Coming To, and Staying In, the Poorest Country in the EU

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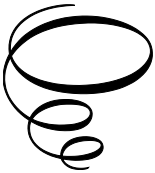
Immigration to Bulgaria

Edited by

Petko Hristov, Ivaylo Markov,
Violeta Perikleva and Desislava Pileva

Cambridge
Scholars
Publishing



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This book first published 2023

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

Lady Stephenson Library, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2PA, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN (10): 1-5275-1754-3
ISBN (13): 978-1-5275-1754-7

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PREFACE

In the last three decades, the dynamic social, political and economic transformations in Europe and all over the world have led to significant changes in the perception of migration in a pan-European context: in the ideas of how nations are constructed and national identities are created and maintained in the beginning of the new millennium. The borders of particular countries are "opening up", accompanied by active cross-border migration processes in Europe. These processes become the main catalyst for academic and public discussions regarding the concept of homogenization of national identity and national culture, which has become an even more important part of the political agenda in numerous countries. Migration is increasingly turning into a key issue and challenge for both the European Union and each member state; it will dominate the policies in Europe for decades to come.

Migrants arriving in a country are not a homogeneous mass, but represent a mosaic of different groups and communities with their own ethnocultural, confessional and linguistic backgrounds and features. Their relocation from one country to another, provoked by political, economic and social factors, is the result of migration movements (mass or individual) of varying intensity over time and diverse attitudes towards permanent settlement. A number of countries on the periphery of the EU, such as Bulgaria for example, become stopovers on the routes of refugees and labour migrants seeking a better life in Europe. Some of them remain and fit in well in Bulgarian social life. And although Bulgaria is the poorest country in the EU according to official statistics, the opposite movement is also present; pensioners from a number of rich countries, as well as from countries such as Japan and Russia, settle in Bulgaria in search of a new, more tranquil and eco-oriented way of life.

Thus, this book is dedicated to a less-covered topic: the adaptation strategies of various immigrant communities in the poorest country in the EU. The research this edited volume offers was conducted by the authors of the chapters in the period between 2018 and 2022, in the difficult conditions of strict restrictions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The study was funded by the Bulgarian National Science Fund (ДН 20/8–11.12.2017) and the team expresses its gratitude for the opportunity afforded. We would like to thank our numerous respondents (refugees, labour migrants, students, and

pensioners from various countries and origins) who spared the time to participate in the study. We are also grateful to Cambridge Scholars Publishing for the opportunity to share the results of our study with a large audience of readers and specialists all over the world.

From the editors

Introduction

Immigration to Bulgaria in Historical Perspective

Petko Hristov
Mila Maeva

Migration is as old as humankind but, in recent decades, it has acquired new dimensions, forms, and characteristics: becoming the focus of public and scholarly interest. The events of February and March 2022 prove the relevance and versatility of migration movements study in the modern world. The flow of refugees from Ukraine proves to us that migration is dictated by several economic and social problems, as well as by political factors that provoke the forced departure of large groups of people from their homes. Following the great migration crisis in Europe in 2015, the continent is now once again on the verge of a huge population movement, this time covering the countries of Eastern and Central Europe. The COVID-19 pandemic, which heralded a future restriction of mobility and migration, subsided, and this contributed to a new explosion of movement forced by wars and economic destabilization.

The challenges of migration are numerous and controversial. They affect both migrants and their families, as well as the sending and host societies (see de Haas, Castles and Miller 2019: 1). As travel and communication have become more accessible and easier, mobility and migration are no longer a difficult and long-thought-out decision but become a lifeway (Krasteva 2014). And yet, migration policies throughout the globe still seem to follow the known paths of "old" migration patterns, as if people were migrating for good. The terminology of migration studies still speaks of "push and pull factors" and "migration flows" whereas, in many countries, diverse societies already exist as people choose to live transnational lives, "life-in-motion" style. Brothers, sisters, parents, and other family members choose to live in different countries and sometimes on different continents. In the globalization period, industry and service providers are increasingly

global producers and traders with highly-flexible and adaptable workforces that move, work, and live beyond borders. The new social and economic environment in conditions of European integration and, on a broader scale, globalization provides new opportunities for free cross-border movements.

For Europe, migration movements have become a key issue and a challenge dominating the European Union's policy and the individual member states' political programs in the last 30 years. The double transition process of the East European countries, towards the Western European model of liberal democracy and, at the same time, towards capitalism, i.e., the removal of the states' hegemony over the economy, coincides with a new phase in the development of capitalism and globalization. In several countries (such as Bulgaria for example), all this was accompanied by the decomposition of numerous economic, political, and social structures, which had previously played a crucial role in society for more than forty years (Hristov 2019: 29). This generated powerful waves of migration on the European continent and increased research interest in contemporary movements. But, in the case of Bulgaria, attention is directed mainly to the emigrants leaving the country. And although, due to their heterogeneous composition, it is difficult to calculate the number, according to rough data, the number of Bulgarians (only some of them are Bulgarian citizens) outside the current borders of the country by 2022 amounted to about 2.5–3 million people; establishing Bulgarian communities abroad in countries such as Germany, Great Britain, the USA, Spain, etc. Many of them have moved between different states, looking for better lifestyle opportunities, but others chose to leave Bulgaria permanently and have no intention or opportunity to return to their native places. This huge migrant number includes those representatives of the historical diaspora who have Bulgarian origin and Bulgarian identity, but do not formally have Bulgarian citizenship. There is already a lot of literature on this subject and the number of studies continues to grow[1]. These intensified processes, involving primarily young and able-bodied people, often well-educated and highly-qualified, put the country in a demographic crisis; producing an aging population and a slowdown in its development.

On the contrary, this book is dedicated to a less-researched topic: the study of the adaptation strategies of various immigrant communities in the poorest country in the EU. Like the other former socialist countries, Bulgaria had limited emigration and immigration before 1989. However, after 1990 the country became part of the world's migratory system. The

[1] For example, cf. Maeva and Zahova 2017; Penchev, Vukov, Gergova and Gergova 2017; Voskresenski, Hristova and Matanova 2021.

geographical position of Bulgaria may positively affect immigration flows; it is one of the three countries sharing a land bridge to Asia and the Middle East at the base of the Black Sea. As a result, immigration involves mainly migrants from the Near and Middle East, Afghanistan, China, and people from the former Yugoslav and Soviet republics (Dzhengozova 2009: 201) and, in recent years after 2014, also from Ukraine and Armenia. Faced with the growing desire of people to travel and to look for better living conditions, East-European administrations are trying to control these processes and Bulgaria is no exception. The Ministry of Labour and Social Care, i.e. the Employment Office, administers bilateral agreements for labour emigration, and licenses intermediary firms that inform and employ those willing to seek moves abroad (Convention No. 181, ILO, 1997), and mediates in the signing of individual labour contracts between Bulgarian citizens and foreign employers (Minchev 1999:123).

* * *

Historically, the post-1878 period shows three main trends in terms of immigration visible until now. One of them concerns Bulgarians from territories with a Bulgarian population that remained outside the borders of the re-established kingdom. The second is related to the settlement of foreigners whose activities were directly determined by the restoration of the Bulgarian state, and the third involved refugees of different ethnic (non-Bulgarian) and confessional origins.

These migration movement types found a legal justification in the policy of the Bulgarian state, revived in 1878, regarding the regulation of immigration and settlement in the country. In the course of the Russo-Turkish War of 1877–1878, which the Bulgarians call the Liberation War, a considerable part of the Muslim population, more than one and a half million (not only Turks but also Muslim Bulgarians, Gagauz, Circassians, Tatars) left the Balkans and headed for the territory of the Ottoman Empire (Stoyanov 1998; Maeva 2006). This led to the depopulation of several regions in Bulgaria, reduced in size at the Berlin Congress of 1878 to the small Principality of Bulgaria. The fragmentation of the territories inhabited by Bulgarians was the cause of the flow of refugees to the Principality (from 1908 proclaimed as the Kingdom of Bulgaria), mainly from Thrace and Macedonia. This division of the territories which had been predominantly Bulgarian-populated for decades determined the policy of the Bulgarian governments on the issue of attracting and displacing non-Bulgarian populations (Vatchkov 2018). Article 1 of the Law on the Settlement of the Uninhabited Lands in Bulgaria, adopted by the Parliament in the early 1880's, says: "On all the unsettled (vacant) lands in Bulgaria... Bulgarians

from foreign lands who are engaged in agriculture and cattle breeding may settle" (Tashev 2000: 19). This was the beginning of the policy of balancing the existing ethnic-demographic structure in the country and, on the other hand, of attracting to the country a population that would increase the volume of the labour force available here in the main economic spheres of the then Bulgarian economy.

The encouragement of ethnic Bulgarian settlers into the country continued throughout the period from the Liberation until the end of World War II. As a result, many Bulgarians from Bessarabia, Romania, Macedonia, Thrace, and Banat settled in the newly-liberated Bulgarian state after 1878. Seasonal and temporary labour mobility (*gourbet*, *pechalbarstvo*) was the other main source of migratory movements in Bulgaria and, more broadly, in Southeast Europe as a whole. Predominantly cross-border in the period leading up to the two Balkan Wars (1912–1913), labour mobility was often a defining economic characteristic for several mountainous regions in the Balkans and imposed a clear influence on their social and cultural life. The destinations of temporary labour mobility often determined the routes of refugees after numerous uprisings and wars (Hristov 2015: 40). Bulgaria was no exception. Over 300,000 Bulgarian refugees from neighbouring countries settled in the country between 1878 and 1920, especially from Macedonia and Thrace. Their emigration from the territories remaining under Ottoman rule until 1912 occurred in several waves. It rose after the Ilinden-Preobrazhenie Uprising of 1903 but peaked during the Balkan Wars (1912–1913) (Peykovska 2019: 16). The drawing of new political borders in the Balkans and the strict control of individual nation-states put an end to active cross-border labour mobility and reversed the directions of migration inwards, towards the rapidly-growing cities (Hristov 2015: 42−43).

To facilitate the adaptation of the new immigrants between 1877–1878 and 1912, more than ten laws, amendments, and additions to them were adopted. Their main purpose was to attract to the country mainly those Bulgarians wishing to return to their homeland, who had emigrated during the past and lived in different countries, as well as those inhabiting the territories remaining outside the borders of free Bulgaria. Policies in this area continued consistently in the period between the two World Wars. They were directed at the populations involved in the massive refugee waves which flooded Bulgaria at the beginning of this period and which were provoked mainly by the bilateral treaties signed between Bulgaria and its neighbouring countries after World War I. The huge number of newcomers provoked strong measures for adaptation and integration in the country to produce population growth and overcome the demographic problems (see Shtrerionov et al. 2018).

According to the Law on Bulgarian Nationality adopted in 1880, foreigners who had assisted the national liberation struggles could become Bulgarian subjects, regardless of what other foreign nationality they had. It pointed out that this right should include not only those who were involved in the armed actions but also those who, during the war and immediately after it, were part of the civil services carrying out the construction of free Bulgaria. The next law, from 1883, facilitated the naturalization of foreigners who were attracted by participation in the restoration of the Bulgarian state (see Shtrerionov et al. 2018: 234−235). The country became an attractive territory for foreigners: many Czechs, Germans, Austrians, Hungarians, Russians, and representative of other nationalities. They were employed mainly in industry, medicine, education, science, crafts, art, etc. They played a role in the training of Bulgarian personnel as well. There were even foreign workers engaged in some enterprises related to state security (see Peykovska 2021).

After 1878, Bulgaria became an attractive territory for Armenians in contrast to other territories within the Ottoman Empire. They arrived from various places to settle here. After the massacre of more than 300,000 Armenians at the end of the 19th century, 20,000 people settled in the country in 1896. Later, in the early 20th century, new groups of Armenian refugees from the Ottoman Empire arrived but their number was significantly smaller. Local Armenian societies, the Bulgarian government and local authorities were responsible for population distribution to the towns (Mitseva and Papazian-Tanielian 1998: 143). From this period we have the first data on Armenians, members of various Protestant denominations, helping newcomers during the settlement process in the new state. However, the Armenian refugees were placed in miserable conditions for a long time. Most of them were engaged in low-qualified jobs. The artisans and the intelligentsia had a harder time adjusting because of the language barrier (Mitseva and Papazian-Tanielian 1998: 144)[2].

As a result of persecution in Russia during and after the end of the First Russian Revolution and later, during the rural uprising in Romania in the period of 1905−1907, about 5,000 Jews were accommodated in Bulgaria. They managed to adapt, assisted by their local communities, and settled permanently in the country.

Immigration processes also included some of the country's expelled Muslim population who returned to their homelands after the re-establishment

[2] According to the last national census of 2011, there are 5,615 people in Bulgaria who have indicated Armenian as their mother tongue, but some authors speak (unofficially) of a population of about 50 thousand people of Armenian origin in the country (Ovyan 2021).

of the Bulgarian state. However, the overall state policy towards the non-Bulgarian population of the Bulgarian state was aimed at their displacement. For example, between 1878 and 1912, a total of 350,000 Muslims emigrated from Bulgaria, of whom 100,000 had left by 1884 (Vasileva 1992: 63). At the beginning of the 20th century, anti-Greek sentiment grew in the country due to religious controversies, which contributed to the departure of the Greek population. As a result of these movements, by 1912, the number of Greeks in the country had decreased by about 34% (Peykovska 2019: 122).

The complex migratory movements in the country continued in the post-World War I period. There was a tendency towards fewer movements of ethnic Bulgarians from territories with a Bulgarian population, but the settlement of foreigners in the country increased. Most numerous among them were the waves of Russian emigrants after the imposition of Soviet rule and Armenian refugees after the genocide in the Ottoman Empire. The total number of refugees (including immigrants) in Bulgaria, reflected in the 1920 census, for the whole period from 1912 to 1920, was 142,307 people or 3% of the population, which represents the largest number of immigrants in the country in the 20th century. 84.1% of the ethnic composition of this refugee flow were Bulgarians (119,602), but among the other ethnic groups were the Russians, Ukrainians, Lithuanians and Finns (7,407 or 5.2%, the Russians being the majority), Turks and Albanians (4,692 or 3.3%), Jews (1,741 or 1.2%), Armenians (1,506 or 1%), Greeks (1,461 or 1%), Germans (479 or 0.3%), Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (476 or 0.3%), Czechs and Slovaks (406 or 0.3%), Hungarians (134 or 0.1%), Pomaks (86 or 0.1%) and others (3,229 or 2.3%) (Peykovska 2019: 38−39; Shterionov et al. 2018: 242).

The great migration movements from Russia were provoked by the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917 and happened in several waves. The first one took place in the autumn of 1918 and throughout 1919, with the increased failures of the Volunteer Army, from the Russian ports of Sevastopol, Odessa and Novorossiysk, and from Constantinople. Then individual Russian refugees headed to Bulgaria. The first larger group of about 1,000 people arrived in the autumn of 1919. These were mostly people of high social status. The second wave of Russian refugees, wounded and military, came to Bulgaria in January−March 1920. The third wave was a result of the defeat of Wrangel's army in November 1920, after which the Red Army invaded the Crimean Peninsula and a huge wave of refugees from the peninsula literally flooded Constantinople. In accepting them, the Bulgarian government and the Russian diplomatic and military representatives acted together with the aim of alleviating the situation of the refugees. The intentions of the commanders of the retreating White Army were to accept

the Russian refugees in Bulgaria as soon as possible and gradually re-settle some of them to Belgrade and Western Europe (Kyoseva 2002: 41; Peykovska 2019; Shterionov et al. 2018: 344). Despite this, a large number of them settled in Bulgaria and Russian military units gradually entered the country. In the next few months, the number of Russian soldiers in the country reached 15,100: according to the estimates of some contemporaries, there were 17,000. As early as 1917, Russian nobles and officers began to arrive in Bulgaria, followed by engineers, doctors, university professors, and ordinary people frightened by the horrors of the civil war. Thousands were repatriated from 1923 to 1925 but, in 1926, a total of 19,698 citizens of the Russian Empire were already registered in the country. They increased to 21,722 in 1934, among whom Russians predominated, but there were also other small ethnic groups: Bulgarians, Ukrainians, Jews, Tatars, Armenians, and Kalmyks[3] (Peykovska and Kiselkova, N. 2013: 216−217; Peykovska 2014).

As a result of the persecutions and mass extermination in the Ottoman Empire in 1922, new Armenian refugees entered the country. As a consequence of the Greek-Turkish War (1919–1922), the movement of Armenians into the country increased. After the terror against them, 13,000 entered the country in the 1921−1926 period, when the Bulgarian government allowed their admission. In the census of 1926, a total of 27,322 people with Armenian identity were registered, of which 66% were foreigners (Peykovska 2021, 315−318). The problems of integration of this community were numerous, as they were unable to work and participate in the social and economic life of the new state (Mitseva and Papazian-Tanielian 1998: 143–144).

In the post-1919 period, there were still other smaller groups of foreigners in the country. They worked in Bulgaria or arrived through mixed marriages. Among them, the Czechs and Slovaks (1,883 in total), the Hungarians (1,126), and the Austrians (802) were the largest communities. These were professionals in certain fields, mostly men. In addition, bilateral agreements were signed with Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Romania in the period under consideration, which contributed to the increase in the number of employees in the country (Peykovska 2021: 318–319).

[3] According to P. Peykovska, the Ukrainians arriving along with the Russians, sought to be put in a separate category–something that the Bulgarian central government did not allow, based on the position that all Russian refugees were Russian subjects. Such a decision originated from the desire to avoid additional complications like the need to apply a special regime for each individual nationality (2019: 58).

All these complex migration processes led to a higher number of foreigners in the country. A review of statistics showed that the number was highest in 1926 and reached nearly 60,000 people (Peykovska and Kiselkova 2013: 213) (see Fig. Intr.-1). In the 1930's, the immigration flow was relatively lower: until 1933 it was slightly higher, between 2,000 and 5,000 people, and it began to decrease from 1934 to 1939 (around 1,400 people per year). According to the statistics, during the two wars the movements decreased and involved mainly male immigrants arriving from European countries due to the bilateral agreements between Bulgaria and Poland, Romania, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia (Shterionov et al. 2018: 260).

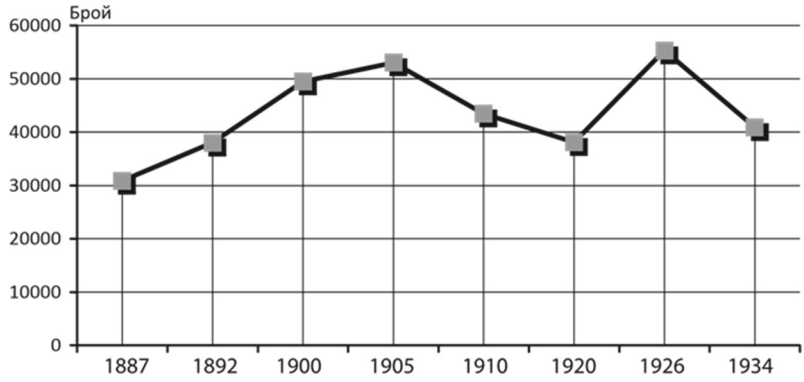

Fig. Intr.-1. Number of foreigners in Bulgaria (Peykovska and Kiselkova 2013: 213)

The main flow in the 1930's was from the neighbouring Balkan countries, predominantly Yugoslavia. Most of the immigrants were Bulgarians from the territories separated from the Bulgarian national state by virtue of military agreements in the 20th century. They were engaged in food and beverage production. An overwhelming number of ethnic Bulgarians, families, also came from Romania: they were mostly engaged in agriculture and domestic services. According to the data, immigrants from European Turkey worked in agriculture, while those from Greece were relatively evenly distributed between agriculture, industry, and trade (Peykovska 2019: 188).

Migration processes were stirred up during World War II. The profile of those arriving in the country changed. The majority arrived from countries with which Bulgaria maintained political, military and economic ties, such

as Hungary. The immigrants were predominantly women employed in the "domestic work" sector (1941) or the "science, education, religion and art" sectors (1942). A significant number of Germans settled in the country too. Some were refugees from the USSR, especially from Ukraine, and they stayed in Bulgaria temporarily on their way to Germany. In term of employment, 77% worked in the "mining and manufacturing industries", specialists in various industrial branches and mostly technical personnel in the extraction of non-ferrous metal ores, to which the influx of German investment during the war was directed, 16% worked in the areas of "domestic and personal services, entertainment, sports, and health", and 6% were engaged in "science, education, religion and art" (Peykovska 2019: 188; Shtrerionov et al. 2018: 261).

During World War II, the government undertook other policies that had an impact on the immigration processes in Bulgaria. Some of them affected the Jewish population and were related to the policies of the Third Reich towards Jews and the reaction of the Bulgarian authorities as its ally. During the period from March 1939 to the autumn of 1943, measures were introduced in Bulgaria which restricted immigration of Jewish refugees from anti-Jewish persecutions in other European countries (Shtrerionov et al. 2018: 261; Peykovska 2019: 189–190). However, oral stories tell of Jews migrating to Bulgaria through intermarriages due to the lower level of repression in the country. For example, about 100 boys from Greece came to Plovdiv in the early 1940's. Most of them had relatives in Bulgaria and thus managed to marry girls with Bulgarian citizenship and stayed to live in the country (Fictitious Marriages 2021).

After 1939, the Bulgarian state attempted to continue its policy of settling Bulgarians living abroad, so characteristic of the period from 1878 to 1912. This was the situation with the Bulgarians from Tavria, USSR (today's Southern Ukraine). In April 1942, the Tavrian Bulgarians wrote a letter to Tsar Boris III (1894−1943) asking him to accept them in Bulgaria because of the complicated political and economic situation in their homeland. Their request was granted in 1943, when the Bulgarian government reached an agreement with Germany to resettle 2,500 people from the territories between the rivers. As a result, several waves of Tavrians, especially families, arrived in Bulgaria. They were predominantly farmers but there were also teachers, doctors, and engineers. They took the place of the displaced Romanian, Turkish and German populations in north-eastern Bulgaria. However, the coming of the new socialist regime in 1944 changed their destiny. On Stalin's orders, all Soviet citizens who settled on Bulgarian territory after the beginning of the German-Soviet war on June 22, 1941 had to be sent back to the USSR. By mid-1945, the majority of the Tavrian

Bulgarians were sent out of Bulgaria, others were killed and a small number remained in the country. After their return to the USSR, many were deported directly to Siberia or Kazakhstan (Hristov and Maeva 2021; Peykovska 2019: 194).

The complexity of the migration processes in the period of 1878−1944 is evident in the diversity of the movement of different Roma groups and communities. According to Elena Marushiakova and Veselin Popov in historical documents, mass migrations of Gypsies in Bulgaria after 1878 are rather rare, but the data are based primarily on oral histories. Gypsy settlement in Bulgarian lands during this period was mainly related to wars and territorial changes. For example, after the Balkan wars, Turkish Gypsies (or Turkish Roma) settled in Bulgaria and, after World War I, Thracian tinners came from the region of Gyumurdzhina, as well as Turkish Gypsies from Greece (in Pirin Macedonia). After the annexation of Southern Dobrudzha in 1940, many Rudari and Kardarashi became Bulgarian subjects. During World War II, some of the Kardarashi, the so-called Serbian Gypsies from the occupied territories, came from former Yugoslavia. In the same period, the Buffolarians in the Pleven region came from Aegean Thrace, which is reflected in the policy materials. At the same time, throughout the whole period (1978−1944), Cardarashians and Rudars arrived in Bulgaria in various ways, both via the Danube River (or so they claim) and from Yugoslavia, as well as Turkish Gypsies from Greece.

The end of World War II and the imposition of a Soviet-style communist totalitarian regime once again changed the nature of migration and the directions of resettlement in Bulgaria. The realization of the ideas of the communists ruling the country after 1944, for the collectivization of agriculture and intensive industrialization of the country, provoked the intensification of internal migration movements in the second half of the 20th century, from villages to cities. Accelerated industrialization led to several problems both in the villages, whose depopulation became a mass phenomenon, and the cities, due to the difficulties that arose in housing, commercial and transport services, the provision of schools, and childcare facilities for the children of the migrants, etc. Above all, the migration flow to Bulgaria changed radically, with a sharp decline in the number and a change in the profile of immigrants settling in the country.

* * *

The main objective of this volume is to propose a multi-layered scientific understanding of the immigrants who have come to Bulgaria since 1990: their patterns of movement, settlement, social networks, identity, integration, and adaptation. After 1990, the studies on immigration in Bulgaria are

mainly oriented towards particular communities, i.e. they remain within the framework of ethnic studies. The research in the monograph does not ignore immigrants' ethnicity and origins but the main focus is the type of migration: economic, educational, political, lifestyle and marriage. Based on this novel approach, the book examines several important factors behind settlement in Bulgaria: the interaction with the local population and between immigrants themselves, the stereotypes and attitudes towards the newcomers, as well as the influence of the local, kinship, and social networks and contacts. The monograph presents the results of the research project "Adaptation and Integration of Immigrants in Bulgaria" (ДН 20/8–11.12.2017) funded by the Bulgarian National Science Fund.

Migrants arriving in a country are not a homogeneous mass but represent a colourful mosaic of different groups and communities with their own ethnocultural, confessional, and linguistic features. Their relocation from one country to another, provoked by political, economic, and social factors, is a result of migration movements (mass or individual) of varying intensity over time and diverse attitudes towards permanent settlement. The main focus of this study is the patterns of adaptation and integration, the migrants' impact on the social situation, the changes in the cultural specifics, as well as the stereotypes and attitudes towards migrants in the host and the sending countries. The scientific debates on such important issues would be of benefit for the improvement of the policies of integration of immigrants in a particular southeast European country (Bulgaria), a member of the EU, but also an opportunity for comparison with the other European states facing the same social challenges. The main contribution of the volume is the fact that it presents the migrants' perspective, their motives for immigration, and strategies for survival and adaptation in their new social environment.

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CHAPTER ONE

LABOUR MIGRATION TO BULGARIA

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Abstract: The study seeks to present and analyse various models of labour immigration to Bulgaria in the period after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the beginning of democratic changes in Bulgarian society. After 1989, the country became attractive for a large number of entrepreneurs, thus forming new communities of Chinese migrants, for example, and increasing the number of Arabs, Vietnamese, Kurds, Albanians, Africans, Ukrainians, Serbs and others who were already present and permanently-established in Bulgarian society. Labour migration is a phenomenon that intensified, especially in the period after the country's accession to the European Union in 2007, with arrivals from the countries of the former USSR (Russia, Ukraine, Moldova, and Armenia) and former Yugoslavia (the Republic of North Macedonia, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina) and Albania looking for work in Bulgaria. The acute labour shortage, which had been felt especially since 2010 in sectors such as agriculture, trade and especially tourism, is being filled by controlled imports of workers from Vietnam, Turkey, the Republic of North Macedonia, the Philippines, etc, as the Bulgarian government aims to attract workers of Bulgarian ethnic origin from the historical diaspora, but also others. As part of the study, an analysis of the situation with Ukrainians arriving in the country for seasonal work or permanent residence is included. This process is intensifying following the abolition of the EU visa regime for them in 2017, hostilities in eastern Ukraine and the deteriorating economic and social situation in their homeland. The chapter will also consider the model of highly-qualified migrants or expats who come from the United States, Great Britain, France, Australia, India, etc., working as experts and consultants for a number of Bulgarian institutions and organizations or foreign companies in Bulgaria.

The text will examine Bulgarian state policy regarding labour immigration, as well as the motives of the arriving foreign workers and the processes of adaptation and integration in Bulgarian society.

Keywords: immigration, Bulgaria, foreign workers, adaptation, integration

Introduction

Migration has become a key issue and challenge for Europe, which will dominate the European Union's policy and the individual member states' political programmes in the coming years. Referring to Bulgaria, attention is mostly focused on emigrants and mobile citizens leaving the country. According to the official statistics, more than two million Bulgarians have left the country in the last 30 years. The current paper focuses on the arrival of immigrants after 1990, called by Anna Krasteva "the Bulgarian Migration Phenomenon" (Krasteva 2005: 4; 2008; 2019).

A historical review of the patterns of economic migrations in the Balkans shows an impressive picture of variety and importance for the social and cultural history of all regions in southeast Europe. Despite the turbulent historical destiny of the Balkan peoples, marked throughout the past 200 years by numerous economic and social catastrophes, labour migration, known in different Balkan languages as *gurbet/ kurbet/ kurbéti*, or by the South-Slavic term *pechalbarstvo*[1] (Hristov 2010), has never ceased and has been accompanied by an exchange of ideas, information, technologies and cultural patterns. For centuries, specific regions of the Balkans in Albania, Bulgaria, Macedonia, northern Greece, Turkey, and southeast Serbia have been the main places for such seasonal/temporary labour migrations, either "sending" or "receiving" migrants. Martin Baldwin-Edwards (2002: 2) calls this pattern of mobility culture[2] "old-fashioned temporary migration", "where the migrant's identity is closely linked to the country of origin" and is significant for extended periods in the history of the entire regions, regardless of ethnic and religious affiliation. A significant challenge to researchers (historians, ethnologists, anthropologists, sociologists, and demographers) is to explain whether these traditional patterns of "life in motion" are reproduced and transformed under the

[1] The word 'gurbet' in most Balkan languages comes from the Turkish-Arabic *gurbet*, meaning "abroad" (see Turkish-Bulgarian Dictionary, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Sofia, 1952, p. 193), and the South-Slavic word 'pechalbarstvo', from the Slavic 'pechalba' ("gain"), i.e., to "gain for a living".

[2] We borrowed this term from the French anthropologist Benoît Fliche, who studied labour migrations (*gurbet*) in Turkey (see Fliche 2006).

conditions of globalisation and EU expansion, which gives more opportunity for labour mobility in a European perspective. This research has yet to be carried out. With this approach, the case of Greece is perhaps indicative: from being a "source" of emigrants in the decades after World War II (see Vermeulen 2008: 18−36) it became an attractive centre for Balkan labour migrants after 1991. IOM data show that, at the beginning of 2020, more than a billion people around the world lived and worked outside their homeland or outside their home region in their own country. Overall, the projected number of international migrants has increased over the last five decades. According to the statistics, 281 million people live in a country other than their country of origin, 128 million more than in 1990 and more than three times the projected number in 1970 and 3.6% of the total population of our planet. According to statistics, Europe and Asia have received about 87 and 86 million international migrants, respectively: 61% of the world's international migrant total. These regions are followed by North America, with almost 59 million international migrants in 2020 or 21% of the world's migrants, Africa with 9%, Latin America and the Caribbean with 5% and Oceania with 3%. In mid-March 2022, in just two weeks, around 2.8 million Ukrainians fled their country (World Migration Report 2020).

Historic review of labour immigration to Bulgaria (1944−2007)

Immigration in Bulgaria has a long history, which dates back to the late 19th and early 20th century. This migration refers primarily to migrants of Bulgarian ethnic origin who arrived in the country as a result of wars or exchange agreements or simply refugees of Bulgarian origin who arrived in Bulgaria from the Ottoman Empire, Greece, Yugoslavia or the USSR. Also worth mentioning is the migration of Roma from Romania in the late 19th century, as well as Armenians from the Ottoman Empire who arrived in Bulgaria in the early 20th century.

During the socialist period, the movements towards Bulgaria were determined by the political and economic interests of the country. According to the Constitutions of 1947 and 1971, Bulgaria was open to immigrants who were persecuted for their political beliefs, if their labour rights had been violated, and their freedom of cultural, artistic, and scientific activities was discriminated against (Guentcheva 2012: 12–13).

After the imposition of a totalitarian communist regime in the middle of the 20th century, in the decades of socialist rule and a strictly state-controlled labour market, the Bulgarian economy was inextricably linked

with the rest of the Eastern Bloc and especially with the USSR. In the 1970's and 1980's, Bulgaria controlled the export of labour to some of the countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America (Libya, Angola, Cuba), mainly as construction workers and medical personnel, on terms and conditions strictly controlled by state-owned enterprises. The only concessions outside the country that the country had for the development and operation of interstate agreements were on the territory of the former Soviet Union, in the Komi timber industry and in the oil industry in Tyumen (Siberia). There were many Bulgarian workers working on fixed-term contracts for several years.

During the socialist period, labour immigration to the country was almost non-existent, except for a small contingent of specialists in business sectors, which developed within the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance. Nevertheless, from the end of the 1940's to the 1980's, the country, as part of the socialist camp, accepted citizens from conflict zones for training and work, which had a favourable influence on the country's economy. As a result of government solidarity with "developing" countries, so-called "people's democracies", from the 1970's, students, and specialists from a number of countries in the Middle East and Africa were admitted to Bulgarian universities, some of whom remained to work in Bulgaria. The Bulgarian totalitarian regime brought immigrants from Yugoslavia, Greece, Africa, Asia and South America. As a result of the support of the Eastern European countries from the communist bloc for the liberation movements in Tropical Africa against Western European colonial domination, in the period of 1955–1990, Bulgaria accepted about 7,000 African students receiving higher education in medicine, engineering and economics (Kamenova 2005; Erolova 2017: 328). Similarly, under intergovernmental agreements, thousands of young Arabs and Kurds from Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Jordan, and other countries came from the late 1960's to the late 1980's to enrol in a Bulgarian higher education institution. Most of them returned to their home countries, but a small number remained to work in Bulgaria (Mitseva 2005a; Zhelyazkova 2005).

During and after the Greek Civil War (1946–1949), thousands of Greeks, most of them with communist convictions, settled in Bulgaria. As a result, at the end of 1949, about 4,000 elderly Greek communists settled permanently in Bulgaria. The fact that part of the group consisted of refugees who had arrived as children, many of whom half-orphans, orphans, or separated from their families for a long time, contributed to this process. Their parents either died during the wars in which Greece participated (1940–1949) or were distributed as refugees in different cities in Bulgaria or in other countries of the former socialist camp. With the normalization of

the political situation in Greece and Bulgarian-Greek relations, after the second half of the 1970's, most of the Greek communists and members of their families returned to their homeland. The Greek community in the 1960's and 1970's numbered approximately 7,500 people. During the period of "repatriation" (1978–1983), when its members were given the right to return to Greece, about half of them settled permanently back in their "old" homeland. About 2,000–3,000 people remained in Bulgaria (Fokas 2017; Kokinu 2012: 275−284; Erolova 2017: 328). Orphans from North Korea were admitted to Bulgaria for temporary residence due to the war on the Korean Peninsula (1950–1953). Special medical care was provided for them, and the Bulgarian Red Cross was actively involved in the campaign. By the end of the 1950's, when they returned to their homeland, they numbered about 500, and they were included in the Bulgarian education system. An interesting case is, for example, Che Guevara's comrades, who arrived in the country after the assassination of their leader, becoming political teachers and preachers.

On the other hand, cooperation between the COMECON countries concerned the strengthening of economic relations between them. They were forced to link their economies, often in the form of signing bilateral agreements that led to labour exchanges. The exchange was disguised in the form of training and qualification but, in reality, it was a matter of labour migration within the so-called "socialist camp", which had very real economic dimensions. Such a case of cooperation was the one between the People's Republic of Bulgaria, on the one hand, and the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV), the Republic of Nicaragua, the Republic of Cuba, Cyprus, and others, on the other. In the late 1970's, for example, an employment agreement was signed between Bulgaria and Vietnam, and in the 1980's the total number of Vietnamese in Bulgaria reached 15,000, including students and graduates. They worked in industry and, above all, in construction (Mitseva 2005b; Parvanov 2016; Parvanov et al. 2016). For that reason, even before the collapse of totalitarian rule, these treaties were terminated and the democratic changes of the early 1990's found Bulgaria without significant contingents of foreign workers.

Immigration to the country intensified after the fall of the totalitarian regime in Bulgaria in 1989. The moves were comprised of five main categories: political, student, labour, marriage and lifestyle migration. In terms of labour immigration to Bulgaria after 1999, it is important to note that numerous entrepreneurs arrived in the country. As a result of such new movements, new communities of Chinese migrants were founded and the number of Arabs, Vietnamese, Kurds, Africans, Ukrainians, and others

permanently settled in Bulgaria increased (see Krasteva et al. 2010; Krasteva 2012, 2015), creating new dilemmas for society (Staykova 2013).

Research focus and methodology

The focus of this study is the rapid increase in the number of immigrants in Bulgaria in recent years, along with their diversity, various migration strategies and the cultural specifics of each of the communities. The article focuses on patterns of adaptation and integration, immigrants' influence on the social situation in the country, as well as the stereotypes and attitudes towards them. The study will present the influence of immigration on local, family, and kinship communities as well as on Bulgarian society. Its aim is to study the development and problems of labour immigrants in the country, to address new and insufficiently-researched issues which will contribute to a deeper historical and ethnological knowledge and will develop a new comprehensive and multilateral view. It is a topical issue with regard to the ethnocultural and social inclusion of the immigrants. Special attention will be paid to labour migrants, their specifics and multilocal and intercultural experiences.

The study is the result of a mixed methodology, which involves a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods. Most of the material was collected using classical ethnographic methods such as observation, in-depth and semi-structured interviews using an unstructured questionnaire and visual documentation. The chosen methodology provides a "more nuanced understanding of the motivations and struggles with which medical professionals grapple when they consider migrating" (Sullivan et al. 2010: 240).

The series of fieldwork research was conducted in the period of 2018–2021 in different parts of the country: two resorts (the Albena Black Sea Resort and the Starosel Spa Resort), and two cities (Sofia and Varna). The interviews were conducted with interlocutors with different national, ethnic, educational, and social statuses. They were seasonal workers, immigrants and Bulgarian citizens, workers, representatives of the state, local and NGO institutions, or businesspersons. During the study, a quantitative method was also used. In 2018, 50 surveys were completed by foreign workers. Finally, yet importantly, the research uses a variety of online sources such as data, studies, information and analyses available on various local and national media. Social media was also used, including groups for virtual communication on Facebook.

The contemporary economic situation and law implementation in Bulgaria

Bulgaria has the lowest gross domestic product (GDP) per capita in the EU. However, since 2013, there has been steady economic growth and, of course, the COVID-19 pandemic is also affecting the economy. Gross value added (GVA) shows a gradual increase from about 36 billion EUR in 2013 to 40 billion EUR in 2021. In the period of 2013–2021, the structure of GVA remained almost the same, about 70% in the services sector, 25% in industry and 5% in agriculture. Real GDP growth increased from 0.3 to 4.2% from 2013 to 2021. This increase is much faster than the EU average. However, the country's GDP growth in 2021 was below the EU average which, according to preliminary Eurostat data, was 5.3%. In 2021, the Prosperity Index (Legatum) gave Bulgaria a prestigious 48th place (out of 167). Immediately ahead of us were Romania (47), Qatar (46), Hungary (44) and Greece (43). The Czech Republic and Slovakia, however, are ahead of us by more than ten places. According to the latest Eurostat data, average household income in Bulgaria was 5,928 EUR. This is far below the EU average (about 20,000 EUR), but it is better than Romania (4,846) and not so far from Greece (9,995) (Smilov 2021; The Legatum Prosperity Index 2021).

The economic situation, EU membership and stability of the country are attractive to foreigners, regardless of their background. Bulgaria managed to become a desired destination for immigrants motivated to settle here for various reasons. This trend is especially visible in terms of citizens of third world countries. Statistical data indicate a gradual increase in their numbers in the period 2015−2021, from 13,670 to 59,803. Their motivation could be family, education or professional development.