BULGARIA'S REQUEST FOR COMPENSATION

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Bojidar Dimitrov, the Bulgarian State Minister responsible for Bulgarians abroad, has stated in an interview given last Sunday to the 24 Hours newspaper that the Ottoman Empire in 1913 (during the Balkan Wars) had expelled hundreds of thousands of ethnic Bulgarians from Thrace and that later on, a treaty was concluded in 1925 between the Republic of Turkey and Bulgaria on that subject, but was never implemented. Furthermore, by putting forth that the descendants of the expelled people must be compensated, Dimitrov has requested Turkey to pay a total of $20 billion and has indicated that this compensation is one of the conditions of Turkeys full membership in the EU. According to the information provided to the journalists by the Bulgarian Government Spokesman, Veselin Ninov, the statements of State Minister Dimitrov reflect government policy, that subject is being handled by a Bulgarian-Turkish intergovernmental working group, and the compensation could be between $10 billion to $12 billion. In response to a question related to whether Bulgaria is ready to veto Turkeys EU membership, Ninov has said that There is such an option. But this is just one of many other conditions of Bulgarian support for Turkish membership. There are also issues relating to energy and water management projects. From the statements of the State Minister and Government Spokesman, one can conclude that the Bulgarian Government is setting conditions in order to support Turkeys EU membership and is also requesting money. Meanwhile, it should be noted that there is a rather blackmailing tone in the statement of State Minister Dimitrov. Due to the relative complexity of the subject, we will provide some information about the situation during the Balkan Wars and the Turkish-Bulgarian Treaty of 1925 in another one of our next articles. However, a point which is already important to emphasize is that in the last years, Turkish-Bulgarian relations could be defined as excellent. Under the influence of this, Turkey has given full support for Bulgarias NATO membership without making any requests from Bulgaria, for instance, without putting forth the necessity to improve conditions of the Turkish minority in that country. But, encouraged from being an EU member and overestimating this position, the new Bulgarian Government with its extreme nationalistic tendencies, has not refrained from entering into conflict with Turkey and has not taken into consideration the negative effects this situation could have on the bilateral relations. Another important point is that Bulgarias requests from Turkey are meaningless at a time when Turkeys EU membership process has rather reached a deadlock.

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