

**Center for Documentation and Information
on Minorities in Europe - Southeast Europe (CEDIME-SE)**

MINORITIES IN SOUTHEAST EUROPE

Catholics of Bulgaria

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MAJOR CHARACTERISTICS

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State Bulgaria

Name (in English, in the dominant language and -if different- in the minority language)

Catholics

Is there any form of recognition of the minority?

The Catholic Church is officially registered in Bulgaria.

Category (ies) (national, ethnic, linguistic or religious) ascribed by the minority and, if different, by the state

Religious

Territory they inhabit

Catholics inhabit in urban centers and villages in Southern and Northern Bulgaria and in the big towns of Plovdiv, Sofia, Rouse, Varna and Bourgas. The biggest concentration of Catholics is in the town of Plovdiv and the area around it.

Population

According to the last population census of 1992, there are 53,074 Catholics, out of a total population of 8,487,317, in Bulgaria.

Name of the language spoken by the minority (in English, in the minority language and -if different- in the dominant language)

Predominantly Bulgarian. In some villages inhabited by Bulgarian emigrants from the Banat region (in present-day Romania) a special dialect of the Bulgarian language is spoken. The written form of that dialect is a mixture of the Cyrillic and the Latin alphabets.

Is there any form of recognition of the language(s)?

Dominant language of the territory they inhabit

Bulgarian

Occasional or daily use of the minority language.

Access to education corresponding to the needs of the minority.

Religion(s) practiced.

Catholicism of the Eastern Rites (Uniat) and of the Latin Rites (Roman Catholic).

Is there any form of recognition of the minority's religion?

Yes.

Communities having the same characteristics in other territories/countries.

There are Catholics all over the world. With respect to the Balkans, Catholics are the majority in Slovenia and Croatia. They are a minority in Bulgaria, Greece, Macedonia, Romania and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (predominantly Orthodox Christian countries), as well as in Albania and Bosnia-Herzegovina (predominantly Muslim countries).

Population of these communities in other territories/countries.

There are some 872 million Catholics around the world (both from the Roman Catholic and the Eastern Rites) (Le Grand Atlas des Religions, 1990:107).

- ***Catholics of Albania*** - 10% out of a total population of 3.4 million (Human Rights Without Frontiers, 1996:9). Around 4,000 of all Catholics are those of the Eastern Rites (Le Grand Atlas de Religions, 1990:109).
- ***Catholics of Greece*** - around 50,000 Greek Catholics, out of a total population of 10.5 million people (IHF Annual Report, 1996:22). 3,000 are Catholics of the Eastern Rites (Le Grand Atlas des Religions, 1990:109). There are also about 100.000-150.000 immigrants living in Greece of the Catholic faith. (see Catholics of Greece)
- ***Catholics of Romania*** - 6 % out of the total population of 22.7 million. Catholics of the Eastern Rites are around 1% of the total number of Catholics in Romania (Human Rights Without Frontiers, 1996:33).
- ***Catholics of the Former Yugoslavia*** - In 1990 some 587,000 Eastern Rites Catholics were registered in the territory of the Former Yugoslavia (Le Grand Atlas des Religions, 1990:109).
- ***Catholics of Macedonia*** - around 4,000 Roman Catholics and around 8,000 Uniat (Eastern Rite) Catholics (Herbut, 1999). According to the last 1994 population census, the Catholics in Macedonia make up 0.4% of the total population of the country, i.e. around 7,800 people, out of a total of 1,935,034 people (Ilievski, 1998:11-12).

The total population of each country is taken from the World Directory on Minorities, 1997.

PRESENTATION

1. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

1.1. *Important historical developments*

Catholicism in the Bulgarian lands until 1860: The first attempts for the spread of Christianity into the Bulgarian lands were made by the Bulgarian Prince Boris I under the leadership of the Roman Pope in the middle of the 9th century. Trying to convert his pagan people to Christianity, and in order to help his two-century-old state to join the civilized medieval world, Boris looked towards the two spiritual centers of Christianity at the time -- Rome and Constantinople. A letter from a bishop to Pope Nicolaus I from the year 864 testifies that the Bulgarian ruler had promised to accept Christianity from Rome through the mediation of King Ludwig of the Germans (Yovchev, et al., 1995:11; Gyuzelev, 1992:73). However, due to political reasons, Prince Boris I accepted Christianity from the Patriarch in Constantinople, based in the capital of neighboring Byzantium. In 865, the Bulgarian people were officially converted to Christianity.

As the Bulgarian ruler was faced with a domestic revolt against Christianity with obvious anti-Byzantine sentiments, he tried to improve the country's relations with Rome. In August 866, he sent 115 questions on the essence of Christianity to the Pope and asked him to send some spiritual missionaries to Bulgaria (Yovchev, et al., 1995:11; Gyuzelev, 1992:73). Following the letter, by the end of the same year, a Pope's mission led by two bishops arrived in Bulgaria where it worked and propagated Christianity until 870. The Bulgarian ruler was very much impressed by one of the bishops, Formosa of Portuen, and proposed to the Pope to ordain him as the head of the Bulgarian diocese (Gyuzelev, 1992:73). The Pope, however, rejected this proposal, as well as a number of other proposals (Assenov, 1998:122). Soon after, relationship between the Bulgarian land and Rome deteriorated. This was especially visible after the Ecumenical Council (879-880) ultimately attached the Bulgarian Church to the Patriarchate of Constantinople (Yovchev, et al., 1995:12).

Relationship between Rome and the Bulgarian land improved again after the end of the Byzantine rule over the Bulgarian territory (1018-1187) and during the first years of the Second Bulgarian Kingdom. In 1199, Pope Inokentius III sent a letter to the Bulgarian Czar Kaloyan, urging him to acknowledge the Pope as the highest spiritual leader. At that time, Czar Kaloyan had the political incentive to have his kingdom be recognized as independent. It would not have been possible unless either Rome or Constantinople recognized an autocephalous Bulgarian church. (Shivarov, 1992:84) Kaloyan's political maneuvers resulted in a union with Rome. In 1204, a papal missionary to the Bulgarian capital of Turnovo gave him the title of "King" and the Archbishop based there became "Primas" (Kosev, et al., 1969:54).

Some historians argue that the union was an important step in the political and ecclesiastical life of Bulgaria, since it took the country out of its isolation lasting for more

than a century and a half under the Byzantine rule (Kosev, et al., 1969:85; Yovchev, et al., 1995:16). There are others, however, who say that this step did not have any serious results (Assenov, 1998:122). Political reasons "froze" the union even more during the rule of Czar Kaloyan (Shivarov, 1992:86). Bulgarians thought of the spiritual head of the Bulgarian Church as a Patriarch, equal to the Patriarch in Constantinople, regardless of the fact that he was called the "Primas" by Rome (Shivarov, 1992:87). Undoubtedly, such an attitude was principally different from what Rome had in mind about the Bulgarian spiritual leader. Although this Bulgarian attitude was not shown on the surface of the relations with Rome, it was observed in the actions of the "Primas," Archbishop Basilius. The notion of a "limited" autocephalous Church was alien to the political leadership in Bulgaria, and this finally led to the 1235 split of the union during the rule of Czar Ivan Assen II (Shivarov, 1992:87-91).

Throughout the 13th and 14th centuries, Rome was trying to win over the Bulgarian rulers but with no success. In 1235, Pope Inokentius IV sent a letter to the Bulgarian ruler, asking him to unite with Rome. Between 1245-1291, another letter of the Pope, sent via the Franciscan monks, also failed to have any impact. In 1337, Pope Benedikt XII wrote a new letter to the Bulgarian Czar Ivan Alexander, which also failed to have any results (Yovchev, et al., 1995:17-18).

After 1396, when the last piece of the Bulgarian land fell under Ottoman rule, the Catholic Church's chances to extend its influence over the former Bulgarian territories dwindled further. Islam was the dominant religion in the Ottoman Empire. Although religions were tolerated during Ottoman time through the *millet* system, the Bulgarian Orthodox Church lost its autonomy and merged into the Christian *millet* of the Ottoman empire with the other Orthodox churches. Its head was the Patriarch of Constantinople.

In the 14th-15th century, Catholicism was spreading in the Bulgarian lands. The first source were the colonies of the Catholic merchants of the Dubrovnik Republic, whose spiritual life was centered in Sofia. A second source was the Catholic mine-diggers coming from Saxony, who settled mainly in the area of the village of Chiprovtsi in northwestern Bulgaria (Neshev, 1992:105). The mine-diggers were assimilated into the Bulgarian population, but left their traces through making their descendants Catholics (Stanimirov, 1988:29).

The foundation for the future active Catholicization of the Bulgarian population was laid down by the flourishing of the Pavlikian movement. Back in the Byzantine period--around the middle of the 8th century and going on for a few more centuries-- Byzantium resettled huge masses of revolting Armenians and Syrians into its western and eastern parts (Yovkov, 1991:15-16). Those people did not believe in the monotheism preached by Christianity. They were dualists, who believed that the world is based on two principles: the principles of Good and Bad. The baptizing of the Bulgarians in 865 further exacerbated the Pavlikian movement, which was an anti-monotheist reaction (Yovkov, 1991:15-16). A similar heretic dualist movement, that of the Bogomils, took roots in the Bulgarian lands in the 10th century during the rule of Czar Petar (927-969).

Between the 10th and the 14th centuries, the two heresies developed in a parallel way without losing their own identities. Both of them had their main centers in the geographic regions of Thrace and Macedonia. Under Ottoman rule, Pavlikians constituted a minor portion of the population in the Bulgarian land, but proved to be a very closed and sustainable community. They did not have the environment to spread their heresy, but managed to retain it through teaching their tradition within their families (Yovkov, 1991:17-71).

In the middle of the 16th century, Rome developed a new policy to spread Catholicism further. It culminated in the 1622 establishment of the Holy Congregation. The latter was supposed to coordinate the efforts of all orders to spread Catholicism globally. In line with the new policy, around 1595, some monks of a Bosnia-based Franciscan order arrived in the Bulgarian land. Historians agree that their mission paved the way to a new period in the spread of Catholicism to that geographic region. In 1601, the Catholics of Chiprovtsi wrote a letter to the Pope, asking him to ordain one of those monks, Petar Zluitrich (Solinat), as bishop of the Bulgarian lands. Shortly thereafter, he became the first Catholic bishop. He was based in Sofia (Stanimirov, 1988:21-26).

Peter Solinat channeled his efforts into two directions -- to support existing Catholicism, building a monastery with a school in Chiprovtsi, and to spread his faith among the Pavlikian population (Stanimirov, 1988:27). The latter policy proved to be quite successful over the next centuries. He also sent Bulgarians to study in Rome. These Bulgarians later became spiritual leaders. Among them were the future Sofia bishops Ilia Marinov and Petar Bodgan (who became archbishop in the middle of the 17th century), Archbishop Petar Parchevich and others (Assenov, 1998:125). Chiprovtsi became the first Catholic stronghold by the end of the 16th century. Throughout the 17th century Catholicism spread further among the Pavlikians and even among some Orthodox Bulgarians beyond that settlement (Yovchev, et al., 1995:22-29). Thus, by the end of that century, there were already five dioceses in the Bulgarian land: Sofia (Western Bulgaria), Preslav (Central Bulgaria), Nicopol (Northern Bulgaria), Skopje and Ohrid (Macedonia) (Assenov, 1998:125).

It could be argued that until the end of the 17th century the above mentioned Bulgarian Catholic bishops were active not only in religious matters, but also in cultural and national ones. Their activities showed some Enlightenment features even before Paisii (Petkanov, 1992:155). The *History of the Slav-Bulgarian People* written by the Bulgarian Orthodox Monk Paisii of Hilendar in 1762 is considered to be the founding stone of the Bulgarian National Enlightenment. It embodies two important elements of modern nationalism: vocabulary of the vernacular, and the theme of the "glorious history."

However, Enlightenment activities were already present outside the Bulgarian lands almost a century earlier. In 1651, the Catholic bishop Philip Stanislavov in Rome published a book-collection *Abagar* of an apocryphal narrative and some prayers, which included some elements of the modern Bulgarian language (Kosev, et al., 1969:102).

Some scholars say that Archbishop Petar Bogdan wrote the first Bulgarian history in 1667. The Vatican library today has only the introduction and the first four chapters of the work. The original is believed to have included 20 chapters. Some data implied that the work was printed in Venice, but there is not a single copy preserved (*Demokratiya*, 14/08/1997).

Catholicism played an important role also during the Chiprovtsi uprising of 1688, which was a major uprising of the Bulgarians against the Ottoman rule. Bulgarian Catholics took an active part in it, believing that the uprising would provoke the Western Catholic states to intervene militarily against the Sultan (Assenov, 1998:125). By that time the Ottoman troops had been defeated by Vienna, and the neighboring Belgrade was occupied by the armies of the allied Catholic states -- Poland, the Habsburg Empire and Venice (Bulgarian Encyclopaedia, 1994).

The Chiprovtsi uprising was suppressed. Afterwards the religious and cultural life of the Catholics in Bulgaria fell into decay. Many of them immigrated northwestwards into the Banat region, which is in present-day Romania. Descendants of those Bulgarians live today in the villages of Old Beshenov, Vinga, Breshtia, Denta, etc. in Romania (*Makedoniya*, 21/6/94). Some of them returned to Bulgaria after its liberation from the Ottoman rule in 1878 (see more in 1.2.).

The Uniat Movement and the Catholics of the Eastern Rites between 1860 and 1944: Following Paisii's history of 1762, Bulgarian nationalism gathered momentum over the 19th century and culminated in the liberation of the Bulgarian state in 1878. Nationalism was initially promoted through secular education, through the creation of the Bulgarian literary language based on the vernacular, through the development of awareness of the Bulgarian history, through journalism, publishing and poetry. In the 1820s, enlightened Bulgarians acknowledged the need for ecclesiastical emancipation from the Greek-dominated Patriarchate in Constantinople. This was considered to be an important step before political independence.

The Bulgarians struggled towards the independence of their Church in two ways. The first one was through the Orthodox Church movement led by Bishops Ilarion Makariopolski and Neofit Bozveli. Ultimately, this movement was proved to be successful. In 1870, the Ottoman government ended the passionate ten-year dispute between the Patriarchate and the Bulgarians by issuing a *firman*, which established the Bulgarian autocephalous church, or the Bulgarian Exarchate. However, the Uniat movement, whose goal was the unification with the Roman Catholic Church, paved the way to the Orthodox Church's independence. This was the second struggle of the Bulgarians towards an independent church.

Dragan Tsankov, a Bulgarian merchant and enlightenment person in Constantinople, was at the head of the Uniat movement. It started after the Crimean war when Russia, the great Orthodox power, was defeated. After this, it became clear that the Church movement of Ilarion Makariopolski had reached a deadlock in the negotiations with the

Patriarch and the Porte (Macdermott, 1962:137). The Uniat movement surfaced in the spring of 1859 when Tsankov started publishing the pro-Catholic newspaper *Bulgaria*. It aimed at showing that the only salvation to the Bulgarian people would come from a union with the Western civilization. It strongly criticized the Greek Orthodox clergy and Russia's negative position on the question of Bulgarian church independence (Assenov, 1998:127). Those ideas found fertile soil in the summer of 1859 among the Bulgarians in the towns of Koukoush, Kilkis (in present-day Greece), Doiran and Stroumitsa. Koukoush was the first town to embrace the union. The clergy sent a letter to the Pope, acknowledging his supremacy as a spiritual leader (Eldarov, Svetlozar, 1994:11).

Encouraged by Britain and France, Tsankov worked towards a union with the Pope. On December 18, 1860 a delegation of spiritual and secular intelligentsia handed a letter to the apostolic vicar in Constantinople, asking Pope Pius IX for a church union. It stated that the Bulgarian Church would keep its own customs and liturgy, but would recognize the Pope as its highest spiritual leader. That same year the act was sanctioned by the Vatican and the Supreme Porte (Eldarov, Svetlozar, 1998:399). The Pope ordained Jossif Sokolski as Archbishop, based in Constantinople. In 1861, the people from the Bulgarian municipality in the imperial city built their own church and opened a school (Eldarov, Svetlozar, 1994:12). Initially, this movement had many followers in Constantinople, and took roots also in Odrin, Malko Turnovo, Plovdiv, Kazanluk, Solun, Enidzhe Vardar, and Voden -- mainly towns in Thrace and Macedonia (Eldarov, Svetlozar, 1994:12). Uniat sentiments grew in some towns of northern Bulgaria such as in Vidin, Turnovo, Silistra, Shoumen and Svishtov. These, however, were quite weak and faded away soon after their establishment (Assenov, 1998:127).

The initial success of the Uniat movement was short-lived. This was so due to the wide spread of Orthodoxy in the Bulgarian land. Nevertheless, it played an important role in the achievement of Bulgarian Church independence.

First, the Uniat movement was important because the Ottoman government officially recognized the existence of the Bulgarian Uniat Catholics in a special 1860 *firman*. Thus, the Bulgarians were recognized as a separate ethno-religious group, different from that of the Greeks (Eldarov, Svetlozar, 1994:11). The motive of the Ottoman government was that the union would limit Russia's influence on the Bulgarians (Assenov, 1998:127). Second, this move pressured Russia to change its negative position towards the issue of Bulgarian Church independence (Assenov, 1998:127). Initially, Russia was not interested in supporting any splits between Greeks and Bulgarians within the Ottoman Christian *millet*, which was one of Russia's strongholds in the Ottoman Empire. Nonetheless, the looming prospect that the Bulgarians may move away from its reach and may try to approach the other western powers changed Russia's policy.

Russia did its best to suppress the growth of the Uniat movement. The 1861 plan for the outrage of Archbishop Sokolski was signed personally by the Russian Czar (Proikov, *Troud*, 6/9/95). He was captured for fraud, transported by a Russian ship across the Black

Sea and finally exiled in a monastery close to Kiev (in present-day Ukraine) (Eldarov, Svetlozar, 1994:12).

1865 saw a new period in the development of the Bulgarian Catholic Church of the Eastern Rites. Rafail Popov was ordained Bishop and Papal Vicar of the Bulgarians of the Eastern Rites in Thrace and Macedonia. He was based in Edirne. His activities were much oriented against the “Hellenization” of the Bulgarian population in those regions, given the fact that the Ottoman government had never allowed the Bulgarian Orthodox Exarchate to place its bishops in Edirne (Thrace) and Thessaloniki (Macedonia) (Eldarov, Svetlozar, 1994:13-15).

Between 1883 and 1913, the Bulgarian Uniat Church expanded into three sees -- the archbishopric of Constantinople and the bishoprics of Edirne and Thessaloniki (Eldarov, Georgi, *Abagar* July/1998). However, with the stabilization of the Bulgarian Exarchate in the 1880s in Macedonia, a trend of reflux from the Uniat Church was observed (Eldarov, Svetlozar, 1998:401).

The Uniat Church had expanded beyond the territorial borders of the Principality of Bulgaria (since 1908, the Kingdom of Bulgaria) (Eldarov Svetlozar. 1994:16). Bulgaria’s defeat in the Balkan Wars 1912-1913 and in the First World War (1918), as well as the subsequent loss of territories, led to a total catastrophe for the Bulgarian Catholics of the Eastern Rites. During the war years, many Bulgarian Catholics of those regions found refuge in Bulgaria (Eldarov, Svetlozar, 1994:16; Proikov, 1998).

Not only was the Uniat Church drained of followers after the wars, it had also lost many of its leaders in the early 1920s. The Church needed urgent reorganization. The first step was to unite the remainder of the sees of the bishoprics in Thrace and Macedonia into a single one that was temporarily administered from Plovdiv. The active involvement of the Papal Visitor Archbishop Angelo Guiseppe Roncalli (when he became Pope in 1958, he accepted the name John XXIII) helped overcome these problems (Eldarov, Svetlozar, 1994:16-17; Mihailov, 1992:57). In 1926, he recommended that all remnants of the Uniat community be joined under a single Apostolic Exarchate based in Sofia, uniting only its followers in the Bulgarian territory (Eldarov, Georgi, *Abagar*, July/1998). Bishop Stefan-Cyrill Kourtev was ordained Apostolic Exarch.

The Bulgarian Uniat Church was being treated in a tolerant way during the rule of the Agrarian government of Alexander Stamboliiski (1920-1923). However, during the junta regimes (1923-1926 and 1934-1935), the clergy and laity were subjected to demagogic campaigns and even repression against them (Eldarov, Svetlozar, 1994:17).

Catholicism of the Latin Rites Between 1878 and 1944: After 1878, the Catholic Church had increased its influence due to several reasons. The first one was the increase of the number of missionaries of the different orders after the Bulgarian liberation. Those who were already present on the Bulgarian soil before 1878, such as the Franciscan, Capuchin, Passionist and Resurrection orders continued their work. Many other missionaries

arrived. New churches and schools were built, and many young people were sent to study at Catholic schools abroad. The Catholic Church was the first one to support the victims of the 1912-1913 Balkan Wars through its charity activities (Tsvetkov, 1994:71).

Another reason is the fact that members of the Catholic dynasty of the Sax-Coburg-Gotha ruled Bulgaria. King Ferdinand of the Bulgarians (Bulgarian Prince 1887-1908 and Bulgarian Czar 1908-1918) belonged to that dynasty and his wife Princess Maria-Louisa was also Catholic. Their son King Boris III (1918-1944) was baptized in the Christian Orthodox religion. In 1930, he married the Italian Princess Jovanna of Savoy, most probably, due to the interests of his dynasty. King Boris III did not act in favor of Catholicism. He did not even keep his initial arrangement with Rome to baptize his first-born son a Catholic. The successor to the throne, Simeon, who was an Orthodox Christian, also baptized his daughter, Maria-Louisa, an Orthodox. (Dimitrov, 1992:142). The influence of Catholicism of the Latin Rites increased in Bulgaria in the inter-war period, most of all due to the active work of the Papal Visitator Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli. During his time in Bulgaria (1925-1935) he helped the Uniat church go out of its spiritual and administrative deadlock. He increased the charity work of the Catholic Church, especially after the destructive earthquake in Chirpan in 1928 and obtained serious financial resources from the Vatican to increase the property of the Catholic Church. Finally, he managed to establish a permanent mission in Bulgaria and thus became an Official Apostolic delegate in 1931 (Michailov, 1992:54-59; Assenov, 1998:130).

Furthermore, Roncalli was actively involved in the negotiations on the terms of the marriage of King Boris III. He attached serious religious importance to that marriage since he believed that could subordinate the Bulgarian Orthodox Church to the Pope. His reasoning was based on what he found as the “religious indifference” of the Bulgarians -- they believed in nothing, and they did not care which way they had to make the sign of the cross, so they only needed to have the Christian clergy. His “overindulgence,” in line with this idea, distanced King Boris III from him, although the King used to consider him a good friend (Dimitrov, 1992:140). The common people loved Roncalli (Mihailov, 1992:54-59).

In 1935, Roncalli’s successor Juseppe Mazzolli came. He was Apostolic Delegate until his death in 1945 (Tsvetkov, 1994:23). Francesco Galloni succeeded him in 1945. Galloni remained in Bulgaria until 1949, when he left the country with the guarantees of the Bulgarian authorities that he would be allowed to return. However, he was denied re-entry and the office of the Apostolic delegation was closed down (Tacone, 1998:51).

Catholicism during Communism (1944-1989): After the Second World War, with the accession to power of the Communist regime in September 1944, Bulgaria entered the sphere of political influence of the Soviet Union. With its doctrinal atheism, communism declared religion as harmful to the development of a new socialist identity, which based on the cleavage of the social classes --workers and bourgeoisie-- and not on the cleavages of ethnicity or religion. All religions, including the Orthodox Church, which was

traditional for Bulgaria, suffered from the restrictions on their activities such as the closure of religious schools, newspapers and so on.

The Catholic Church suffered more than the Orthodox Church. The fact that the Orthodox Church is a national church rather than having its center in Rome like that of the Catholic Church, makes the meddling of the secular state into the church affairs rather easy. Throughout the four decades of Communism, the Orthodox Church, and to a certain extent the Muslims whose spiritual head is not subordinated to any Muslim center abroad, were infiltrated with pro-Communist loyalists. Thus these religions, if not totally eliminated, as it was the initial intention, became “toothless” towards the regime. The Bulgarian Orthodox Church, as well as the Muslim denomination’s offices received subsidies from the state. The clerics were socially secured and received state pensions (BTA, 12/02/1988). A particular loyalty to the regime was shown in the declarations of the Muslim clerics that Muslims in Bulgaria enjoy religious freedom. A resolution from an Imam meeting in 1985, for example, went even further by saying that the “Muslim Bulgarians have never belonged to the Turkish nation” (BTA, 2/4/1985).

The principle of worldwide subordination of the Catholic clergy directly to the Pope in Rome does not allow any active involvement of the nation-state into the Catholic Church’s affairs. Therefore, Catholicism was viewed in Sofia, and in Moscow, as Communism’s Number One Enemy along with American and Western “imperialism.” Thus, while the Communist regime tried to restrict the influence of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church, and to preserve it for the purposes of its own “democratic” appearance, it aimed at the total liquidation of the Catholic Church (Kalkandzhieva, 1992:144).

The Bulgarian Orthodox Church played a very important role in the assault on Catholicism in Bulgaria after 1944. This became visible first in the politicized statements of Exarch Stefan I and the Plovdiv Metropolitan Cyril (who later became the Patriarch), who spoke respectively against the “Catholic aggression” and the collaboration of the Catholics with Italian fascism (Kalkandzhieva, 1992:146-147). Furthermore, the Bulgarian Orthodox Church participated in a meeting of all Orthodox Churches from the so-called “Camp of Peace and Democracy” in Moscow (July 8-18, 1948), where the Greek Orthodox Church and the Ecumenical Patriarch were not invited. The existing historical material from that time shows that the Soviet government had initiated the meeting (Tsvetkov, 1994:76).

The meeting made decisions that were directed against the Catholic Church. It was decided that all treaties between the respective countries and the Vatican should be suspended, that all Catholic orders and congregations should be dissolved, and all clergy of foreign origin should leave the countries (Tsvetkov, 1994:76). All these decisions were soon reflected in the legislation of the respective countries (Kalkandzhieva, 1992:146).

Between 1944 and 1949, Catholicism in Bulgaria was subjected to a lot of pressure. With the Collectivization Law of 1948, the lands of the Catholic Church were expropriated. This fact deprived the church from its main source of income. The Catholic Church was

not subsidized by the state, unlike the Orthodox Church and the Muslims denomination (Kalkandzhieva, 1992:147; Eldarov, Svetlozar, 1994:174). All Catholic Church's real estate such as schools, colleges and hospitals was expropriated, with the exception of the churches and chapels. The activities of the Church, such as charity and teaching, were also monopolized by the state (Tsvetkov, 1994:77). The 1949 Denominations Act restricted the Catholic Church in its relations with the Vatican and in receiving donations from abroad (See more in 6.2.)

The formal restrictions on Catholicism did not satisfy the Communist regime. In September to October 1952, it launched a series of fabricated trials against 55 Catholic clerics. They were accused of espionage for Rome by involving in a "plotting espionage organization" based in Bulgaria. In August 1952, about 70 clerics and other outspoken Catholics were arrested (Tsvetkov, 1994:34). Held and interrogated in the offices of the State Security Service under inhuman conditions, the clerics were forced to sign papers with their self-accusations. Finally, the Communists managed to "reveal" a complicated network of spies, based in seven espionage centers in Bulgaria. The network was allegedly connected to the apostolic delegates Guiseppe Mazzolli and Francesco Galoni of the Vatican in Bulgaria (Tsvetkov, 1994:37).

Six people were found guilty of establishing that illegal organization. Four of the accused were sentenced to death and two were imprisoned for 20 years (see more on bishop Evgenii Bosilkov in 1.3.). 32 people were convicted as members of the organization and many of them were sent to jail for 10-15 years (Tsvetkov, 1994:103-104). Others were sent to the Communist concentration camps.

These trials were just part of an anti-Catholic campaign launched by the Soviet Union. In 1946, the Uniat communities in Yugoslavia's Croatia and Hungary received the first blows. Romania and Czechoslovakia followed suit in 1948 and 1949, respectively. Between 1949 and 1950, trials similar to those in Bulgaria were launched against the Roman Catholic Church in Hungary, Poland, Romania and Albania (Tsvetkov, 1994:44-45), and even in China (Kalkandzhieva, 1992:150). They aimed not only at hampering the Catholic Church's activities through eliminating the clergy, but also at discrediting it in the eyes of the population as being subversive to the legitimate Communist power. Thus, the activities of the Catholic Church in Bulgaria were crippled for the next 40 years.

The Second Vatican Council of 1962-1965, convened under the guidance of Pope John XXIII (civil name - Guiseppe Roncalli), introduced major changes in the Vatican's policy concerning the modernization of the Catholic Church's attitude towards the non-Christian religions globally.

In the first half of the 1960s, the majority of the political prisoners, including the convicted Catholic clerics of 1952, were set free and some of them returned to their ecclesiastical duties. Some of them were released from the prisons earlier than the time envisaged by the court, a move often related to the Second Vatican Council. Most likely, however, the reason was the Communist regime's willingness to show itself as

“democratic” in the eyes of the world. In 1963, there was unofficial information circulated among political prisoners that the UN would monitor the implementation of conventions that were already signed by Bulgaria (Belovezhdov, 1998). Indeed, between 1944 and 1960, Bulgaria ratified certain human rights conventions. Those were the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organize Convention (effective for Bulgaria since 1960), the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (effective for Bulgaria since 1961), the Convention Against Discrimination in Education (effective for Bulgaria since 1963), the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (effective for Bulgaria since 1951), (Burgenthal, et al., 1997:233-234).

In the 1970s and 1980s, the first steps towards rapprochement between Bulgaria and the Vatican were made. Communist leader Todor Zhivkov and members of his government visited the Vatican and a Vatican archbishop visited Bulgaria in 1976. A few clerics were sent to further their studies abroad and a limited number of Bulgarian researchers were allowed to enter the Vatican archives (Assenov, 1988:133). In 1972, a Bulgarian cultural center was established in the Vatican. Archimandrite Georgi Eldarov became its administrator (See more in 1.3.). However, all these measures of the Bulgarian Communist state were superficial. The Catholic clerics in Bulgaria lived under constant threats (Belovezhdov, 1998).

1.2. Economic and demographic data

Demographic data: According to data gathered by the Bulgarian Patriarch Cyril (1953-1971) in the middle of the 19th century, there were around 20,000 Catholics in the Roman Catholic bishoprics in Skopje, Nikopol, Sofia and Plovdiv. The Uniats, subordinated to Constantinople, were around 9,000 (Assenov, 1998:128; Tsvetkov, 1994:70). Altogether there were 109 clerics, 35 churches and 15 schools. These data show that the number of the followers of Catholicism was not very big, yet they had plenty of spiritual leaders, churches and schools. Even before Bulgaria’s liberation from the Ottoman rule in 1878, the Catholic Church had already built good infrastructure in the Bulgarian land (Tsvetkov, 1994:70).

Due to the increase of the Catholic influence after 1878, the number of Catholics grew in the following way: in 1888 there were 18,505 Catholics; in 1920, 34,072 and in 1934, 45,704 (Assenov, 1998:130). Around 1944, there were 48,000 Catholics in Bulgaria (Bokova, 1998:262). During the Communist repression in the early 1950s, the Catholic Church had around 57,000 faithful followers (Tacone, 1998:49).

There are different estimates on the number of the Catholics since 1989. According to the last 1992 population census, there are 53,074 Catholics in Bulgaria. More Catholics live in big and middle-size towns (around 37,629 people) than in villages (around 15,455 people). Other estimates show that the number of Bulgarian Catholics is between 75,000 (Collaco, 1998) to 100,000 people (Eldarov, Svetlozar *Podkrepa*, 9/9/1993). According to different estimates, out of all Catholics, Catholics of the Eastern Rites number between

6,000 and 20,000 people (Rabka, 1998; Proikov, 1998; Collaco, 1998). There are no official statistics on them. The language of the majority of the Catholics, according to the census, is Bulgarian (47,043). Around 116 Catholics speak Turkish and 1,581 speak Romanes (Census data, 1994).

Emigration: There have been a few major migrations in the recent history of the Bulgarian Catholics. The first one was after the Chiprovtsi uprising in 1688, when a major part of the inhabitants of the oldest Catholic settlement in Bulgaria, Chiprovtsi, emigrated to the Banat region in the Catholic Habsburg Empire. Two years after Bulgaria's liberation from the Ottoman rule in 1878, the Bulgarian Prince Alexander Batenberg issued an Act giving land to the Bulgarians from the Banat, who wanted to return to Bulgaria (*Demokratiya*, 20/07/92).

The first major emigration took place in the beginning of the 1880s and in the 1890s. The Catholics of Banat settled down compactly in five villages: Assenovo (203 families), Bardarski Geran (185 families), Dragomirovo (141 families), Gostilia (133 families) and Bregare (83 families). All of these regions are in northern Bulgaria. At present, they are under the realm of the Nikopol bishopric. In the 1930s, Bulgarian Banat Catholics numbered between 5,213 and 6,500 people. According to the clauses of the Krajova Peace Treaty of 1940, a treaty that aimed at the arranging of bilateral relations between Bulgaria and Romania, in the fall of 1943, 90 more people settled in Bardarski Geran (Niagulov, 1998:1-5).

The second major migration was that of the Uniat Catholics after the Balkan Wars (1912-1913) and the First World War. After the Second Balkan War (1913) and the following 1913 Peace Treaty of Constantinople, Western Thrace was returned to the Ottoman Empire, where a big number of Bulgarian Catholics of the Eastern Rites were concentrated (see 1.1.). This fact and the hostility of the Ottoman soldiers led to the migration of the majority of the Bulgarian Uniats. Initially, they settled down close to the newly established border near Malko Turnovo, Svilengrad, around the present-day Dimitrovgrad (towns in southeastern Bulgaria), hoping to return to Western Thrace later. However, the prospect to return faded away through the years. The next generation of Catholics started migrating slowly in the 1950s to the inner lands and settled in Kazanluk, Sungurlare, Stara Zagora and other towns and villages (Proikov, 1998). Between 1912 and 1918, there was also a migration wave of Catholics from Macedonia (Eldarov, Georgi, *Podkrepa*, 9/9/93).

The modernization process provoked the third major migration wave. It was not typical only for the Catholics, but for the whole Bulgarian population. Urbanization among the Bulgarian Catholics started in the 1930s (Bokova, 1998:3) However, the majority moved into the towns during the time of Communism, when modernization was exacerbated by the collectivization of their property and the industrialization of the country.

Economic data: Little research has been done on the past or present economic situation of the Catholics in Bulgaria. This is, most probably, due to the fact that Catholics, unlike

other denominations (e.g. Muslims) do not suffer from economic segregation in specific regions or industries. Currently, the Catholics live in urban and rural areas alike and suffer under the same general economic hardships like the majority of the Orthodox Bulgarians, resulting from the country's belated economic transition.

Catholics in the northern bishopric of Nikopol are generally poorer than the Catholics living in the south, Sofia and Plovdiv. They are all affected by the general economic situation in the country. However, even within the Sofia-Plovdiv bishopric, Catholics living in the small town of Rakovski, for example, are richer than those living in the village of Belozem, which is only 17 km from Rakovski (Rabka, 1998). Thus, the dividing lines are not along religion, but along the urban-rural split, a result of the process of modernization.

1.3. Defense of identity and/or of language, and/or of religion.

The harshest attack on Catholicism in Bulgaria was launched during the four decades of Communism. The 1952 series of trials left a few clerics dead and many of them imprisoned. Among them, the case of the bishop of Nikopol, Evgenii Bosilkov, needs special attention. Allegedly, he was actively involved in the "espionage organization" of the Catholic Church in Bulgaria and was executed shortly after his trial. For his dedication to Catholicism, Pope John Paul II, beatified him on March 15, 1998. He is the first Bulgarian who has been beatified. (The beatification of a person is a step before his canonization, i.e. his proclamation as a "saint." The beatification is given to a cleric who is considered by the Church as a figure of exemplary Christian behavior).

Bosilkov studied in Belgium, Holland and Italy, where he defended a Ph.D. thesis on the History of the Bulgarian Union in the 13th century (Tacone, 1998:15-16). He spoke 13 languages. Besides the fact that he was an extremely knowledgeable person, he was also very charismatic and much trusted by the common people. This gradually helped him to become the leader of Catholicism in Bulgaria (Tsvetkov, 1994:79).

Before his arrest and the following trial, he was much courted by the new regime to enter the Fatherland Front (a coalition of political formations, dominated by the Communist Party, which was formed in opposition to the fascist regime in Bulgaria and which came to power in 1944). He was promised a rank in the power structure, as well as to receive some subsidies for the Catholic Church. The Communists were trying to attract him and make him collaborate with the regime. He, however, fiercely refused the offer and this resulted in his death (Tsvetkov, 1994:79).

Another way of defending the identity of the Bulgarian Catholics during Communism was through the establishment of the Bulgarian Cultural Center in the Vatican in 1972, under the guidance of Archimandrite Georgi Eldarov. In 1981, he established a unique personal archive of books and documents on Bulgarian history from the time of the Bulgarian Enlightenment to the modern period, including the period of Communism (*Podkrepa*, 9/9/93). He had been gathering the books for almost 35 years. The archive

includes primary sources such as registers, stamps and personal archives from the time of the Bulgarian revival in Thrace and Macedonia. Many archival books were obtained from the Bulgarian archives of the Protestant American Robert College in Istanbul when the college was closed in 1972. Among these were original copies of books with signatures and notes of prominent Bulgarian revivalists (*24 Chassa*, 01/06/1996).

This collection of materials is considered to be one of the richest private collections of Bulgarian books and documents gathered outside the country. In 1983, Eldarov established the Abagar House in Italy. After the 1989 changes, he decided to move his collection to Bulgaria, “since there was nobody to use it [in Italy].” Since 1996, parts of his archive have already been transferred to Sofia (*24 Chassa*, 01/06/1996).

2. ETHNIC OR NATIONAL IDENTITY

The Catholics in Bulgaria have a Bulgarian national consciousness. Some are perceived by the majority as “Banat Bulgarians.” Still, they do not have any feelings of a distinct national or ethnic identity.

2.1. Describing identity

2.1.1. Cultural characteristic(s) differentiating it from the dominant group

2.1.2. Development of the minority’s awareness of being different

2.1.3. Identifying this difference as ethnic or national

2.2. Historical development of an ethnic or a national identity

2.2.1. The minority’s resistance to or acceptance of assimilation

2.2.2. The minority’s resistance to or acceptance of integration

2.2.3. Awareness of having an ethnic or a national identity

2.2.4. Level of homogeneity in the minority’s identity

2.3. Actual political and social conditions

2.3.1. Relations with the state

2.3.2. Relations with the dominant ethnic/national group in society

2.3.3. Relations with other minorities if any

2.3.4. Relations between the regions inhabited by the minority and the central authorities

3. LANGUAGE

Most Catholics speak Bulgarian as their mother tongue. There are very few rural Catholics from the Latin Rites, who identify themselves with the “Pavlikian” language (see more in 4.1.).

3. 1. Describing the language

3.1.1. Linguistic family

3.1.2. Dialects and unity; linguistic awareness

3.1.3. Instruments of knowledge: description of the language and norms (history of the written form and of its standardization)

3.2. History of the language

3.2.1. Origins

3.2.2. Evolution

3.2.3. Cultural production in the language (literature, oral tradition)

3.3. Actual sociolinguistic data

3.3.1. Territory in which the language is used

3.3.2. Number of persons using this language (in territory and among emigrants)

3.4. Freedom of expression in the minority language

3.4.1. Level of acceptance or resistance to the minority's language

3.4.2. Ways in which the state protects or impedes the use of the minority language

4. RELIGION

4.1. Identifying a religious minority

The Catholics are a religious minority in Bulgaria. They number around 53,074 people (Human Rights Without Frontiers, 1996:23). However, the use of the word “minority” with respect to the followers of the Catholic religion in Bulgaria is objected by the Catholic clergy, by researchers and by the Bulgarian state. Since Catholicism has been on Bulgarian soil for such a long time, one cannot call its followers “a minority” (Proikov, 1998). That word has negative connotations. Catholics, who are members of one of the biggest churches in the world, have their own self-confidence and are not inhibited by inferiority complexes towards Eastern Orthodoxy.

The community of the Bulgarian Catholics, even those of the former Banat Bulgarians who have retained their specific culture, do not consider themselves as being “dominated” or being “a minority.” On the contrary, they consider themselves an inseparable part of the whole Bulgarian Christian community (Bokova, 1998:266), which is incorporated into the Bulgarian nation (Niagulov, 1998:5).

The official position of the Bulgarian state is that it does not recognize the notion “religious minority,” but rather the notion “religious denomination.” First and foremost, it is claimed that all denominations in Bulgaria are treated on an equal basis by the state. Second, one cannot refer to the denominations in Bulgaria as “religious minorities,” since

the respective denominations may be majorities in number internationally. Third, if one speaks of “minorities,” then all denominations are to be considered “minorities” in Bulgaria, since according to some researchers the atheists are still the majority in this country (Krustev, 1998).

Organization: Today the Catholics in Bulgaria are organized in three bishoprics. Those who adhere to the Latin ordinance (or often called “Pavlikiani” due to their origins) are organized by the southern bishopric of Sofia-Plovdiv, based in the town of Plovdiv, and by the northern bishopric of Nikopol, based in the town of Rouse. The third bishopric, based in Sofia, is that of the Bulgarian Catholics of the Eastern Rites. The bishops of the three bishoprics constitute the Bishop’s Conference, which is the highest administrative body of the Catholic Church in Bulgaria. The mandate of the Chair, called Apostolic Exarch, is for three years according to the statute of the Catholic Church, created for the needs of its functioning as a corporate body within Bulgaria (Proikov, 1998). Currently, the Apostolic Exarch is Bishop Hristo Proikov, who is the spiritual leader of the Bulgarian Catholics of the Eastern Rites. In 1995, he succeeded Archbishop Metodii Stratiev, who was the first Chair of the Bishop’s Conference.

The followers of the Sofia-Plovdiv bishopric has been concentrated in the town of Plovdiv and the region around it in Rakovski, Belozem, Duvanli, Zhitnitsa, Hisarya and others. The Nikopol bishopric has the majority of its followers in Rouse, Belene, Bardarski Geran, Malchika, Pleven, Varna and others (Rabka, 1998). The Sofia-based Eastern Rites bishopric has followers mainly in southern and less so in central Bulgaria -- in Sofia, Plovdiv, Bourgas, Yambol, Shoumen, Svilengrad, Topolovgrad, Stara Zagora, Malko Turnovo, Ivaylovgrad, Svilengrad, Sandanski, Delchevo, Kazanluk, Haskovo, around Dimitrovgrad and others (Proikov, 1998).

Currently, there are several active monastic orders of the Catholic Church in Bulgaria. Legally, they act either under the bishoprics of the Eastern or of that of the Latin Rites. Within the Eastern Rites, there are the Assumption, Salesian of Don Bosco and Resurrection brothers, as well as the Oblates of the Assumption, the Carmelites and the Eucharistine sisters (Collaco, 1998; Proikov, 1998). Within the bishopric of the Latin Rites, there are the Capuchins, Passionist and Conventual brothers and the sisters of the Franciscan Missionaries of the Sacred Heart, the Sisters of the Charity of Saint Vincent de Paul (Zagreb) and the Benedictines of Hudzingen (Collaco, 1998; Rabka, 1998). Altogether, the brothers are around 11, and the sisters are around 16 people (Collaco, 1998).

Since 1989, the Catholic community has suffered significantly due to the lack of educated clergy. Since 1992, when a ban in the Denominations Act that disallowed foreign clergy from working in the country was lifted, several monks from Italy and Poland were invited to come to Bulgaria to meet these needs. Currently, there are Italian monks from the order of the Passionists in the northern bishopric of Nikopol and Polish monks from the Capuchin orders and one laity cleric from Italy in the Sofia-Plovdiv bishopric (Rabka, 1998).

Diplomatic relations with the Vatican were established for the first time in 1990, unlike in other former communist countries such as Romania, Hungary and Czechoslovakia, where relations with the Vatican were re-established after 1989. Mgr. Mario Rizzi was appointed the first nuncio. The current nuncio, Mgr. Blasco Collaco, succeeded him. Besides being the Vatican's ambassador (*nuncio*), he embodies also the functions of the Apostolic delegate, who is the spiritual representative of the Holy Father before the Catholic bishops in Bulgaria and the Bulgarian Catholics (Collaco, 1998).

4.2. Religious freedom enjoyed

The religious practices of the Bulgarian Catholics are not only visible and corresponding to their needs, but also they are recognized by the state. Their most important practices include the building and visiting of Catholic churches, participating in prayers and confessions, officiating religious marriages with the presence of a Catholic priest, officiating the religious festivities such as Easter, Christmas and others. Interviews with clerics such as Bishop Proikov, Papal Nuncio Collaco and Father Robert Rabka found that they do not think religious practices of the Catholic minority in Bulgaria have been impeded by the state after 1989. However, the Catholic Church still faces difficulties with the restitution of its property, which was sized during Communism (see more in 4.2.3.) (Proikov, 1998; Collaco, 1998). Less problematic is the issue with the residence permits of the Catholic missionaries.

Since 1989, a revival of the Catholic community is observed not so much in religious, but in cultural terms. Compared to the Muslim community, for example, which has erected some 100 new mosques in Bulgaria since 1989 (BTA, 28/11/97), there are not many new Catholic churches. One such church is the one built in Plovdiv in 1996. In 1997-1998, the Catholic Church had around 60 churches and chapels (Assenov, 1998:137).

The revival in the activities of the Catholic Church is shown in the occasional activities of the Abagar Foundation, formed around the book collection of Archimandrite Georgi Eldarov of the Foundation of the Banat Bulgarians. The activities are supported mainly by the permanent charity of the Catholic Church's Caritas Organization.

Caritas is the charity organization of the Catholic Church. The organization relies on the Church's infrastructure worldwide in pursuit of its activities. In Bulgaria, it has the status of an NGO. In 1993, the three Caritas organizations were established on the basis of the three bishoprics in Bulgaria: in Plovdiv, Rouse and Sofia. They formed a network between each other. In 1997, Caritas was already present in 29 towns and villages in the country. The projects, which it develops in Bulgaria are oriented towards the socially disadvantaged (from children in orphanages to unemployed elderly people). The organization does not support only Catholics, but also other socially disadvantaged people, such as some Roma in southern Bulgaria (Georgieva, 1998).

4.3. Relations with the dominant religious community and the other communities

There is traditionally a high level of religious tolerance between the confessional communities of the Orthodox and the Catholic Christians in Bulgaria. This can be attributed to at least two reasons. First, even before the Enlightenment, Catholicism has played an important, and undoubtedly, positive role in the national emancipation of the Bulgarians through the Uniat movement. The second reason is that Orthodox Bulgarians, even before the atheist times of Communism, were “religiously indifferent,” as described by Roncalli (See 1.1.). Nowadays, unlike Greece and Serbia, for example, where Orthodoxy is an important part of the identification of being “Greek” or “Serb,” in Bulgaria most people identify themselves as “Orthodox atheist,” a notion often used by the press. Some of those, who are baptized in Orthodoxy, are even proud of being the descendants of the dualist traditions, such as that of the Bogomils. Even in its recent history, in the 1920s, Bulgaria became a fruitful soil for the development of a new movement: Dunovism, which claimed to have spiritual relationship with the Bogomil tradition.

In this vein, for the Bulgarian Catholics of the Latin Rites, as well as for the Bulgarian Orthodox Christians, it was normal by the end of the 19th and the middle of the 20th century for their religious rites to coexist with pagan beliefs and rituals, which resisted the influence of the churches (Halacheva, 1992:320).

The good relations between Catholics and Orthodox Christians are well observed in the private sphere: religious rituals and marriage. The Catholic community was quite self-isolated until the 1950s and the prohibition of “mixed” marriages (between Catholics and Orthodox believers) was strictly observed. However, the relative isolation has been overcome through the erosion of the traditional attitudes resulting from the urbanization process. The communication between Catholics and non-Catholics in the educational and the professional sphere in the towns made such prohibitions obsolete. The idea of the “mixed” marriage is also accepted, provided the non-Catholic partner and the children of the new family became Catholic (Bokova, 1998:264).

Around the end of the 19th and the middle of the 20th century, Bulgarian Catholics maintained closer relations with the Orthodox Bulgarians in mixed settlements, such as Plovdiv and Malchika. On the other hand, in settlements inhabited predominantly by Catholics, such as Oresh and Tranchovitsa, the long-term isolation from the Orthodox population slowed down the process of disintegration of the traditional Catholic beliefs. Thus, the rites of these believers included some archaic elements registered by Catholic missionaries in the second half of the 19th century (Halacheva, 1992:320).

The rites of Catholics of the Latin Rites from the village of Oresh in Northern Bulgaria, inhabited exclusively by Catholics, were already somewhat influenced by Eastern Orthodoxy, especially as far as the memorial service is concerned. It is common in Eastern Orthodoxy that after the memorial service, food and some gifts are offered to the participants in the ceremony, while in Roman Catholicism that ritual is prohibited. However, the Catholics from that village borrow this Orthodox custom and consider it a

part of their own Catholic ritual. An important channel through which such borrowings became part of the Catholics' lives was the opening up of the "closed" Catholic-Catholic marriage, where the changes were introduced mainly by mixed marriages, particularly by the women (Bokova, 1996:33-34).

By the end of the 19th and the middle of the 20th century, the Bulgarian Catholics, who were descendants of the Catholicized Pavlikiens, spoke a dialect different from that of the Orthodox Bulgarians in the mixed settlements. However, this was not an ethno-differentiating indication since both spoke the same language -- Bulgarian (Halacheva, 1992:321). More recently, one of the characteristics of the Catholics of the Latin Rites is the "Pavliakian" language, known also as "Catholic" within the Catholic community (Bokova, 1998:265).

Since 1989, the Bulgarian Orthodox Church has shown a trend towards dissociating from the World Ecumenical Council. It joined that Council during the time of Communism. Nowadays it tries to be more "patriotic" and looks for the support of the state in order to become the official state religion in Bulgaria. Although at present, to a great extent the Orthodox Church is split between two competing leaderships due to state interference, both of them have almost the same opinion on the Church's separation from the World Ecumenical Council on Churches. The controversial issue is supposed to be the recognition of the right of homosexual, which is objected by the Bulgarian Orthodox Church and the Russian Orthodox Church. Clergy from both sides observe this trend in anti-ecumenical statements. Since the Orthodox Church is becoming more isolationist, the ecumenical dialogue between the religions is absent (Cohen, 1998). This lack of dialogue implicitly endangers the Catholic religion and its followers in Bulgaria.

The attitude of the Bulgarian print-media towards the Catholics is generally positive, although there are not many publications on them. Since 1989, the media have focussed their attention mainly on historical topics such as the role of the Uniat movement in Bulgaria's National Revival, the Chiprovtsi Uprising. Apart from that they deal with some current topics such as the restitution of the Catholic Church's property, the beatification of Bishop Evgenii Bosilkov, Archimandrite Eldarov's private book collection and the activities around the cultural revival of the Banat Bulgarians in Bulgaria and Romania.

Events covered in the media with respect to Catholicism are mainly the ones that happen outside the country. The media do not define a clear image of the Catholics. The notion of Catholicism has no negative implications. Catholics are depicted positively as being tolerant, deeply attached to traditions, unified and prone to charity. Still, there is a lack of a more in-depth understanding of the denomination's beliefs, and the approach of the media towards Catholicism is rather superficial (Denichina, 1996:13).

An October 1998 campaign of the Catholic Bishop's Conference against abortion in view of the preparations for the adoption of the law on children's rights was covered only briefly by one daily -- *24 Chassa*. The reaction was negative and the main argument

against it was that the prohibition of abortion did not take roots even in Catholic countries such as Poland or Italy, and it would not take roots in Bulgaria (*24 Chassa*, 1-2/10/1998).

4.4. *Ways in which the state protects or impedes minority religious activities*

The main problem of the Catholic community after 1989 has been the restitution of the Church's property. In 1992, the National Assembly drafted a special law on the restitution of the property of the Catholic Church that the communist government had seized with a non-promulgated act of March 12, 1953 (*State Gazette*, 24/12/92). This laid down the legal basis for the restitution, but restitution in practice is moving very slowly.

Part of the difficulties arise from the fact that before 1944, the Catholic Church did not have a judicial status in Bulgaria and thus, the property was inscribed to clerics who administered it. Now, many of those clerics are dead and it is difficult to find their numerous inheritors, who have to declare that this property did not belong to them. Many of those inheritors live outside the country (Proikov, 1998).

The restitution of that property created some tensions between the Catholic Church and the Bulgarian State in 1993. In 1993, the Bulgarian Parliament found out that under the terms of a Bulgarian-French bilateral agreement of 1955, some parts of the Catholic Church's property had been paid off by the Bulgarian State to France. Therefore, these were not subject to restitution according to the 1992 law (*Kontinent*, 17/9/93; *Otechestven Vestnik*, 6/11/93). Some of them were major buildings in Sofia, Plovdiv, Varna, Yambol, Bourgas, Rouse, which belonged to French colleges, hospitals, etc. (*Otechestven vestnik*, 27/10/93). A clause of that agreement envisaged that French citizens and juridical persons, whose property had been nationalized, were to be financially compensated (*Otechestven Vestnik*, 6/11/93). However, the Catholic Church argued in the mid-1990s that France did not have the right to act in that way concerning the property of the Holy See (Proikov, 1998). Mgr. Collaco claims that the Catholic Church does not agree with the governments' position that the issue of this particular property of the Catholic Church has been settled (Collaco, 1998).

Another problem concerning the restitution is that some of the already restituted buildings are still occupied by state institutions, such as the Sofia-based State School for Music, for example (*24 Chassa*, 6/3/98). The Restitution Law postulates that the legitimate owners should pay taxes, something that is done by the Catholic Church. However, rent is not paid to the Catholic Church even though the latter has proposed to the Ministry of Culture that a symbolic amount should be paid by that school. The government promises to move the school out of the building and find another one, but nothing has been accomplished yet (Collaco, 1998). Bulgarian Catholic leaders discussed that issue with President Petar Stoyanov in March 1998 (*24 Chassa*, 6/3/98), around the time of Bosilkov's beatification.

Although the restitution of the property is the major problem of the Catholic Church in Bulgaria, there is another problem related to the residence permits of the foreign Catholic clergy. Some of the foreign clergy still has to ask the Directorate of Religious Affairs for

permission to stay and work in the country. Clerics receive residence permits from the Interior Ministry for six months to one year. This is considered to be problematic, especially in regard to the six-month-term. The Catholic Church also protested because of the coverage that Bulgarian National Television had of the Catholic Easter Day in 1998. On that day a program was broadcast early in the morning at around 8 a.m., when few people were able to see it (Rabka, 1998).

The general reaction from most of the minority churches in Bulgaria (even the officially recognized ones) to the 1996 discriminatory acts of the authorities was largely hesitant due to the fear of reprisals. Some of them, for instance the Catholic Church, never reacted, even when their own interests were infringed upon (*BHC, Obektiv*, 1996:8).

GENERAL LEGAL STATUS

5.1. Past

The establishment of the Bulgarian State in 1878 was determined legally by the San Stefano Treaty and the Berlin Treaty of 1878, providing for the protection of the minorities in Bulgaria. The international legislation of that time protected mainly the freedoms of the religious minorities, since religion, not ethnicity, was a major factor of differentiation. However, by the Vienna Congress of 1815, this attitude had started changing and special clauses on ethnicity and race were included. This was further developed by the 1919 Treaty of Neully, when race, ethnicity and language became the dominant factors for minority protection. Provisions for the protection of religious minorities were also included. (Kanev, 1998:69-70).

The first Bulgarian Constitution --the Turnovo Constitution of 1879, which was operative until the adoption of the Communist one in 1947-- mirrored the international treaties' principle of protection of the religious minorities. On the one hand, it gave rights to the religious minorities for self-government, while, on the other, it put them under the supervision of the Executive branch. Local legislation was regulated by the 1880 Act for the Interim Regulations of the Spiritual Government of Christians, Muslims and Jews (Kanev, 1998:70).

The Catholic Church did not have the judicial status of a corporate body from 1878 until 1990. Nevertheless, this fact did not hamper the right of the Catholic community to adhere to its faith. Furthermore, until 1944, the institution of marriage and divorce was still in the realm of the activities of the Church. However, along with the other religious communities, the Catholic Church had to ask the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Denominations for special permission to build its own churches (Kanev, citing Girard of 1932, 1998:77).

With the Communist take over in 1944 and the introduction of a totalitarian political system, the state tried to introduce major changes in all spheres of public life. Concerning the minorities, it was not important to protect their rights in terms of religion or ethnicity,

but to merge them to the secular ideology of communism. Although the legislative basis in the two Communist Constitutions of 1947 and 1971 provided for the respect of religious freedom and the freedom of conscience, this was not pursued in practice (Kanev, 1998:76-80). With respect to the Catholics, this became quite visible, since in 1953 the Communist government issued, but did not promulgate, an act, which seized the Catholic Church's property (See 4.2.3).

Between 1944 and 1989 Bulgaria ratified some UN documents which included clauses on the respect of ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities. Among them were the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966), the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (1966), the Convention against Discrimination in Education (1960). In the mid-1970s Bulgaria became a member of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) (Kanev, 1998:72-86).

During Communism, domestic legislation on religious affairs was regulated by the 1949 Denominations Act that helped the authorities to exert total control over all denominations. This Act is still active today, with some important changes (See 5.2.). In the Communist years, the Act had several clauses that impeded the activities of the Catholic Church in Bulgaria. Art. 9 postulated that clerics, who maintain clerical relations with institutions abroad, would not be able to assume their posts before a special approval by the Director of the Directorate of Religious Affairs (Kalkandzhieva, 1992:148; Denominations Act, 1949). The Directorate is a governmental body. Art. 12 allowed the Directorate to remove temporarily or to dismiss clerics from office, who work against the laws, the public order and against the "democratic" structures of the state. Arts. 22, 23 and 24 attacked the Catholic Church directly. They did not allow it to maintain relations with organizations based abroad i.e. the Vatican or to receive donations from them without the permission of the Directorate. The opening of missions, congregations and charity organizations was stopped and the existing ones were closed down (Kalkandzhieva, 1992:149).

5.2. Present

The right to religious freedom is guaranteed on three levels, which in many points are in sharp contradiction with one another. The three levels are: the Constitution from July 13, 1991, the international treaties and the local legislation. (Cohen, Kanev, 1998). The Constitution proclaims freedom of religion and the separation between Church and State. It defines the Christian Orthodox Church as "the traditional religion of the Republic of Bulgaria." Initially, this provision was not interpreted as to provide any legal preference for the Church of the majority, although the 36th National Assembly made some attempts to do so (Human Rights Without Frontiers, 1996).

The Constitution introduces some prohibitions. First, there is a prohibition on the use of religious communities and institutions for political purposes and the formation of parties along ethnic and religious lines. That provision is viewed by human rights organizations as unreasonably discriminatory. Second, freedom of conscience is restricted on five

grounds: national security, public order, public health, good morals and the rights and freedoms of the others. The restriction due to preservation of the “national security” is in addition to the restrictions made by international treaties such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the European Convention on Human Rights (Cohen, Kanev, 1998). The Deputy Director of the Directorate of Religious Affairs has stated that “national security” is understood in Bulgaria as a special case of “public order” (Krustev, 1998).

At present, the Denominations Act, enacted in 1949, requires the registration of all religious denominations with the Council of Ministers. The respective local branches of the religious groups are registered with the Municipal Councils (Human Rights Without Frontiers, 1996). The Chair of the Council of Ministers has the right to get involved in the communities’ religious affairs. S/he may do the following: 1) review the documentation and communications of the denominations and stop their publications and distribution; 2) grant preliminary permission to those religious denominations, which want to maintain relationship with organizations abroad, as well as approve donations from abroad; 3) dismiss any religious officers who are found “braking the laws, the public order and the good morals, or are working against the democratic structures of the state” (Krustev, 1998).

Decision No5 of the Constitutional Court (1995) reviewed the Denominations Act in view of the new 1991 Constitution. The democratically oriented President and some deputies who were interested in declaring the Denominations Act unconstitutional provoked this action. However, nothing major was achieved, apart from the passing of some qualifications on religious freedom. The Constitutional Court ruled against the infringing upon the right of free choice of religion and included the right of association as a basic right of religious belief. The decision mentioned that the constitutional restrictions on freedom of conscience should be interpreted within the limitations of the international treaties to which Bulgaria is a party, especially to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The rights of the state to interfere in the affairs of the religious communities were limited to the monitoring of their political activities and those, directed against national security, public order and the rights and freedoms of the other citizens. The right to discharge religious leaders from their office was declared unconstitutional (Human Rights Without Frontiers, 1996).

There are three articles in the Penal Code, which envisage penalties for “crimes against religious denominations.” The first concerns the instigation of religious hatred through speech, press, and action or in any other way. The second penalizes the disturbing of religious rituals and congregations and the third prohibits the establishment of religion-based political parties and the use of religion against the state. None of these articles has been used for the punishment of people after 1989 although there were many instances of instigation of religious hatred by the media or by statements of public officials (Cohen, Kanev, 1998:7).

The Persons and Family Act is also related to religious affairs in Bulgaria. This law provides for the incorporation of some citizens' associations and foundations with the district courts (Cohen, Kanev, 1998:7).

The Radio and Television Act, adopted in November 1998, postulates in its Art. 53 that the Bulgarian National Radio and Television should provide time for addresses to the believers, as well as for the coverage of important religious ceremonies at the request of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church and the other officially registered religious denominations. The concrete regulation on that matter is shifted towards the statutes of the respective national media. This allows the national electronic media directors to make their own decisions on what could be broadcast. Thus, the concrete decisions are going to be made on a case by case basis.

6. AVAILABILITY OF EDUCATION FOR THE MINORITY

6.1. Brief history of the system of education in relation to the minority

In the past, the Uniat Church had two major achievements in respect to education -- the Bulgarian Catholic high school in Edirne, organized by the Polish Resurrection brothers, and the high school "St. St. Cyril and Methodius" in Solun (Thessaloniki), organized by the Bulgarian Catholic Exarchy (Eldarov, Svetlozar, 1994:109). The Edrine School was established in 1863. Initially, mainly French pupils and a small number of Bulgarian ones attended it. In 1874, the French department of the School was closed down and was transformed into a small Catholic seminary (not for the higher education of the clergy). That same year, the Bulgarian department of the school was changed into a high school. Especially around 1885, the year of the unification between the Principality of Bulgaria and Eastern Roumelia, the School became a center of pro-Bulgarian activities. It was closed down in 1914 after Edrine was left out of the Bulgarian territory and was re-occupied by the Ottoman army after the two Balkan wars (Eldarov, Svetozlav, 1994:109-121).

In the second half of the 19th century, Catholic orders and congregations organized some schools in Bulgaria. The most active among them were the French orders, and less so, the Italian ones. According to data of the late 1920s, the French Catholic schools were based in six major towns of Bulgaria -- Plovdiv, Sofia, Bourgas, Yambol, Rouse and Varna, and were separated into male and female ones (Zaimova, et al., 1992:295-298). The most prominent among them were the "St. Augustinus" college in Plovdiv, the schools for females of the "St. Joseph" sisters in Sofia, Plovdiv and Bourgas and of the Assumptionist sisters in Varna and Yambol, as well as the college for boys of the "Brothers of the Christians Schools" in Sofia (Assenov, 1998:129). The French schools, apart from being the strongholds of Catholicism in Bulgaria, were a good basis for the increase of the French influence, so they were constantly supported by the French authorities (Zaimova, et al., 1992:295-298). The faculties at the French and the Italian Catholic schools consisted mainly of foreign monks and nuns (Assenov, 1998:129).

Along with the secular private Catholic schools, the Catholic Church had also four small seminaries for the education of the future Catholic clergy. By the end of the 1920s, the Institute “Opera pro Oriente” was established in Bulgaria, which played the role of a cultural center of the Vatican (Assenov, 1998:129).

Catholic education was seriously damaged in the period 1944-1989. The French Catholic colleges were closed down in the late 1940s. While a limited number of Orthodox clerics continued to be educated in the higher education Orthodox seminary in Sofia, Catholicism was not taught at all. Just in the 1970s and the 1980s, the Communist regime sent some clerics to study in Rome. In 1989, there were only about 40 Catholic clerics in Bulgaria. Their number raised to around 50 in 1995 (Assenov, 1998:135).

6.2. Availability of teaching material for the minority

The teaching material in Catholicism is insufficient (Proikov, 1998). Some teachings of prayers are published in the *Enoriiski Glas* newspaper (See more in 7.2.). Since 1989, some books, but not textbooks, about Catholic theology were published. Also, some historical books were published, but they were even fewer than those about theology.

6.3. Official position

The academic year 1997/1998 was the first one after the collapse of Communism when Christian religion was introduced as an optional subject in the primary schools of Bulgaria. Starting in academic year 1998/1999, this kind of education will be extended to the level of secondary education. There are still no separate classes on Catholicism, and no serious efforts seem to be made to introduce Catholicism as an optional subject in the state schools.

6.4. Activists’ initiatives

There are some optional classes in Catholic religion in the private Polish school in Sofia, headed by Father Robert Rabka, a Capuchin Monk based in Sofia. They are divided into three groups. The first is for the students in the second grade (primary education), the second is for the students in the sixth and the seventh grade (secondary education) and the third is for the students at the high school level.

6.5. Present situation at different levels:

6.5.1. Nursery school and primary education

There are no special Catholic schools for the small children. Along with their parents and other adults, they can attend the classes on Catechism in the parishes. There they can learn religious canon on Sundays or weekdays (Collaco, 1998).

6.5.2. Secondary education

Boys at the secondary school level are educated in the two so-called “minor” seminaries of the Eastern and Latin Rites, based in Plovdiv. Those schools give a spiritual preparation to boys with vocation during their secondary school. These boys have the potential of becoming Catholic priests in the future. The boys study in secular schools and visit the Catholic minor seminaries, where they have classes in Latin, in theology and in other subjects related to the Catholic religion (Rabka, 1998). Right now, there are no more than 10 students in these seminaries (Proikov, 1998; Rabka, 1998). This education activity is still underdeveloped. Once the Catholic Church has its buildings restituted, and has attracted enough boys of vocation, this activity could be developed further (Collaco, 1998).

There is a problem with the status of the education of Catholics in Bulgaria (Cohen, 1998). The diploma issued in the Catholic minor seminaries has no legal value for the Bulgarian state, unlike the diplomas from the Orthodox and the Muslim schools. For example, with a state diploma from the Orthodox seminary which is at the university level, a graduate can become a priest when ordained, but he can also look for secular jobs, such as becoming a journalist, a teacher, etc. By contrast, the diploma of the Catholic school is not recognized by the state nor does it have any judicial status. It resembles very much a diploma in foreign-language education. Thus, it can only certify the graduate’s knowledge of Catholicism (Cohen, 1998).

6.5.3. Higher education and research

Higher education in Catholicism is traditionally pursued outside Bulgaria. This is still the case nowadays. In 1998, there were three clerics who study in Rome and one in Slovakia. They will receive their higher education abroad, and then they would be able to pursue Ph.D. studies (Rabka, 1998). Research opportunities are possible in the Bulgarian Church Archive in the Vatican.

7. COMMUNICATION AND AUDIOVISUAL MEDIA

7.1. Legal situation

see 6.2.

7.2. Press

There are few newspapers dedicated to Catholicism in Bulgaria.

The *Istina-Veritas* newspaper is the organ of the Bishops’ Conference in Bulgaria. This monthly newspaper is the successor of an eponymous paper, which was published between 1924 and 1949, when it was closed down by the Communist regime. It deals with general issues from the religious life of the Catholic community in Bulgaria, and some moral, social and charity issues from a religious perspective. It also gives

information on the developments concerning Catholicism abroad. It is published in Bulgarian.

The *Enoriiski Glas (Voice of the Diocese)* newspaper is the organ of the Sofia-Plovdiv Bishopric. This monthly focuses on the religious activities of the Catholics in Southern Bulgaria, on the Holy Script, and on prayers and educational material for the small children. It has been published since 1993 in a bulletin form, and since 1996, in the form of a regular size newspaper. It is published in Bulgarian (Rabka, 1998).

The *Abagar 1* newspaper, described by its founders as a “journal,” is the organ of the Bulgarian Church Archive in Rome. It was founded by Archimandrite Georgi Eldarov in 1991 and is published in Bulgarian. This monthly focuses mainly on historic issues concerning the Catholic Church in Bulgaria and the Bulgarian Catholics. Current issues are rare, and if they appear, they are dedicated to major events in the Vatican or among Catholics in Bulgaria, or are focused on reviews of currently published books.

Caritas is the bulletin of the Catholic Church’s charity organization of the same name in Bulgaria. It mainly deals with issues which are related to the projects of the organization, and some global phenomena, such as AIDS and abortion. *Caritas* is a monthly bulletin, published in Bulgarian since December 1996.

Information about the Catholics in Bulgaria could also be found in the *Falmis* newspaper, which is a publication of the Banat Bulgarians in Bulgaria. It is published in a specific Bulgarian dialect, in the Cyrillic and the Latin script. In the village of Oresh, in the Nikopol Bishopric, few secondary school students, under the guidance of the Passionist monk Father Fortunato and with the help of the local school, publish a small Catholic bulletin, called *Vyara (Faith)* (Hristov, 1998).

7.3. Radio

There is no Catholic private radio and no special program for the Catholics on the Bulgarian National Radio. In the Vatican, there is a Bulgarian section of “Radio Vatican.” It was started in 1949. For many years before 1989, its editor-in-chief was Archimandrite Georgi Eldarov. A survey of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty of 1987 showed that it was listened by around 400,000 people within Bulgaria, a number which was much larger than that of all Catholics in the country. The Bulgarian section of Radio “Vatican” was an important forum for the spread of religious information during the atheist time and for communication with the Bulgarian diaspora. After the end of the Cold War in 1989, it somewhat lost its popularity (Eldarov, *Abagar1*, July/1998). Religion was no more a taboo in Bulgaria. Furthermore, the editor-in-chief of the Bulgarian section, Archimandrite Eldarov, assumed a diplomatic office of the Vatican in Bulgaria. Therefore, the radio lost one of its important pillars.

7.4. Television

None

7.5. Internet

The Capuchin order, acting in Bulgaria, has an English language Internet site within the Internet site of the Capuchins of Cracow (Rabka, 1998). Otherwise, the bishopric themselves do not have their own web sites.

8. CONCLUSION

Bulgarian relations with the Catholic Church have a long history. The Bulgarian Prince Boris I first established connections with Rome with respect to his political considerations to baptize the Bulgarian people in the middle of the 9th century. Due to political considerations, he accepted Christianity from neighboring Constantinople. A union with the Pope during the first years of the Second Bulgarian Kingdom in the 12th century was not very effective and was short-lived. In the 13th and 14th century, the grounds for the future spread of Catholicism in the Bulgarian land were prepared by the flourishing of the dualist Pavlikian heresy, which provided the future converts to Catholicism. Apart from that, this period saw the first messengers of Catholicism in this geographic region -- the Catholic merchants of the Dubrovnik Republic and the mine-diggers from Saxony, who settled in the village of Chiprovtsi.

By the end of the 16th century, the Bosnia-based Franciscan missionaries visited Chiprovtsi. And in the beginning of the 17th century, one of them was ordained the first Catholic bishop. He made great efforts to convert Pavlikians to Catholicism and to send clerics to Rome. Some of the latter were involved in the Chiprovtsi uprising of 1688, and published books with religious and pre-national content.

Catholicism played an important role in the struggle of the Bulgarians for ecclesiastical emancipation from the Greek-dominated Patriarchate in Constantinople in the middle of the 19th century. The Bulgarian Dragan Tsankov signed a Uniat with the Pope in Constantinople in 1860. Tsankov viewed this as the only way to the achievement of independence for the Bulgarian Church. This union was short-lived, but it played an important role to make Russia, which was initially against the splits between Greeks and Bulgarians in the Orthodox *millet* of the Ottoman Empire, change its opinion on the Bulgarian Church question. The Ottoman Sublime Porte also changed its policy, which for its own interests regarded the union as a positive act since it diverted the Bulgarians from Russia's direct influence. All this ultimately led to the 1870 official permission from the Ottoman government on the establishment of the Bulgarian Orthodox Exarchate. The latter was one of the biggest achievements of the Bulgarian national independence movement.

After the achievement of Bulgaria's political liberation from Ottoman rule in 1878, Catholicism gained some influence. Many of the already active Catholic orders in the Bulgarian lands increased their activities and new ones arrived. The Catholic dynasty of

the Sax-Coburg-Gotha of Prince/Czar Ferdinand and his son Czar Boris III (although the latter was later baptized as an Orthodox Christian) also played a role in the development of a relatively positive attitude towards Catholicism in this traditionally Orthodox country. Catholics as a minority were treated well during the rule of the Agrarian government of Alexander Stamboliiski (1920-1923), but the junta regimes of 1923 and 1934 restricted their activities.

There have been three major migration waves of the Catholics. The first migration was that of the Catholics after the 1688 Chiprovtsi uprising. Thereafter, many of them immigrated to the Banat region of the Habsburg Empire. Some of them returned after Bulgaria's liberation in 1878 and settled down in a few villages in Northern Bulgaria. The second one is the migration of the Catholics of the Eastern Rites, who found refuge in Bulgaria after the Balkan Wars 1912-1913 and the First World War. Historically, the Uniat movement took roots especially in the land of Thrace and Macedonia, both of which remained outside Bulgaria proper after these wars. The third migration, connected with the general urbanization, started in the 1930s and continued throughout the years of Communist rule after 1944. However, this latter migration concerned not only the Catholics, but also the whole Bulgarian society.

The Communist rule between 1944 and 1989 banned all religions due to its doctrinal atheism. Catholicism suffered even more than the traditional Bulgarian Orthodox Church. Control over the Catholic Church was impossible. First of all, it was because Catholic clerics refused to collaborate with the regime. Second, the regime did not have the political means to control a denomination subordinated to its center in Rome. In the late 1940s, the apostolic delegation of the Pope, as well as the Catholic publications and schools were closed down. The Catholic Church's property was expropriated and the Church was not financed by the state. However, these measures did not satisfy the regime, and in 1952 it launched fabricated trials against the Catholic clergy. Clerics were allegedly involved in an espionage organization in Bulgaria. These trials resulted in the deaths of several people, the imprisonment of many others for 10 to 20 years in the Communist hard-labor camps. A slight "cooling down" of the regime was observed in the 1970s and 1980s, but the general suppression of Catholicism remained until 1989.

After 1989, a revival of Catholicism was observed in Bulgaria. In 1990, the Catholic Church obtained the status of a juridical person in Bulgaria. Some clauses of the repressive Denominations Act of 1949 were lifted and some foreign clerics arrived in the country to meet the need for educated Catholic clergy. The Catholic newspaper *Istina/Veritas* resumed its work and other Catholic papers appeared in the public space. Few Catholic clerics were again sent to study abroad for their higher education. With a special act of 1992, the Church property was restituted, but everything is still only on paper. In practice, some of the Church-owned buildings are still in the possession of state organizations. With respect to the primary and secondary education, as well as concerning the media, the Bulgarian Catholics are still underrepresented in the Bulgarian society. The Bulgarian State does not recognize the diplomas from their schools.

Today, the Catholics are organized in three bishoprics, based in Plovdiv, Rouse (both Latin Rites) and Sofia (Eastern Rites). Their activities are administered by the Bishop's Conference, which elects its Chair every three years. Their activities are supported mostly by the Catholic Church's charity organization Caritas, and less by the Abagar Foundation and the Association of the Banat Bulgarians, which are small Bulgarian organizations focused on specific issues.

Catholics in Bulgaria are not well researched. Big gap exists in the information about them in terms of their economic development and their relations with the Orthodox Christians and the other ethnic and religious groups in the country. Historically, the period between 1878 and 1944 is also not well researched. The same holds true for the period between 1952 and 1989.

There may be many reasons for the lack of sufficient information on these topics, but three of them should be mentioned in particular. First, the Catholic community in Bulgaria does not seem to have adequate financial resources to support itself. Second, traditionally, Catholics are being treated very well in Bulgaria, and this has precluded the necessity for deeper research. The same reasoning is behind the third fact, namely that Catholics belong to the Bulgarian nation, and thus, do not differ from the majority of the Bulgarians in ethnic terms. That is why they are relatively well integrated into the Bulgarian society.

ADRESSES

1. Cultural institutions and/or associations founded by the minority

Current information on the organization of the Catholic Church in Bulgaria.

- Mgr. Blasco Francisco Collaco, Papal Nuncio and Apostolic Delegate in Bulgaria
Address: 6, August 11th St., Sofia
Tel: (+359 2) 981 17 43

- Bishop Hristo Proikov, Apostolic Exarch of the Bishop's Conference in Bulgaria and bishop of the Sofia-based Bishopric of Catholics of the Eastern Rites in Bulgaria
Address: 7, Lyulin Planina St., 1606 Sofia
Tel: (+359 2) 54 29 69

- Bishop Georgi Yovchev, Sofia-Plovdiv Bishopric (Latin Rites)
Address: 3, Maria-Luiza Blvd., Plovdiv
Tel: (+359 32) 62 20 42

- Bishop Petko Hristov, Nikopol Bishopric (Latin Rites)
Address: 26, Ivan Vazov St., Rouse
Tel: (+359 82) 22 52 45

Fax: (+359 82) 82 28 81

- Ing. Emanuil Patashev, Director, Caritas-Bulgaria
Address: 9, Oborishte St., 1504 Sofia
Tel: (+359 2) 944 1858,
Fax: (+359 2) 946 1173
e-mail: caritas-bg@bulnet.bg

2. Minority institutions and/or associations concerning education

3. Political parties and/or associations founded by the minority

4. Minority media

Radio stations

Newspapers

- *Istina-Veritas*
7, Lyulin Planina St.
1606 Sofia
Tel/Fax: (+359 2) 52 29 59
- *Enoriiski Glas*
125, Kniaz Boris I St.
Sofia
Tel: (+359 2) 981 55 48
Fax: (+359 2) 981 43 47
- *Abagar I*
POB 248
1606 Sofia
Tel: (+359 2) 55 91 07
- *Caritas*
9, Oborishte St.
1504 Sofia
Tel: (+359 2) 944 18 58
Fax: (+359 2) 946 11 73.

Magazines

Television Stations

Internet Web Sites

The Capuchin order in Cracow: free.polbox.pl/b/boguslaw/angiel/htm

Publishing Houses

- Publishing House “Dobriyat Pechat”
Contact person: Bishop Georgi Yovchev
Address: 125, Kniaz Boris I St., Sofia
Tel: (+359 2) 981 55 48
Fax: (+359 2) 981 43 47
- Publishing House “Sofia-Plovdiv Bishopric”
Contact person: Bishop Georgi Yovchev
Address: 3, Maria-Luiza Blvd., Plovdiv
Tel. (+359 32) 62 20 42

The Nikopol Bishopric has also published a few titles, but it does not have a separate publishing house.

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