The formation of the Bulgarian nationality constitutes a complicated and prolonged process which is marked by a centuries-long development embracing a considerable period of Bulgaria's medieval history. The elucidation of this process is linked to the collection and use of a vast number of data dealing with history, archaeology, ethnography, linguistics, toponymy, and anthropology. Moreover, the study of the formation of the Bulgarian nationality calls for not only the perusal of extensive source material, but also for throwing more light on the nature of nationalities and the ways in which they were formed and consolidated.

As is known, nationality is a definite type of ethnic community that emerges at a given stage of the evolution of human societies. It is a higher and more advanced community than the tribe and was established during the period of disintegration of the tribal system. Each nationality is distinguished by several basic traits which lend to it the nature of a durable and united community. These traits in common are the following: language, specific material and spiritual culture, and a national awareness (self-awareness). It is also known that a common language is one of the main features of nationality; it plays the part of a binding link and is the main instrument of communication.

The emergence of nationalities is related to definite, tangible, historical conditions that act as favorable ethnos-forming factors. One of these conditions is a territory in common where a people are being formed, where they live and create. Without the presence of a territory in common which provides the spatial basis required, it is impossible to exclude tribal fragmentariness and promote closer economic, political, and spiritual ties typical of the essence of every national community. The territory in common in itself, however, cannot play a uniting role if there is no state organization at hand. Thus, whenever there is a state authority with a well-organized administrative setup and a single foreign and home policy, the narrow frames of the tribal system can be broken up, economic relations can be intensified, and tribal isolation may be eliminated.

The factual story of the formation of various nationalities indicates that usually several ethnic groups have a share in their establishment which renders the elucidation of the ethnogenetic process particularly complicated. A com-
plex ethnogenetic process is also typical for the formation of the Bulgarian nationality. Three main components contribute to its step-by-step formation: the local Balkan population (chiefly Thracians), Slavs (who arrived in the middle of the sixth century in the Balkan Peninsula), and Proto-Bulgarians (who settled on Bulgarian land in the second half of the seventh century).

The first written information on the Thracians date towards the start of the first millennium B.C. It is known that they inhabited the whole eastern part of the Balkan Peninsula and that they were divided into numerous tribes. The Greeks were their neighbors to the south, and the Illyrians and the ancient Macedonians, to the west. In the beginning of the first century A.D., the Thracian tribes were conquered by the Romans and included in the territories of the gigantic Roman Empire. At the end of the fourth century the Roman Empire was divided into two parts: a western one with Rome as its capital and an eastern one with Constantinople as its capital. The latter was given the name of Byzantium. The Thracian tribes remained under the domination of the Byzantine Empire. During the prolonged rule of the Romans and the Byzantines, a part of the Thracians were Romanized and a part were Hellenized, while a part of them preserved their ethnic and cultural distinction.

The end of the fifth and the beginning of the sixth centuries marked the assaults of the Slavs on the Balkan Peninsula. At that period they inhabited a vast territory to the north and the northeast of the Danube River. It embraced the approximate location of present-day Ukraine, Romania, and Hungary. They were divided into numerous tribes ruled by individual chiefs. They were in a stage of the so-called “military democracy,” i.e., at the final stage of the disintegration of the tribal system when private ownership of land was already known and there existed a reasonably strong and rich ruling upper

1. On the Thracians and their history, language, and culture, see V. Velkov, Robstvoto v Trakiia i Mizia prez antichnostta (Sofia, 1967); Hr. Danov, Drevna Trakiia (Sofia, 1969); A. Fol, Demografska i sosialna struktura na drevna Trakiia (Sofia, 1970).
2. On the question of Hellenization, see V. Beshevliev, Prouchvaniia vurhu lichnite imena na trakite (Sofia, 1965), p. 75.
3. On the question of Romanization, see the detailed studies of B. Gerov, “Romaniz-mish mezhdu Dunava i Balkana,” GSUFF Fil. fak. 11, No. 5, 2 (1948); 11, No. 7, 2 and 11, No. 18, 5 (1952-53); idem, “Prouchvaniia vurhu zapadno-trakiiskite zemiprez rimsko vreme,” ibid., 1, 3 (1950-60); 11, No. 2 (1967); 12 (1968); 13, No. 1 (1969). Cf. also V. Beshevliev, Prouchvaniia vurhu lichnite imena u trakite (Sofia, 1965).