Chapter 3

Patterns of Emigration from Bulgaria

1. Introductory note

Before presenting the history and the main trends in Bulgarian migration, a note about the available data sources and data quality is necessary. Similar, to the problems related to recording Polish migration, as will be described in the next chapter, the data sources providing information about the past and contemporary Bulgarian migratory movements are not abundant and are often contradictory. The reasons for the poor data quality are largely due to the underdeveloped systematic registration of migration flows during the totalitarian period when international migration from Bulgaria was suppressed to a minimum. After the fall of the communist regime, the lack of a tradition of recording migration flows as well as the lack of methodology and standard definitions made for unreliable measurements of population movements. Contemporary Bulgarian statistics are more advanced in comparison with the past but are still in their initial development. Currently, the arrivals and departures of nationals are registered at border crossing points but the length of the stay abroad is not taken into account, thus making it difficult to distinguish between short and long-term stays abroad. The data are also highly aggregated and differentiate only between three reasons for traveling abroad: tourism, personal visits, and business. All trips not falling into one of these categories are counted as “other”.

The gap in the knowledge of Bulgarian population movements has been partly addressed by: a few studies about Bulgarian migration trends conducted by academics at the Institute of Demography of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences (BAS, 1993; Philipov & Donev, 1997); two studies on attitudes towards migration conducted by the National Institute of Statistics in 1991 and 1992 (Philipov & Tsvetarski, 1993); and some accounts

of Bulgarian emigration based on census results (Kaltchev, 2001). The information provided in these sources is, however, either highly contradictory or of uncertain origin.

Accounts of migrations of ethnic Turks are more numerous (*e.g.* Vasileva, 1992; Zhelyazkova, 1998; Krastev, 1998; Morokvasic, 2001; Parla 2003), but raise significant problems related to data collection and data comparability.

Given the situation described, the estimation of migrations from Bulgaria would not be complete without taking into account foreign sources and information gathered by receiving countries. The primary foreign information sources on Bulgarian migrations include: two representative surveys about the profiles and motives of potential immigrants from Bulgaria, conducted in 1992 and 1996 and initiated by the International Organization for Migration (IOM, 1993; IOM, 1997); one analysis of immigration trends in Bulgaria since 1998, conducted in the framework of ILO's International Migration Program (Gächter, 2002); and an analysis of international migration tendencies in transition countries (UN, 2002b).

Based on the available sources, a general outline of the main characteristics and trends in the migrations from Bulgaria will be presented. All quoted figures should, however, be regarded with caution because of: the vague methods for recording migration in the past and nowadays; the striking mismatch between data reported in different publications on the same topic; the fact that no uniform periods in Bulgarian migration history have been established, which hinders data comparison; and, last but not least, the often unspecified data sources based on which estimations of the Bulgarian emigrations have been made. These latter issues will be addressed explicitly throughout the text.

2. Migrations from Bulgaria before the fall of the Iron Curtain

In Bulgaria, as in other former Soviet countries, the primary migration movements have been shaped by the economic and political reality during major historical events such as the First and the Second World Wars, the introduction of a totalitarian regime in the country after 1945 and liberalization after 1989. Similar to other CEE countries, the turning

point in the Bulgarian migration tradition was the fall of the communist regime, an event that made possible freedom to travel after 45 years of severe restrictions on population mobility not only to foreign countries but also within the territory of Bulgaria.

The patterns of population mobility in Bulgaria before the fall of the Iron Curtain were influenced by two major historical events: the liberation of the country from the Ottoman Empire in 1878 and the establishment of a totalitarian regime in 1945.

As in the rest of CEE, pre-1945 Bulgarian migrations were not restricted politically. The most characteristic flows during those years included the return of ethnic Turks to Turkey and the primarily transatlantic economic migration of ethnic Bulgarians. The numerous changes in national borders after 1878 also provoked non-voluntary migrations, which cannot be a subject for a thorough discussion here due to the limited data about their size and origin.

The first significant wave of migration from Bulgarian territory occurred at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries, when the fall of the Ottoman Empire stimulated the return of ethnic Bulgarians from territories adjacent to Bulgaria to the country as well as an emigration of Muslims residing in Bulgaria. Unfortunately, exact figures about the size of these flows are not available. As far as Muslim outflows are concerned, Zhelyazkova (1998) suggests that 350 thousand Muslims left Bulgaria between 1878 and 1912 and estimates that a further ten to twelve thousand Turks emigrated each year between 1913 and 1934. Krastev (1998) notes that about 550 thousand Turks emigrated from Bulgaria between 1878 and the end of the Second World War[1].

Even though Bulgaria did not impose formal restrictions on mobility of its population until the end of the Second World War, the overall emigration level was rather low during the whole pre-totalitarian period. Setting aside the emigrations of ethnic Turks, the majority of long-term emigrants from Bulgaria left the country in search of economic prosperity in the United States and Western Europe (Philipov & Tsvetarski, 1993). The exact numbers of Bulgarian emigrants to the United States from this period are not known since US statistics on immigration between 1899 and 1920 has collapsed the data on

[1] The reader should bear in mind that neither of the authors provides a source for their figures.

immigration from Bulgaria, Serbia, and Montenegro into one category. However, considering the fact that around 66 thousand persons from the Bulgaria, Montenegro and Serbia entered the United States between 1820 and 1940, it could be hypothesized that the share of Bulgarians was indeed not too high (Gibson & Lennon, 1999).

An exhaustive analysis of Bulgarian migration history during the Second World War does not exist either. Between 1935 and 1946, 153,795 emigrants were registered but no further information, such as ethnic origin or chosen destination countries, is available (See Table 3.1) (Philipov & Tsvetarski, 1993).

Table 3. 1. Emigration from Bulgaria in the period 1927-1992

Year	Emigrants
1927-1934	61,330
1935-1946	153,795
1947-1949	38,499
1950-1954	158,027
1955-1959	1,702
1960-1964	568
1965-1969	3,291
1970-1974	37,824
1975-1979	74,236
1980-1984	336
1985-1988	501
1989	218,000
1990	87,895
1991	40,246
1992	65,250
Total	**941,500**

Source: Philipov & Tsvetarski (1993)

With the end of the Second World War and the establishment of the totalitarian regime in Bulgaria, the free movement of people was prohibited. Leaving the country was allowed only after obtaining permission from the police and an international passport was provided especially for the trip and was again retrieved by the authorities upon return to Bulgaria.

A state-approved exception from the non-exit policy was made in two cases only: ethnic migrations and short-term migrations of workers. Ethnic migrations constituted a

unique type of long-term legal emigration, which was made possible under the framework of bilateral conventions for ethnic migrations, for emigration of Jews and ethnic Turks[2].

A limited opportunity for short-term work migration was regulated via bilateral agreements with the former USSR and some North African and Middle Eastern countries. Under this framework, Bulgaria provided woodcutters and construction workers to the former USSR, engineers, hydro-specialists and teachers to Morocco, nurses to Libya, and engineers to the Middle East. Usually the Bulgarians employed under these schemes resided abroad for more than one year and, according to international definitions[3], should be considered as emigrants. There is however, no recorded information about the numbers of Bulgarians employed abroad and their rate of return.

A third, but according to the state "illegal", way for leaving Bulgaria was by requesting asylum abroad. This option was not widely employed due to the existing restrictive emigration policies and the strict border controls, which made departure from Bulgaria virtually impossible and physically dangerous. Therefore, the overall refugee flow from Bulgaria was not pronounced until 1989 when the borders finally opened. Before that time, prospective asylum seekers had only limited opportunities to leave Bulgaria "legally" such as being a tourist, going on a business trip, being a performer in a troupe, or as a member of a sports team. The only remaining alternative was attempting to cross the land border unnoticed. None of these options for permanently leaving the country was easy to employ. In the first place, going on a tourist or business trip abroad was not necessarily approved by the state and passports were not given to people who were considered to be potential emigrants or who were viewed as not conforming to the communist state

[2] 35 thousand Jews left the country between 1948 and 1949 (Philipov & Tsvetarski, 1993). Emigrations of ethnic Turks will be presented in a separate section.

[3] According to the definition of the United Nations, a long-term migrant is "a non-resident intending to stay in the country for more than a year" and short-term migrants are those who stay in a country other than that of habitual residence for more three months but less than a year (UN, 1998).

ideology[4]. Secondly, each group trip abroad was supervised by a state agent, one of whose functions was to secure that all Bulgarians returned to the country. In the case of non-return, the family of the emigrant was subject to prosecution or other forms of intimidation practices. Another factor that could have discouraged people from emigrating was the possibility of losing one's Bulgarian nationality in case of non-authorized traveling out of the country, as envisaged in the new nationality code from March 1948. Additionally, starting in 1951, people who were intercepted in an attempt to cross the border without authorization faced imprisonment for up to ten years. All these factors kept successful emigration from Bulgaria and applications for asylum abroad as difficult to achieve goals. In this light, it is not surprising that during the period 1945-1955 the number of Bulgarian refugees in Western Europe, North America, South America and Australia, taken together, does not exceed eight thousand persons (Philipov & Tsvetarski, 1993).

Asylum seeker outflows were minimal after 1955 as well. Between 1965 and 1989, the total number of asylum applications submitted by Bulgarians in Western Europe was 13,011, the majority of which (around seven thousand) were submitted in 1989, the year when totalitarian regimes in all CEE countries collapsed. Before 1989, the average number of asylum seekers from Bulgaria was around 250 persons per year. In only two years, 1971 and 1988, more than 500 applications were lodged in industrialized European countries (UNHCR, 2001). The exact figures of asylum application submitted annually by Bulgarians in industrialized countries between 1965 and 1989 can be consulted in Table 3.4 and Table 3.5, at the end of this chapter.

Even though the amount of Bulgarian asylum seekers is rather low, some patterns in the preferred destinations can be outlined. Firstly, until 1988, Germany was the most popular destination, annually receiving around one third of all applications. Secondly, until 1979 asylum requests by Bulgarians were lodged in only eight European countries while before 1970, Bulgarian applications were not filed in any other countries than Germany and Switzerland. Asylum destinations diversified in the early 1970s and by 1979, Italy and

[4] According to the law on passports from 1969, a passport will not be issued to a person whose travels or stay abroad contradicts the interests of the state (Official Journal of the State N° 92, 28 November 1969).

Austria hosted the largest numbers of Bulgarians after Germany. The proportion of applications submitted in the remaining countries – Belgium, Denmark, and the United Kingdom – remains minimal. Some 187 applications were filed in Turkey but there is no record whether these refer to ethnic Turks or ethnic Bulgarians. In the 1980s, Germany, Austria, Italy, and Switzerland remained the most popular destinations. As indicated in Table 3.5, even though seven new countries (Finland, Greece, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, and Sweden) appeared on the asylum scene, their share as receiving countries was rather insignificant[5]. Despite the rather low emigration rate of Bulgarians, it should be stressed that they still constituted one of the major asylum-seeking populations from Eastern Europe in the past: the overall majority of asylum seekers in Western Europe from 1965 until 1975 was predominantly from the former communist countries in Central and Eastern Europe. With minor exceptions, during this 10-year period Poland and Bulgaria, along with Hungary, Yugoslavia, and the former Czechoslovakia were five countries from which the major flow of asylum seekers originated.

3. Migrations from Bulgaria after the fall of the Iron Curtain

The formal benchmark of transition to democracy in Bulgaria is November 10, 1989, when the State Secretary and Chief Secretary of the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party resigned from power. The process of partial liberalization that led to this event started earlier the same year with the opening of state borders as well as the abolishment of exit visas and restrictive passport policies.

The removal of restrictions on free travel resulted in an increased outflow from Bulgaria that reached a peak in 1992-1993 and has decreased afterwards, a tendency illustrated in Table 3.2.

Estimating the size of the post-1989 migrations is, however, still hindered by the previously described problems of data quality and reliability. The lack of practice in collecting statistical information about migrations made for inadequate measuring of what

[5] Between 1980 and 1988, Greece received 125 applications, the Netherlands 37, Spain 32, Sweden 55, and less than ten applications were submitted in each of the rest of the countries.

is believed to be the most massive emigration from Bulgaria. The opening of the borders resulted not only in increased outflows but also in a diversification of migration movements to include temporary migrations, "suitcase traders" commuting to neighboring countries to deal in small and cheap consumer goods as well as in food and gasoline, undocumented migration for work, migration for the purposes of education or training – in other words, movements which are not reflected in national statistics.

Table 3. 2. Emigration from Bulgaria in the period 1980-1999

Year	Emigrants
1980-1984	7,330
1985-1989	13,290
1990	15,750
1991	24,180
1992	36,400
1993	32,990
1994	15,410
1995	16,610
1996	14,470
1997	16,420
1998	14,920
1999 (only to GFR)	8,200
Total	**215,970**

Source: UN (2002b), according to foreign statistics

The incoherencies in the data on Bulgarian migrations are, in some cases, enormous (e.g. a difference of half a million emigrants reported for the same year is not unusual) and raises the question to what degree any of the available assessments reflect the actual migrations. For example, according to the preliminary analysis of 2001 census data, for the period 1992-2001, the net emigration of 177 thousand persons[6] testifies to a decreasing level of outflow from Bulgaria in comparison with the previous ten years (Kaltchev, 2001; NSI, 2002b; Stanchev, 2004). Additionally, between 1998 and 2003, 20,815 persons

[6] Only 36,962 persons have declared residence abroad or, in other words, these are the only migrants officially known as legally residing abroad (Stanchev, 2004).

migrated temporarily via bilateral agreements for short-term employment (Stanchev, 2004). The first contradiction becomes obvious when the data published by Bulgarian analysts of the census results are inspected. According to Philipov & Tsvetarski (1993) and Philipov & Donev (1997), more than 193 thousand Bulgarians emigrated in only the three year period of 1990-1992. For 1992-1995, the same authors estimate that the number of emigrants was 239,250 persons (Philipov & Tsvetarski, 1993; Philipov & Donev, 1997). This is again larger than the estimate provided by the NSI. At the same time, this data is inconsistent with those offered by foreign sources (UN, 2002b). According to the latter estimations, 76,330 Bulgarians emigrated between 1990 and 1992, and 101,410 between 1992 and 1995. Table 3.1 and Table 3.2 can be consulted for a more detailed overview of the differences between the Bulgarian and the foreign statistics referring to the same periods or years. Simultaneously, a publication of the International Organization for Migration suggests that that in 1990 alone, the number of emigrants from Bulgaria was around half a million persons, of which 30% held a university or college degree, thus advancing the hypothesis that Bulgaria is undergoing the process of brain-drain (IOM, 1997)[7]. Even if we exclude the ethnic migrations from the IOM (1997) figure, since the UN (2002b) statistics do this, the difference between the emigration statistics provided by the two sources remains enormous[8] and reinforces the impossibility of achieving even an approximation of the early 1990s migrations form Bulgaria.

The data problems, however, do not conceal the new tendencies in Bulgarian migratory behavior in comparison with the migrations patterns before the fall of the Iron Curtain. The most significant changes include an intensification of the outflows from 1989 onwards, a decrease in migrations of ethnic Turks, a paradoxical increase in the asylum

[7] Uncertainty around the emigration issue did not prevent the local press from taking a firm stand on the issue and speculating that millions of Bulgarians were leaving the country, that the majority of the young people had left the country or were willing to do so, or that the nation was disappearing due to emigration.

[8] The emigration of the Bulgarian Turks from 1990 onwards is estimated to be between 30 and 60 thousand persons annually (Zhelyazkova, 1998). Subtracting any of these figures from the IOM estimate still results in an emigration level of more than 400 thousand persons in 1990 only.

flows (see below), and a development of new forms of migration, such as pendular migrations and undocumented work abroad.

The strongest evidence for the intensification of migration flows could be found in exploring the asylum seeking practices of the Bulgarian citizens after 1989. In 1989 the number of Bulgarian asylum seekers increased by more than 100% compared to all previous years. An important change in preferred destination occurred this same year with 5,022 asylum applications for Sweden, which transformed it into the most attractive destination for Bulgarians at that time. Austria was still a preferred target country but the importance of previously preferred countries, such as Germany and Italy, decreased significantly (See Table 3.5).

The most massive outflow from Bulgaria took however place in the period 1990-1994 when 96,465 persons requested asylum abroad. This number of asylum applications transformed Bulgaria into the fourth major sending country in Europe after Yugoslavia (519,871), Romania (349,821), Turkey (183,007), and Bosnia-Herzegovina (114,067) (UNHCR, 2001). During these years, Germany appeared again to be the primary destination country. Simultaneously, the spectrum of targeted countries diversified and countries that were not a main destination in the past became major players in the first half of the 1990s. The principal changes occurred in the cases of Belgium, the Czech Republic, France, the Netherlands, Spain and the United Kingdom. The most extreme was the transformation of Belgium's position as a target destination (Gächter, 2002). While in the previous 25 years the country received around 100 applications, in only four years' time the asylum requests went up to three thousand and in 2000 Belgium received 53.9% of all Bulgarian applications for asylum. Similarly, the Czech Republic and France had previously no records of Bulgarian applications but are now accounting for, respectively, more than two thousand and more than one thousand applications (See Table 3.6 at the end of this chapter). Overseas destinations such as Canada and the United States attract 6,852 asylum seekers from Bulgaria and thus constitute the primary non-European target countries (See Table 3.7 at the end of this chapter).

After the rapid increase in asylum seekers in the early 1990s, the level of applications decreased in the period 1995-1999 but still did not reach the low level prior to 1989. Germany, Belgium, the Czech Republic, France, and the United Kingdom remain the most preferred European destinations, while the significance of the United States and Canada as receiving countries has become minimal (See Table 3.6 and Table 3.7). A primary reason for the decreased asylum flow is the introduction of restrictive reception policies in Western Europe towards Eastern European asylum seekers. Additionally, the limited opportunity for obtaining asylum after the fall of the totalitarian regimes in CEE has acted as a break towards potential new flows. This is most obvious in the case of Germany where the 1995-1999 applications decreased to some five thousand in comparison with the over 77 thousand applications submitted during the previous five years. The change of migratory behavior could be linked to the fact that the majority of the applications from 1992 and 1993 in Germany were rejected, a fact testifying for the ever-decreasing chances of successful legal immigration through the asylum channel in the future (UNHCR, 1997). The lack of chances to obtain asylum is best reflected in the 2003 and 2004 figures for asylum seekers from Bulgaria: the number of applications lodged by Bulgarians reached their lowest level since 1989[9] (UNHCR, 2004; UNHCR, 2005).

The fact that Bulgarians were not completely discouraged to request asylum even after the asylum channel was practically closed for Central and Eastern Europeans from safe countries of origin requires some attention. Unlike other countries in CEE, such as Poland, former Czechoslovakia, and Hungary, from which the asylum flow increased in the late 1980s and decreased afterwards, Bulgaria turned out to be a major sending country from 1989 onwards and this tendency remained stable until the end of the 1990s. With the fall of the totalitarian regime in Bulgaria, the flow of asylum seekers was expected to decrease because of political stabilization in the country and the limited opportunities for obtaining asylum abroad. The reasons for continuous requests for asylum could be attributed to two main factors. Firstly, the possibility to travel unrestrictedly, which

[9] In 2003 and in 2004, Bulgarian citizens have lodged, respectively, 2,434 and 2,658 applications for asylum in industrialized countries (UNHCR, 2004; UNHCR, 2005).

occurred only at the end of 1989, has acted as a propellant of migration even though the West has closed its asylum channel for Eastern Europeans. In fact, the international evaluation and response to the changes in Bulgaria did not take place immediately in the first years after 1989, so the possibility for obtaining asylum was still not cancelled. Secondly, after 1992, when the international response was articulated and asylum was no longer granted to Eastern Europeans, the economic and political situation in Bulgaria has still not improved significantly and after 45 years of life under totalitarian rule people were unable to foresee improvement. Under these circumstances, requesting asylum was one of the few possible ways to enter a foreign country where one could attempt to find employment and eventually settle while the application was processed. Subsequently, after a negative decision, many of the rejected asylum seekers remained, undocumented, in the host countries. Having entered the job market, many have become pendular migrants commuting between country of destination and origin on a regular basis[10]. It is not an exaggeration to say that post-totalitarian asylum applications are a result of a conscious decision to use the asylum system for economic migration, which is otherwise impossible. A study conducted by the IOM indeed reveals that the Bulgarian concept of "asylum seeker" does not include the key idea that asylum is designed to offer protection to people fleeing due to well-founded fears of persecution or in order to escape violent and life-threatening conflict (IOM, 1997). On the contrary, most Bulgarians view the asylum application as a good avenue for economic migration and achieving a better life abroad.

The closure of the channels for legal migration as well as the political liberalization in Bulgaria has resulted in alternative forms of migration that seek to overcome the restrictions imposed by Western European countries on legal economic migration. The alternative migration channels employed have become increasingly irregular and include the abuse of the legal means of entry e.g. as a tourist or as a student. Once inside the destination country, undocumented migrants work to improve their economic position.

[10] This pattern of migration employed by former asylum seekers will be later on identified as a strategy employed by the undocumented Bulgarians in Brussels.

Factual information about Bulgarian migrants in irregular situations is scarce, but testifies that the phenomenon of undocumented migration is on the rise. For example, in Austria, Bulgarians who are apprehended has been steadily increasing since 1997[11]. The number of undocumented Bulgarians might be small and Bulgaria may rank low on a scale of apprehension, but the numbers continue to rise and prompt the need for either better immigration control measures or an increased presence of undocumented persons.

In Greece, the undocumented stock of Bulgarians was estimated to be around seven thousand persons in 1993 (Markova & Sarris, 2002) and around 50 thousand in 2000 (Morokvasic, 2001).

The presence of undocumented Bulgarians becomes increasingly visible in the Netherlands as well, especially after police raids in The Hague and Amsterdam in 2002 and 2003. During those actions, undocumented immigrants have been apprehended and deported, usually the day after apprehension. Press releases of the Dutch Ministry of Justice reveal that, in total, more than 16 deportation flights took off from the Netherlands to Bulgaria with 70 to 180 undocumented Bulgarians on board of each flight (Dutch Ministry of Justice, 2001/2003). The increasing proportion of the undocumented Bulgarian work force in the Netherlands could be also deduced from a look at the changing employment patterns in the Dutch greenhouse sector. In 1996, the number of undocumented workers in the sector was around ten thousand, while in 2000, it rose to 17 thousand and in 2002, the estimations suggest a figure of 70 thousand persons in an irregular employment situation. A pronounced shift is observed also in the employers' preference over certain undocumented workers. Before 2000, Turks and Moroccans were the primary employees in the sector but gradually they were displaced by Eastern Europeans and, particularly by Bulgarians, Poles, and Ukrainians who work for the half the price asked by Turks and Moroccans (de Waard & Westering, 2002).

Since the fall of the totalitarian regimes in CEE, Bulgarians have also been traditionally one of the largest groups of deportees (after Ukrainians and Romanians) from

[11] The apprehended undocumented Bulgarians in Austria were 301 in 1997, 179 in 1998, 444 in 1999, and 961 in 2001 (Gächter, 2002).

Poland. Even though Bulgarian citizens are rarely apprehended by the Polish border guards (on average 46 undocumented Bulgarians have been apprehended each year since 1998), their deportation figure was the third largest between 1998 and 2000, and the second largest from 2002 to 2004 (See Table 3.3).

Table 3. 3. Bulgarians apprehended for illegal border crossing in Poland and Bulgarians deported from Poland (1998-2004)

	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004*
Apprehended	86	109	55	47	10	13	4
Deported	874	704	623	552	769	579	309

* Data for 2004 includes only the period from January to August.

Source: Kepinska (2004)

The transition process in Bulgaria and the related international responses have not only provoked undocumented migrations as an alternative migration strategy, but have also made Bulgaria an attractive scene for recruiting women for trafficking. For example, in Greece (where no trafficked prostitutes from Bulgaria were recorded in the past) the number of discovered trafficked cases has increased to 60, thus making Bulgarians the third largest group of trafficked women in Greece after Albanians and Russians (Lazaridis, 2001).

4. Complementary information on migrations from Bulgaria

The increased migratory potential of the Bulgarian population can also be assessed to some degree indirectly by exploring the results of the indicated in the introductory note of the present chapter surveys conducted in 1992, 1996, and 1998 and by investigating the possible future trends in migration from Bulgaria. The major results that are available from these surveys will be presented briefly in order to elucidate the most pronounced migration

tendencies, but the reader should bear in mind that studies about attitudes towards migration and migration potential have only a limited ability to predict if and to what extent migration will actually occur.

The results of the principal surveys show that the main reasons for considering migration are of an economic nature but the inclination to migrate permanently has decreased significantly while priority is given to tourism and business travel (IOM, 1997)[12]. This conclusion testifies that Bulgaria is witnessing the same shift from permanent to temporary migration as observed in other CEE countries, thus the general pattern of migration in Bulgaria does not constitute an exception to the post-totalitarian migration trends in other CEE countries. A related trend is also the decrease in the total number of potential migrants in 1996, even though dissatisfaction with economic conditions was much higher in comparison with 1992. In 1996, 54% of the interviewed persons says that it was "very unlikely" and 81% that it was "unlikely" for them to go either for a short or long visit to another country or for short- or long-term employment abroad, compared to 23% and 70%, respectively, of the interviewed people in the 1992 survey (IOM, 1993; IOM, 1997). As described in Chapter 2, the possible reasons for the reduced migration potential could be multiple. On the one hand, past migrations from Bulgaria never reached very high levels and were mainly in the form of asylum seeking. The relatively low migration rate did not allow for the creation of migrant networks abroad that could facilitate and absorb new migrants. In other words, the lack of "migration know-how" acts as a barrier for the new potential migrants. On the other hand, due to the past political restrictions on travel and prosecution in cases of unapproved migration, former asylum seekers were rarely capable of maintaining contact with family members at home, and the fall of the totalitarian regime did not immediately result in reestablished communication and development of migration networks between separated families. Thirdly, the deteriorated Bulgarian economic situation in 1996 led to decreased chances to find the financial means to initiate migration. The survey results also point to the fact that the interviewed persons perceived emigration

[12] The percentage of people who found it "very unlikely" to emigrate permanently increased from 70% in 1992 to 76% in 1996 (IOM, 1997).

as increasingly difficult and therefore considered illegal immigration as a possible solution. At the same time, the general opinion has been exactly that illegal migration makes it difficult for other Bulgarians to travel legally to EU countries because it gives Bulgaria a "bad name". People also consider the information about the possibilities for immigration rather inadequate, a further factor keeping emigration levels low. The main sources of information about legal opportunities for living in other countries are friends and relatives, television, newspapers, and personal visits abroad. These sources, however, are not a sufficient trigger for implementing migration and the companies that provide information and help for immigration or for finding a work in another country are perceived as highly untrustworthy. Finally, the interviewees acknowledged that the most important reason for remaining in Bulgaria is the strong family tie and relations with friends and the local community. People often fear that emigration will lead to their social isolation or poor treatment in the new country. Nevertheless, most of the interviewees (74%) say that they would encourage their children to move to another country for the rest of their lives.

From a demographic perspective, potential immigrants are primarily male, well educated, urban, and below the age of 40. Students, the unemployed, and ethnic Turks constitute another group of potential migrants. The number of potential immigrants is smallest for the ethnic Bulgarians (23%) followed by the Bulgarian Roma (36%) (IOM, 1997).

The most preferred destination countries are Turkey (for the ethnic Turks), Germany, and the USA. Less than 5% mention Western Europe as a preferred destination. Excluding Germany, those who consider Western European countries for both short- and long-term migration focus predominantly on Italy, France, Switzerland, Scandinavian countries, and the United Kingdom.

The low migration potential from Bulgaria began to increase in 2002 when 8% of the population affirmed that it was very possible to move to live permanently abroad, in comparison with 3% during the 1992 and the 1996 surveys (NSI, 2002a). The main motivations for migration included living and working in a country with a higher living standard and resolving one's own or family material problems. Considering emigration as a

strategy for coping with economic problems reflects the fact that the living standards in Bulgaria have not improved during the last five years even thought the country was making a progress towards achieving its foreign policy priorities such as NATO and EU accession. In 2002 Bulgaria was the country with the lowest remuneration level and the highest unemployment rate in CEE[13]. The main obstacle for migration, however, remains the lack of financial resources for undertaking such a step.

One final theme that requires attention is the emigration of Bulgarian scientists or the issue of "brain-drain". The emigration of young qualified professionals has been largely discussed in the press where concerns have been raised that Bulgaria is losing its intellectual potential. The currently available information on the migration patterns of well-educated persons is not abundant, but at the same time offers contradictory opinions as to what degree Bulgaria suffers from "brain-drain". For example, a study conducted by The Institute of Sociology at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences in 1993 on a sample of 10,424 persons indicates that 54% of the scientists had a strong negative attitude toward the socio-political situation in Bulgaria, while 71% found the conditions for professional development in the country deplorable. Only 3.9% declared they had a decent financial status. These results might suggest that most scientists would like to emigrate although the empirical findings reveal that no more than 10% would actually try to pursue their professions abroad (BAS, 1993). Since an intention to migrate does not necessarily translate into emigration, it could be expected that the actual outflow of scientists will not reach significant proportions. Gächter (2002) advances a similar perspective when he asserts that Bulgaria has not suffered a loss of national development potential; on the contrary, Bulgarians have not adequately used the opportunities that migration could offer.

These non-alarming research results are contradicted by arguments emphasizing Bulgaria's "brain drain". According to some studies, about one fifth of Bulgarian scientists are reported to have left the country in the period 1989-1996 (IOM, 1997). Based on a

[13] The minimum wage in 2002 was 50 USD, the average salary was 134 USD, the average pension was 50 USD, and unemployment was 17% (USAID, 2003).

survey of 5,456 persons (including 983 scientists) Bobeva (1996) concludes that 67% of Bulgarian scientists are willing to emigrate and 6% have already secured a position in a foreign host institution. The gravity of the scientists emigrating is, in this context, difficult to estimate. However, it could be hypothesized that in the future no significant negative effects of "brain-drain" will be experienced firstly because of the low numbers of emigrating academics and secondly because of the high percentage of people with a university education who choose to remain in the country. Additionally, the number of PhD students in Bulgaria is increasing[14], which, in the long term, compensates for actual migrations. Any further predictions are impossible to make since no information about scientists' return migration or the purpose and duration of the emigration is currently available.

5. Emigration of the Bulgarian Turks

The reason for dedicating a special section to ethnic migrations is that these migrations do not accord with any of the identified migration patterns of the ethnic Bulgarian population. Moreover, the exodus of ethnic Turks from Bulgaria constitutes, until now, not only the largest authorized and non-prosecuted emigration, but also the most massive population movement directed towards an industrialized country[15] to take place during the Cold War period in the politically isolated Soviet Block. The ethnic Turkish migrations were regulated by bilateral agreements or forcefully provoked by the Bulgarian state, in order to achieve the country's goal of cultural homogeneity on its territory. Bulgarian policy towards the Turkish minority has stamped the country with a reputation for large-scale human rights violations, resulting in international isolation.

Henceforth an attempt to reconstruct the main trends in the migration of ethnic Turks will be made while special attention will be given to problems of data inconsistencies

[14] In 1998-1999, 2,496 persons enrolled in a PhD program, while in 2001-2002 the number rose to 3,585 persons (Sretenova, 2003).

[15] Turkey has been traditionally considered a Western industrialized country, and especially during the Cold War period when the division between East and West was strongly pronounced (UNHCR, 2001).

or lacking data sources. Even though some conformity has been achieved regarding the general developments of Bulgarian Turkish migration, the data that has been the basis of the presently circulated numbers of emigrants remains elusive. Since ethnic migration has been a highly sensitive political issue, we can assume the real emigration levels may have been misreported firstly by the government during the totalitarian period and secondly after liberalization, when the issue of forced ethnic migration became one of the tools to condemn the past political regime.

The presence of ethnic Turks in Bulgaria and the subsequent ethnic migrations from Bulgaria to Turkey is first and foremost an outcome of five centuries of Ottoman rule in Bulgaria. The liberation of Bulgaria from the Ottoman Empire in 1878 resulted in the first massive emigration of Turks, which at that time represented around 20% of the population. In the immediate years after the Russo-Turkish war of 1877-1878, around 350 thousand Turks left Bulgaria. Afterwards, between 1913 and 1934, some ten to twelve thousand ethnic Turks are believed to have migrated annually to Turkey (Zhelyazkova, 1998). An exception from this pattern took place in 1925 when an agreement for voluntary resettlement was signed between Bulgaria and Turkey, permitting the emigration of approximately 100 thousand persons (Parla, 2003).

With the establishment of the communist regime after the Second World War, the ethnic Turks in Bulgaria were the only population with a significant migration history: firstly, due to bilateral agreements between Bulgaria and Turkey and, secondly, because they were victims of the ethnic cleansing initiated by the Bulgarian state. Throughout the history after the Bulgarian liberation from the Ottoman Empire, Turkish migration has also been a response to the persistent ethnic tension and conflict between Muslims and Christians coexisting on Bulgarian territory (Vasileva, 1992). The occurrence of forced or voluntary migration of ethnic Turks did not cease during the entire totalitarian period, but intensified on four occasions. Some consensus has been reached that the first outflow refers to 155 thousand Bulgarian Turks who left the country during 1950-1951 after suffering the first consequences of the transition to a totalitarian regime: e.g. forced land collectivization and the termination of private land ownership (Krastev, 1998; Zhelyazkova, 1998; Parla,

2003)[16]. A second increase in the emigration of ethnic Turks took place between 1960 and 1968 when the Bulgarian state adopted a policy to eradicate the Turkish cultural presence in the country by closing ethnic schools and theaters, banning the Turkish newspapers, and prohibiting Turkish music in public places. As a result of the repressive policy, around 200 thousand Bulgarian Turks are believed to have left the country (Krastev, 1998).

A third outflow was observed between 1968 and 1978, when thousands emigrated on the grounds of a family reunification treaty between Bulgaria and Turkey. It is difficult to approximate the size of this migration. Without citing her source, Zhelyazkova (1998) refers to around 130 thousand persons who emigrated between 1968 and 1978. A. Parla (2003) uses publications of three other authors[17] to explicitly stress the fact that all statistical sources are ideologically biased, and concludes that the figure should fall somewhere between 50 and 130 thousand emigrants. The figures provided by these two authors do, however, differ from those quoted by Philipov & Tsvetarski (1993) (see Table 3.1).

The fourth and the most pronounced migration to Turkey was a response of the so called revival process, which was designed to achieve a full assimilation of the ethnic Turks in Bulgaria. Attempts to diminish the visibility of the ethnic Turkish presence have been made in the past but the strength of the anti-Turkish campaign initiated in 1984 and implemented over the following four years had no precedent in the past and has lead to the international isolation of Bulgaria. The full assimilation of the Bulgarian Turks was expected to be achieved through repressive measures such as prohibiting the Turkish

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[16] According to Philipov & Tsvetarski (1993) 158,027 persons have emigrated from Bulgaria in the period 1950-1954 (See Table 3.1). The authors however fail to provide information about the ethnic origin of these migrants. Considering the fact that during this period Bulgaria was under a totalitarian regime, one could hypothesize that these migrants are indeed from ethnic Turkish origin, or constitute the same group of migrants as discussed by Krastev (1998), Zhelyazkova (1998) and Parla (2003).

[17] The sources quoted by A. Parla are: Poulton, H. (1989) *Minorities in the Balkans.* London: Minority Rights Group; Vassileva, D. (1992) Bulgarian Turkish Immigration and Return. *International Migration Review*, 26(2), pp. 342-352; Kirisci, K. (1995) Post Second World War Immigration from Balkan Countries to Turkey. *New Perspectives on Turkey*, 12 (Spring), pp. 61-77.

language in public spaces, obligation for those with Turkish names to change their names to names of Bulgarian or Slavic origin, and employing the police to supervise and implement these measures.

In 1989, Turkey opened its borders to Bulgaria and permitted the temporary or permanent resettlement of Bulgarian Turks. This provision for humanitarian protection offered by Turkey resulted in the emigration of around 360 thousand persons who left Bulgaria with the intention of settling permanently in Turkey (Vasileva, 1992; Zhelyazkova, 1998). Morokvasic (2001) argues that the ethnic Turks who emigrated after 1989 number between 200,000 and 300,000 persons, while according to Philipov & Tsvetarski (1993) the number of emigrants in 1989 alone was 218 thousand persons (see Table 3.1)[18]. As neither of these authors cites their original sources of data, we cannot necessarily trust their figures. It should be noted that the motivation for emigration was not only related to politics but was also economic. By 1989, the job market in Turkey as well as the accessibility of consumer goods were much better than in Bulgaria and consequently attracted economic migrants under the provisions for ethnic resettlement.

With the fall of the totalitarian regime in 1989, the ethnic Turks were immediately granted the right to retrieve their names and the practice of religious and ethnic persecution was terminated. Consequently, more than 150 thousand persons returned to Bulgaria (Vasileva, 1992; Dimitrova, 1998; Hodja & Marinov, 1998)[19]. The large return rate has been attributed to the fact that economic and social adaptation to life in Turkey must not have been easy. Those lacking a profession or education were employed in sectors where their income was even lower than in Bulgaria. At the same time, the common religion did not act as a strong integration factor and the newcomers were perceived as Bulgarians, e.g.

[18] Philipov & Tsvetarski (1993) do not provide information about the ethnic origins of these migrants but considering the numbers of refugees who have originated from Bulgaria in 1989 (see Table 3.4) and the lack of intensive non-ethnic migration from Bulgaria before 1990, one could hypothesize that the figure provided by Philipov & Tsvetarski (1993) refers to an emigration of ethnic Turks.

[19] The return migration figures are also not uniform. Dimitrova (1998) advances the figure of 35 thousand returns by October 1989 while Hodja & Marinov (1998) speak about 60 thousand returns in the first months after the fall of the totalitarian regime.

foreigners, in Turkey and had little chance for upward mobility. Discrimination against Bulgarian Turks in Turkey was also a common phenomenon. Emigrants were usually paid less than locals for the same type of job; they were employed predominantly for the most unskilled or dirty jobs and it was only the qualified immigrants, such as physicians or technicians, who managed to obtain similar jobs as the ones they had had in Bulgaria (Vasileva, 1992).

The ethnic migrants faced serious material problems upon return to Bulgaria. The major issue was housing since the Bulgarian state privatized or bought the emigrants' former homes and sold them to Bulgarians so that at least half of the returning people were homeless upon arrival in Bulgaria. Considering the fact that most had also lost their employment it is clear that economic reintegration was a hard task. These events should be taken into account when exploring the consequent migratory pattern from Bulgaria and, in particular, the irregular and the circular migrations towards Western European countries where the number of undocumented Bulgarians is steadily increasing (Kloosterboer *et al.*, 2002; de Ward & Westerink, 2002).

After 1989, both long- and short-term migration to Turkey continue but from this point the primary motivation was economic rather than political. As a response to the economic crises in Bulgaria in 1990 and 1997, between 30 and 60 thousand people migrated to Turkey in an attempt to achieve secure employment and income (Zhelyazkova, 1998). Zhelyazkova (1998) also quotes the estimates of "some experts" according to whom the actual number of emigrants reached 400 thousand persons between 1989 and 1996, but no reference was made available. A similar figure (400 thousand to 450 thousand) is also advanced by Dimitrova (1998) who bases her statement on uncited, unofficial records. The available literature leaves unaddressed both the reason for the enormous difference (approximately half a million emigrants) as well as the degree to which each of the advanced estimations is correct.

6. Conclusions

Based on the scarce and, to a large degree, inconsistent data, it could be concluded that emigration from Bulgaria was kept rather low before the fall of the Iron Curtain, due to political repression in the country, and that it intensified only from 1989 onward. The closed border policy allowed only for the migration of ethnic Turks and the latter constitutes the major outflow from Bulgaria ever since the country was liberated from the Ottoman Empire. Similarly, compared to other CEE countries, the political transition towards democracy in 1989 lead to a sudden increase in the outflow and, more precisely, in the number of asylum seekers originating in Bulgaria. Emigration reached a peak in the middle of the 1990s and decreased afterwards.

Given this context, it could be concluded that Bulgarian emigration does not differ from the pattern of mobility typical for the whole Central and Eastern European region in transition. The feared wave of migration did not occur, nor did the Bulgarian speculation that its intellectual potential would flee.

Emigration from Bulgaria is economically driven but long-term settlement abroad is more an exception than a rule. The short-term trips, on the other hand, have become the major pattern of migration. From 2002 onwards, an average of 3,5 million Bulgarians travel abroad annually and in more than 90% of the cases, the reason for the trip is tourism, a personal visit, or business (NSI, 2005).

The closure of channels for legal emigration has created new forms of migration, such as shuttle migration for the purposes of work, undocumented work abroad, and, to a limited extent, temporary work abroad under the provisions of bilateral agreements. Bulgaria has also become one of the pools for the recruitment of women for the purpose of trafficking (IOM, 2001; Lazaridis, 2001).

What is important to stress is the fact that after 1989 Bulgaria became not only a sending but also an immigrant receiving country. One phenomenon exemplifying this tendency is the constantly increasing numbers of asylum applications submitted in Bulgaria. In the period 1995-1999, Bulgaria received 3,412 asylum applications while in 2000-2004 the number rose to 9,760 (UNHCR, 2004), which brought Bulgaria up to the

27th most preferred asylum destination out of 50. The transformation of Bulgaria into a receiving country and the fact that the vast majority of people seeking asylum in Bulgaria are from Afghanistan, Iraq, Armenia, Algeria, Iran, Nigeria, Somalia, Turkey, Pakistan or are stateless, reshapes the country from a formerly isolated and not preferred destination to a country acting as a magnet to Asian and African asylum seekers in a similar way as does Western Europe, traditionally. To what degree the newly arrived asylum seekers use Bulgaria as a waiting room in order to migrating to the West is still difficult to evaluate. Even if Bulgaria is not a final destination the fact remains that the country's position on the international migration scene has changed significantly during the past 15 years.