

Traces of Violence and Transmission of Memory: The 'Revival Process' in the Narratives of Different Generations of Turks in Bulgaria

By

Dóra Papadopulosz

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Supervisors: Prof. Dan Rabinowitz

Prof. Vlad Naumescu

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Abstract

The thesis explores the ways the memory of the so called ‘revival process’, the forceful assimilation campaign against the Turkish population of Bulgaria between 1984-1989, is still present in the lives of Turks today. Traces of the past not only emerge as subjective, individual and collective remembrances, but also in many tangible forms, such as the forcefully adopted Bulgarian names that still appear in identification documents, and the torn-apart families, which are consequences of the emigration wave that followed the violent events. I argue that beyond these vestiges which make the collective past a part of everyday life of Turks, members of the minority are also compelled by the contemporary sociopolitical environment to evoke their memories of the forced assimilation and to transmit these to the younger generations. By examining how these memories are transmitted, I discuss different types of familial transmission and the possible causes behind them. Furthermore, I argue that the younger generation's image of the past is shaped by the filtered narratives of direct ancestors, and that in turn, members of the younger generation interpret their parents’ and grandparents’ accounts in new ways.

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Introduction

“In the Land of Memory the time is always Now.”

Stephen King

A young Turkish woman from Bulgaria told me a story she had learnt from her family as a child: in the 1980s the state authorities sent the army to their village in the Northern part of Bulgaria in order to conduct the forceful change of the names of the Turkish population to ones considered Bulgarian. The Turks of the village got together as a sign of resistance trying to prevent the implementation of the state orders. She was a baby at that time and her grandfather held her as a shield between them and the soldiers, and shouted “Shoot! Shoot now if you really want to!”. The tanks did not shoot in the end, however the names of all ethnic Turks in the village were changed.

The story that Ayşegül heard of her grandparents takes us back to 1984, the year in which, after decades of similar, smaller scale attempts against the minorities of the country, the Bulgarian Communist Party initiated a campaign to assimilate the whole Turkish population. According to the official standpoint of the authorities there were no Turks in Bulgaria. Everyone holding a Turkish name and having Muslim faith was considered to be descendant of Bulgarians, who had been forced to change their language and religion during the rule of the Ottoman Empire. The process was therefore entitled the ‘revival process’ (‘vuzroditelen protzes’), suggesting that these people now had the chance to recover their true, Bulgarian ethnic identity. The names of ethnic Turks and all citizens with Turkish- or Arab-sounding names, including the Bulgarian-speaking Pomaks¹ and Roma, were changed. The use of the Turkish language and Islamic rituals were

¹ Pomaks are a Muslim minority, living mainly in the Rhodope Mountains. Today there are about 160,000-240,000 people belonging to this group, however the state does not consider them a distinct minority (Minority Rights 2014). Therefore in the 2011 census there was no exact data about them (Census 2011).

prohibited. The so called 'revival process' and the protests in sign of resistance were followed by violence; many were killed and imprisoned. The campaign was followed by a huge emigration wave, which continued even after 1989, when the communist regime fell and Turkish people had the right to receive back their original Turkish names and practice their religion.

Today, 25 years after these events, public discourse in Bulgaria does not pay much attention to the 'revival process'; the events are not taught in history classes, or if so, only by way of digression. The Bulgarian state's official standpoint publicly was only silence for a long time, until the acceptance of the declaration of the Bulgarian Parliament in January 2012 condemning the 'revival process' and defining it as ethnic cleansing, which was followed in 2013 by the apology of Sergei Stanishev, former prime minister and the leader of the Bulgarian Socialist Party.

Despite this, the commemoration of the forceful assimilation campaign is practiced mainly by the members of the Turkish minority, who represent nearly 9% of the population of Bulgaria (Census 2011). Official commemorations of the events started and monuments were built in order to preserve the past. Besides the rare public commemorations, as well as the few documentaries and publicly available photos of the 'revival process', the main context of remembering is still familial communication, where conversations lead to the passing on of the narratives of parents and grandparents to the younger generations, who grow up receiving and interpreting these memories.

This thesis investigates the ways in which the memory of the forceful assimilation is present in the everyday lives of the members of the Turkish minority in Bulgaria, and the forms these memories are passed down to next generations. Theories of social remembering suggest that the reconstruction of memories is always shaped by the present social context (Halbwachs 1992); therefore understanding how members of the Turkish community evoke these events and how they

evaluate the past can give us information about the present situation of the ethnic minority and its relation to the Bulgarian majority.

Another focus point of the thesis is the transmission of these memories and the investigation of the young generation's relation to the 'revival process', which is an area still unexplored by academic research done on the Turkish minority. As Hirsch (2008) suggests painful memories of parents and grandparents can be transmitted so deeply that the descendants might also define their present in relation to the troubled past, preceding their births'. On the other hand the memories received are always reinterpreted by the next generation (Tschuggnall and Welzer 2002) giving way to new approaches to the past. This research also aims to understand the ways the inherited memories are present in the narratives of the young Turkish generation, which can be crucial in forming the future ethnic relation between Bulgarians and Turks and the collective identity of the Turkish youth.

The main qualitative method I used to investigate the memory of the 'revival process' and the transmission of it was the collecting of narratives of Turkish people with first-hand memories of the past events and of members of the younger generation, born after 1985. Most of my informants are highly educated people working in banks, hospitals, leading their own small businesses or working for the MRF party. I reached my informants through the snowball sampling method starting with the few Turkish people with whom I got acquainted during my stay in Bulgaria in 2011-2012. I conducted semi-structured interviews in Sofia and in Kardzhali, a small town on the Southern part of Bulgaria, with a high percentage (about 35%) of Turkish population (Census 2011). I recorded conversations with 26 people in homes, coffee places, parks and in the building of the MRF party, some of these were shorter, others long, in-depth interviews between 45 minutes and two hours. This allowed interviewees to give insight into what they see as relevant and interesting, and enable the collection of rich, detailed answers (Bryman 2008:437). While hanging

out with some of these people I also had the chance of participant observation, listening and taking part in their conversations about the present and the past in smaller groups. I visited the National History Museum of Sofia and the Historical Museum of Kardzhali.

Memories that emerge in the course of the interviews are remembered in a specific communicative context, where my role as a researcher might also affect the findings. All of my informants are bilingual, and the interviews were conducted in Bulgarian. My positionality during the fieldwork was highly influenced by the fact that I was born in Bulgaria from a Bulgarian mother but raised in Hungary; thus I was usually not seen by my interviewees as a typical Bulgarian. Some of them commented on this during or after the interviews. In a conversation in a restaurant with three of my informants after conducting an interview with Emel, a woman in her thirties, she pointed out that it is a good thing, that “someone from abroad” is doing this kind of research, as the findings will not be biased. This also enabled me to ask questions concerning the relation of Bulgarians and Turks from a borderline position of this ethnic duality, and as someone not living in the country this also allowed me to pose questions about daily politics and the current situation of Turks.

While discussing the findings of my ethnographic work I will use pseudonyms in order to preserve the identity of my informants. I sense some kind of irony in writing about the forceful renaming campaign and the same time “forcefully renaming” my interviewees, but this shall be seen merely as a sign of my respect towards them and towards the private memories and thoughts they have shared with me.

In the followings first I give an overview of the theoretical work on memory that frames my ethnographic findings. In Chapter 2 I trace the historical background and the literature written on Turks in Bulgaria and on the ‘revival process’. In Chapter 3 I discuss the memory of the forceful assimilation from the point of view of the opinions of my informants connected to the blaming and

the lack of judicial redress which can influence their relation to the Bulgarian majority. In Chapter 4 I show different types of familial transmission and discuss some of the possible causes behind them. I argue that members of the young generation receive the memories in a filtered way and interpret the narratives of the ancestors in a new manner; therefore their interpretations are a source of change and maintenance at the same time. In Chapter 5 I enumerate ways in which the memory of the ‘revival process’ is still present in the everyday life of Turks. I argue that the present-day political and social situation in Bulgaria is forcing the memories connected to the ‘revival process’ to emerge, and compel members with first-hand memories to pass on their stories to next generations.

1. Collective memory and generational transmission

The idea that remembering should be considered not only as an individual phenomena but as one that is embedded in social frameworks was introduced to the sociological discourse by Maurice Halbwachs (1992) who argues that we are mostly in a social environment when we gain experiences just as when we recollect them as memories. The past is not reserved, but is rather reconstructed in the process of remembering, which always happens on the basis of the present; therefore memories always reflect our present social context. The working of the collective memory is a process where the individual memories are created according to the perspective of the group which is expressed in family traditions, religious practices, etc. The memory of the group about certain events or the group itself is manifested in individual memories. Halbwachs also emphasizes the link between memory and identity – the steadily reproduced memories give continuity to the identity both on an individual and on a collective level. This Durkheimian perspective highlights the way in which collective memory ensures collective identity and solidarity within a group.

Building on Halbwachs' theory, another approach that stresses the ways in which the present has an impact on the past is the invention of tradition perspective (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1992), which investigates how public notions of memory are manipulated from above, and new traditions are created in order to exercise power. As a reaction to this approach emphasizing processes from above, new theories came to light that enhance bottom-up processes. The dynamics approach does not reduce memory to political manipulation and imposed ideology but argues that memory also has an inherent continuity and seeks to understand the ways in which the past endures in the present rather than the impact of the present on the past (Misztal 2003). In this thesis I mainly investigate memories of the 'revival process' as bottom-up processes, not denying that influence from above also exist.

Processes from above are usually bound up with public communication and official commemorations rather than with everyday conversations. Memories of the first generation of the ‘revival process’ exist in both forms – they endure in everyday conversations and are also expressed and maintained by official commemorations organized mostly by the Movement for Rights and Freedoms political party. This process can be understood in the framework of Assmann’s approach of communicative and cultural memory (1995). The formless, disorganized ways of everyday communication give place to the communicative memory which has a limited temporal horizon of three to four generations. Once it is passing to objectivized culture in the form of organized ceremonial communication, it is becoming part of the cultural memory, which is “characterized by its distance from the everyday” (1995:128). Its fixed points are fateful events of the past, and are in direct relation to the group’s identity. In this sense the commemorations of the ‘revival process’ are a form for the Turkish minority to express their relation to the past events of the forceful assimilation and to maintain their ethnic identity, remembering the events which contain a sharp distinction “between those who belong and those who do not”.

On an individual level the two types of memory cannot be separated but influence the image of the past at the same time, there is a “dialogue between the vernacular and public discourses of memory” (Kapralski 2006:192). Information transmitted to the young generation in the family through communicative memory and public commemorations, documentaries, photos and news about the ‘revival process’ all shape ideas of the past. The manipulative processes organized from above (and here I mean both the memory-projects organized by the Turkish MRF party and the mainstream, official communication of the state, which treats the ‘revival process’ as an uncomfortable part of history and tries to keep its memory unspoken) might meet resistance, however, according to the “Konrad-paradigm” the subjects of manipulation cannot escape some kind of influence by these (Kapralski 2006). While keeping in mind this inseparable nature of

personal and public, the focus of this thesis will be the investigation of the familial transmission in the realm of communicative memory.

The theoretical discussion about the transmission of memories is bound up with that of social generations and the transmission of knowledge and memory. Karl Mannheim (1952) argues that the notion of generation is based on the common location in the social and historical process. Members of the same generation have the same potential experience, which is partly determined “by the way in which certain patterns of experience and thought tend to be brought into existence by the natural data of the transition from one generation to another” (Mannheim 1952:291-292). When new participants appear in the cultural process, they have the opportunity to develop a new approach and a new relationship towards social phenomena. At the same time participants of older generations disappear and some information, attitudes and ways of thinking disappear with them, giving way to forgetting. In this way the transmission of the cultural heritage is a constant interplay between renewal and conservation. The inherited memories about the past are interpreted by the next generation in a different way: they are restructured, and contextualized from a different point of view, from a different historical situation. Several questions arise: why do the members of the older generations transmit the memories? Under which circumstances does the transmission happen? How does the new Turkish generation interpret and understand the memories of the generation who suffered from the 'revival process'? What kind of meaning they create of the stories heard in the family? What are the traits of the narratives that have disappeared or changed during the transmission and what is retained?

Tschuggnall and Welzer (2002) have another point to offer when thinking about generational transmission. According to their theory, history is not only learned by books and the media but is incidentally picked up in everyday life. One main source of people making sense of the past is through the stories presented by members of older generations. When the contemporary witnesses

of the older generation tell their memories to the younger generation, in the dynamics of intergenerational discourse, the narratives are negotiated and translated into the younger generations language. The authors find the act of story-telling itself a crucial point in understanding the transmission of memories. Narratives are generally a very important “mode of understanding and creating the meanings of human affairs” (2002:132). When members of the younger generation create a new meaning of the story they do it “against the background of their own experiences, interests and cultural frameworks” (2002:133). In this way narratives combine the particular story with more general notions, and are understood with the help of general types of stories. The incomplete narratives are filled in and are given meaning with the help of previously learned conventionalized story-types. Many times the person who tells the story and the listener are not using the same type of story, and in this way the interpretation can bring totally new meanings in the narrative. Social conventions, beliefs and the general attitudes of the group of the listener are also expressed in the interpretation. Analyzing the interviews about the German past the authors observed that problematic parts of the grandparents' stories usually don't appear in the grandchildren's interpretations, this way they can keep the moral integrity of the older relatives (Tschuggnall and Welzer 2002).

Memories transmitted about the 'revival process' are not simply a cultural heritage to pass on, but mostly consist of painful memories of violence. Discussion of intergenerational transmission and workings of trauma emerged as an important object of study in connection to the second generation of the Holocaust survivors. Marianne Hirsch uses the expression “postmemory” to describe “the relationship of the second generation to powerful, often traumatic, experiences that preceded their births but that were nevertheless transmitted to them so deeply as to seem to constitute memories in their own right” (2008:103), contradicting Mannheim, arguing that transmitted memories can sometimes appear in a very similar way as one's own memories. She

chooses the term “postmemory” to express a temporal delay and on the other hand to recall more complex notions that are implied in “other posts” such as postcolonialism and postmodern, i. e. “an uneasy oscillation between continuity and rupture” and “defining the present in relation to a troubled past” (2008:106). I explore if a rupture caused by the ‘revival process’ exists in the narratives of the “postgeneration” and how the intergenerational communication, the told and untold memories within the family appear in their version of the past.

Being aware of the fact that people “do not remember events as they happened and do not pass on memories intact to their heirs” (Kapralski 2006:182), while dealing with the memories and the ‘postmemory’ of the ‘revival process’ I will not investigate in any way the relation between the historical evidence and the subjective mental images of the past. Despite the criticism that has been made in connection with the use of memory seen as an “independent social actor” (Argenti and Schramm 2010:16), which might serve as an obstacle for studying critically historical events, I agree that imaginations and ideas about the past might influence present-day behavior; therefore I share the view of Argenti and Schramm that “there is still a need to question how extreme political violence is experienced by individuals, enculturated at the collective level and passed down through the generations” (2010:19), and that anthropological research with its ethnographic methods can contribute to the unfolding of these phenomena.

To understand the present-day social context in which remembering the ‘revival process’ occurs, in the followings I give an overview of the origins, the history and the present of the Turkish minority in Bulgaria, and a review about the academic work written on the topic so far.

2. The history and the present of the Turks in Bulgaria

Turkish presence in the Balkans can be dated back to the 12th century, when Byzantine emperors settled some Turkish tribes in the region (Yalamov 2014). The most massive emigration wave followed when Bulgaria fell under Ottoman rule in the end of the 14th century. The Muslim presence in the country was significant even after 1878, the end of the Russo-Turkish war and thus the Ottoman period. In 1881 about 30% of the population was Muslim (Neuburger 2004:36). Autonomy was granted to the minority to some extent; Muslim communities had their own courts and private schools. The first attempts of forceful assimilation and change of Turkish names to Bulgarians concerned the Pomak population, the Bulgarian speaking Muslim people, after the eruption of the first Balkan war in 1912. In the interwar period an emigration wave to Turkey started as a reaction to the rise of Bulgarian national image that saw the Turco-Muslim population as a threat to national unity and territorial integrity. The Second World War brought an intensified state campaign against all kind of foreign influence, and in 1940 the “Law of the purity of the nation” was passed, which forbid marriages between Bulgarian and non-Bulgarian citizens, followed by a forced name change of about 60,000 Pomaks (Neuburger 2004).

During the era of communist rule (1946-1989) the Bulgarian Communist Party interpreted in various different ways the ideas of communism, internationalism, nation, class and ethnicity (Petkova 2002). In the beginning of this first period the constitution recognized the existence and rights of ethnic minorities inside the country. According to Neuburger (2004), this can be seen as a caesura in the strong nationalist undertow which was always present under the surface of the Communist politics. Turkish-language schools became part of the public school system, and the constitution insured the practice of any religion and the right of minorities to express their ethnic identity through the media – various newspapers were printed in Turkish. This internationalist

Marxist tolerance was based on the idea of the class unity of Bulgarian and Muslim, but the BCP's "newly invented academic machine" started elaborating a different approach. The Muslim population was seen as a "visible Oriental affront to Bulgaria's modernity", an obstacle to the Communist development (Neuburger 2004:57). With the merging of the Soviet model of modernization and pre-Communist efforts on creating a national ethnic unity, "the BCP went much further with its attempts at total assimilation of Turks and Pomaks than the Soviets" (Neuburger 2004:60). Soon after Todor Zhivkov came to power, in the April plenum of the Central Committee of BCP in 1956, new regulations were introduced: "Minorities were subjected to a policy of forced integration that contained no respect for the preservation of their ethnic, cultural and religious identity" (Bojkov 2004:352-353). Muslim religious traditions were banned, such as funerals, circumcision, fasting during Ramadan and traditional Turkish music on weddings. From 1958 secondary school and higher level education was carried out only in Bulgarian. In April 1962 another drastic change took place: the BCP's Politbureau passed new resolutions concerning the ethnic minorities of the country, urging an assimilation to the majority. Gradually, Turkish primary and secondary schools were closed down, all newspapers were published in Bulgarian, and the Turkish theaters were closed. In 1964, an attempt was made to change the name of Pomaks of the Western Rhodopes region. The initiative encountered resistance from the population, so the Central Committee of the BCP did not push through the campaign (Petkova 2002:45).

Even after these decades of similar but smaller scale attempts on assimilation, "there was a definite element of surprise in the seemingly sudden announcement of the name-changing and other related policies in the winter of 1984" (Neuburger 2004:78), when the Bulgarian Communist Party initiated a more systematic and comprehensive campaign than in any era before. There are several reasons which could have led to the BCP's consideration that the assimilation seemed more urgent than before: the rise of Islamic fundamentalism and assumptions about Turkish and Pomak

affinities to Turkey evoked certain fears about national security. Illegal Turco-Islamic organizations in Bulgaria bombed several public places a few months prior to the implementation of the process. Another possible factor could have been a demographic one: by the late communist period the Turkish population was growing two times faster than the Bulgarian (Neuburger 2004:78-79).

In spite of all this foreshadowing the scope of the new campaign was beyond imagination. The forced change of the Turkish names was supplemented with measures known from previous times, such as the prohibiting of the use of the Turkish language, Islamic rituals and the wearing of traditional Turkish clothes (Eminov 1997, Baeva and Kalinova 2009). The term used by the state as a denomination of the procedure was 'revival process' or 'rebirth process', expressing the concept that the Bulgarian nation is a one-ethnic nation, and the Turkish speaking population is descendent of ethnic Bulgarians, who had been forced to change their language, culture and religion during the rule of the Ottoman Empire, and finally have the chance to recover their true ethnic identity. Officials of the Communist Party traveled through the country and gave speeches spreading this ideology, claiming that there were no Turks at all in Bulgaria (Eminov 1997:13). In 1985 Dimitar Stoyanov, minister of internal affairs stated the same (Eminov 1997:16). Not long after this statement, deputy prime minister Todor Bozhinov strengthened the idea: “no part of the Bulgarian people belongs to any other nation” and “our countrymen who reconstituted their Bulgarian names are Bulgarians” (Eminov 1997:17). This interpretation completely disregarded the self-identification and self-perception of the Turkish population (Bojkov 2004:344). However, the renaming process was conducted by the state, villages were surrounded by tanks and police, roads blocked and Turks forced to apply for new, Bulgarian names (Neuburger 2004). A lot of violence occurred when people opposed the orders of the authorities. Accounts of how many people were killed during this period vary between 800 and 2500. Others were arrested and taken into prison or

to Belene concentration camp (Bojkov 2004:359). By March 1985 the campaign succeeded to force all Turks in the country to adopt Slavic names (Eminov 1997:8). As a consequence of these events in the summer of 1989 over 300,000 Turks left the country for Turkey in the course of the so called ‘grand excursion’ (‘goliama ekskurzia’). After the collapse of the communist regime, in December 1989 the government restored the rights of ethnic Turks, who could choose their names and practice Islamic rituals again (Petkova 2002:49). Half of the Turks who had emigrated to Turkey returned to Bulgaria in the following years (Eminov 1997:97).

When considering the present situation of the Turkish minority an important indicator of their acceptance is that on a legal level the constitution does not use the term ‘national minority’ or ‘ethnic minority’, in this way minorities are protected directly only by international law. The principle of unity of the Bulgarian nation still stated in the constitution does not leave place for recognizing the different ethnic groups of the country. The context of remembering the ‘revival process’ is influenced by this situation, in as much as the members of the Turkish minority can parallel with the past: their rights that were entirely disregarded that time, are still not warranted.

Human rights reports on Bulgaria from 2000-2001 prepared by international organizations such as Human Rights Watch and the US Department of State, “either do not mention the Bulgarian Turks at all, or point to the situation of the Bulgarian Turks as an example of successful integration” (Petkova 2002:50). In terms of education, Turks are provided the opportunity to study their mother tongue and religion in public schools in voluntary Turkish language classes, but in practice this right is not always implemented. Attempts by the minority to introduce rights connected to their native language and religion usually encounter the opposition of the extreme right parties of Bulgaria, who tend to entitle these efforts as “Islamist provocation” (novinite.com 2010).

The rights of the Turkish minority are mostly promoted by the Muslim-based political party Movement for Rights and Freedoms which appeared on the political scene after the collapse of the

communist regime. Although the constitution does not allow political parties to organize themselves on an ethnic basis, not officially the MRF is considered to be the 'Turkish party' and their activity is central in the organization of the life of the Turkish minority.

Public forms of remembering the violence of the 1980s exist mostly as a consequence of the activity of the MRF. There are commemorations organized by them, remembering the victims of the protests against the change of the names where speeches are given each year by the members of the party. In the village Mogiliane, in the Kardzhali region, where a 17 months old girl named Türkan died during the protests in 1984 a monument was stated by the MRF in the form of a well, remembering her and other victims of the violence. The Youth Department of the MRF published a book called “Memory” (no date) with a collection of interviews conducted with Turks about their memories of the ‘revival process’. The project was aiming on collecting and publishing the narratives without any comments, in order not to forget the past.

As about academic work on the subject, after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the communist regime in Bulgaria, scholars were free to examine questions regarding the ethnic minorities of the country. The majority of research conducted on Turks in Bulgaria focus either on the history in general, or part of the history of the minority group (Eminov 1997, Mahon 1999, Petkova 2002, Yalamov 2002, Neuburger 2004), the history of the ‘revival process’ (Bojkov 2004, Baeva and Kalinova 2009); or on the current situation analyzing memories of the 'revival process' (Georgieva 1993, Madjarov 1993), political events (Kavalski 2007), minority rights (McIntosh et al. 2005, Rechel 2008), contemporary inter-ethnic relations between Turks and Bulgarians (Zhelyazkova 2001, Warhola 2003, Fatková 2012, Naxidou 2012), aspects of the collective identity of the Turkish community (Yalamov 2014), or post-1989 changes in the situation of the minority (Eminov 1999, Vassilev 2002, Anagnostou 2005, Bakalova 2006).

Accounts of the 'revival process' cover different aspects of the events. Eminov (1997) gives the ideological background and consequences of the renaming campaign. He places the events of the 1980s in a wider historical perspective analyzing Bulgarian nationalism from the independence from Ottoman rule in 1878 until the fall of the communist regime in 1989. His chronicle of 1984-85 enumerates the acts of the government illustrated with quotations of speeches given by the members of the Communist Party. Concerning the consequences of the campaign the author argues that the assault on Turkish identity “strengthened the resolve of Turks to cling to their ethnic and religious identities even more tenaciously” (1997:17). Mahon's chronicle (1999) examines the grounds that enabled the 'revival process' and the consequences it had on the communist regime. Bojkov's historical report (2004) is based on personal stories and academic literature focusing on the nationalist politics of the era, while Bakalova (2006) gives an account of the minority policy of the communist party during the renaming campaign, analyzing the possible and actual inter-group tensions that have occurred.

An ethnographic work concerned with the memory of the events was carried out in 1992 by a team of researchers led by Georgieva (1993). While collecting narratives of people who have personally experienced the events of the 1980s, they aimed to create the basis of an oral history. The research was done in three villages of the Razgrad region (Northern Bulgaria), focusing on inter-group relations between the two ethnic communities. It shows how the ‘revival process’ “disturbed the traditional behavior system” between Bulgarians and Turks (Georgieva 1993:95) and reveals specific elements of the legislation that had different impact on the Turks on an individual level. Another point of their research was to focus “on the mechanism through which collective memory selects, presents and interprets phenomena and events” (Madjarov 1993:104). It shows how the image of the people of different ethnic groups is positive when talking about neighbors and the village, while an abstract image of Turks is usually more reserved or even

negative. Another common point in the narratives the team has collected was an idyllic picture of the life before the ‘revival process’ (Madjarov 1993).

The research I have conducted supplements these works in as much as it does not concentrate merely on the narratives of people with first-hand memories, but also on the transmission of them to the generation that have grown up since the coercive assimilation campaign. In the following chapters I discuss the findings of my ethnographic research, starting with the evaluation of my informants of the ‘revival process’.

3. Repercussion and responsibility of the ‘revival process’

How is the ‘revival process’ seen today and what kind of influence does it have on the Turkish community? Who is considered to be responsible for the violence that happened? Here I will analyze the opinions and thoughts of my interviewees, connected to three main points of remembering – the effect the events still have on the Turkish minority, the responsibility for the ‘revival process’ and the question of jurisdiction.

One of my informants, Hanife, a young woman in her late twenties living in Kardzhali, told me that the ‘revival process’, instead of reaching its goals had a reverse effect: “I think... assimilation happens in a natural way. If this would not have happened the assimilation would happen anyway. But the forcing always has its reaction”. Ömer, a man born in 1974 moved to Turkey with his family as a child in the course of the ‘grand excursion’. Now he is living in Sofia, raising his daughter with his wife. He had similar thoughts: “For example, if they wouldn't have changed our names... Anyway in the mixed towns step by step people started to speak Bulgarian. It had a reverse effect”.

In these cases the ‘revival process’ is seen by the members of the Turkish minority as an event that prevents assimilation. Speaking Turkish instead of Bulgarian and maintaining the Turkish traditions can be seen as a “reaction” to the tentative nature of the forceful assimilation. In this way preserving the collective memory of the past and transmitting it to the next generations also contributes to the construction of the collective ethnic identity of the Turkish minority and their relation to the Bulgarian majority. This approach does not only exist in the beliefs of my informants, but academic literature on the question also suggests that the forceful assimilation had a reverse effect, and have strengthened the ethnic identity of the Turks in Bulgaria (Eminov 1997, Georgieva 1993). The process can be easily understood in the Halbwachsian frameworks (1992), which

suggest that remembering is social and the coherence of a group is maintained partially by memory: remembering the ‘revival process’ might evoke stronger feelings of belonging to the Turkish minority. We can trace an ongoing ‘revival’, one that is not forced by the authorities, but which is happening according to the self-determination of Turks and is fostered partly by the memory of the forced assimilation. In the core of this identity stands the feeling of belonging to Bulgaria, the mother-land called home, and the same time being Turkish and Muslim, different than Bulgarians. This self-determination was expressed by many of my informants, who mostly see Turkey as a foreign country, as abroad, and have warm feelings towards the Bulgarian land. Thinking of the ‘revival process’ evokes the memory that the same self-determination was once claimed to be unacceptable and false. As a consequence there is a stronger sense of belonging together not only because of the language, traditions and religion, but also as a consequence of a past threat to the identity that now has to be maintained in order not to let the ‘revival process’ achieve its goals.

The collective memory of the ‘revival process’ is of course not unanimous. The violent past events are seen in a different light by different people even among members of the Turkish minority. An important point of the memories is the evaluation of the responsibility for what happened in the past. As our ideas about the past can have direct influence on our evaluation of the present, and as the ‘revival process’ was only 25 years ago, so most of those who participated in the events are still alive, the different answers to the following questions might be important from the point of view of the peaceful living together of Bulgarians and Turks: Who is to blame? How could such a thing happen? Should anybody be convicted?

Elif, a woman in her thirties now living in Sofia was 7 years old when the first protests started against the change of the names in her village in the region of Kardzhali. Two months later her father was arrested for taking part in them. For six months the family didn't know whether he was dead or alive. Later they understood that he was taken to the Belene concentration camp. After

spending years in Belene, in another prison and finally in a village where he was interned, in 1989 he was released and the family moved to Turkey. During the years of her father's absence Elif's mother was depressed and constantly crying. Later, in Istanbul Elif met her husband, also a Turkish man from Bulgaria, and the two of them moved to Sofia, because he started his studies there. She told me about her relation with the Bulgarians:

“I don't have any bad feelings towards Bulgarians, but maybe towards the leadership that took my whole childhood away. I did not have a childhood. Altogether in those years I became a mother. The mother of my own mother. [...] We are not enemies of the Bulgarians, we are just very normal, average people who try to live somehow. It was maybe the Russian politics of that time from where everything begun.”

While sitting in a park in Sofia, Hafize, a young mother from the Razgrad region was watching her child playing in the playground and told me about her ideas on the question:

“There's no way to hide the traces, this [the ‘revival process’] have left some kind of wound or pain in the people. But you don't have to look at it the wrong way, with bad feelings. People in our village used to live normally, they don't have anything against each other because one is Bulgarian and the other is Turkish, it's more like this was imposed on them from above, with the army and with power. The tension comes from there. The average people live very well. They know our traditions and we know theirs; they bring us eggs on Easter and we bring them the special bread on Kurban Bayram. The average people live well unless there's something imposed on them with laws or with prohibitions”.

Politics was seen often as a reason when posing the question “Who is to blame for what happened?”. Many of my interviewees answered “Todor Zhivkov” or “the BCP”. This idea is not

only shared among older people with first-hand memories, but there are also examples of the same view among the younger generation. In these evaluations the leadership of the country of the 1980s carries the responsibility for what happened to Turkish people and families. Blaming the Russian politics of the time allows Elif, who moved back to Bulgaria to see contemporary interethnic relations as peaceful, and not to blame Bulgarians in general for what happened. But even the blaming of the Bulgarian politicians of the time leaves the door open to expel the guilt to a realm outside the everyday life. In many cases “vernacular discourse may defend itself against the unpleasant truth because it may threaten a positive image of the group” (Kapralski 2006:191). In this case Elif and Hafize both tend to maintain a positive image of Bulgarians, by dealing with the ‘revival process’ as a consequence of external factors.

The argument of the peaceful living together was also a very common one. Members of the generations that have first-hand memories about the times before the ‘revival process’ mostly remember living in harmony with the Bulgarians, and I was told the same about the present. The idealized example of the Easter eggs was one that came up in different interviews, just as in the narratives collected in the research by Georgieva and her team (Georgiva 1993, Madjarov 1993). In the villages the neighbors of different ethnic groups used to (and in some places still do) host each other on their own traditional Christian and Muslim festive occasions and take part in each other’s celebrations. The memory of this peaceful coexistence leads to the conclusion that the people themselves are not to blame for what happened, but the change have come from outside, from the world of politicians. This also makes the view of the present a more pleasant one: if the wrongdoings of the past are done by the Communist Party, people are safe now in the era of democracy.

Another example was given by Çiçek, a woman born in 1988 in a small town in Northern Bulgaria, now working in Sofia: “I don’t have inside me any hatred towards Bulgarians for what

they did, because I think it's only a deed of a certain circle of people, not of all. The rest were just executors, they simply had to do it and they did it, they just executed what they were ordered to. [...] Principally there are no problems between Bulgarians and Turks, but when politicians come into the picture, it starts there”.

Nedim, who was born in 1978 in Southern Bulgaria, emigrated as a child to Turkey with his family in 1991, returned to his homeland to study in university and now is living and working in Sofia. He expressed a similar view: “Not everyone who took part in the change of the names is to blame. If this is an order for him, he will go to jail if he doesn't cooperate. They were not against Turks. What kind of fault does a soldier have, when they have sent him to do that?”

Emin, who was a child during the 1980s in a village close to Shumen and now has three children, the oldest being 12 years old gave the following account of what happened:

“In general people think that not all of the Bulgarians are guilty for this. And I personally think the same, that not all of the Bulgarians are to blame. But some of the Bulgarians are guilty, because they executed the orders. Yes, the main fault is the Bulgarian Communist Party's, but after all this BCP consists of people. At least the ones who made the decisions, and especially those who executed these decisions fiercely cannot be excused, they are guilty. But to blame all Bulgarians is also not correct”.

These quotations show two different ideas about blaming some of the ordinary people. While in Çiçek's and Nedim's account people who were working for those state offices that took active part in the change of the names can be excused, in Emin's version there is the blaming of the same participants. Not blaming the ones who were executing orders by the state authorities creates the possibility for Bulgarians and Turks to live together peacefully, not establishing a situation of constant suspicion, where colleagues, acquaintances and average Bulgarians on the streets might be guilty for the ‘revival process’. Emin's version is different in this respect. In his account

participants in the organizing and execution of the orders – people who are parts of the present-day society – are seen as guilty for what happened. This approach gives way to some kind of tension in the contemporary life of the ethnic groups, seeing any average Bulgarian as a possible perpetrator of the past.

Mehmet was 8 years old when the names were changed and was attending primary school in the region of Kardzhali. He remembered the following of the first day in school after the new names were given:

“The teacher was checking who is missing. She locked the door after entering the room, which she never used to do. I don't remember her name, and maybe it's better, because I would despise her. And she was checking the classbook, who is who. And that was the first time anybody ever called me on a different name than mine. And because I didn't answer to that name, I received the first slap of the many that I was receiving later for speaking Turkish for example. [...] The fact that the teachers were constantly repeating our Bulgarian names was not only disturbing but murderous. As if it would bring them some kind of pleasure”.

Other interviewees also mentioned teachers, policemen, military people and state bureaucrats who seemed to enjoy their superior position, or average Bulgarians who expressed their hatred towards the Turks. Since this kind of behavior is not explicable by the orders, which could be fulfilled anyhow, it hints that there is something in the people themselves, and that the cruelty of the ‘revival process’ does not derive merely from the state authorities. This explanation brings the past and the present together in a way which suggests that the perpetrators of the past can be met anywhere in the course of everyday life. If the cause for the ethnic tension lies in the people themselves, the present-day democracy does not prevent the events from reoccurring.

These evaluations of the ‘revival process’ resonate in different theories of ethnicity that see conflicts either as a result of processes constructed from above, either as bottom-up processes. As Hobsbawm (1992) suggests, official ideologies of states cannot predict what average citizens believe, therefore when trying to understand nationalism and ethnicity, we need to analyze both phenomena from above and bottom-up processes, i.e. the beliefs and views of ordinary people. Deriving from Hobsbawm’s theory, Brubaker et al. (2006) suggest that there can be a detachment between ideas of nationalist politics and ethnicity as present in the everyday life of citizens of both the minority and the majority ethnic group, just as we see in some of the narratives of my interviewees. On one hand there is the heavy ideology coming from the Communist Party, and on the other the sometimes still peaceful living together of neighbors of different ethnic groups.

Another important point of collective memory is the relationship between memory and justice, a topic which has received a lot of attention from researchers in the fields of social and political sciences and legal theory. The spread of the language of human rights and democratization and the “growing valorization of memory as the essential element of collective identity” (Misztal 2002:146) increases the awareness of past wrongdoings, which can influence what and how do societies remember. In the case of the ‘revival process’ the first official statement which admitted some kind of guilt for the events in the 1980s was the apology in 2012, but till the present day no one was ever convicted, there were no criminal prosecutions or reconciliation commissions.

My interviewees expressed different feelings about the deficient jurisdiction. Mehmet told me:

“We are not looking for retribution. Our religious and our Turkish education does not teach us to look for punishment. But if some would have been convicted could bring solace in those who suffered of the totalitarian system. And they were not only Turks, but Gypsies and Bulgarians also. If the evil is not penalized, tomorrow the same can

happen”. Hafize had the following thoughts: “It has to be clarified why and how did this happen. But even if they convict someone... sooner or later everyone receives what he deserves. Even if they say, like he is to blame, I doubt that it will ease the feelings people have”.

Arguments about the need for convicting the guilty are usually built around the opinion that Mehmet expressed: that the conviction would mean relief for the victims and on the other hand would prevent the same events from happening. Other reasons mentioned were that this would be an official confession from the state, a real one, unlike the apology, which for many does not mean more than an empty political phrase. Different evaluations of the situation showed that even the apology meant a lot to many of my interviewees. On the other side are the notions that convicting the guilty would only harm to the present day relations of the two ethnic groups, and that the past wrongdoings cannot be recompensed this way. A common argument supporting this idea was a religious one – the belief in the divine providence makes the human jurisdiction unnecessary. This corresponds to a coping mechanism described by Kapralski (2006): the vernacular memory of the pogrom against the Jews of the Polish village Jedwabne in 1941 is inserted into mythologized stories, where “moral order must be reintroduced by the divine punishment of those guilty” which also means that there is “no attempt to punish real murderers” and no “sense of individual or collective responsibility” (Kapralski 2006:184). The author sees this phenomena as an escape from historical reality, which helps avoiding answering difficult questions. In the case of the evaluation of the ‘revival process’ this might also be seen as a way to avoid the questions of guilt and punishment.

The image people have about the past are not merely remembered, but also passed down to next generations, providing social continuity. In the followings I will investigate the ways in which the memory of the ‘revival process’ is transmitted to the young generations.

4. Patterns of familial transmission

In many Turkish families memories of the forceful assimilation campaign are part of everyday conversations. Ayşegül, the woman who was told the story about her as a baby and the tanks, is now 27 years old and works in the capital. She told me about the way she heard memories of the ‘revival process’: “Simply, when we are talking about something else, the topic opens itself. In my family in general they were speaking about these things very often, I mean, it is not something that is unspoken or about which we speak rarely”. In her family the stories about the renaming and restrictions were transmitted when conversations led to evoking the memories. Hafize, a young woman of the same age told me something similar: “I have learnt about these things gradually. When I listened to my grandmother and grandfather talking, I’ve heard things. I’ve also seen some of their documents, we kept them, with the Bulgarian names, and then I was asking, why are they different” (See on the preserved documents more in chapter 5).

Some members of the generation with first-hand memories also pointed out that they did not have one revealing conversation with their children about the ‘revival process’, as in the case of Emin: “How can I explain you, I would like to tell them, but these things are hard to speak about. Sometimes I am forced to tell them. I don’t know why. Once for example, I was telling to the eldest one, specially about the change of the names, I don’t know what was the occasion, but there was a reason, not just like that, to tell them this and this happened. There was a reason.”

These cases show one of the usual patterns: in the families where the topic is not a taboo and memories are retold, children generally learn about the past gradually and stories about the renaming become part of their common knowledge about the family’s history, and about the history of the country. Most of my younger interviewees who received information in the family have learnt about the past events this way, not at once, but rather constantly, little by little.

There are other cases when the memories of the revival process are not generally a taboo, but certain elements stay hidden. Emin, who lives in the capital and has three children, the eldest one being 12, told me that when he spoke about the renaming, his children were asking questions: “The first thing they want to know what was my name, which I've never told them. Some people say it, like this and this was my name, but for me it's displeasing to say it, so I don't want them to know it either”. The Bulgarian name itself, as a symbolic representation of the loss of autonomy, of the ‘revival process’ itself, is kept in silence, never said out loud. The name “is not only a sign of someone’s individuality and family. It is somehow an inextricable component of a personality and it has magic power” (Georgieva 1993:96). That is also the reason for the silence that keeps in secret the name of the new-born child in traditional Turkish families, until the name-giving ceremony where the Muslim priest whispers the name in the child’s ear (ibid.). In Emin’s case the saying out loud of the Bulgarian name would mean a recreation of a different identity, an oppressed and forced one.

Unlike the examples above, in some families the ‘revival process’ is a topic that stays unspoken and not mentioned in everyday conversations. In some cases the memories are hardly passed on. Cenk, a man born in 1989 in a village near Gotse Delchev in Southern Bulgaria told me: “They never told me anything. I just know that a lot of Turkish people had to leave to Turkey that time, you know, with all the bags and waiting in line on the border”. He also did not receive any information about his own Bulgarian name: “They used to tell me that I didn’t have a Bulgarian name, that when I was born the regime fell in a few months, but you know, all the other people my age had one, so I guess I also had one”. When I asked if he knows if there were other restrictions concerning the Islamic religious practices he did not know about these. Two other interviewees of the second generation also described their families as ones in which the ‘revival process’ is rather a taboo. Çiçek described her family as one which is “not from the people who talk a lot about the

past”. She also said: “I don’t know any concrete stories, I just know it was hard for them those times”.

These cases show how in some families the ‘revival process’ is part of the family secrets, the untold stories of the past, which according to Kuhn (2002) also shape people’s identity the same way the told stories do. She argues that a family without secrets is very rare: “People who live in families make every effort to keep certain things concealed from the rest of the world, and at times from each other as well. Things will be lied about or simply never mentioned. Sometimes family secrets are so deeply buried that they elude the conscious awareness even of those most closely involved. From the involuntary amnesias of repression to the wilful forgetting of matters it might be less than convenient to recall, secrets inhabit the borderlands of memory. Secrets, in fact, are a necessary condition of the stories we are prompted by memory to tell about our lives” (2002:2).

Another account by Mehriban showed the same kind of concealment and its possible effects: “I did not know about this at all for a long time. In the family this was not mentioned”. In her case she has learnt about the stories of the ‘revival process’ from other sources later, when started to work for the political party Movement for Rights and Freedoms, and participated in a campaign to collect stories of old people about the period: “I was shocked, because they were telling very terrible things. What happened in the prisons, and even in the homes, the villages, the streets when people went out. Shocking things. I wasn't expecting this at all, that people were hiding under bridges, in the forests, they were persecuted, beaten, this is simply terrifying”. This last example shows how the discovery of the concealed memories can also be hideous, even if that happens in a more advanced age. Another point is that although Mehriban received the narratives and the information from people living in the rural area, the collecting of interviews in which she participated was organized by the MRF. The lack of the familial transmission was this way filled by a process organized from above, from the political realm.

In the followings I will explore the possible causes that stay behind the different patterns of transmission, and show possible answers for the question: Why is the ‘revival process’ an object of concealment in some families and why does the older generation pass on the narratives in others?

Emin, who has never told his Bulgarian name to his family, but besides this talked and is planning to talk more about the events with his children expressed the following idea:

“I personally would like to tell my children, but in a less harmful way, so they would know about these events, because if they don't draw the lesson, tomorrow or the day after the same can happen. And also, sometimes to explain the present we need to go back to the past somehow and make the necessary juxtapositions, so we can value certain things. For example to value democracy, to value pluralism we need to see this moment of totalitarianism. To where can it get to. Or chauvinism, where can it lead. Racism, or the extreme nationalism where can it lead.”

A similar opinion was set forth by Hafize: “I will tell him [her son] maybe from the point of view to appreciate that you have the right to choose. This is very important, he has to appreciate it. I will also never forget this. Also now as we speak it looks like something historical, you know, this and this happened in this and this year, but the feelings it left are still working”.

As we see, the transmission of the memories is sometimes seen as a possible tool for preventing the reoccurrence of the events, learning about the ‘revival process’ can amend the future, keeping similar oppression from reemerging. Besides, there is a strong will in the members of the grown-up generation to show their children the difference between the two eras and the freedom that democracy brings. The same time this goes hand in hand with the fear of causing “harm” to the children with passing on traumatic stories of the past, like in the case of Birsen, a 48 years old woman who has a son and a daughter: “I tell about this to the children as a tale. But that time it was really frightening. I wanted to get off in an easier way, but they were asking. [...] I don't think it's

important to talk about this. What happened has happened. There's no need to ruin the children's psychological state". The fear is that the frightening and painful stories might harm the children and have negative effects on their mental health. Birsen also told me that she had passed on to her children the less frightening, sometimes even funny stories of the period. This way some members of the young generation will receive the remembrances of the past in a filtered way, not getting access to the most painful memories.

Mehriban, who had learnt about the events as a grown-up when collecting interviews of old Turkish people, asked her parents why they had never spoken to her about the 'revival process': "They said it's not a nice memory and they don't want to go back there". This is a reason not connected to the transmission of the memories, but with the fear of evoking the first-hand memories, the retelling of the stories, which is not a pleasant activity.

Çiçek, who hasn't received any specific stories of her parents told me: "I think they don't talk about it because it's long gone. If we know about it or if we don't, it happened anyway. There's no need to go after the idea that you have to have revenge. You have to know about it, but you don't have to have fixed ideas, to hate someone because in those times something happened". In her account the evoking of the memories of the 'revival process' is a possible cause for hate. The same fear that was expressed by many interviewees. Members of both generations argued that the memories of the 'revival process' can be destructive from the point of view of the relations between Bulgarians and Turks, that the transmission of memories is a possible threat to peace, and might make it harder for the two ethnicities to live together evoking feelings of anger and hatred. Some of the families where the topic is a taboo and where the memories are not transmitted to the younger generation this worry is the cause for the concealment. This way of thinking might be the cause in cases for not asking the parents about the past, or not asking more details, just as I the case of

Hanife, Birsen's daughter: "I know as much as they told me. But I did not ask more on purpose, because I think it makes no sense to be enemies. History is history."

When I asked Seniha, 20 years old, if she thinks if it is important to talk about the 'revival process' she told me: "No, I don't think it is important. The important is what is happening today, how is the relation between people. The important is to be in a good relation, to live good. There is no sense in turning backwards". Here we see another possible cause behind the concealment. It is not about the possible harmful effect of the memory transmission, but simply about the insignificance of it.

Accounts of the transmission of memories given by my interviewees show that both the transmission of the memories and their concealment is surrounded by different fears. On the one hand by the fear that the passing on of the stories might be harmful for the children, or for the relation between the different ethnic groups, and on the other hand that the past might be forgotten, giving way to its reoccurrence.

Most of the opinions connected to the collective memory of the 'revival process' were expressed by both people with first-hand memories and the younger generation born after 1986. The only clear difference that I could reveal between the accounts of the 'revival process' of different age groups lies in the emotional charge of the story-telling.

Birsen, 48, when retelling her memories about how they were hiding in the forest by night, the prohibitions and the fear, suddenly told me: "Even when I remember, I live through it again". Emel and Elif were both children when the change of the names started, have their own experience and memories of the events. They were both struggling with their tears at certain moments of the conversation. Many of my elder informants highlighted in their stories the fear that was present for 5 years, and felt hard to talk about the past. Experiencing intense emotions while remembering

shows the importance of the bodily experience, which makes the memories vivid and somatic (Misztal 2002:80).

This bodily experience is something the younger generation might also sense, but it is not always the case. According to Hirsch, strong, traumatic memories can pass on to second generations in such a way, that they “seem to constitute memories on their own right” (2008:107). In the case of the memories of the ‘revival process’ I would argue that the postmemory is not so strong that would traumatize the second generation, and that the fear and pain that is present in the narratives of the first generation are fading away in the process of transmission. This corresponds to the theories that argue that new participants in the social reality have a fresh contact to the past and develop a different approach towards it (Mannheim 1952), preserving some parts and letting others go, maintaining the generational continuity but giving way to change at the same time; and theories that highlight that the narratives about the past are interpreted in new ways by the younger generation, according to their own experiences (Tschuggnall & Welzer 2002).

In the case of the memory of the ‘revival process’ the new experience of the young generation is the context of democracy and globalization. Memories of violence that the young received from their parents and grandparents also contain a certain level of pain, but are mostly eased by the idea that today “we live in a different era”, as Cenk expressed. The narratives of the older generation are interpreted through the image of the communist leadership accompanied by the belief that such events cannot happen in the 21st century. Those members of the young generation who think this way are also not too deeply involved in their direct ancestors’ past, since their opinion is that the problems of today, such as health care and economic problems are more important than talking about the ethnic violence that happened more than twenty years ago. In their everyday experience ethnic tension is not a central question, which is underpinned by the fact that most of my interviewees of younger age have Bulgarian friends and don’t think of a mixed marriage as

something impossible, which factors can be indicators of the distance between the majority and the minority.

Despite the fact that certain elements of the image of the ‘revival process’ might fade away, there is no way for the memory of the coercive assimilation campaign to disappear. The reminiscences the violence has left behind constantly evoke the memories. In the following chapter I present these traces that bring the past and the present together.

5. Reminders of the ‘revival process’ lingering in the present

Remembering itself and the process of transmission is prompted by several different situations. Şafak, a young man born in 1992, explained to me what he thinks about why his grandparents told him more stories, than his parents: “Well, the old people remember more often, because it was really hard for them, they can’t forget. And maybe also because they don’t have other things to do (laughing). They remember this as we remember what we used to do in our childhood. When there is any kind of ethnic tension, they remember these things. They can’t forget”.

Emin evoked different situations:

“Sometimes in the Bulgarian community such things happen that force you to talk about these things. The children also hear things from here and there, especially when someone like Volen Siderov² appears on television, they start asking questions. And also when a few years ago when Boyko Borisov³ said that he agrees with the goals of the 'revival process' he just doesn't agree with... he does not accept the methods they had used. And with these things, like it or not, these questions stay in the everyday agenda. [...] Some extreme situations which happen to the Muslim in Bulgaria wake up these feelings, they wake up the memories of the 'revival process'. I was a child when the 'revival process' happened, but when I see that they are making all kinds of efforts to proscribe the Turkish language for example, the mother tongue, there's no way not to remember this period.”

² The founder and leader of ‘Ataka’, the Bulgarian political party considered ultranationalist and racist.

³ The prime minister of Bulgaria between 2009-2013, member of ‘GERB’, the center-right political party.

Other informants of mine also mentioned the far-right Ataka party and Boyko Borisov, the former prime minister as participants in the political life the actions of whom go against the effort to extend the rights of the minority. Some of my interviewees even expressed ideas according to which “the revival process is still going on”, since basic rights, such as kindergartens and schools where Turkish children can study in their mother-tongue are not guaranteed. These cases show that members of the Turkish community parallel between the past and the present which evokes feelings that urge people to see today’s politics as a possible threat for the minority. Contemporary Bulgarian politics, Anti-Muslim and anti-Turkish public discourse enters Turkish families’ homes and dispose people to remember the times of the ‘revival process’. It forces parents and grandparents to share their thoughts and pass on the memories to their children and grandchildren, and on the other hand generates questions in the younger members of the family, also leading to familial conversations that can reveal the memories. These cases also show how the individual memories are socially organized in the Halbwachsian sense (1992), are embedded in the broader social context, in our case in the Bulgarian everyday politics, which generates individual memories to come up, and also in the family which is the social context for evoking the memories.

Besides the public discourse there are more particular and personal topics that can lead to the transmission of memories, just as in the case of Elif, whose father took part in the protests against the change of the names and spent four years in prison after that. She told me that in the years of her childhood any kind of celebration was a sad occasion, intensifying feelings of the lack of the father, so till the present day she never celebrates her birthday:

“I hate it.” – Elif said. “I have told my child. She is 11 years old, I told her last year about her grandfather. She knew things before, but I’ve never told her that he had been in jail, because it’s not a nice thing, not something that you can be proud of. But I explained to her, as they explained it to me before, that it was for political reasons,

and that he is not a bad person. He was taken because of his thoughts, because of what he believed in. She knew about these things before, but it was maybe like a puzzle and now she put the puzzle together. She did not ask me questions after that, she only told me, that she knew about the prison. Earlier she was asking questions, but we always told her that we will tell her when she will be older. She was asking me why I don't celebrate my birthday. And now she understands how was it.”

In Elif's story there is the pain still lingering on which created a situation different than the average (the not celebrated birthday). This would force her to remember every year, and was also realized by her daughter. After many questions and vague, partial information that the child collected during the years, the topic earlier treated partly as a taboo had to be revealed. In this case the deliberate transmission happened at once, but little traces heard by the daughter gave her some kind of knowledge before the topic was discussed.

Some of the traces are more objective and tangible. Emin mentioned a story from three years ago: “It was around the year 2000-2001 when I went for a birth certificate to some of the state services where they give these things and they asked me my previous name and I had to say it. They are in the archives, but not only there, also in the municipality where someone was born. And later I've read somewhere that there were other cases like this.”

His forcefully imposed Bulgarian name which he never shared with his children had to be revealed and said out loud because the continued existence in official documents. In his case the fact that he was obligated to say out loud his former name was a humiliating one, which went against his way of treating the name as magical. Other informants, such as Hafize mentioned that they have kept at home old documents, which had the Bulgarian names on them. The official documents are the bearers of the public identity, accepted and traced by the state. These objects either deliberately kept at home, either still treated as official by the state authorities are another

way in which the memory of the ‘revival process’ emerges in the course of the everyday life of the members of the Turkish minority.

A common cause behind the emergence of the memories is connected to the huge emigration wave which followed the forceful assimilation campaign and led to the rupture of many families and communities. Even though after 1989 half of the emigrated people returned to their homeland, most of my interviewees still have relatives or close family members living in Turkey. After the border between Turkey and Bulgaria was opened in 1989, close family members tried to emigrate together, but were many times separated of their further relatives. In some cases even the close family could not stay together.

Young men serving in the army could not leave the country. Emin, who experienced the events as a 10 year old boy in a small village in the Northern part of Bulgaria, inhabited by Turkish people and emigrated to Turkey with his family in 1989, told me:

“In my village there were only 10 families left from the approximately 180 or 200 families, because they had to stay, since there was a restraint for young men who had to attend the army. They could not leave the country, so only they stayed. And not the whole family, for example my cousin was in the age to enter the army, and only his father stayed with him. His mother and sister were together with us, we emigrated together”.

That was one of the reasons that his close family was the first to return from Turkey to their Bulgarian village after three months, so he and his parents and cousins could stay together, but the many others never returned to their homes: “almost half of our village stayed in Turkey”. In this way the community of the small village was torn apart.

The loss of friends was also expressed by Egemen, a young man in Kardzhali, whose family left to Turkey, and returned two years later: “What I understood as a child is that all these people

had to leave. My friends, my classmates. Everyone left to somewhere, so we were all dispersed. This is the only thing I understood then, and for which I am still angry, that people were all dispersed. They all went to some direction, and with some of them we lost each other”.

The situation created by the ‘revival process’ with some members of the family living in Turkey, is also one that makes it necessary to explain the past to the younger generations. Ayşegül mentioned it when answering my question if she plans on talking about these events to her children: “Yes, surely I will tell them one day, if I see that it makes sense. But they will know it, there’s no way they will not. Here, for example my mother is in Turkey, my grandmother is in Turkey. The children will ask why they are there and why we are here. And then I will have to explain them”. Her mother’s parents and relatives emigrated to Turkey, and later, when her parents got divorced in the 1990s, her mother followed her kin to Istanbul while she and her brother stayed with their father and their grandparents from her father’s side in Bulgaria. This is a fact that generates a constant remembering of the ‘revival process’ that makes it impossible to forget and to impede the transmission of the memories.

Another example was given to me by a family in Kardzhali. Hanife and Ahmet, brother and sister in their twenties explained me how both on their mother’s and father’s side they have cousins who live in Turkey. Then the woman told me:

“In our family we usually have strong relations. But they [the cousins] spend for example twenty days per year here in Bulgaria. Ok, you see each other for twenty days, but then... Altogether you don’t behave like relatives, but like strangers. We have a different mentality, they got used to the mentality there. Also we understand each other without problems, but we speak a different dialect. And these people could be here. For example Kardzhali instead of 50 thousand habitants could be with 100. Why is it not? This would mean a bigger force. They, instead of investing there, would invest here,

this would mean more working hands, more investment, more development. I see it as a slowdown, I don't know if I am right, but that is my opinion".

In this case besides seen as a cause for the personal loss of the family, the 'revival process' is also seen as something that prevents Bulgaria from further development and which has long-term economic influence. It is a loss for the whole country. This account widens the fault of the guilty, since they did not only harm the Turkish minority, but had a negative effect on the majority as well. On the other hand it makes the economic situation of the country another factor that evokes the memories of the forceful renaming.

As Kuhn points out "the past is like a scene of a crime: if the deed itself is irrecoverable, its traces may still remain. From these traces, markers that point towards a past presence, to something that has happened in this place, a (re)construction, if not a simulacrum, of the event can be pieced together" (2002:4). This stands on one hand for the first-hand memories that might be consciously repressed, or temporarily forgotten, and on the other hand for the familial transfer – the traces left behind that, as we have seen above, generate questions in the younger generation.

Besides the political discourse, some personal facts in people's lives, documents with the old names and the fact that many families are divided between Bulgaria and Turkey, another way revealed by my informants in which the memory of the 'revival process' lingers on is the ongoing presence of the Bulgarian names. Most of the names changed in the 1980s are not used anymore. After the collapse of the old regime, people had the right to take back their original, Turkish names. There are certainly cases when some did not change back their names and have used the Bulgarian ones both in their personal lives and in official situations ever since, but none of my interviewees belong to this group. However, there are some cases when the forcefully changed Bulgarian names are still used in official documents. Some Turks who left for Turkey during or after the 'revival

process' and lived there for a long time have dual citizenship and two passports with two different names, still having the forcefully altered Bulgarian name in their Bulgarian passport.

Hanife told me the story of her cousin: “We have this cousin in Turkey. He was born here, and they wanted to keep his double citizenship. Here he is registered with his Bulgarian name, and they did not change it. They say 'anyhow, we know his Turkish name' and he stayed with his Bulgarian name. In his Bulgarian ID he is with the Bulgarian name, and in his Turkish ID with the Turkish one”.

I was told a similar story by Ömer, whose daughter is a few months old. He told me that when his family left in 1989 for Turkey after the change of the names, they made new identification documents, so he has a Turkish ID with his Turkish name in it. However, he never changed back his name in his Bulgarian ID. His family stayed in Turkey and is still living there, but he came back to Bulgaria to study in university and since then he is still using his Bulgarian name when dealing with official issues. “I will change my name now, because my daughter was born. I don't want her to remember it. I left my Bulgarian name because, you know, it's easier. When you go somewhere. Even if they say there is no discrimination, there is always. When they see you have a Turkish name, they look at you in a very different way. People who say there is no discrimination are lying to themselves, I think.”

The possibility of a strategic identity shift created by the double documents seemed to be useful until now. With the appearance of the daughter it becomes a disturbing element, reminder of a troubled past which has to be eliminated.

In some cases the names are officially changed and are not present in any documents, but still used in some informal situations. In Kardzhali a Turkish man in his thirties told me that as a child he had a Bulgarian name, which was changed back (by his parents, since he was under 18) in the

1990s. He mentioned that despite this, in certain situations it have happened that he used his old, Bulgarian name:

“Sometimes the Turkish people in the bigger towns like to say their Bulgarian names instead of the Turkish ones. They use them, so they don't... well... a Turkish man is like if he would be different, inferior. Even we used to do that. Also me, when I was in Sofia, I was doing this. Not to tell you why... well, we mostly did that to get to know girls. This was the first year when I went to Sofia, and also maybe on the seaside, when we went there when we were younger, it's normal, and when I went to Sofia to work. I never did that of shame, more because of the advantage. They will ask you stupid questions if you say your name, they will ask 'What? How was your name again? Is it Turkish? Are you Turkish?' And so on. Stupid conversations start and I don't have the patience for that, to explain them how is this whole thing. [...] From my generation Turkish use their Bulgarian names to... you see, what an interesting thing, now they use it voluntarily, because of their own will. That time they were forced to wear that name and many of them were complaining. And today there are even people who are willing to take back their Bulgarian names, so everything can be more normal, you know. Because even today, I don't know why they take it like this, like if... when you go somewhere, in some state institution, or anywhere and you say 'Ahmed', and from then things are happening with difficulty. On the other hand, if you say Stoycho or Mladen, things happen in a different way.”

Emin also remembered a time of the 1990s when many people from Bulgaria were trying to find a job in Western Europe: “And there was a moment when all the people took back their [Turkish] names, and a few years later for economic and social reasons they changed their names again to

Bulgarians, now voluntarily. Specially after the crisis which was in the years 95-96-97, so they would find work in Western Europe.”

We see from these examples, that the use of the Bulgarian names after the end of the communist era is seemingly voluntary, but there is a strong force in the background – the fear of discrimination, and the feeling that having a Turkish name makes life harder in official institutions or in personal relationships with Bulgarians, or even people in Western Europe. The present situation of the minority, a feeling that in Bulgaria being Turkish means to be inferior compels people to remember the ‘revival process’.

All these traces are part of the everyday lives of the members of the Turkish community: memories evoked by contemporary political discourse, family members and relatives living in Turkey, documents with the forcefully changed Bulgarian names and the reoccurrence in certain situations of the same. These crumbs of the past linger on in the present, constantly reminding the members of the minority of the ‘revival process’, and showing how “in the Land of Memory the time is always Now.”

Concluding remarks

The research engaged in the ethnographic exploration of the ways the forceful assimilation campaign of the end of the communist era against the Turkish population in Bulgaria is remembered among the members of the Turkish minority, and the forms these memories are passed on to younger generations.

The findings reveal that the memory of the ‘revival process’ gives way to a stronger feeling of belonging to the Turkish minority. Accounts of the forced assimilation mostly blame the politics of the communist era. This approach leaves the door open to peaceful contemporary relations between the Bulgarian majority and the Turkish minority, since it sees the average Bulgarian guiltless. In other narratives there was the blaming of the ordinary people, which creates a situation that might render the ethnic relations more difficult. The question of jurisdiction as an important aspect of collective memory (Misztal 2002) also evokes strong feelings among some members of the minority, since the lack of a legal verdict is seen in cases as the lack of official admission of the fault committed by the communist state.

Patterns of transmission show that the first-hand memories, the stories of the generations that experienced the ‘revival process’ are in some cases constantly retold and transmitted to their children and grandchildren; in others they are concealed and treated as a taboo. I have found two different ideal types of transmission: a gradual, constant passing on of information and a case where the family secrets of the ‘revival process’ were revealed at once. The concealment of the past and the deliberate transmission both hide certain fears: the fear that the past will be forgotten, providing an opportunity for the past to be repeated, and on the other hand the fear that the passing on of the traumatic events might harm the contemporary ethnic relations or the mental state of the members of the young generation.

The narratives of my informants revealed many possible topics, situations and tangible remembrances of the past that force the memories to come up and to be retold to the younger members: the torn apart families, documents with the Bulgarian names and the contemporary political and social context all lead to the reemergence of the memories. The seemingly voluntary use of the old Bulgarian names hides the fear of prejudice and discrimination.

The findings can be understood in the frameworks of the Halbwachsian theory (1992) of collective memory: the remembering of the ‘revival process’ happens in a social context. In the narrower sense the memories are evoked and passed on in a familial context, while being embedded in the broader, public discourse. Patterns of transmission show that despite the theory of “postmemory” of Hirsch (2008) in the case of the younger Turkish generation the memories are not so deeply transmitted that they “constitute memories in their own right” (2008:103), but are rather changed in the course of transmission, and similarly to the findings of Tschuggnall and Welzer (2002) are reinterpreted according to their own social context.

Many aspects of the memory of the ‘revival process’ are not covered by this research. An exciting attempt would be to collect narratives of different generations of the same families (among my interviewees there were only two members of the younger generation the parents of whom I also interviewed), and compare their narratives in detail. Just as in the case of the research conducted by Tschuggnall and Welzer (2002), it would show exactly what type of information is concealed by the older generation, and what are the parts of the stories that are transmitted by the parents and grandparents but interpreted in a different way by the younger generation. This would reveal more on how the young generation interprets the narratives according to their own background, what are the elements that differ in their ways of understanding.

A gender aspect of the memories might also contribute to the understanding of the ways in which the memory of the past is maintained and organized: do Turkish women with first-hand

memories of the ‘revival process’ have a different approach towards the past than men? Is there a gendered difference in the ways the younger generation interprets the forceful assimilation?

As mentioned before, there are monuments, commemorations, publicly available photos and documentaries, which are part of the cultural memory of the ‘revival process’. The investigation on the commemorations could give further understanding of the ways in which communicative memory passes into cultural memory, and in which the public remembering influences the structure and content of personal memories. The understanding of the connection between the content of these public images and the memories inherited in the family would also provide more information on how the two spheres, public and personal, traverse and complete each other.

Memories of the ‘revival process’ might be different among the members of the different ethnic groups living in Bulgaria; therefore the investigation of the memories of the Bulgarian, Roma and Pomak population, and their comparison with each other could reveal important aspects of ethnic relations in the country. It would be important to discover the ways the mainstream public sources of information – museums, history books, the media, etc. – maintain and pass on, or hide, the memory of the ‘revival process’, since these are the sources which influence the image that the majority has about the troubled past.

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