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1910–1934 INTERNAL MIGRATION OF LOCAL POPULATION IN BULGARIA (ACCORDING TO CENSUS DATA ON BIRTH PLACE IN BULGARIA)

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Abstract. *This study examines the internal migration of the native-born population in Bulgaria between 1910 and 1934. Its volume and dynamics, gender and ethnic specificities, distance, directions and spatial orientation are revealed by quantitative analysis of the statistical information on the birth place of the native-born population in Bulgaria, drawn from the four censuses realized during the period under consideration. Due to the lack of current statistics on settlements and displacements, they are an indispensable historical source of spatial mobility within the country.*

Keywords: Historical Demography, Internal Migration, Census, Native-born Population in Bulgaria, 1910–1934.

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The internal migration of the population in Bulgaria during the studied period was never a special subject of study in the historical demography as it is considered minor if compared to the external/international migration due to its insignificant volume and minimal growth. As an agenda, it has been mentioned only briefly (just a few sentences, literally) in summary works on demography of Bulgaria and several overview articles on migrations (Naydenova 2000: 3-15; Stefanov et al. 1974; Totev 1968: 38-48) [in Bulgarian]. Some of those articles or studies never even mentioned the issue of internal migration during the period 1910–1934 (Zhekov 2006: 175-204) [in Bulgarian]. It is noteworthy that without any special research on this issue, authors simply come to the conclusion: internal migration is unimportant. The emphasis of scientific interest is actually put on internal migration in the second half of the twentieth century (Minkov 1972), when it was most intense, especially in the direction from the village to the city. As implied by the authors studying the migration history of Bulgaria, the reason for neglecting the internal migration process lies in the fact that at that time the external migration was really important and the immigration process exceeded the emigration one, especially during the wars and immediately after the wars (Mintchev 1999: 124) [in Bulgarian]. In fact, the situation and development of internal migration are important because they relate to a number of interconnected and largely self- and/or mutually reinforcing processes such as industrialisation, economic modernisation and growth, settlement growth, the settlement system growth and transport infrastructure growth, the first demographic transition, urbanisation (in the latter case, even urbanisation itself is considered to be the most typical process of internal migration (Naydenova; Dyson: 2010: 125-126)) [in Bulgarian].

FACTORS OF INTERNAL MIGRATION IN BULGARIA

The internal migration process in Bulgaria during the studied period developed in a context of changes in the state borders as a result of the wars. The territory of the country increased from 96,345 sq. km to 103,146 sq. km, as the acquired lands to the south, namely the Strandzha region, part of the Rhodopes, Pirin and the valleys of the rivers Mesta and Struma have a larger area than the confiscated South Dobrudja and Western outskirts. In terms of arable land, however, more land was lost (3.8 million decares from Dobrudja) than acquired (1.5 million decares, mainly mountainous area) (Angelov et al. 1981: 297) [in Bulgarian]. The internal migration process takes place against the background of a dynamic demographic situation: increased mortality during the wars, post-war birth compensation, active external migration, refugee and immigration waves, unique in their volume, mostly Bulgarians (expelled from their centuries-old residences in territories which remained outside the borders of our national state), but also Russians and Armenians, emigration of local other ethnic population as a result of bilateral agreements for exchange of population with neighbouring countries. The final result was an increase in the population of Bulgaria: between the censuses from 1910 to 1926 by over one million people, the composition of this being refugees and immigrants, and also population in the acquired lands to the south, whose number was larger than that in the lost

territories, and then the population acquired in the period through to the 1934 census, i.e. another 600 thousand people. While the immigrating Bulgarian population was predominantly rural, the insufficiency of arable land as a result of the above losses as a consequence of the wars became tangible but was overcome in the 1920s (using methods such as drainage of swamps, clearing of forest terrains, etc.).

At that time, internal migration processes among the local population in Bulgaria developed without any special regulations by the state (people moved freely between districts, counties and settlements), but were closely interrelated with various sectoral policies of the Bulgarian governments.

Bulgaria was an agricultural country with a predominantly rural population and a slowly growing urban population (from 19.1% in 1910 to 21.4% in 1934). The expansion of the settlement system during the interwar period was made by establishing rural settlements, which came as a consequence of the emphasis in the economic policy of the Bulgarian governments in the 1920s: land acquisition, land fragmentation and creation of a stable stratum of small rural land-owners (Table 1). From 1920 to 1934, the number of villages grew by 1442. Some new “refugee” villages were created: 12 by 1926 (one in each of the districts of Burgas, Karnobat, Varna and Lom, three in the district of Kardzhali and five in the district of Mastanli).¹ Many were the villages which arose around railway stations as a result of the lively economic activity there; dozens of new neighbourhoods and hamlets were formed, some of them being populated as “scattered” and rural settlements with some of them having grown further into villages.² Over the studied period the predominant type of villages was the large villages, i.e., those having over 500 inhabitants, and their share was 54%.³ It is noticeable that then in Bulgaria there were over 500 villages with more inhabitants than some of the townships (Mishaykov 1941: 50) [in Bulgarian].

While in 1926 the number of cities reached 97⁴ and remained so until 1934, in 1946 that number already grew to as many as 105 (Table. 1). These were times when the predominant model was townships with fewer than 10,000 inhabitants (Mishaykov 1941: 50) [in Bulgarian]. The number of towns with over 20,000 inhabitants was growing. Sofia grew to a population of over 100,000 and until 1934 was the only town in Bulgaria with more than 100,000 inhabitants⁵. Sofia was the city with the

¹ The regulation of the newly settled settlements as self-functioning ones was done by the 1931 Law on the recognition of newly settled settlements as independent ones and on the renaming of some settlements (amended in 1932 and 1934). *State Gazette*, 1931, No. 6, (08/04) [in Bulgarian], Amendments: *State Gazette*, 1932, No. 84 (08/07) [in Bulgarian], Ordinance-Law for amendment and supplement: *State Gazette*, 1934, No. 123 (31/08) [in Bulgarian].

² An example of this is the recognition of Mandrata neighbourhood, which was part of the village of Yakezli (Burgas district), as separate settlement under the name of Konstantinovo. See *State Gazette*, 1922, no. 246 (02/02) [in Bulgarian].

³ If we take into account the exceptional situation of the hamlets and neighbourhoods, then the percentage of small villages becomes even smaller.

⁴ The following villages were declared towns: Byala Slatina (1914), Elhovo (1925), Pernik (1929), Sveti Vrach (Sandanski), Seymen (Maritsa, Simeonovgrad), Cherven Bryag (1929). See: Mladenov, Dimitrov 2009: 13-17 [in Bulgarian].

⁵ Until the outbreak of the Second World War that threshold was reached by Bulgaria's second ranking city, Plovdiv.