

## THE EFFECTS AND APPEARANCES OF NAMECIDE PROCESS FROM SOCIALIST TO POST-SOCIALIST BULGARIA

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The paper seeks to discover common patterns among the oral history narratives told by witness-informants who experienced namecide, ethnic genocide, ethnic discrimination, and ethnic cleansing under communism in Bulgaria, today living in Turkey, and have many experiences, related with the effects and appearances of namecide fact, in post-socialist Bulgaria. In conclusion the study discusses the actual developments on condemnation of the crimes of Bulgarian communism which related with namecide and the common patterns of conceptualisation on namecide, ethnic genocide, ethnic discrimination, and ethnic cleansing by victims, scholars, human rights organizations, and post-socialist Bulgarian political authorities.

**Key Words:** Bulgarian Political Authority, National Turkish Minority, Namecide, Ethnic Genocide, Ethnic Discrimination, Ethnic Cleansing, Nameanomie.

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This study problematizes, examines, and defines some effects and appearances of *namecide* process from socialist to post-socialist Bulgaria. The *namecide* as a type of socialist Bulgarian political violence was over, but its influences continue in various dimensions, fields, and forms in everyday life of national Turkish minority's members who today are a citizen of Bulgaria, no matter today in which country they live in. Many Turks lived in Bulgaria, Turkey, or another countries including also post-socialist European countries have to live with an *name-anomie* due to being victims of *namecide* in recent socialist Bulgarian past.

The main problematization of the paper is that: how the *namecide* conducted by socialist Bulgarian political authority on national Turkish minority between 1984 and 1989 was lived by Turkish victims in recent socialist past and is lived by same Turkish victims in post-socialist today?

After defining the concept of *namecide* the mentioned question/problem is taken in the context of four categories. Three categories of them are related with three implementations of socialist Bulgarian political authority: ethnic genocide, ethnic discrimination, and ethnic cleansing. The rest category is on the ongoing influence of *namecide* fact in the period of post-socialist Bulgarian political authority.

In the study the techniques of collecting data are largely the oral history interviews with 20 witnesses<sup>15</sup> and partially the observation of writer<sup>16</sup> of this study. Oral history interviews were done in Bursa-Turkey during March 2010 within the scope of PhD work<sup>17</sup> of writer of this study. Data achieved from the oral history narratives told by 20 witnesses, who are also the survivors of last concentration camps of socialist Eastern European countries (Belene Concentration Camp, Belene Isolation Camp, and Bobovdol Concentration Camp operating in Bulgaria between 1985 and 1987), have analyzed in the mentioned four main categories above. That empirical research data has the nature of primary source.

20 witness-informants was expelled from Bulgaria during the ethnic cleansing of 1989 and today settle down in Bursa-Turkey. All of them are citizens of both Bulgaria and Turkey. After 1989 deportation they had citizenship in Turkey. They have experienced a very complex process as a part of national Turkish minority and suffered various cides including namecide, and discriminations. Today they continue to experience and suffer the various effects and appearances of the recent past. Perhaps the *namecide* of recent socialist past have turned to the *anomie of name* in post-socialist period.

### 1. The Concept of *Namecide*

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<sup>15</sup> The detailed information of 20 witness- and camp survivor informants are given in Özkan's unpublished PhD thesis (2010: 211-256) that can be accessed free through the link <http://tez2.yok.gov.tr/>.

<sup>16</sup> The writer of this study is also a witness and victim of the namecide process in recent socialist past (between 1984 and 1989) and post-socialist period of Bulgaria. She was forcefully given the "Valia Sergeeva Mileva" name in socialist Bulgaria during the namecide of December 1984. After 2002 in Bulgaria she have taken back her Turkish name as "Vildane Shabanova Alieva". Therefore, the observation technique of this study is also the *experienced observation* (or the *observation of experience*).

<sup>17</sup> The title of that PhD thesis is *Bulgaristan Halk Cumhuriyeti'nde Siyasi Otorite ile Ulusal Türk Azınlığı Arasındaki Güç İlişkileri Bağlamında Belene Toplama Kampı (1985-86)* [Belene Concentration Camp (1985-86) in the Context of Power Relations Between Political Authority and National Turkish Minority in People's Republic of Bulgaria]. The thesis is written in Turkish at the Department of Sociology in Hacettepe University, unpublished, and can be accessed free through the link <http://tez2.yok.gov.tr/>.

In literature of social sciences the “namecide” concept have firstly been proposed by Vildane Özkan (2010) within the scope of her PhD thesis, especially for defining forcefully changing names in People’s Republic of Bulgaria. The concept of *namecide* have been proposed with inspired by concepts of genocide, ethnic-cide, culture-cide.

Özkan (2012: 28) defines that *namecide* is to change systematically with political force the names of persons belong to ethnic, national, religious etc. minority group into the names belong dominant culture in the nation-state, as in the case of Bulgaria. Özkan proposes that *namecide* concept also defines to change systematically with political force the names of city, town, village, mountain, hills, river, stream, field, mosque, fountain, gravestone, etc. belong to ethnic, national, religious etc. minority group’s culture into the names belong dominant culture in the nation-state.

In Bulgaria *namecides* was also committed on other ethnic and national minorities (Romas, Macedonians, Pomaks etc.), but this study is only limited with the *namecide* committed on national Turkish minority’s members between 1984 and 1989.

It should to be noted that *nameanomie* occurs during and after the *namecide* process conducted against the functionality of a group’s names. *Nameanomie* as a result of *namecides* means that the members of ethnic, national, religious, etc. group suffer to anomie when they need to use “name” in formal and informal relationships.

In widespread literature that namecide fact known as “forcefully changing names (насилствената смяна на имената)”. Nameanomie process suffered citizens of Turkish origin of post-socialist Bulgaria nearly not mentioned, even under other words/forms.

## 2. *Namecide* in the Context of Ethnic Genocide

Ünal Lütfi, head of the Bulgarian parliamentary delegation, during the debate on the need for international condemnation of the crimes of totalitarian communist regimes at the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe’s January 25, 2006 part-session, said the following (Narodno Sybranie Na Republika Bylgarija, 2006; Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly, 2010):

It can not be missed the fact that some totalitarian regimes have remained until the end repressive and criminal. The most extreme example of this is the so-called “Revival Process” in Bulgaria that lasted five years. Within two months between 1984 and 1985, in gross violation of human rights –violence, murder and sent to camps and prisons–, the communist totalitarian regime tried to touch one of the most important human rights –human identity–. Over 1 million ethnic Turks and Muslims were forced to change their names to Bulgarian, 517 people were sent to the camp “Belene”, 2 000 people were interned, about 5 000 were arrested by the police. Many homes were deliberately destroyed. For the period May 1989 - September 1989, 350 000 people were forcibly deported to neighbour Turkey. The aim of totalitarian communist rule is to make the population in Bulgaria a mono-ethnic country without minorities. ... Ladies and gentlemen, let me give this poignant example, because this form of gross violation of human rights is not only a violation of the human dignity, the right to religious freedom, and the right to cultural heritage. It is a policy of ethnic genocide [етногеноцид]! Invasion of ethnic and religious identity of the man! A flagrant crime ... (Narodno Sybranie Na Republika Bylgarija, 2006).

Dimitrov (2000: 2) expressed the ethnic genocide including *namecide* as “asimilation by changing names” and defines it as “the most extreme nationalist policy in Eastern Europe in the 1980s”:

... the most extreme nationalist policy in Eastern Europe in the 1980s – Bulgaria’s attempt to assimilate its Turkish minority by changing their names from Arabic-Turkish to Slavic-Bulgarian. The policy stands out both because of its numerical parameters and the nature of the imposed changes. In the little more than a month between December 1984 and January 1985, nearly one million people, more than a tenth of Bulgaria’s population were forced to change their names. This represented one of the most extensive and certainly the most rapid assimilation campaigns in European history. The change of personal names was something to which no communist regime had resorted before. Even Ceausescu in Romania ... did not go so far as to force Romanian names on the minority.

According to the data obtained from oral history narratives told by 20 witness- and camp survivor informants; ethnic genocide committed by Bulgarian socialist political authority from 1984 to 1989, in the official name of “revival process (възродителният процес)”, has been imposed on all members without exception<sup>18</sup> of Turkish minority in the People’s Republic of Bulgaria. Political authority based on the thesis of “revival process” claimed that “In Bulgaria there are only Bulgarians. People who speak Turkish are also Bulgarians who forced to turkification under

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<sup>18</sup> Before December 1984, there was also *namecides* on the members of national Turkish minority, but within almost three or four weeks between December and January 1984, unexceptional each one of turks was suffered *namecides* within scope of ethnic genocide.

ottoman captivity and today these people are aware of this reality and voluntarily want to return to their Bulgarian origins. And so they voluntarily want their Bulgarian names back.”

After accepted and conducted the above-mentioned official thesis, a ethnic genocide including *namecide* was initiated by Bulgarian socialist political authority against national Turkish minority. All of 20 witness- and camp survivor informants expressed that between 1984 and 1989 all Turkish names was forcibly changed to bulgarian names, speaking in Turkish and using “old” Turkish names was prohibited in all social and private areas even including their own home, tombs with Turkish name was destroyed. Informants said that Turks who resisted, not adapted, labeled with “have the potential to resist” by political authority, and in some cases even also adapted – was arrested, sended to concentration camps and prisons, beaten, tortured, killed (see also Associated Pres., 1986), given pecuniary punishment, exiled, dismissed, their children was suffered to discrimination in schools, kept under probation or house arrest, etc. and during the summer of 1989 expelled from Bulgaria.

Witness- and camp survivors informants remarked that members of national Turkish minority showed the greatest resistance against *namecide* among the above-mentioned many varieties of suppression within the scope of ethnic cleansing. 19 informants have expressed that arrested because of his resisting and not adaptation to especially *namecide* process. 1 informant said that arrested because of labeled “have the potential to resist”.

Today, as a result of the oral history narratives of witnesses and observation of this study's writer, it can be said that the fact of *namecide* have the most important place in memories of Turkish victims of ethnic genocide committed by Bulgarian socialist political authority in recent past.

### **3. *Namecide* in the Context of Ethnic Discrimination**

According to the data obtained from oral history narratives told by 20 witness- and camp survivor informants; in socialist Bulgaria the discrimination was, continuously but escalating, applied against Turks. Informants remarked such examples: the members of national Turkish minority was tended to occupations at the bottom of social hierarchy such as worker, builder, tailor, driver, etc. and there were places for very few Turks at the more top of social hierarchy such as doctor, engineer, teacher, etc. Furthermore Turks was banned from some occupations at the top such as pilot, armed soldier, shipmaster, diplomat, etc.

Informants emphasized that when Turks fulfilled the 2 years of military service as a worker-soldier doing the heavy works in buildings, construction of railway; Bulgarians as armed soldiers without working in constructions. All of informants also stressed that young Turks as worker-soldiers spent a great deal of effort in the establishment of heavy industry in socialist Bulgaria. Turks were restricted to go out socialist Bulgaria more than Bulgarians.

Informants said that even after *namecide* conducted as result of the official thesis of “all people in Bulgaria are Bulgarian”, the ethnic discrimination against Turks was continued in earlier areas, forms and dimensions –in education system, occupations, military system, going abroad, etc.

### **4. *Namecide* in the Context of Ethnic Cleansing**

Within the scope of ethnic cleansing, almost 400,000 Turks were expelled from Bulgaria to Turkey during the summer of 1989. Before some months the Parliamentary of Bulgaria have called this expelling as “ethnic cleansing”. On January 11, 2012, the 41st National Assembly of Bulgaria adopted a declaration that “condemns” the ethnic genocide under the name of “assimilation process” and of “forced assimilation”. In the same declaration the National Assembly declared as ethnic cleansing the deportation nearly half million Turks from Bulgaria to Turkey during the summer of 1989 (Narodno Sybranie na Republika Bylgarija, 2012; Demokrati Za Silna Bylgarija, 2012; Özkan, 2012a).

The members of national Turkish minority subjected to ethnic cleansing were not show compliance with the “Bulgarian/Slav names” given in scope of *namecide*. These members of minority and their families were firstly expelled from Bulgaria. Between these victims there were 20 informants of this study.

20 witness- and camp survivor informants also are victims of that ethnic cleansing in 1989. Most of informants said that they expelled from Bulgaria to Western European countries, but after arriving to these countries they applied to the Embassy of Turkey for going to Turkey, because of the very strong desire to live their own Turkish culture. Because then they was wanting only their basic human rights such as to speak in their mother-tongue, to use their Turkish names in relationships, etc.

Informants today live in Bursa-Turkey. They, in addition to the citizenship of Bulgaria, had the citizenship of Turkey after 1989. Most of them visit post-socialist Bulgaria and spend summer holidays in their own places before ethnic cleansing. They have complex feelings on their lives in socialist and post-socialist Bulgaria.

### **5. Effects and Appearances of *Namecide* in Post-Socialist Bulgaria**

According to the data obtained from oral history narratives told by 20 witness- and camp survivor informants and the observation of this study's writer; after 1989, today in post-socialist Bulgaria, the various patterns of reactions of Turkish victims to *namecide* can be classified in the following six categories:

1. Some of victims not even pronounce the "Bulgarian" name given by Bulgarian socialist political authority.
2. Some of victims have taken Turkish names without the suffixes of "-ov, -ova".
3. Some of victims have taken Turkish names with the suffixes of "-ov, -ova".
4. Some of victims are not taking back their Turkish name due to various reasons, although very much wanting to take the Turkish name.
5. Some of victims voluntarily and proudly carry today the "Bulgarian names" forcibly given in recent Bulgarian socialist past. They say that they liked that name or have more prestige Bulgarian name than Turkish name, both in Bulgaria and in other European countries.
6. After taking Turkish names, some of victims compulsorily take back again "Bulgarian names" due to ethnic discrimination in public, social, official places against Turkish names in post-socialist Bulgaria.

Bulgarian nationalism strongly continues in various types, dimensions and forms (for examples see Özkan, 2012b) in post-socialist Bulgaria. It can be said that the above-mentioned reaction patterns of victims to *namecide* are influenced by such nationalist social-cultural-political environment.

### Conclusion and Discussion

It can be said that today there are two main trends toward *namecide* process and its influence in lives of victims: on one hand it is almost totally ignoring, and on other hand it take into consideration but with the reducing of severity of *namecide* process. For example the second attitude describes the *namecide* process as "forcibly changing names".

Today the most of politicians, scholars, victims, human rights organizations, etc. continue intentionally or unintentionally to describe and define the suppressions in socialist and post-socialist Bulgaria, with the reducing of severity of political violence. For example:

1. *ethnic genocide* generally expressed with "assimilation, forced assimilation" words;
2. *ethnic cleansing* generally expressed with "migration, forced migration" words;
3. *namecide* as the above-mentioned generally expressed with "forcibly changing names" word;
4. *ethnic discrimination* against Turks in post-socialist Bulgaria generally not expressed.

It seems that both suppressions on national Turkish minority in Bulgarian socialist past and the continuities of same suppressions in post-socialist Bulgaria have not enough conceptualized by social sciences, although they have original patterns in social-cultural-political contexts. And these suppressions also not been associated with legal sanctions, although the Declaration of Condemnation accepted by the National Assembly of Bulgaria.

The situation of national Turkish minority in post-socialist Bulgaria is very complex. To analyze this complex context and process is needed especially more empirical data of the nature of primary sources. There are archival documents (see Angelov, 2008) with free accessible on the subject today, but also there are need for more collecting of narratives of live witnesses.

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