

COMMUNITIES AND IDENTITIES IN BULGARIA

edited by Anna Krasteva



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Anna Krasteva

INTRODUCTION

This is the most challenging book I have ever worked on. Our prime objective was to summarize in a single volume the diverse and complicated issues of Bulgaria's ethnic and religious communities – each one of which may be the subject of a separate book – without sacrificing the depth of the analysis at any point. Your critical interpretation will show to what extent this objective has been achieved. In addition, we wanted this book to be coherent and homogeneous, while preserving the individual style of each author. We regard homogeneity only as a general framework of respect for the subject of research and avoidance of confusion between theoretical and ideological positions. Within this framework, the theoretical preferences of the authors have been preserved.

No social science is in a privileged position when it comes to understanding communities. That is why the fourth objective was to have each author “transcend” his or her disciplinary background so as to produce an interdisciplinary book.

The analysis abides by the following logic: theory-politics-everyday life-“reality”. The purpose of the theoretical part is to present the spectrum of concepts which thematize ethnicity. The authors proceed from the presumption that there is no single, “most appropriate”, explanation, and examine the sphere of validity of a number of theories in studying the different communities in Bulgaria. This approach is based on the thesis that the demonstrated aspiration towards an ultimate truth in the sphere of ethnic relations is often inspired by an ideological and political, rather than by an epistemological position.

It is impossible to understand minority communities without due consideration for the state's attitude to them, as vested in law and politics. The conceptualization of minorities in everyday consciousness is an important ac-

cent in the book. This accent stems from the view that the voice of not only scientific truth and state interests should be heard in this delicate sphere, but also of the immediate participants in social interactions – both from the minorities and the majority.

The focus is on the specificity of the different communities. The purpose is to present them in a variety of theoretical perspectives – historical, ethnological, sociological – with an emphasis on their genesis and historical transformations, as well as, just as importantly, on the identities of their members. Hence their presentation in formal – alphabetical – order, and the absence of a classification of communities, since any classification will inevitably “arrange” and predetermine identities.

This book is part of the *Intercultural Studies* series, launched with the contribution of the Bulgamin Tempus Project. The first volume, *Communities and Identities*, was published in Bulgarian and English at the beginning of 1998. *Communities and Identities in Bulgaria* is published in Bulgarian and English too. The next three volumes in the series are *Geopolitics, Identities, Discourse, Power and Communitarianism*.