationalism was characterised by the strong interest in describing Bulgarian cultural identity. The failure of the national unification programme engendered a social and political climate in which the need for self-observation and analysis sprang to the fore. "The image of the Bulgarian in his/her own eyes [during this time] is martyred – a member of a victimized nation, isolated from the world, but uniting in a peculiar way idle collectivism, anarchic individualism, and social elitism, which nurtures democratism, while in the same time lacking civil discipline and responsibility, thus enervating the tendency to democracy," Todorova concludes[69]. It remains unclear however, if this image, constructed by the intelligentsia corresponded to the one of the majority of the population, consisting mainly of egalitarian peasants and a weak middle class. Her thoughts, Todorova illustrates with the essay of Konstantin Galabov who reframed the nationalistic discourse of the past: the unification idea was still present, but this time the critique was directed at the methods used for its achievement. Bulgarians themselves, and not the Great Powers, were the subject of criticism. Galabov's observation was that the reason for the helpless anger and the loss of direction in Bulgarian society was not simply the suffered defeat in the wars, but the social turbulence that originated

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[67] For example the camp in Dupnitsa. Marushniakova & Popov, 1993.

[68] According to the testimony of Manush Romanov, who after 1989 became an activist and joined the Parliament. Ibidem.

[69] Todorova, 1995.

from the urbanisation processes and the attempts for swift adaptation to the new European cultural models.

3.3. COMMUNISM AND "COMMUNIST" NATIONALISM (1944-1989)

Communism here is understood not as the ideology of classical (pre-state) Marxism, but as its practical implementation by the state[70]. While the classical Marxism as a cosmopolitan universal ideology is incompatible with the particularistic notion of nationalism, this is not necessarily true about its practical implementation: both state communism and nationalism are ideologies of modernisation, attempting to respond to the challenge of the West[71]. Despite propagating supremacy of the class struggle over the national question, and the suppressing of own national interests in the name of the world proletariat revolution, the nationalist agenda in Bulgaria had remained intact: communist discourse was nothing more than ordinary nationalism concealed under Marxist jargon[72]. It has been claimed that state communism merely included nationalistic images in order to overcome their potency[73]. Todorova's vision however seems more likely: nationalist ideology borrowed Marxist language to secure its own legitimacy. Officially, Bulgarian policies during the communist period followed entirely the prescriptions of Moscow for the creation of a proletariat-governed society, while simultaneously the majority of the governing elite still cherished the nationalistic ideals. The signing of the Treaty of San Stefano (3 March) for example was being celebrated with increasing festiveness from 1960 onwards, even though it had not yet been declared a national holiday (that happened in 1990). Todorova provides us with a good example for the symbiosis between the two ideologies by analysing a speech given by the leader of

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[70] The decisive difference comes from the attitude towards the state: state communism just like nationalism, cannot exist without the state, classic Marxism, however is in general terms anti-state, with some exceptions. Todorova contends that Marxism completely ignored the importance of the ethnie and nationalism, while state communism acknowledged the power of the ethnonationalism during WWI. Lenin tried to reconcile the discrepancies between the communist theory and practice in introducing the right to self-determination and succession. Nevertheless the question about the nature and role of nationalism and its relations with socialism remained open. Ibidem.

[71] Ibidem.

[72] Ibidem.

[73] Verdery, 1991, p. 314, in Todorova, 1995.

the communist party – Todor Zhivkov[74], entitled "Speech for Bulgaria" ("Слово за България"), held on 20 October 1981 in commemoration of the 1300th anniversary of the founding of the Bulgarian state[75]. In this speech, Zhivkov relied on two opposing discourses – one, hailing the communist doctrine, and the other – seeking to evoke strong patriotic feelings in the audience. The impact of communism on Bulgarian nationalist agenda was twofold: first, it did away once and for all with the ambition to restore "Bulgaria of San Stefano," and second, in dropping its aggressive irredentist pre World War II expression, Bulgarian nationalism (albeit disguised in Marxist *clichés*) turned its attention to the population living within Bulgarian territories. The triune theory of the ethnogenesis of the Bulgarians according to which the formation of the Bulgarian people was completed in the 9th century from Bulgars, Thracians and Slavs, served to establish Bulgaria as a state of a single nation. The policies of the communist governments towards the Pomaks, the Roma and the "non-Bulgarian" populations (Turks and Tatars) reveal that minorities had a place in Bulgarian society so far as their origins could be linked to the Bulgarian ethnos. The Pomaks (ethnic Bulgarians who forcefully or voluntarily converted to Islam during the Ottoman rule) were seen as the unfortunate victims of the Ottoman aggressors and an inherent part of the Bulgarian nation. The Turks on the other hand were persistently construed as "the enemy," whose loyalty would always go out to neighbouring Turkey, an attitude that was additionally aggravated by Turkey's membership to NATO. From the beginning, the minority policies of the communist party were centred on preventing the assimilation of Pomaks, Roma and Tatars into the Turk minority. In Decision A101, dated 5 April 1962 of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party (Decision A101) we find the following paragraph:

[...] In the process of successful realization of the cultural revolution some negative tendencies can be noticed which hamper its development, create difficulties for the strengthening of the moral and political unity of the people, and serve as an instrument of the propaganda of the enemy. A considerable part of the Gypsies, the Tatars, and the Bulgarian Muslims still tend to affiliate with

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[74] Leader of the BCP from 4 March 1954 until 10 November 1989.
[75] No profound analysis of the speech is necessary to see that it combines the most typical instruments of both communist and nationalistic discourses – the political speech and the ritual of commemorating anniversaries of historic events.

the Turks under various forms, a tendency which is especially helped by the *Muslim religion* and the *Turkish and Arabic names*. Stimulated by the Turkish reactionary propaganda and religious fanaticism, and helped by the incorrect activities of a number of bodies of the people's government, more than 130,000 Gypsies and tens of thousands of Tatars and Bulgarian Muslims in many parts of the country have registered themselves as Turks[76].

The Decision begins with the affirmation that the BCP, "guided by the Marxist-Leninist theory on the national question" aims to secure a complete political and social equality of rights to all working people with no difference as to language, religion, or nationality, in order to achieve "the quick liquidation of the great economic and cultural backwardness of the Turkish and Gypsy population." Notwithstanding these communist *clichés*, the paragraph quoted above reveals the ethnonationalistic basis for the "egalitarian" policy of the BCP: upon registering as members of the Turkish minority, Bulgarian citizens "cease" to be Bulgarian. Being a Turk, or registering as one, in itself is an epitome of "backwardness": it "hampers" the development of the cultural revolution, obstructs "the strengthening of the moral and political unity of the people," and "serves as an instrument" of the enemy's propaganda.

The nationalistic "ethnocentric" policy of the BCP is confirmed by its appeal to the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences to send complex expeditions of historians, ethnographers and philologists to study "the national origins and the nationality of the population in the respective regions of the country," and "especially the ethnic origin" of Turks, Tatars and Gypsies, in order to discover "the historical truth about the results of the assimilation policies of the Turkish oppressors, about the mass and individual conversions to Islam[77]." The assumption was that Tatars, Gypsies, and Bulgarian Muslims (Pomaks), were originally of Bulgarian origin, but had been forced into accepting a "false" (Turkish) identity.

With regard to the Roma, the attempt of the communist government to evade the "threat" of their assimilation into the Turkish minority has been approached in three contradictive ways: by inclusion, assimilation and exclusion.

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[76] Emphasis added. In *Destroying Ethnic Identity. The Gypsies of Bulgaria*, 1991, p. 69.
[77] Ibidem.

3.3.1. Policy of "Social Inclusion"

In its first few years in power, the communist government attempted to develop the distinct self-awareness of the Roma minority by granting Gypsies a limited cultural autonomy. In the first Roma newspaper, *Romano Esi* (*Roma Voice*), created in 1947, BCP made the following address:

May those, who up until now have been ashamed to call themselves gypsies and have assimilated in the Turk minority, or who have been baptized as Christians, take off their masks, lift their heads up and show they are gypsies[78].

The first Socialist Constitution of 1947 (*Dimitrovska Konstituciya*) proclaimed the Gypsies a separate community, with its own ethnic identity, equal in rights to the Bulgarian majority – an attitude, which was inspired by Moscow's position towards the different communities, compiling the USSR. Recognising Roma's separate ethnic identity through upholding their culture and advancing its development, was meant to distance them from Islam: the main point of unity between Gypsies and Turks. As a result, the Roma enjoyed more liberties during those first years of communist rule than they would ever do later on in the regime. Two Roma organisations were established: *The All-Gypsy Organization for Fight against Fascism and Racism and for the Cultural Advancement of the Gipsy Minority* (1945) and *The Cultural-Enlightening Organization of the Gypsy Community in Bulgaria* (1946)[79]. Judging by its name, it is likely that the first one was created with the significant involvement of the state. It was chaired by Shakir Pashov – the editor in chief of *Romano Esi*[80]. The other organisation had even stronger ties with the BCP. Its local groups were accepted in the regional structures of the ruling party and were thus significantly aided by the government. In 1947, the Gypsy theatre "Roma" was formed, encouraging members of the Roma community to engage in amateur performances in arts and sports.

[78] Crowe, 1999, p. 20, in Büchsenschütz, 2000, p. 21.
[79] Marushiakova & Popov, 1993, p. 88, in Büchsenschütz, 2000, p. 24.
[80] Pashov abruptly lost the political support of the ruling party after his re-election to the Parliament in 1949. He was sent to the concentration camp in Belene. Marushiakova & Popov, 1993, p. 89.

3.3.2. Policy of Assimilation

The policy of social inclusion was very short-lived. With the change in the BCP's political leadership in the end of 1940s, came a shift in the state's objectives. Under Valko Chervenkov's leadership, the state began a process of consolidation of the Stalinist communist model through forced industrialisation and collectivisation of property[81]. Bulgarian society began its transition to a "new Bulgarian socialist nation," where there was no room for separate minority groups. The Roma (like all minorities) were meant to assimilate in the Bulgarian majority, and turn into "conscientious and good constructors of socialism[82]." The assimilatory policies included "cultural silencing," forced settlement, "correct" education, and renaming campaigns.

a) Cultural Silencing

In line with the new "assimilation policy" the referring to Gypsies, as to a separate group became "undesirable." The census of 1956 was the last one to mention data, related to the Gypsy population[83]. The Roma cultural unions, which became part of the ruling communist party, were dismissed in the beginning of the 1950s. The newspaper *Romano Esi*, was renamed in 1949 to *Nevo Drom* (*New Way*), and in 1950 its publishing was suspended. In 1957 Sulyo Metkov made an attempt to publish the magazine *Neve Roma* (*New Roma*), at first financing it himself and later with the help of friends[84]. In 1959 however, the government changed the magazine's name with a Bulgarian one – *Nov Pat* (*New Way*), and from that moment until 1988, it was published only in Bulgarian[85]. In later years the government discouraged all attempts for assembly on the part of the Roma. In the beginning of the 1960s, several Roma decided to establish a football club where teams would carry Roma names. They were quickly summoned by the authorities who forced them to swap the names of the teams with Bulgarian ones. In response, the Roma dismissed the club[86].

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[81] Valko Chervenkov was the Leader of the BCP from 2 July 1949 to 4 March 1954.
[82] *Destroying Ethnic Identity. The Gypsies of Bulgaria*, 1991, p. 69.
[83] According to the census 194,000 people registered as Gypsies. Marushiakova & Popov, 1993.
[84] Büchsenschütz, 2000.
[85] Marushiakova & Popov, 1993, p. 89.
[86] In *Destroying Ethnic Identity. The Gypsies of Bulgaria*, 1991, p. 14.

b) Forced Settlement

For the communist party, the biggest impediments for the participation of the Roma in the construction of the socialist society were their unsedentary lifestyle (also considered the root cause of their economic and educational backwardness, which prompted them to resort to begging and stealing), and their affiliation with the Turks. Building on the premise that the Gypsies were "an inherent part" of the Bulgarian people, and for the sake of facilitating their assimilation in Bulgarian society, the BCP engaged in an extensive plan for the "positive reorganization of their way of life, the raising of their culture, and the incorporation of that population to the construction of a socialist society[87]." The strategy included settlement campaigns, and the provision of educational and employment opportunities. The first settlement campaign was initiated in 1954 providing about 20,000 Roma families with land and expedient loans to build their own houses. Special elementary schools for the newly settled Roma children, were also established[88]. The campaign however was insufficient to bring the expected results, which prompted the adopting of Decree 258 of the Council of Ministers of 17.12.1958 for the Solution of the Problems of the Gypsy Population in the People's Republic of Bulgaria (Decree 258):

As a result of the care of the Communist Party and the People's government, the gypsies received broad opportunities for labour and cultural advancement. [...] However, a certain part of the gypsy population is lagging behind the general development of the country, is not permanently employed, does not pertain to one place, but leads a nomadic way of life, and engages in begging, fortune-telling, stealing and other violations of the public order. In many cases the Gypsy population remains a spreader of diseases and a carrier of utter backwardness[89].

The Decree prohibited "travelling and begging" and every Bulgarian citizen was obliged to engage in community service labour. The executive committees of the local people's councils were urged to adopt measures for the employment of gypsies in the state factories, in the forest management or in the cooperative farms. New loans were

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[87] The secretary of the CC of the BCP apparently needed to explain once again the point of these measures in a letter to the local party committees. Ibidem, p. 61.

[88] According to Crowe this is how Roma ghettos emerged in 160 cities and 3,000 villages. Crowe, 1999.

[89] Büchsenschütz, 2000.

envisioned both for the municipalities, as well as for separate Roma families. Municipalities were also required to take care of hygiene in Roma neighbourhoods. Several months into the implementation of the Decree, the BCP found its execution problematic for the local authorities. With a Letter, dated 16 June 1959 (Letter of 1959), the Secretariat of the Central Committee of the BCP turned to the Regional, City, and District Committees of the BCP explaining once again the importance of gypsies' participation in the building of socialism[90]. The Letter identified certain "manifestations of neglect toward the Gypsies" and the "underestimation of their work," as the root causes for their protracted incorporation in society. The same negative stereotypes, existing since the Middle Ages, were still present in the middle of the 20th century, but were this time attributed to the mistakes of preceding capitalism:

As a result of these [poor] conditions of life, for which the bourgeoisie and its policies of exploitation are wholly responsible, a "public opinion" was formed that they were lazy, incapable of working in the sphere of production, lacking culture, etc.[91].

The communist "master-plan" for the creation of a solid socialist nation, and the age-old ethnonationalistic agenda complemented each other perfectly. The communists could assimilate minorities in the dominant Bulgarian community, and claim that it was in the interest of the socialist nation-building. "Communist" nationalism raged against the Turk "aliens," but advanced Gypsies' economic and educational development, because it was believed they were of Bulgarian origin. Only against the backdrop of the "us-them" dichotomy can the strict measures for the separation of the two ethnic groups be understood. In Decree 258 Politburo urged BCP, Fatherland Front, and all other state organisations to combat "the Turkish religious and chauvinistic propaganda and its pan-Turkish and pan-Islamist goals[92]." The authorities were to limit the settlement of Gypsies and Pomaks in the regions with compact Turk population. They were also to prohibit the education in Turkish as well as the employment of Turkish teachers in schools with prevailing Tatar, Pomak and Roma children. The Ministry

[90] Ibidem.
[91] Ibidem.
[92] *Destroying Ethnic Identity. The Gypsies of Bulgaria*, 1991, p. 68.

of Defence was to secure the segregation of Bulgarians and non-Turk Muslims from the Turkish minority in the military companies and platoons, and in the labour units. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs was to make sure that the Muslim clergymen were not spreading Turkish propaganda.

c) "Correct" Education

Apart from prohibiting travelling, Decree 258, urged the Ministry of People's Education and the local authorities to secure the "wholly enrolment of children of Gypsy origin in Bulgarian schools[93]." As already mentioned, the subsequent Letter to the local committees of the BCP highlighted the growing concern of the ruling party that many Gypsies preferred sending their children to Turkish schools: a tendency that had to be prevented at all costs. All organisations of the BCP were urged to ensure that Gypsy children were receiving the "correct" education by attending Bulgarian schools. From the beginning of the academic year 1958/1959 Bulgarian was established as the only language of didactics in all schools, including in those of the Turk minority where Turkish used to be taught to elementary students (Roma language was never taught in school, which could be explained by its lack of standardisation). With the above-cited Decision A101 of 5 April 1962, the Politburo of the Central Committee of the BCP strengthened the assimilatory measures:

> The Ministry of Education and Culture and the regional people's councils must take measures so that the Turkish language is not taught to the children of Gypsies, Tatars, and Bulgarian Muslims. These children must be taught in Bulgarian. *The appointment of Turkish teachers at schools where the children of Gypsies, Tatars and Bulgarian Muslims predominate must be avoided.* The children of Bulgarian Muslims and Gypsies must not be allowed to live in hostels or to study in the same groups with Turkish children wherever this is possible[94].

In addition to Bulgarian elementary schools, a number of sources point to the existence of "boarding schools," allegedly created in 1961 under the initiative of Todor Zhivkov himself, aiming for the complete

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[93] The special schools for Roma children existed until 1959. Ibidem.
[94] Ibidem.

assimilation of Gypsy children[95]. The latter were taken from their families and placed in a healthy "Bulgarian" environment, where they would be turned into "full-bodied citizens, and committed builders of socialism and communism[96]." In its report on the 5th Congress of the Fatherland Front in March 1963, the Chair of the National Council of the Fatherland Front Encho Staykov stated that in compliance with Decision A101 of CC of BCP of 1962, 3,000 Gypsy children had been paced in "boarding schools[97]." According to Staykov in 1963, their number had increased to 5,000, and in 1967 – to 9,000[98]. Troebst alleges that in 1975 there were 145 "boarding schools" in existence, where about 10,000 children of semi-nomadic Roma families were forcibly placed[99].

d) Renaming Campaigns

The most widely known assimilatory measures of the BCP were the renaming campaigns, which affected the Gypsies, the Pomaks and the Tatars much earlier than they did the Turks. As Muslims, the three minority groups were deemed susceptible to assimilation in the Turkish minority, which, as already shown from the above-cited Decision A101, was most unwelcome. It was precisely Islam and the Turkish and Arabic names, which "especially helped" their affiliation with the Turks, Politburo reasoned. From the 1960s onwards the communist party began a policy of apartheid, segregating Turks from the rest of the Muslim population.

Decision A101, however important for the establishment of the name-changing doctrine, was not the first interference of the people's government with Roma's identity. Back in the beginning of the 1950s, the processes of forced modernisation through collectivisation of property, initiated by Valko Chervenkov, interfered with the religious and cultural values and principles of Muslims, many of who wished to migrate to neighbouring Turkey. Their incentive was more than welcome for the communist party, and on 4 January 1948, encouraged by Stalin, the Plenum of the Central Committee of BCP adopted a decision for the deportation of "non-Bulgarian" population from the Southern border

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[95] Ibidem, p. 27.
[96] A leaflet on the use of boarding schools in Genov, Marinov & Tairov, 1964, pp. 47-48.
[97] Büchsenschütz, 2000, p. 27.
[98] Statement of Yula Kamenova from Vidin on the 6th Congress of the Fatherland Front in May 1967. Ibidem.
[99] Troebst, 1990, p. 482; Crowe, 1999, p. 26.

of the country. About 100 Roma attempted to migrate with the Turks[100]. More importantly, on the eve of the Turks' deportation, the Registration Department of the Ministry of Interior sent a letter to the Address Offices, insisting that Roma and Tatars be registered as Turks in an obvious attempt to rid the state of them as well. Supposedly 130,000 people have been affected by the government's actions[101]. Clearly, certain circles in the government were opting for the construction of a "Bulgarian-only" socialist nation: a communist interpretation of ill-concealed ethnonationalism, where *Bulgarianness* was identified through its age-old ethnic markers: Bulgarian language and Orthodox religion.

The official "socialist nation-building" policies with regard to the non-Turk Muslim population however took a different direction: one of assimilation rather than exclusion. Two years before the adoption of Decision A101, the Rules for the Register on the Civil Status were amended so that children would be registered as Bulgarian, even if their parents were of non-Bulgarian origin. What is more, non-Bulgarians could file an application to register as Bulgarians, and change their first, second and family names[102]. Decision A101 officiated and expanded this policy in stating expressly that:

[...] religion and personal names are not criteria for nationality. It must also be made clear that intermarriage does not lead to change of nationality of the spouses. The children of the intermarried couples can be registered as Bulgarians completely voluntarily and with the explicit agreement of both parents[103].

The "identity-change procedure" was additionally simplified by the provision that non-Bulgarians could change their names "without asking for permission from the people's court but by making a written application to the respective people's councils." The enforcement of the decision was to be accompanied by "a large and systematic popular persuasion, and by no means [...] any form of violence or administrative force [was to] be used." Decision A101 also took measures for the returning of the "real nationality" to the Tatars, the Gypsies, and the

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[100] Turkey closed its border for the settlers, because of the Roma who did not have visas, or permission to leave.
[101] Kertikow, 1991, p. 88.
[102] Büchsenschütz, 2000.
[103] Ibidem.

Bulgarian Muslims, who were registered as Turks "by mistake" in 1950, by virtue of Letter 5-434 from 11 May 1950 by the Civil Status Department of the Ministry of the Interior. The assimilatory intention of the provision is clear: the "real nationality" could be returned to everyone, "with the exception of those who have already registered themselves as Bulgarians."

It is not possible to estimate with certainty the number of Roma, who changed their Turkish/Arab names to Bulgarian ones after 1962. Nevertheless, it could be argued that the bigger part of the Muslim Roma had done so by the end of the 1970s[104]. In 1985 the future Prime Minister Georgi Atanasov presented a report in Politburo stating that:

[...] in line with the policies for social development and with relation to the changing of the passports, about 250,000 Roma have accepted the Bulgarian names. Thus, the tendency for affiliation with the Turks of a certain part of [the Roma] was overcome, and the conditions for its consolidation in the Bulgarian socialist nation were created[105].

3.3.3. Social Exclusion

The assimilation policies of the BCP towards the Roma, although still present, seemed to be losing their potency during the 1980s. Since no proof of a shared origin between Bulgarians and Roma had been found, the authorities became less and less concerned with the well-being of the minority. In 1978 it became clear that only 30% of the Roma children finished school, very few of them obtained a university degree and more than half of the adults remained illiterate[106]. To counter that, the Secretariat of the Central Committee of the BCP adopted Decision 1360 of 9 October 1978 enlisting a number of measures "for the involvement of the Roma in service of the community[107]." The increase of their education and self-esteem was to be accomplished through a network of kindergartens meant to teach Roma children the

[104] An article of 1983 for commemoration of the 1300th anniversary of the Bulgarian state reads: "The names of this population are no different than the Bulgarian names, with the exception of those, who consider to be Turks." Decheva, 1983, p. 573.
[105] Report of Georgi Atanasov on the meeting with the party secretaries on 18 January 1985. Büchsenschütz, 2000.
[106] *Destroying Ethnic Identity. The Gypsies of Bulgaria*, 1991, p. 30.
[107] Ibidem, p. 90.

Bulgarian language as soon as possible. The special Roma schools were to be eliminated; the segregated neighbourhoods were to be gradually abolished in the next 10 to 20 years; Roma were to be accepted in the art collectives. These measures however remained only on paper: out of 547 Gypsy neighbourhoods, only 36 were abolished; special schools continued to exist, and creative liberty was not at all stimulated. In fact, in 1980 an art collective was even dismissed, because its manager used the word "Gypsy" advertising a concert and included Gypsy songs in the playlist[108]. In 1984, performing Gypsy music in public was prohibited[109].

Towards the end of its life, the communist government realised not only that the Roma were "alien" to the Bulgarian ethnos, but also that the attempted assimilation policies were not able to make them believe they were Bulgarian. In this climate, the negative stereotyping flourished and warning signs began to appear on some train stations, cautioning against "Gypsy pickpockets." To some restaurants and cafes, Roma would be refused access[110].

The last members of the Muslim Roma community, who had not changed their names earlier, were finally forced to do so during the infamous "Revival Process," with the renaming of the Bulgarian Turks (1984-1985)[111]. The changing of passports began in 1981 and was meant to finish by the end of 1985, where the older generations would receive their new identity documents last. Unlike the old ones, the new passports did not include the section *ethnicity* ("народност"). Reportedly around 180,000 Roma (mainly Muslim) were affected in the process[112]. The renaming campaigns of the Roma (and the other non-Turk Muslim population) did not attract much public attention and ran almost unnoticeably in the community. The reason for that might be the renowned adaptability of the Roma to the present social conditions.

The official and most prominent expression of the policy of social exclusion was the erection of massive concrete walls around the Roma neighbourhoods, which exist until present day[113]. The authorities began to deny the very existence of the Roma ethnic group. A secret census (for the needs of the "Revival Process") estimated 576,927 Gypsies (6.45%

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[108] Ibidem, p. 91.
[109] Crowe, 1999, p. 26.
[110] Ibidem, p. 27.
[111] Popov, 1993, p. 22.
[112] Crowe, 1999, p. 27; Marushiakova & Popov, 1993, p. 91.
[113] For example the one in Kazanlak, Marushiakova & Popov, 1993, p. 91.

of the population), more than half of whom had Turkish self-awareness. More importantly the authorities defined as Gypsies, not only those who had identified themselves as ones, but also many others based on their way of life, cultural particularities, nearby population, etc.

4.

MANIFESTATION OF ETHNIC NATIONALISM
IN STATE POLICIES AFTER 1989

In the first years of democracy, the "communist" nationalism, which in its essence was an ill-disguised ordinary nationalism, presented itself to the world, free of the need to conform to a defeated doctrine. The drastic change in the international *status quo*, with no great powers in the region facilitated this "rebirth" of the national idea, complemented by the notorious mass appeal of nationalism in times of economic, social and cultural crises. In the case of Bulgaria, this nationalism was, as it always had been, ethnocentric and concerned with the problems of "real" Bulgarians. Its forum was the newly liberated media, which began preaching of the importance of the "national unity," based on the "common national interests," "common national ideals," and "common national policy[114]." This "national unity" of course was not meant to extend beyond the borders of the ethnic majority, and so the "Turkish problem" remained the pinnacle of modern nationalistic discourse, where the ceaseless debates on the studying of the Turkish language at schools, the character and the degree of the Turkish and Muslim propaganda keep it very much alive to this day. With regard to the Roma, ethnonationalism was expressed through silence: in the first few years after the dissolution of the communist regime in 1989, Roma did not attract much of the public attention. As a result, in the growing political and economic havoc, thousands of Roma lost their jobs and an increasing number of children dropped out of school, while the state stood idly by. The fast deindustrialisation of the country and the destruction of the agricultural sector cost Bulgaria 1,300,000 jobs, the bigger part of which required unqualified and low-qualified

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[114] From an article, written by Ilcho Dimitrov, in Todorova, 1995.

workforce[115]. The Roma who generally have the lowest education and qualification levels of all ethnic groups in Bulgaria, were the first to fall out of the labour market. The extremely high levels of unemployment, spurred by the macroeconomic changes in the beginning of the 1990s, are still being recreated until this day. For the last 25 years employment amongst Roma has been decreasing in the range of 37-66%. As they are the only minority in Bulgaria with such dramatic unemployment rates, the correlation between employment/unemployment and ethnicity during the whole post-communist period is striking.

Bulgaria's transition to democracy brought mass, long-term impoverishment which swept through the whole nation, but remained most noticeable in the Roma community. Its characteristics have been described as follows:

[...] it is widespread; its rate is above the average for the country; it is related to large-scale exclusion of elderly Roma from the labour market and a rapid decline in their children's education; it is continuous and likely to pass on to future generations, i.e. to become constant; it is connected with the increasing exclusion of Roma from nearly all spheres of social life and with the intensified segregation of their community; it reflects the cumulative effect of several powerful negative factors – ethnic divisions, enormous intergroup distance, spatial and institutional segregation and deep impoverishment[116].

And while the reasons behind all this are primarily economical, the nationalist discourse of the majority follows the irrational logic of prejudice: "*they* are poor because they are lazy." These attitudes are not solely confined to social murmur and malicious gossip, but transcend into state policies, which legitimises stereotypes and engenders new waves of social exclusion. During the transition period, discriminatory policies and actions of state's officials could be found in the sphere of social services (education, health care, and housing), institutional discrimination, lack of media control, etc.

[115] Beleva, 2005, in Tomova, 2013.
[116] Tomova, 2013.

4.1. SOCIAL SERVICES

4.1.1. Education

In the years after the collapse of communism, the new democratic state adopted a number of changes in the field of education and social assistance, which impeded the access to education of Roma and Turkish children. The fees for public kindergartens sharply increased, causing huge numbers of dropouts of Roma children. For years and years 4/5s of the them were unable to attend kindergartens because of financial problems in their families. In addition, hundreds of nurseries and kindergartens closed down, and tens of thousands of children missed pre-school altogether, since vacancies were increasingly found through personal connections or over the Internet: two conditions that most Roma families cannot meet. The government did not offer any social assistance to those children then, and has still not recognised the need of such measures now, despite the attempts of civil society organisations and experts to explain the benefits. It could be argued that these changes were not necessarily "anti-minority" tailored, as they affected the nation as a whole. However, although there certainly was a large number of ethnic Bulgarian children from poor families, whose access to kindergartens was obstructed due to the same reasons, the large majority of the affected children were of minority origin. Had it been the other way around, the potential social outburst would have likely prompted the government to find a better solution. Since however Roma's interests are not represented in the social and political sphere, the government lacked incentive to employ creativity. Another harmful government policy was the cutting of the funding for extracurricular activities, which were mostly used by Roma and Turkish children to improve their Bulgarian language skills. As a result, those children could not enjoy the additional assistance in studying subjects that due to the language barrier or for other reasons, were not completely understood during regular classes. Another obstacle to their learning opportunities were the increased class sizes (up to 30 students). Teachers could not spare enough time to help each student learn, and those who did not speak Bulgarian well suffered the most. In rural areas, where most of the children were Turks and Roma, conditions were even worse. Due to insufficient numbers of teachers, children would often be put in so-called "merged grades," and sometimes be taught by teachers, who

were not experts on the specific subjects[117]. These conditions, however backward, were still better than those in segregated schools in Roma ghettos, where even eight-grade students had difficulties reading.

With regard to segregation and its abolishment, very little has been done. The Law on Secondary Education does not establish the desegregation of Roma children as a priority[118]. There are almost no programmes for the closure of segregated schools in ghettos and the transfer of their students to ordinary ones. What is more, whenever an initiative to close down a segregated school succeeds and the students are transferred to an ordinary school, parents of non-Roma children, quickly move them to a different one, to the effect that the ordinary school becomes segregated once more.

Even if these impediments did not exist, and all Roma children could study in integrated schools, they would face a lot of obstacles before they could be "included." The notion of "school integration" is very narrowly defined. It merely seeks to ensure that Roma children are enrolled in schools with predominantly ethnic Bulgarian children. From then on, there are no mechanisms provided for the training of teachers, for working in a multicultural classroom, that would enable them to develop and impart an attitude of tolerance, sensitivity and equal treatment. Due to low salaries and poor conditions, many teachers lack motivation to work tirelessly for the sake of children's learning, especially when there is a language barrier in the classroom. In addition, surveys point to an extremely prejudiced attitude of teachers towards Roma pupils. They are often indifferent and have low expectations of these students at best, or are bluntly rude and offensive at worst. There is a pressing need for civic and intercultural re-training of teachers, but so far such measures have not been introduced. As a result of these poor learning conditions, it often happens that students of minority groups not only have trouble gaining knowledge on the taught subjects, but also do not manage to learn Bulgarian in class. This drawback has even greater consequences, given the fact that access to schools, which provide intensive foreign language teaching, and computer lessons (both skills with great socio-economic value on the labour market) is granted upon passing a mandatory Bulgarian language exam.

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[117] If the number of students falls below the minimum, children from different grades are taught the same subject together. Ibidem.
[118] Proposals for legislative amendments were submitted in 2011. Ibidem.

Another bad policy was the cutting of the funding on child goods, educational materials and books (1991). Free textbooks in compulsory education (until eight grade) were not distributed until 2004[119]. Children from the poorest families could not afford the educational materials, which significantly impeded their learning opportunities. According to a research conducted in 1999, 95% of Roma children had only half of the required textbooks, or did not have any at all. The free textbooks, which were envisioned for the socially disadvantaged children could only be used in class, and so students' self-preparation greatly suffered. The studying process was additionally hampered by the hunger and the resulting lack of concentration, that many of the impoverished children felt during the entire school day. Since the national and local budgets stopped funding cooked food in schools, children would starve for hours.

The inevitable conclusions from this short review on the studying opportunities of minority children during the transition period, are that the equal access to education exists only on paper. Since 1991 the Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria has been guaranteeing free primary education and no discrimination[120]. In reality however, the state is responsible for the numerous obstacles, that children from poor families face constantly in the classrooms. When it is not actively hindering their learning opportunities by adopting insensitive legislation, the state remains a passive observer, at best, to the thousands of school dropouts. These tactics silently endorse the already popular belief of the majority that *they*, the Roma, have poor education merely because they do not value it. This proves convenient for ethnocentric governments that are unwilling to spend on minority measures,

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[119] In 2004 first-grade students received free textbooks. In the following years, free textbooks were distributed also to the students up to fourth grade. In 2009 and 2010, students from the first up to the seventh grade were also included. Ibidem.

[120] Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria:

"Art. 53.

(1) Everyone shall have the right to education.

(6) The State shall promote education by opening and financing schools, by supporting capable school and university students, and by providing opportunities for occupational training and retraining. It shall exercise control over all kinds and levels of schooling.

Art. 6.

(1) All persons are born free and equal in dignity and rights.

(2) All citizens shall be equal before the law. There shall be no privileges or restriction of rights on the grounds of race, national or social origin, ethnic self-identity, sex, religion, education, opinion, political affiliation, personal or social status or property status."

which "are going to fail anyway." Such discriminatory attitudes have in turn engendered a deeply rooted belief among poor Roma families that investing in education is pointless. If the Roma parents do not value education, it is because it has been repeatedly confirmed that however much their children study, they will not go far in a rejecting, racist society. Illiterate and undereducated parents on the other hand, cannot motivate their children to remain in school. In addition, cultural norms, such as the virginity cult in some religious families, cause early school dropouts of girls, who are married off young and have children of their own before they have reached twenty years of age. Structural obstacles to education meet cultural barriers to create a vicious cycle of replicating illiteracy, taking a toll on generations to come. Instead of assuming its role of the primary social caretaker, by creating incentives to persuade and stimulate poor Roma families into the benefits of good education, governments indifferently raise their shoulders, accepting the unavoidability of Roma's "backwardness." The state thus sheds its responsibility, backed up by the ruling neoliberal ideology, which claims that every individual is responsible for their own actions, regardless of the unequal start in life he/she may have as a member of a disadvantaged social group, reinforcing the trend of blaming the victims for their dire situation. Neoliberal ideology as Tomova claims is a "typical manifestation of modern racism in contemporary society[121]." In the ethnocentric nationalistic discourse, the argument "why should we try to fix *their* problems, when we have so much of our own" is often heard. *They* are not considered part of the Bulgarian nation, but dishonest parasites leeching off the money of the loyal (Bulgarian) taxpayers through the social welfare system. As not truly Bulgarian, *they* are not seen as entitled of receiving those benefits, but rather as taking advantage of the pressure coming from the international community for their integration in society.

4.1.2. Health Care

The *Health and the Roma Community* survey reports that Bulgarian Roma demonstrate the poorest health status in comparison with Roma

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[121] Tomova, 2013, p. 36.

communities in other states[122]. The poor conditions of life in ghettos naturally translate into chronic and often severe health problems, which additionally hinders the already scarce employment opportunities they have. Disability certificates from the Territorial Expert Medical Commission are very difficult to obtain. The access to health services, much like the access to education, is blocked by several factors. Firstly, the allocations from the state budget for health care are extremely low, which requires citizens to pay half of their treatment (or at times even a greater part) from their own pocket. Another problem is the uneven geographical distribution of medical teams and hospitals. This is especially true for the regions with prevailing Roma and Turk populations, where doctors are allocated more patients than they can handle. From the outset, minority patients are subjected to poorer health services. Travelling long distances to visit medical specialists is also an issue. Most importantly, since so many of the Roma community have no employment (or where they have one, it is often temporary, or irregular), health insurance is hard to secure. According to the above-mentioned survey, 26% of the adult Roma had no health insurance[123]. As a result, they tend to rely more on emergency room services, physician's altruism and pharmacists' advice without previous consultations with doctors. Bureaucratisation of medical services additionally impedes the access to health care for the poor, and the chronically ill, as well as for the mothers and children from remote places. Finally, personal attitudes of doctors and their disregard for Roma's cultural differences often force many of them to resort to self-healing practices.

4.1.3. Housing

In the beginning of the 1990s, instead of desegregating Roma neighbourhoods, the state began withdrawing its institutions from the ghettos. Schools, health centres, kindergartens, and various cultural and other institutions closed down. With that, the control over illegal construction, and compliance with civic regulations, including sanitary and hygienic standards ceased. The little-to-none technological and

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[122] *Health and the Roma Community: Analysis of the Situation in Europe in December 2008.* The survey was carried out simultaneously in Bulgaria, Greece, Spain, Portugal, Slovakia and the Czech Republic in November and December 2008. Ibidem.

[123] Constituting 18% of the entire Roma population. Ibidem.

social infrastructure has remained almost the same since the ghettos' communist past, when the BCP intentionally did not include these neighbourhoods in the urban planning. It would turn a blind eye on illegal construction, as it needed a cheap workforce it could easily control: because of those illegal constructions, the Roma could always be sacked from their jobs, or forced to leave the settlement, if need be.

For the past 25 years of democratic transition, the "absent" state has done almost nothing for the solution of the ghetto problem. While living conditions are gradually deteriorating, and the illegal constructions are multiplying, the state continues to blame its own inadequacy on its communist predecessors, and, on the Roma's "inherent animalism," which hardly comes as a surprise.

4.2. PUBLIC OPINION

Consolidation of democracy after a long period of autocratic rule is a process which necessarily begins with recognition of social heterogeneity, in all its forms: ethnic, religious, racial, social, and so on. Bulgaria also took this course when it proclaimed the right to self-identification of minorities, and guaranteed all their basic civil, political, economic, cultural and social rights. The new-born democracy, however was off to a bad start. The defensive character of Bulgarian nationalism emerged in the political discourse. Populism, manipulation and rude nationalistic rhetoric swept across all media and social circles and the Bulgarians, much like in the beginning of the 19th century, once again felt threatened, this time from the inside of their territory. Building on the already strong ethnocentric national feeling, the new rapid impoverishment and political instability additionally intensified community egotism: survival increasingly depended on personal ties and contacts within one's own social circle. Thus, intergroup communication drastically gave in to social frustration and discriminatory behaviour. The media considerably facilitated the social exclusion of minorities, by adopting offensive stereotypical rhetoric especially strong toward the Roma, usually presenting them as irresponsible, lazy and inherently prone to criminal behaviour. The state had no response. It withdrew once more into its "much more serious problems," tacitly approving of the racist discourse. In a hurry to sign all available international human rights protection instruments, the state "forgot" to execute

its most important obligation, namely to educate its institutions and constituents of the democratic and human values of tolerance, and acceptance[124]. To this day, hate speech is not being publicly disproved of by the state's institutions. The example offered in the Introduction of this research is a testament to this rule. What is more, the irrational idea that intolerance toward the *other* is an expression of one's patriotism can often be overheard in the public discourse. Depersonalised negative generalisations, and statements, upholding the superiority of the majority's ethnie are offered with pride.

The first survey of ethnic prejudice, stereotypes and social distance was conducted in 1991 by the Institute for the Study of Youth Populations upon the request of the President of the Republic of Bulgaria[125]. The analysed period was marked by extreme political and social tremors. The recent forced assimilation and exile of hundreds of thousands of the Bulgarian Turks, the despicable exploitation of ethnic fear by presidential and parliamentary candidates, the increasing unemployment, poverty and crime all provided a fertile ground for the wide-spread negative attitudes and prejudice against minorities, most hated of which were the Roma. 89% of the respondents described them as thieves, 76% – as bullies, 75% – as profiteers, 70% – as liars, 67% – as swindlers[126]. Tomova argues that the reason for the reiteration of negative stereotyping was the attempt of journalists and politicians to divert attention from the much more serious embezzlement of "state property" cases and the organised crime. Using Roma as a scapegoat was an easy form of manipulation, which is why it became popular to indicate the ethnicity of suspects or convicts, whenever they belonged to the ethnic minorities. Nowadays this practice is still widely popular. Apart form being described as criminals, in the media Roma were often presented as *dirty*, *illiterate*, *ill-bred* and *primitive*, and having less worth and less rights. A series of sociological surveys, carried out in the period 1992-1999 pointed to a positive change in the attitude of Bulgarians towards Turks and Pomaks[127]. The social distance between

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[124] For example Bulgaria's joining the Council of Europe in 1992.
[125] Tomova, 2013.
[126] Ibidem, p. 44.
[127] *The Ethno-cultural Situation in Bulgaria* (1992), *Relations of Compatibility and Incompatibility between Christians and Muslims in Bulgaria* (1994 and 1997), *The Rhodope Mountains - A Model of Tolerance* (1998), *A Culture of Peace Within the Young Generation in Bulgaria* (1999). Ibidem.

the majority and the Roma, however remained intact. As is common during economic crises, ethnocentrism, enhanced by populist and racist discourse rose significantly. Bulgarians fervently rejected any possibility of Roma working in the government's institutions or in law enforcement bodies.

Table 1. Social distance between Bulgarians and Roma (positive answers of ethnic Bulgarians) (%)[128]

I agree to:	1992	1994	1997
Marry a Gypsy	5	5	6
Have a Gypsy friend	30	30	27
Live with Gypsies in the same neighbourhood	52	40	32
Work with Gypsies	55	51	40
Live with Gypsies in the same settlement	61	61	50
Live with Gypsies in the same country	66	72	60
My child having a Gypsy teacher	-	19	16
Have a Gypsy chief of the local police office	-	11	13
Have Gypsy officers in the army	-	12	14
Have a Gypsy government minister	-	11	13
Several of my child's schoolmates being Gypsies	-	63	58
Half of my child's schoolmates being Gypsies	-	19	11
Most of my child's schoolmates being Gypsies	-	11	6

Source: IMIR. Data provided by the following surveys: *The Ethno-cultural Situation in Bulgaria* (1992) and *Relations of Compatibility and Incompatibility between Christians and Muslims in Bulgaria* (1994 and 1997).

Another valuable source addressing Roma stereotyping is Zornitsa Ganeva's book *Development of Ethnic Stereotypes in Childhood* (2009). It analyses the stereotypes about the Bulgarians, the Turks and the Roma among children from the age groups of 6-, 9-, 12- and 15-year-olds. Among the conclusions of the research were that children are prone to ascribe positive qualities to their own group, and attribute various negative characteristics to Roma children. The importance of this research lies in its findings that stereotypes are formed in early

[128] Ibidem.

childhood in the process of socialisation, and "begin to function as social norms, which are unreservedly accepted by children[129]."

4.3. INSTITUTIONAL DISCRIMINATION AGAINST ROMA

In 2010, the Universal Periodic Review for Bulgaria, held by the United Nations Human Right Council (UNHRC), identified Bulgaria's serious problems with discrimination against Roma, especially with regard to the excessive use of force by law enforcement bodies and the freely disseminated racist and xenophobic speech. Also in 2010, in its annual report the Committee for Protection of Discrimination (CPD) found that in the period 2006-2010, were filed 168 complaints about ethnic discrimination. The number of actual discrimination cases was certainly bigger, as the Committee contended, due to the victims' unwillingness to come forward with their claims. In July 2011, upon assessing Bulgarian legislation, policy and practice with regard to minority rights, the United Nations Independent Expert on Minority Issues, Ms. Gay J. McDougall, concluded that: "Current Government initiatives and financial commitments are having little more than superficial impact and are failing to address the entrenched discrimination, exclusion, and poverty faced by many Roma... Many policies seem to remain largely only rhetorical undertakings aimed at external audiences – official commitments that are not fulfilled in practice. Concrete actions on the ground and adequate financial commitment are essential[130]."

4.3.1. Police Brutality

Since the beginning of the 1990s, Bulgarian Helsinki Committee (BHC) has been raising awareness on the extremely high number of cases of unjustified police brutality during arrests or interrogations of Romani citizens. The Committee helped bring many of them before the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR). 2010 was a record-breaking year for the Court's practice against Bulgaria, as in a series of decisions it found numerous violations of Aricle 2 of the European Convention of

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[129] For more information about the research, see ibidem, p. 46.
[130] UN News Centre, 2011, in ibidem.

Human Rights (right to life). One of them was the infamous *Nachova v. Bulgaria* case, where two unarmed Roma conscripts were shot dead in the back by military police[131].

4.3.2. Local Authorities Discrimination Acts

Since 2000, when Bulgaria signed the European Social Charter (ESC), the European Committee of Social Rights (ECSR) has found three violations of the rights of citizens, members of the Roma minority[132]. In 2006, the ECSR found the lack of adequate housing a violation of Article 16 of the ESC[133] taken together with Article E, because "the Roma families are disproportionally affected by legislation limiting the possibility of legalising illegal dwellings; and the evictions carried out did not satisfy the conditions required by the Charter, in particular that of ensuring persons evicted are not rendered homeless[134]." After the Bulgarian accession to the EU, the ESC was constantly violated, especially with respect to Article 13 (right to social and medical service), Article 14 (right to benefit from social welfare service) and Article 16 (right to housing). The problems came on the one hand from the economic crisis and the ineffective judiciary system, and on the other, from the unwillingness of the majority to improve Roma's housing conditions or their access to social and health services: a direct consequence of the political and media propaganda reinforcing the age-old stereotype of the lazy, irresponsible "Gypsy." The notion that Roma are merely parasitising on the system of social assistance, resulted in three consecutive amendments to the Social Assistance Act, which reduced the period of monthly assistance first to 18 months (2006), later to 12, and finally to 6 months (2008)[135]. The right to free health services for unemployed persons was suspended as well. To counter these measures, the European Roma Rights Centre

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[131] European Court of Human Rights, Grand Chamber, Applications Nos. 43577/98 and 43579/98, 6 July 2005.

[132] Tomova, 2013.

[133] Article 16 ESC reads: "With a view to ensuring the necessary conditions for the full development of the family, which is a fundamental unit of society, the Contracting Parties undertake to promote the economic, legal and social protection of family life by such means as social and family benefits, fiscal arrangements, provision of family housing, benefits for the newly married, and other appropriate means."

[134] European Committee of Social Rights, 2006.

[135] Tomova, 2013.

lodged a collective claim against Bulgaria before the ECSR, claiming that they affected Roma disproportionately. The Committee found violations on the part of the state on Article 11, paragraph 1 (right to protection of health), and Article 13 paragraph 1 (right to social and medical assistance)[136].

In 2011 two political parties based their election campaigns on their promises that they would demolish Roma's illegal dwellings as soon as they become elected. Even though generally local authorities refrain from such actions, there have been a number of cases when several Roma houses have been demolished, leaving families on the street. In 2009, 46 illegal dwellings were demolished in Bourgas, in 2010 – one apartment block in Yambol. Both times the local authorities did not provide alternative accommodation to their residents. The lack of interest, on the part of the society encouraged other municipalities to follow their lead and soon after that, another Roma dwelling in Sofia was demolished. Reportedly among its residents were also pregnant women and children with disabilities who had no other living alternative. What is more, the police, which was present at the demolition site, unnecessarily beat the inhabitants of those houses. The response of the Ombudsman of the Republic of Bulgaria was swift: he condemned the actions of the local authorities by invoking the provisions of international law, according to which potential victims need to be consulted and informed about the purposes of the eviction and of the alternative use of the land. They must also be informed of the effective legal means of protection (including free legal assistance) against the eviction decision, or given access to land in case they remain homeless[137]. The government and local authorities however paid little attention to the Ombudsman's statement, while some media did not cover it at all.

In December 2009, the Supreme Administrative Court (SAC) for the first time sentenced a politician for his public abuse of Roma. The case concerned a Sofia municipal mayor who had made anti-Roma statements on a national radio station. The Court held that in making them, the mayor had violated the dignity of all Roma and created an

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[136] "The authorities have failed to take appropriate measures to address the health problems faced by Roma communities stemming from their often unhealthy living conditions and difficult access to health services. The medical services available for poor or socially vulnerable persons who have lost entitlement to social assistance are not sufficient" (European Committee of Social Rights, Decision on the Merits, 18 October 2006).

[137] See CESCR, 1997, paras. 15-16, in Tomova, 2013.

"abusive environment for them." The Commission for Protection of Discrimination (CPD) fined the mayor, banned him from making such statements in the future, and required him to make a public apology on the same radio station. The CPD also compelled him to publish its decision in a national newspaper at his own expense. This is the first case, in which an official has been sentenced to make a public apology for hate speech, and to publish his verdict[138].

4.3.3. Media Impact

The public use of hate speech has been an established practice in Bulgarian media since the "Revival Process," initiated by the communist regime in the mid-1980s. With the arrival of democracy, this trend did not change, if anything – it has become worse.

In the beginning of the 1990s President Zhelev's advisor on ethnic issues lodged several complaints with the Chief Prosecutor of the Republic of Bulgaria, against several print media, claiming that they were provoking ethnic hostility between Bulgarians and Roma and Turks. The Chief Prosecutor, Mr. Tatarchev, however, refused to launch a case, or to order an investigation, arguing that the statements merely "reflect the true situation, and the freedom of speech guarantees editors and journalist their right to write about unpleasant facts in impolite language[139]." According to the findings of several surveys, initiated by civil society organisations, during the 1990s anti-Roma hate speech prevailed in all analysed newspapers[140]. The surveys showed that apart from the typical negative stereotyping depicting Roma as criminals, lazy, irresponsible, living off welfare funds, they were portrayed as a social, demographic, and cultural threat to the development of Bulgarian society. The research also found that the number of materials about the Roma sharply increased around elections, when political parties would buy the votes of poor Roma. Their number also grew during summer, when political news was usually few, and Roma provided for some nice "tabloid reading material."

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[138] Bulgarian Helsinki Committee, 2009.

[139] Tomova, 2013.

[140] Several research projects analysed the content of press articles about Roma. The studies were organised by the Initiative for Human Rights Foundation, Bulgarian Helsinki Committee, Open Society Institute and S.E.G.A. Foundation.

Around the years of Bulgaria's accession to the EU, the intensity of hate speech in the media has decreased. However a BHC report of 2008 revealed several concerning trends: 1) the freedom of expression was being used as a pretext to disseminate racism, xenophobia, sexism, and prejudice towards religious, ethnic and sexual minorities; 2) the Council of Electronic Media (CEM) was failing to enforce the law on the control of television and radio operators; 3) ethic committees in press and electronic media stood idly by as their codes of ethics were constantly violated[141]. In 2008, upon conducting a monitoring of the national radio *Horizont* and its "Nedelya 150" broadcast, CEM concluded that the programme continuously kept sexual and ethnic minorities out of national air. In a most outrageous expression of indifference with regard to hate speech, the most prominent award for young journalists *Chernorizets Hrabar*, was awarded to Kalin Rumenov, who often uses racist statements against the Roma in his writings[142]. The CPD has developed a strong case law against racist hate speech and has repeatedly condemned the unnecessary indication of the ethnic origin of alleged criminals, especially when those are Roma. Nevertheless, BHC's annual report for 2009 did not show significant improvement in the electronic and print media. It has however praised the efforts of the CPD to impose international standards to the occurrences of hate speech in the media, reiterating that "freedom of expression is not an absolute right, and measures to prevent discrimination should not be formalistic and declarative[143]." In view of the CEM's inadequate indifference, the CPD remains the sole effective institution for supervening control to find violations, and punish perpetrators.

In its Fourth Monitoring Report on Bulgaria, the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) recognised the positive developments since its last report in 2004. It praised the adoption of the Protection against Discrimination Act, the creation of the Centre for Educational Integration of Children and Students from Ethnic Minorities within the Ministry of Education and Science, the participation of Bulgaria in the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015, and the adoption

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[141] Bulgarian Helsinki Committee, 2008, in Tomova, 2013.
[142] The award was ultimately revoked by the jury, after several international organisations protested at the end of August against its granting to a racist. Bulgarian Helsinki Committee, 2008.
[143] Ibidem.

of the Media Code of Ethics, prohibiting unjustified announcement of race, religion or ethnicity. Despite Bulgaria's progress in these fields, the ECRI expressed concern on the little application of the Penal Code provisions on racist crimes, the insufficient effectiveness and funding of Roma programmes, the impunity of racist talk in the media, the inadequate persecution of racist actions by the police, and the lack of a system for collection of ethnic data[144]. The ECRI also recommended, among other things, that Bulgaria immediately ratified Protocol 12 to ECHR, and trained CEM on fighting racism and penalising politicians for hate speech[145]. In 2010, it became clear that it was not only the extreme-right newspapers that used hate speech. The CPD examined the three most largely circulated daily newspapers in Bulgaria (*Novinar*, *Trud* and *24 Chassa*) and found that texts reinforcing negative stereotyping, and inciting hatred against the Roma were periodically published therein. Two studies on the print media, published in *Population Review*'s issues of 2011 and 2012, identified a changing trend in the racist rhetoric: "modern" racism was now substituting overt racism in an attempt to avoid CPD's sanctions for hate speech[146].

[144] ECRI report, in Tomova, 2013.
[145] Other recommendations included: to ratify Protocol 12 to the European Convention on Human Rights; to provide the Commissions for Protection against Discrimination with sufficient human and financial resources; not to impede the freedom of association of any community; to effectively integrate the Roma children in the schools; to prevent racial profiling and the excessive use of force by the police.
[146] The two surveys were implemented by the Open Society Institute and INTEGRO (Tomova, 2013).

5.

ETHNOCENTRISM IN BULGARIAN SOCIETY TODAY

The long tradition of the Bulgarian state of marginalising the "odd one in the group," is as much an *effect* of the traumatic early-onset ethnocentric interpretation of nationhood, as it is a direct *cause* for its perpetuation. In employing minority-insensitive policies, the state legitimises discrimination and leads the majority by example. Bulgaria's democracy has not yet reached the level of farsightedness where its institutions could understand why treating a fraction of society with disrespect can be problematic. From a constructivist perspective, the opposite could be argued: that it is after all ordinary people who compile the state apparatus, and so it is the society that sets the discriminatory tone.

With regard to the ethnic question, Lurie contends that ethnicity is not only one's culture, but also the manner of its interaction with neighbouring communities. When there is no compatibility in the cultural manners and algorithms of behaviour, the feeling of the distinctness, and foreign-ness of the neighbour will be perceived as something natural, primordial. If, however the neighbouring communities are generally compatible, the division between "us and them" becomes more difficult and only appears when prompted by additional external pressures such as economical, political, and social tremors[147]. This is precisely when the nationalistic discourse becomes most avid – ethnicity surfaces in times of crisis. Since Bulgaria has been entering and re-entering crises since the beginning of its democratic transition, it is no wonder why the ethnic question has not been dropped for the last 25 years.

The modern state of Bulgarian nationalism can be analysed from

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[147] Lurie, 1999.

the data gathered in the research "Ethnicities and Power[148]" of 1998, analysed by T. Nedelcheva, and the secondary analysis of the data from the surveys "State of Society[149]" from 2002, 2006, 2007, made by Petya Kabakchieva in "Social Status and Nationalism[150]."

In the data from 1998, Nedelcheva observes two levels of tolerance in the Bulgarian community: a declarative (expressing the "desired" public attitude) and factual (expressing certain fears, historical constructions, and persisting frustrations). On the declarative level Bulgarians in general are tolerant: 81% accept the fact that Bulgarian society is a unity of different ethnic communities. The majority of the Bulgarians (55%) also approves of the participation of representatives of other ethnic communities in the government and in the political life of the country. Nevertheless, the prevailing 64% are convinced that in the Bulgarian nation belong only those who share Bulgarian traditions and customs. 71% of the respondent Bulgarians approve of the cultural development of the other ethnic groups, on the condition that it is not state funded (for example achieved through the work of NGOs). What is more, only a little over 30% agree that representatives of different ethnic groups should have their own political parties and be able to study their mother language in state schools. The analysis reveals the substantial discrepancies between the declared principles of the democratic society, and the ethnocentric projections of the majority.

From the three surveys of the 2000s, Kabakchieva draws a different, qualitative set of conclusions, tracing nationalism to different social groups within the ethnic Bulgarian community. She finds that those who have a mobile way of life and communicate with other cultures on a regular basis, are less prone to develop nationalist views. The opposite is also true – the "rootedness" in the place engenders ethnocentrism. Her research also revealed that there are two types of nationalists in modern day: 1) "classic patriots" (15%), and 2) those "rooted to the soil" (40%). The first ones are mostly representatives of the upper middle class, over 50 years of age, well educated and sympathising with the left or central-left parties. They perceive Bulgaria through its history and national ideals. The second type, are the representatives of the aggressive nationalism, mostly elderly, poorly educated people,

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[148] "Етносите и властта".
[149] "Състояние на обществото".
[150] "Социален статус и национализъм".

supporting the radical party ATAKA, and with strong opposition to everyone different and foreign.

With the exception of those two groups, Kabakchieva observes the absence of nationalist moods in Bulgarian society. What is more, she argues that there is a strong tendency of "denationalisation" of Bulgarians: the nation-state has disintegrated into a nation and a state. To the perception of its citizens, Bulgaria has now shrunk to their immediate social circle – family, friends, favourite places, the hometown. In that case, there is no danger of nationalist outbursts, *per se*, but the de-nationalisation of the individual can bring some unforeseeable implications. If he/she begins to identify with the kin and ethnos, instead with the nation and state, the already fragile civic foundation of the Bulgarian nation will crumble. This re-ethnisation can conjure the need to defend oneself from the "threatening other" to the effect that Bulgarians could begin disputing, or bluntly violating others' civil rights. Under the guidance of a strong victimisation discourse, warning of the *others*' "coming," "breeding," "taking," "destroying," Bulgarians could develop an aggressive nationalist attitude that can amount to a full-blown ethnic conflict. This would be the case if the ethnic Bulgarian community begins to perceive itself as being on the road to extinction. It seems that the traumatic nationalism of survival could most easily be invoked against the Roma. In the survey of 2006, 48% Bulgarians have said that they mistrust and openly hate members of the minority.

6.

"REBOOTING THE SYSTEM"

6.1. WHY IS IT NECESSARY?

In the wake of recent events, the conflict in Sofia's Orlandovtsi neighbourhood, the following clashes in Garmen, and the re-launching of the campaigns for demolishment of Roma's illegal dwellings, electronic and print media, and the social networks in Bulgaria are once again swarming with overt anti-Roma propaganda. Yet in the online edition of a respected Bulgarian newspaper for economic analysis (*Capital*) we find an article entitled "We Can't Do Without the Roma[151]." It offers a refreshing and rational analysis of the present and future of Bulgarian society, beginning with a description of the first successful model for Roma inclusion in Bulgaria. It was implemented in the district of Kavarna, where 1/4 of the local population is of Roma origin. Reportedly, the mayor, Tsonko Tsonev, began with a simple calculation – "if one fourth of Kavarna's population are Roma, then one fourth of the municipality budget will be spent for the improvement of their living conditions. They are voters, whose votes are worth being gained through investments in their living environment, and not through distribution of meatballs[152]." The mayor managed to convince the municipality council as well as the ethnic Bulgarian population that Roma's well-being is of crucial importance for the development of the whole municipality. The authorities used the European Union

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[151] Translation mine. ("Не можем без ромите"), 26 June 2015, available at http://www.capital.bg/politika_i_ikonomika/obshtestvo/vsichko_za_pravata_ni/2015/06/26/2560928_ne_mojem_bez_romite/?sp=0#storystart.

[152] The mayor refers to the established practice of politicians to offer free meatballs, and other food and drink to Roma voters during election campaigns, so as to secure their votes.

funds for the improvement of Roma's neighbourhood infrastructure (streets, sewage system, water pipes) and assisted the Roma working abroad with the preparation of their documents for legal residence in their host-states. Education in nurseries and kindergartens was made free for all children in the city, so that all those whose mother tongue was not Bulgarian could proceed to school much more easily and avoid the early dropout risk. The municipality also made a point in employing Roma in the education, health care and local administration structures. By empowering them to participate and care for their own municipality, the local authorities, and the Roma have build an environment where rules are being followed and respected.

The article goes on with an economic analysis of a pending dismal future. According to the World Bank and the Institute for Market Economics, in 2030 40% of the people in employment age will be of Roma origin. If they are unable to read and write, have no skills and qualifications, have no employment or are poorly paid, the future retired populations will clearly have no funding for pensions. In general terms, without the Roma Bulgarian society is doomed to failure, poverty and misery. Bulgarians simply cannot afford to procrastinate or impede the improvement of Roma's living and social conditions, because they are losing money, time and future. Petar Ganev, an economist from the Institute for Market Economics confirms that the pension system, which is based on the solidarity model, where the working are taking care of the retired, will collapse in 20 years time. The poverty levels of the people in working age will rise dramatically. "We are an old, and sick society with few children" adds Prof. Ilona Tomova from the Institute for the Analysis of the Person and the Population with the Bulgarain Academy of Sciences. "One third of the population do not have Bulgarian as their mother tongue and if we do not embrace solidarity, we are running the risk of shortage of services. Because they [the non-ethnic Bulgarians] will have to provide for our pensions, education and health system, the care for senior population, the opportunities for annual leave."

These daunting conditions will increasingly make Bulgaria an un-attractive destination for foreign investors. Employers in whole sectors will struggle to find qualified workforce, because those seeking employment will not be able to meet basic requirements. Foreign investors in economically strong regions like Plovdiv have already taken into their own hands the training of their employees and pressure local

authorities into adopting a reform in the education system[153]. The road ahead necessarily involves inclusion of the current poor and unemployed in the labour market and making education equal for all once again.

According to the 2006 research of Bogdanov and Angelov, the reforms required for the Roma inclusion do not need great funding, and in that regard are not expensive from the society point of view. The total expenditure for their integration are between 0.7 and 1.1 billion leva (0.35-0.60 billion Euro) for a period of 10 years. The positive effects of their integration however are huge. Through saving on social assistance, decreasing the lack of efficiency, augmentation of the applied labour and the gained revenue, lowering of mortality rate and crime, the benefits of the Roma inclusion for the whole society are between 15 and 30 billion leva (7.5 and 15 billion Euro)[154]. The positive impact exceeds the expenditures between 20 and 30 times, not counting the positive effects related to the increase of the educational levels, since they need more time to manifest (Table 2). In comparison, the positive effects of Roma's inclusion are higher than the annual size of the consolidated state budget of Bulgaria – between 35 and 70% of Bulgaria's gross national product (GNP).

Table. 2. Benefits from Roma's inclusion[155]

Million leva (EUR)	Minimum	Average	Maximum
Saved social assistance	2000 (1000)	3150 (1575)	4300 (2150)
Decreased lack of efficiency	667 (334)	1050 (525)	1433 (716)
Labour, revenue, GNP	8100 (450)	12650 (6325)	17200 (8600)
Lower mortality rates	2500 (1250)	4400 (2200)	6300 (3150)
Lower crime rates	1400 (700)	1400 (700)	1400 (700)
Total	14667 (12334)	22650 (11325)	30633 (15316)

[153] For example the German firm "Pirin-tex," as well as the big companies "William Hughs" and ABB Bulgaria. See the article "Not a Burden, but a Resource" ('Не тежест, а ресурс'), 26 June 2015, available (in Bulgarian) at http://www.capital.bg/politika_i_ikonomika/obshtestvo/vsichko_za_pravata_ni/ 2015/06/26/2561053_ne_tejest_a_resurs/.
[154] The numbers are estimated in 2006 for a 10 year period.
[155] More findings of the research in Bogdanov & Angelov, 2006.

Table 3. Expenditure for Roma's inclusion[156]

Million leva (EUR)	Minimum	Average	Maximum
Re-qualification, education	500 (250)	650 (325)	800 (400)
Housing and infrastructure	266 (133)	313 (156)	360 (180)
Total	766 (383)	963 (481)	1160 (580)

6.2. "RE-IMAGINING" THE NATION: TOWARDS A CIVIC CONCEPT

As already established, one of the most important nation-building methods is the system of standardised mandatory education. The role of the teachers and educational institutions is crucial to the development of analytical thought and for the construction of the image of the nation in children and young adults. Through the studying of own history, literature, and art, the new generations learn to value and respect their culture and to distinguish it with pride from all others. With that regard, it is no wonder that ethnic Bulgarian children, as shown above, grow up with a feeling of superiority towards all other ethnic minorities despite sharing equal rights. In the state-approved syllabi for grades three to seven, very little attention is paid to the history and culture of ethnic minorities[157]. The topic is introduced for the first time in the third grade, in the subject "The Person and Society" with the studying of the National Enlightenment process of the 18th and 19th centuries in the following way: "Cohabitance [of Bulgarians] with the others: Turks, Jews, Armenians, Roma and other communities[158]." From the outset, children are presented with the concept of the "non-Bulgarian" *other*. Although it is a historical fact (as I have argued above) that the Bulgarian national identity was formed excluding all other religious and ethnic communities, this process needs to be explained in a sensitive way so that young, impressionable children would be able to distinguish history from present day life. More specifically, it should be emphasised that yesterday's *others*, are today's *our own*: Bulgarian citizens taking

[156] Ibidem.
[157] All of them available in Bulgarian at https://www.mon.bg/?go=page&pageId=1&sub pageId=28.
[158] Syllabus available in Bulgarian at http://www.mon.bg/?h=downloadFile&fileId=521.

their rightful place in the social and political life of the country we all share. The same approach should be used when teaching about the role of the Orthodox Church for the development of the national self-awareness. In the third grade syllabus, cited above, Orthodoxy has been established as one of the foundations of Bulgarian identity. This immediately sends a signal to every student that all non-Christians are outsiders, and "lesser" Bulgarians. Religious and cultural diversity should not be taught superficially, on the side, and presented merely as bringing additional exoticism to the Bulgarian nation. Diversity should be established as part of what being Bulgarian is. Apart from prominent Bulgarian historical figures, the third grade syllabus should also include such persons from every minority group, whose deeds and achievements have contributed to the development and progress of the Bulgarian culture and state. Through such examples students will learn to respect different cultures and religions and see that each and every one of them have their rightful and deserving place in our society. This is especially necessary with regard to the Turkish minority. With so much literature and folklore, dedicated to the ruthless acts of the Ottoman oppressors, the children could easily link Turks with the image of the "enemy." As early as the third grade, children should be introduced to the origins, histories and cultures of all ethnic groups, and how they came to compile the modern Bulgarian nation. Currently the only ethnic group that is being examined properly is the one of the majority; Turks are presented in their capacity of "natural enemies," and Roma's origin or history is not being taught at all.

According to the sixth grade literature syllabus, the studying of the Bulgarain novel *Under the Yoke*, the most famous piece of classic Bulgarian literature, is meant to help form national-identity awareness in students. Given that the novel is centred on the preparation of the Bulgarian uprising against the Ottoman rule, where "the good" and "the bad," are constructed along ethnic and religious lines, it is clear how such an objective could send mixed messages. Once again, the distinction between ethnicity and nation should be emphasised. While *Under the Yoke*, as well as all other Revival literary works, is undoubtedly of crucial importance for the Bulgarian ethnic awareness, less weight should be given to its relation to the modern Bulgarian nation: a unity of different religions and ethnicities.

Music and art classes can also contribute to the development of an egalitarian perception of the other. The names and works of famous

singers and composers from minority communities should be studied, especially with view to the fact that "being naturally talented musicians" is among the very few positive stereotypes that exist about the Roma.

6.3. TAKING DOWN STEREOTYPES

Stereotypes exist on both individual and systemic levels, which is why anti-stereotype strategies also need to be implemented ubiquitously (on an institutional, individual and cultural level)[159]. This multi-faceted, inclusive strategy for combatting stereotypes must necessarily include both "bottom-up" (institutionally instigated actions, such as advertising campaigns) and "top-down" (addressing specific stereotypical behaviours) "custom-made" approaches, as opposed to "one-size fits all" programmes, which are not able to address specific issues in different regions. According to Maučec, to tackle down stereotypes, one must firstly acknowledge that at least some part of the Roma behave in a way, which confirms certain negative stereotypes. Consequently the strategy will only be successful if members of both Roma and non-Roma groups work together to improve their relationships, especially given the fact that over the centuries long history of interaction, negative prejudice about *the other* have been accumulating on both sides. However persistent and widespread stereotypes tend to be, it has been proven that they are still responsive to new information and therefore can be changed. Key aspects of the adopted measures include: providing accurate information to eliminate false beliefs, avoiding "one-way" communication (both ethnic groups should be given the opportunity to engage in the discussions), invoking both sides' empathy for each other, pointing out similarities first, while emphasising cultural diversity and plurality, focusing on changing the stereotype-inspired actions and behaviours (rather than attitudes and/or beliefs, which are much more difficult to change), obtaining the support of unambiguous political leadership, engaging leaders from academia, sport, police, public life to consistently send messagees condemning stereotypy behaviours[160].

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[159] Maučec, 2013. The following chapter follows his findings.
[160] Ibidem.

6.3.1. Individual Strategies

First, individual strategies include *providing knowledge about social and cultural issues*. As noted above educational institutions and teaching materials can have a deep impact on the development of students' perceptions about national-awareness and negative stereotyping. Through discussions, stories, and exercises in class, teachers can help students understand and overcome conflicts in their homes and communities. Intergroup activities are easier and more beneficial when students from both Roma and non-Roma ethnic groups are present, so that both sides can share their point of view. Even if this is not the case however, teachers should still encourage students to develop an understanding of the other, not only by imparting knowledge, but also by utilising other individual tools such as creating *dissonance* and using *empathy*. *Dissonance* is the psychological inconvenience, which could amount to feelings of guilt as a result of a perceived inconsistency between one's openly endorsed egalitarian values, and the negative attitudes that he/she might still hold on the inside towards the out-group members[161]. *Empathy* on the other hand involves taking the perspective of the other and seeing things through their eyes, which may lead to altruistic behaviour.

6.3.2. Interpersonal Strategies

According to Reneé Weber and Jennifer Crocker, stereotypes can be reversed when a typical group member performs more frequently counter-stereotypy behaviours[162]. What is important here is not to allow this member to be treated as "the exception to the rule." With *the intergroup contact*, the member should constantly remind the others of his/her group membership. From then on, building a closer relationship with an opposite-group member, would facilitate the more positive evaluations of their group as a whole. Especially beneficial is the realisation that the two have things in common. Stereotypes' worst feature is that they serve to "dehumanise" and humiliate the other, to the effect that he/she is no longer worthy of compassion or empathy. Sharing hobbies, interests,

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[161] Pedersen et al., 2003, p. 263.
[162] Weber & Crocker, 1983.

and especially nurturing emotions (such as care for children or aging parents), "restores" one's humanity once more. After breaking the initial ice, the challenge is to avoid the all too easy conclusion that the persons who do not fulfil the stereotype are simply "not like the others." The way to expand this transformative experience beyond individual members of out-groups sometimes goes through participation in dialogue groups and problem solving workshops, that are not specifically focused on the breaking of stereotypes, but have other, more general goals. These could be joint recreational, and sport programmes, women or children-focused activities, and so on. According to Petersen et al., in order to be successful these joint activities should meet several requirements: conflicting groups must have equal status within conflicting situation, there should be no competition along group lines, groups must seek superordinate goals within the context of the activities, relevant institutional authorities must monitor the intergroup contact and reduce tension if needed[163]. The challenge is to simultaneously address both sameness and diversity of both groups' members. To be effective, the contact situation must expose people to stereotype-inconsistent information, which is repeated, by many group members, who are typical.

Another interpersonal method for diminishing stereotypes is *providing different "consensus" information*. People who believe that they are being supported by the majority in their negative views about the out-group, are more likely to hold on to their stereotypes much longer. On the contrary, when their support is "taken away" they are more likely to change their own attitudes. *Dialogue* is always more beneficial than "being lectured at," which is why establishing forums, platforms, and round tables for discussion helps bring more understanding and sometimes offer creative solutions.

Last but not least, interpersonal strategies can be delivered to a wide audience through advertising and awareness raising programmes. Since both electronic and print media have proven so successful in disseminating negative stereotypes over the years, their impact on public opinion has been established with certainty. Through characterising people in certain ways, they influence their viewers/readers to do the same, Maučec concludes[164].

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[163] Pedersen et al., 2003, p. 15.
[164] Maučec, 2013.

7.

CONCLUSION

This research established the reason for Bulgarians' rejection of *the other*. It observed Bulgarian ethnic identity's formation, and its "coming of age" as a national identity in the context of the new liberated state. It then demonstrated how the programme of state nationalism assumed the innate Bulgarian defensiveness to assimilate, exclude or disregard *the other*. It argued that for the sake of progress, this defensiveness must be overcome, and the nation must be "re-imagined." Even though this entails a personal transformation on an individual level, it is the democratic state that holds the inalienable responsibility to detect the need for change and use its legislation, institutions, and initiatives to make it happen. From the *multicultural collectivism*, which views diversity as coexistence of separate social groups, Bulgaria needs to move forward to *multicultural individualism*, reconstructing society as a unity of individuals with different characteristics, but common interests.

The state needs to educate its sovereign on the significance of *the other*, and of the harmful consequences of the "marriage" between the *ethnic* and the *national*, which not only affect the minority, but over the long term hamper the progress of the entire nation. "Re-thinking" the Bulgarian nation necessarily includes a *divorce* between the ethnocentric defensiveness of its origins and its current democratic aspirations. Ethnocentrism as demonstrated above complements "nicely" totalitarian regimes, whose moral foundations have always been questionable. Democracy however is a finely tuned instrument, with very precise settings, which does not work, in the absence of freedom, equality, and fraternity. Because democracy bestows its future to its people, when it does not work for some, after a while, it will work for none. From the growing ethnic tension in Bulgarian society today, it is clear that this process has already begun. Its economic implications

are also already being felt. If the state stubbornly continues to regard the "Roma problem" a *Roma's problem*, by 2030 Bulgarian society will experience a full-blown socio-economic crisis, when it will be up to the illiterate and unemployed young to support the sick old.

Bulgaria can no longer mismatch modern democratic rule with out-dated elitist practices. In 1991, it denounced its own exclusion from the democratic world and proclaimed its "resolve to create a democratic and social state, governed by the rule of law[165]." 25 years later, it is high time that it "played the part."

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[165] Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria, Preamble.

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