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BULGARIAN POLITICS OF MULTICULTURALISM – USES AND ABUSES

(Case-study)[*]

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The main manifestations of the present Bulgarian politics of multiculturalism can only be understood in the context of the national history, geography, and the complex and sometimes controversial ethno-cultural relationships within the framework of the nation-state, which were inevitably influenced by the international milieu including the implicit impact of the Balkan neighboring countries.

However, before we trace the main outlines in the present profile of the ethno-cultural relations in Bulgaria, we need to make some clarifications, concerning the use of the basic terms, which should be used more carefully regarding the Balkan context and especially the Bulgarian society:

1) In the name of theoretical accuracy, it is not correct to speak about multiculturalism as a political philosophy, based on a moral theory and applied to the practices of a certain society as it is the case of Canada, where in 1988 the concept of multiculturalism was accepted under the form of a Law as basis for official policy. A decade later the same happened in Australia - and obviously the cultural context of these two countries differs much from the Balkan ethnic patchwork. Here we shall use the term **'multiculturalism' in a sense of officially adopted and institutionally applied state policy in treating the issues of the cultural variety of the population**;

2) In the Bulgarian case **the notion of cultural variety has been very often reduced to the existing ethnic minorities** – and only recently the idea of other culturally differentiated entities (various religious communities, refugees, immigrants, etc.) has been institutionally and legally recognized under the impact of the international community. But generally it seems that this is the way the philosophy of multiculturalism has been used on a more

practical level on the Balkans - while many other differences based on religion, gender, age, place of living, etc. remain obscured in the public space and neglected in the official politics – Balkan societies are **preoccupied with the ethnicity issue**, as it still remains one of its chief problems;

3) As the concept of multiculturalism is relatively a new one and the term itself has been coined at the beginning of the 70s of the 20th C., we shall use this term in describing the official ethno-cultural politics of the country only during the last three decades; however, in order to understand better its development we shall make a brief review from the moment Bulgaria became an autonomous state after its liberation from the Ottoman domination;

4) Therefore the accent of the case-study will be put on the history of the official politics towards **the two largest ethnic minorities** (Bulgarian Turks and Roma) during the last century as an example of the various (sometimes even distorted) forms in which the legal recognition of the Other can exist;

5) In this text we shall use the term '*ethnic minority*' (in the traditional way of designating the ethnically differentiated entities within the Bulgarian society), because in our mind the term '*national minority*' has been imported into our public discourse via the European Union legality.[1]

6) One last remark: It is not relevant to speak about Bulgarian ethno-cultural politics in general, because there is no single, coherent and continuous politics regarding the various ethnic minorities in Bulgaria. They have been treated separately – officially and unofficially. In practice the politics have been differentiated during the past century: the political methods used in treating

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[1] The ratification of the Council of Europe's *Framework Convention for Protection of the National Minorities* by the Bulgarian Parliament (18.02.1999), which could be regarded as the first official document of the Bulgarian state, recognizing the principles of multiculturalism, provoked a debate in the society about what 'national minority' could mean. Contested as a Trojan horse of imported separatism, finally the term 'national minority' found certain legitimization only in regard to the Bulgarian Diasporas outside the country. (See Grekova, M. The Political Battle For/Against 'Minority' in Bulgarian Dailies). Thus in the Bulgarian use the term 'national minority' started to signify just the opposite of Kymlicka's definition (Kymlicka, 1995). For Kymlicka **the ethnic minorities** descend from those who voluntarily emigrated or who have been imported as labor force in a foreign country and settled there, while the **national minorities** consist of indigenous people who have been colonized but who preserved their way of life, sharing at the same time the common national project.

the Roma minority are different from those of treating the Bulgarian Turks and even more so – in treating the Bulgarian Jews and Armenians, for example.

Ethnic minorities – visible and invisible

When speaking of ethnic minorities in the Bulgarian society, there are usually two of them, which are necessarily mentioned – Bulgarian (sometimes called 'ethnic') Turks and Gypsies. A more careful approach would distinguish also the Jews (well-known through their victimization during the World War II), Armenians (who also suffered genocide within the former Ottoman Empire); some might even remember the Karakachans and Gagauz. The truth is that the last are really the least, but nevertheless they are presented somehow in the public space (and mind).

It is really interesting to compare the results from the last two censuses from 1992 and 2001 and to trace how some ethnic groups appear, while others disappear from the official counting, which can be regarded as a state tool for recognition and legalization of its social subjects. (See Table 1)

a) Table 1
Ethnic Self-identification of the Bulgarian population

2. Ethnic Group	5. Census 1992	6. Census 2001
Bulgarians	7 271 185	6 655 210
Turks	800 052	746 664
Roma	313 496	370 908
Russians	17 139	15 595
Armenians	13 677	10 832
Arabs	5 438	328
Wallachs	5 151	10 566
Macedonians	-	5 071
Karakachans	5 144	4 107
Greeks	4 930	3 408
Tatars	4 515	1 803
Jews	3 461	1 363
Albanians	3 197	278

Romanians	2 491	1 088
Vietnamese	1 969	-
Ukrainians	1 864	2 489
Englishmen	1 578	-
Gagauz	1 478	540
Circasian	-	367
Polish	1 218	-
Others	-	18 792
Refusing self-identification	-	62 108
Refusing to give an answer	-	24 807
TOTAL	8 487 317	7 914 324

Apart from the official recognition, embodied by the national statistics, there arises the problem of '*imagining the community*' (if we use the famous Benedict Anderson's concept). From such a point of view it is interesting to explain for example why the third biggest minority in Bulgaria has never been imagined as an entity?

Is that so because the Russians, who live in Bulgaria, do not perceive themselves as a separate community with distinct way of life? Or maybe they are not different enough from the dominant cultural pattern and that is why they are hardly distinguished? Obviously, this suggestion is not quite correct, as they are easily detected with their mild accent, untypical appearance and (em)pathetic modes of behavior, which have been sometimes parodied – all this cannot be mistaken by Bulgarians no matter whether they are 'pro' or 'contra' the Russians… But while individuals are distinguished, the group remains invisible – and the question is what turns a group of individuals into a minority? Obviously, a difference is necessary, but not enough - the difference between cultures (so to speak '*cultural otherness*') is a necessary pre-condition to start the process of group identification, but not enough in order to crystallize the image of a separate social entity. Neither is enough the process of *imagining the community,* nor is the *act of recognition* by the others as a respond to the imagined community. And if we assume that the process of ethnic mobilization, which is now typical for Bulgarian Turks and Roma, occurs in the cases when individuals feel themselves threatened or underestimated as members of a certain group, then can we assume

with the same degree of plausibility that the 'ethnicity' as an identity marker would gradually become invisible if the negative factors disappear in the time?

The Turkish minority

According to the last censuses the Bulgarian Turks represent 9.5-10.0% of the population or about 750 000 - 800 000 people.

The official politics in Bulgaria towards the Turkish minority is a function not only of the long traumatic history in the Balkans (the well-known five centuries of Ottoman domination), but of the geography as well, namely the proximity to Turkey, which has been accepted by Bulgarians after the liberation at the end of the 19th century as a potential threat, and accordingly – the Turkish minority in Bulgaria – as a possible '*fifth column*'. Right after the Liberation (1878), when the share of Turkish population within the traditional Bulgarian borders was about 26%, it started gradually to decrease to 14% in 1900, and reached about 10% in 1934, which is more or less the same at the present days. The Turks who continued to live in the new autonomous state of Bulgaria were mainly of rural origin and poor and they had traditionally good relationships within their settlements, known as a special supportive system of neighborhoods ('*komshuluk')*. In 1910 a Bulgarian MP remarked during a session of the National Assembly, that Turks were working much more than the Bulgarian population, that is why their fields were ploughed in time (Stoyanov, 1995:249). All this created the ground for foreign observers at the beginning of the 1920s to conclude that in comparison with other East-European countries religious and ethnic tolerance was spread most broadly in Bulgaria.

The situation changed very quickly after the political murder of the prime-minister Alexander Stamboliisky (09.06.1923), when various social gains for the Turk minority were suspended[2]. In 1934 the Union of the Turkish Cultural and Sport Associations, called TURAN (whose main ideology was the new pan-Turkism), was officially cancelled by the state after the military coup-d'etat (19.05.1934) when all

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[2] For example the sum of 3 millions levs for support of Turkish schools in the country were struck off from the State Budget; the autonomy of the Turkish schools was restricted, the Turkish minority participation in the political life was reduced: if in 1923 there were 10 representatives of Turkish minority in the National Assembly, in 1933 their number has been reduced to 4.

political parties were banned. The next 20 year-period (1930s and 1940s) can be characterized by both Bulgarian and Turkish nationalistic aspirations and by capsulation of the Muslim religious community in Bulgaria. In 1936/37 an agreement was signed between the two Governments for a long-term regulated emigration of 10 000 Bulgarian Turks every year to their 'fatherland'. Nevertheless that was a period when xenophobic acts of humiliation and repression against some Bulgarian Turks were so strong, that state institutions had to make an official recommendation for '*more moderate forms of impact*'. (Stoyanov, 1995:250-251)

Generally, the official politics of getting rid of the ethnically suspicious elements during the Second World War lead to a decrease of the Turkish minority to 675 000 in 1946.

During the first years of socialism there was a clear-cut political effort to create an intelligentsia among the Turkish minority: a special institute for education of Turkish teachers was opened, as well as Turkish Departments in the Faculty of Philosophy and History and Faculty of Physics and Mathematics at the Sofia University were established. With the exception of the 1950/51, when the first emigration took place during the era of socialism, the next decade was marked by a constant stimulation of the minority cultural autonomy and increase of its privileges: about 10 Turkish theaters were opened, several newspapers in Turkish language were published, and 97% of Turkish children attended primary school.

After April 1956 (the so called *April plenum*) together with the next big change in the political game (the Bulgarian replica of Soviet change along the political lines with the empowerment of Khrushchev), a new ideology was put forth regarding the Bulgarian Turks: they were to be treated as an '*indivisible part of the Bulgarian people*' (Mutafchieva, 1995:29). This direction, translated into more practical terms, meant a policy of overcoming differences through cultural assimilation. In 1958 a *war* has been declared against the religious fanaticism and nationalism of the local Turks. As a consequence there are two new emigration waves – in 1968/78 (120 000 Turks left the country) and the so called '*big excursion*' in 1989, which was one of the tragic signs of the end of the socialism.

At the present moment the relationships between the majority of the Christian Bulgarians and the Bulgarian Turks as an ethnic minority enjoy according to the sociological researches one the highest positive values after the dramatic events of 1989: in January 2003 85% of the population consider the relationship between Bulgarians and Turks to be to a certain degree positive, while only 13% estimated them as bad. All, including the representatives of the various minority communities such as Turks, Roma, and Bulgarian Muslims share this opinion. (Gueorgiev, 2003:24). Nevertheless 21% of the interviewed Turks are not satisfied with their relations with the majority.

If we try to trace the dynamics of these relationships during the last decade, using some modified indicators of the Bogardus scale, it will be difficult to generalize any steady tendency during the years. (See Table 1) Generally, the well-known pattern of higher results on the longer-distant relations and lower results on the closer-distant relations is valid, but as the results from the latest research (as of January 2004) prove, at the present moment Bulgarians are more readily becoming bosses, colleagues and even personal friends with Bulgarian Turks, but not their subordinates.

(1) Table 2
BULGARIAN ATTITUDES TOWARDS TURKS

Indicators	1992 (Ghivko Gueorgiev)	1993 (National Center for Research of the Public Opinion)	1994 (Petar-Emil Mitev)	1997 (Ilona Tomova)	1998 (Georgi Fotev)	2001 (Alpha Research)	2004 (Alpha Research)
I would hire for a job	47.6%	-	-	-	62%	-	58.3%
I would agree to be hired by	39.1%	-	-	-	53%	50%	43.9%
I would work together with	-	50%	-	-	70%	-	68.3%
I would have them as neighbours	-	65%	-	-	71%	74.2%	63.7%
I would have them as friends	56.7%	-	27%	56%	59%	-	54.6%
I wouldn't marry for (I wouldn't agree my children to marry for)	76%	73%	-	-	91.5%	-	64.8%
I would vote for	28.5%	-	18%	40%	-	50.6%	-

The reverse attitudes of the Turks towards Bulgarians are more positive, thus outlining a model of interethnic relations of asymmetrical (and implicitly hierarchical) type.

Table 3

TURKISH ATTITUDES TOWARDS BULGARIANS

Indicators	1992 (Ghivko Gueorgiev)	1993 (National Center for Research of the Public Opinion)	1994 (Petar-Emil Mitev)	1997 (Ilona Tomova)	1998 (Georgi Fotev)	2004 (Alpha Research)
I would hire for a job	88.6%	-	-	-	81%	95.5%
I would agree to be hired by	92.6%	-	-	-	87%	95.5%
I would work together with	-	-	-	-	94%	98.5%
I would have them as neighbours	-	-	-	-	85%	97.0%
I would have them as friends	87.7%	-	-	86%	82%	92.4%
I wouldn't marry for (I wouldn't agree my daughter to marry for)	67.2%	-	-	-	76%	50.0%
I would vote for	86.3%	-	69%	84%	-	-

The same tendencies are valid about the second largest minority in the country – the so called 'Gypsies', but in their case this asymmetrical and highly hierarchical model of ethnic relations reaches its extremes.

The Roma minority

There are about 365 797 Roma according to the last census (2001), but sociological data tell us a different story. They probably are not less than 800 000, thus turning Bulgaria to be a country with one of the largest Roma minorities, the third European country after Romania (2.5 millions Roma) and Czech Republic and Slovakia (1.4 million). This

discrepancy is probably due to the so called '*false identity*' of many of the Romas who prefer to present themselves in formal situations as representatives of some more prestigious ethnic group – most often as Turks or as Bulgarians, depending on their religion.

What is more important is that, considering the steady tendency of negative demographic growth of the Bulgarian population, or in other words a decrease of (-5.6) per 1000 for 2002, the Roma minority is growing much faster, showing a demographic pattern of high birth rate (and high mortality), that was characteristic for the Bulgarian population as whole during 1926. According to representative sociological research (2003) carried out by the Institute for Social Values 'Ivan Hadjiisky', while the ratio between Bulgarians – Turks – Roma at the moment is 81% : 11% : 6%, in 2020 the ratio will change into 52%: 26% : 16% (if the same demographic tendencies continue).

The Bulgarian Roma have been really free, escaping any kinds of official policy – due to their nomadic way of life - until 1958, when they all had to settle permanently (due to the already mentioned idea for indivisible and united nation). There are 21 Roma sub-groups (clans) who are often in a conflict between them, so although they represent one ethnic group for the 'outsiders', among themselves they recognize more differences than resemblances.

It seems that it is exactly their growing numbers and the concomitant increasing poverty which drives an internal corruption in the cultural code of the society (a corruption of the educational and professional structure), plus the EU insistence on regarding the human rights of the 'internal others' is the real reason for new political efforts for recognition and integration of this minority. The main means of this politics is the integration through education and political participation[3] and if there is something really new, it is the new approach in solving the Roma problems – via creating of so to speak of a 'front line' in the Roma communities – some sort of educated and politically active Roma elites serving as a positive model, and denying the former stereotypes of the culture of poverty, which is also the culture of dependency.

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[3] A detailed overview of the present politics in regard with Roma minority can be found in '*The Information of the Politics of the Bulgarian Government for Improvement of the Situation of the Roma Population in Bulgaria*', accepted on October 28 2002 at a meeting of the National Council on the Ethnic and Demographic Issues with participation of Roma organizations. See *www.ncedi.government.bg/8.Doklad-Brussels-4.11.02.htm*

These casual efforts need to turn into a continuous policy, in order to give sufficient results. According to the already cited *Information of the Politics of the Bulgarian Government,* at the present moment 52% of all Gypsy children in a school age (7-16 years old) do not attend school. The comparison between the data from the last Census in 2001 (Table 4) and from the representative sociological research of Alpha Research, carried out in January 2004 (Table 5) shows no significant improvement in the education status of the Roma population in Bulgaria during the last 4 years.

(a) Table 4
Education Structure of the Bulgarian Population by Ethnic Groups – 2001

Degrees of Education	Bulgarians - %	Ethnic Turks - %	*B. Gypsies - %*
University	20.2	2.0	0.9
High school (secondary professional school)	54.0	24.6	7.8
Basic (VII grade)	22.6	55.0	46.2
Initial (IV grade)	3.0	16.0	36.7
Illiterate	0.2	2.3	8.5

Resource: National Statistical Institute, results for the Population Census, 2001

(a) Table 5
Education Structure of the Bulgarian Population by Ethnic Groups – 2004

Degrees of Education	Bulgarians - %	Ethnic Turks - %	*C. Gypsies - %*
University	15.5	1.5	.0
'Semi-higher'*	4.8	1.5	.0
High school (secondary professional school)	52.4	35.4	9.4
Basic (VII grade)	24.7	56.9	71.7

Less than basic	2.6	4.6	18.9

* 'Semi-higher' education was in the socialist past a transient educational level, intermediate between the college and university.

Resource: Alpha Research Ltd., January 2004

The unfavorable education structure goes hand in hand with high unemployment. There are some national programs for temporary employment of the Roma, but they cannot solve really the basic effects of unemployment. Only 10% of the active adults continue to practice their traditional arts and crafts, and only 8.5% own some land, which is usually very small and restricted to the yard area (*Report for Evaluation of the Priorities of the Employment Politics in Bulgaria*).

We can describe the present Roma situation as *ethnic mobilization* with all the elements, typical for that process, characterized with a conscious mobilization of all the possible resources for positive self-identification and revaluation of their ethnic identity: justification of their origin through dignified Indian ancestors and new interest in their roots; self-labeling (for ex. a Gypsy orchestra invented for themselves the name '*Chocolate Boys*' – a reminisce of the Black American slogan during the 60s '*Black is beautiful*'); creation of a new educated elite and development of political activism, radicalization of their pleas. After 1989 about two hundred Roma NGOs emerged (including a dozen feminist Roma organizations), aiming at preservation and development of Roma culture, protection of Roma rights and ensuring their social and economic interests. Since 1995 the Roma minority has tens of representatives in different levels and structures of government. The representatives of *Euro-Ro*ma are now in the National Assembly, in a coalition with Ahmed Dogan, the leader of the biggest political structure in Bulgaria, created on ethnic basis, – the so called *Movement for Political Rights and Freedoms*. 21 members out of 240 represent the coalition in the Parliament.

The possibilities for an ultimate solution of the Roma problems are not great, so far as there is no clear concept how exactly to approach these problems and also because there are no sufficient instruments (including the financial resources) for doing so.

We can generalize that after the fruitless attempts to assimilate the Roma population through the adoption of the Bulgarian way of life[4], there is now a more differentiated approach – various pilot projects have been developed aiming generally to support the most enterprising and hard-working Roma families in their small private enterprises – the aim here is to create a positive example for the rest of the Roam community. In the sphere of education a process of preparation of future Roma teachers started, and special attention is being given to the intercultural education of Roma children – unfortunately until now only in few schools in several Bulgarian towns.

If we take into account the existing deep negative stereotypes towards Roma among Bulgarians and even ethnic Turks, we can understand how long a time will be needed in order to see some positive results concerning the improvement of the situation of the Bulgarian Roma minority. According to the Institute for Social Values 'Ivan Hadjiiski' (2003) 56% of the young Bulgarians and young Turks do not want to live together with Gypsies, and 68% do not want to work together in the same workplace; 71% of the young people from both ethic groups do not even want to live in one and the same section of the town with Roma people.

Given the numerous ups and downs in the ethnic relations and official politics towards ethnic minorities since the end of the 19th C. till now - the conclusion can be drawn that although at the present moment the country is referred to as '*an isle of stability*' in the Balkans and the ethnic relations in the country have been cited as a positive example (named *the Bulgarian ethnic model*) there has been no continuous and consequent national strategy towards the minorities which has endured for more than 15 years (referring to Bulgarian Gypsies) and for more than 20 years (referring to Bulgarian Turks).

Rights or Privileges?

According to results of a national representative sociological research of the *National Center for Public Opinion Research* in October 1992 80% of respondents expressed a desire for national reconciliation and 72% of the population considered that in order to complete the processes of the democratization of the country **it is necessary to guarantee**

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[4] The most drastic example was the idea to socialize Roma by making them live in blocks of flats together with Bulgarians. This mixing of the living spaces caused a lot of disorders and mutual suffering enforcing once again the question of the respect of one's own life style and traditions.

equal rights to ethnic groups. But how do people translate 'equal rights' into more practical terms? On the one hand, when practical and economic issues are discussed, people support the idea that ethnic minorities should participate on an equal basis in the privatization processes – 59%; 65% express desire for more intensive economic relationships with Turkey; more than 50% are ready to have a Turk for a business partner, and 65% of respondents would even accept Turks for their neighbours. But at the same time 73% responded that they would not allow their children to marry to a representative of the Turkish minority. Similarly, in the face of a registered broad religious tolerance (supported by the fact that 2/3 of the respondents are against the idea of imposing Orthodox Christianity as the only one legitimate religion in the country), 60% believe that national unity can be achieved with the help of the Orthodox Christianity, while only 23% rely on the Islam. In other words, even when people recognize the necessity for more democratic values in treating the ethnic and religious 'Other', they still manifest an ethnocentric point of view.

At the present time Bulgarians who are the national majority have changed many of their attitudes as compared to only 15 years ago – they accept the following civic rights as due to the ethnic minorities (Gueorgiev, 2003:25).

(i) Table 6

Basic rights	Approval
To create organizations and associations for protecting of their culture	79%
To have political representatives in the National Assembly	74%
To publish books and other editions in their mother language	71%
To have representatives in the local authorities	69%
To have their own newspapers	67%

At the same time Bulgarians become more bifurcated or remain strictly conservative when the issues come to institutions that traditionally guarantee the national autonomy or symbolic access to public spaces. Even more astonishing is that the Bulgarians are more concerned about preserving symbolic domination in the public space, and yet more inclined to share work opportunities with minority representatives.

(ii) Table 7

Basic rights	Yes	No
To work as sergeants and officers in the army	56%	26%
To have their political parties	51%	37%
To enter the service of the Investigation, Court or Attorney office	49%	36%
To have programs in their own language on the National TV	39%	51%
To have their own television station	39%	46%
To learn their own language in the public schools	40%	48%
To put signs in their own language in the public spaces of their settlements and the surrounding areas	21%	65%
To be educated and trained in their own language	19%	70%

Nevertheless, the thorniest issue is territorial autonomy for minorities - here the majority is very united in their opinion: only 8% support the idea, while 83% reject it (Gueorgiev, 2003:25-26). But concerning media rights, there is a certain positive development in the attitudes: for example, when for the first time in recent Bulgarian history news was introduced in the Turkish language on the official TV Channel 1, 33.9% of the population supported that act (according to the Alpha Research, 2001), while their number grew to 39% at the present moment. According to Zhivko Gueorgiev, this positive development can be proved also by the fact that while at the beginning of the democratic transition only the most educated segment of the population shared more liberal ideas about ethnic minority rights, however now these values are spread out evenly between people with lower levels of education (obviously including representatives of the minorities themselves) and the more educated liberal elite. This process could be described in Kymlicka's terms as the development of 'rights consciousness' (Kymlicka, 2002: 7)

However, now we come to some really difficult questions, which have no single and simple answers. If we look more carefully at the data, cited by Z. Gueorgiev, we shall see that the poorer and less educated Roma representatives are more radical in their claims than the more educated and better socialized Bulgarian Turks: 74% of the Roma prefer to receive their education and training in their own language as opposed to 56% of

the Turks; 69% of the Roma want to have the right to put labels in their own language in public spaces in their settlements and the surroundings as opposed to 52% of the Turks; 40% of the Roma regard as their right some form of territorial autonomy as opposed to 14% of the Turks. Is that really liberalization and enlightenment of their thinking or impulsive reaction from the desperate and illiterate margins?

Let us try to analyze more carefully the situation with one of the most easily recognized and most broadly accepted minority right – language. Let us take for example those Turks, who prefer to receive their education in the language of the majority and to use their own language mostly in the private sphere: do they really betray the idea of their ethno-cultural identity, surrendering to the majority culture, or do they rather appreciate the possibility of acquiring greater symbolic and cultural capital using all opportunities of the existing education system? And how do we evaluate what is actually the better (the most suitable) education?

On the one hand, the language right in open societies pays respect to the cultural and language variety; on the other hand – thus a possibility is created to perpetuate the isolation and to restrict the social advancement of language minorities. In its extreme manifestation, such position can lead to the type of society of 'two solitudes' as it sometimes is labeled in the Canadian case. (Kymlicka, 2002: 12)

Or let us take a far-away example. As a result of a referendum in California (1998) all bilingual educational programs in the public schools have been rejected. The decision was supported by 61% of the electorate, among which by 57% of the people, who are of Asian origin, and by 37% from the Spanish speaking population. (Hochschild, J. and Scovronick, N., 1998:18)

The results could be regarded as a manifestation of the hidden mechanism of symbolic domination (in Pierre Bourdieu's terminology), but it could also mean a conscious choice of the recognized legal path to success - **language is not just a means for communication, but the main key to many doors – that of the elite secondary school and later on in the university, that of public administration and in the realm of media… If we decide to double, triple or multiply the (educational, cultural, social…) system as many times as many ethnic minorities happen to become visible in the**

public space and to present their official claims, could it really be effective, not to say - destructive for the system itself?

Thus we come to a real puzzle: on the one hand, it is absurd to think about a Babel-Tower- like society – there should be some sort of common language for the sake of mutual coordination. On the other hand, **language, common at least for the major part of the population, inevitably turns to be a means not only of communication, but of domination as well**. And at the same time, differentiated social and cultural politics, no matter how ambitious and noble they are in their intentions, they very often lead to further segregation. Thus, in the words of B. Barry, multiculturalism is a challenge to the idea that equality means equal treating (Barry, Brian, 2001)

And More Questions without Answers

Here we can just repeat (or re-edit) the questions from Taylor's famous essay: what does it mean to recognize a culture? Is it enough to accept it condescendingly on the grounds of its mere existence (what does the multicultural discourse mean by enriching the symbolic wealth) or do the cultures need not only our recognition, but our respect as well. But as Taylor warns us, all this system of interactions and interrelations could be a subtle form of cultural homogenization due to the implicit action of our own judgments. Assigning values only to those who resemble us, we can finish, in Taylor's words, the politics of the difference, turning everything else into the same.

Or we can put it differently, this time using the Ronald Dworkin's argument from the debate on liberal communities: who can determine for a certain community what is the '*good life*' for its members – people themselves or outsiders, thinking that they know better? This is the elusive ground of a debate which never ceases in time and whose answers in my opinion should be carefully elaborated in each separate society taking into account all of the external and internal factors, determining the development of the interethnic relations, and all the possible opinions existing in the public space.

At the same time we should not regard multiculturalism just as a theoretical tool for certain politics, but in a broader sense the multiculturalism is a cultivated public sensitivity towards various cultural differences and identities. From such a viewpoint the role of mass media is very important as a generator of public attitudes. Even today there are numerous

examples of a double standard in this respect: very often the newspapers use politically correct language about ethnic minorities (and especially about 'Gypsies') but imply contextually hidden phobias. This reinforces the question of a revision of the Bulgarian ethno-cultural politics in its broadest sense. Taking into consideration the negative demographic growth of Bulgarian population and the trend of its 'gypsification', it can be generalized that the multicultural politics in the country should be reconsidered very carefully at the highest political levels and should be applied more systematically especially in the sphere of education, thus preparing the conditions for a broadening the scope of participatory and representative democracy.

To leave these questions in a '*laissez-faire manner*' to the unattainable future of the notified expiration of the nationhood within the supranational unifications such as the EU, seems to be a childish hope in the face of the evoking nationalisms – they will move according to Zygmunt Bauman from the state boundaries to the castles of regionalism: just watch them...