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DEPORTATION IN THE COLLECTIVE MEMORY OF CRIMEAN TATARS

ДЕПОРТАЦИЯ В КОЛЛЕКТИВНОЙ ПАМЯТИ КРЫМСКИХ ТАТАР

В основу данной статьи легло исследование, проведенное среди трех возрастных групп крымских татар с использованием метода полуструктурированного интервью. В статье рассматриваются вопросы травмы и памяти, место депортации в коллективной памяти разных поколений крымских татар, исследуются образы и символы, используемые в нарративах.

Crimean Tatars, the Turkic language people, Muslims by faith, during the two and a half centuries have lived through two large tragedies in their history: loss of their statehood in the 18th century and the total deportation from their historical homeland in 1944. From 1443 to 1783 Crimean Tatars had their statehood in the form of the Crimean Khanate, since 1475 it was under the Ottoman Empire, where it retained its autonomy in matters of domestic and foreign policy. The annexation of Crimea by Russia and the following dispossession of land and Russification policies brought to several large waves of immigration of Crimean Tatars from the Crimean peninsula and its surrounding districts to Turkey. In the 18th century 100 thousand Crimean Tatars left Crimea, and in the 19th century the number of emigrants reached up to 200 thousand people. The emigration of Crimean Tatars continued during the first half of the 20th century and was primarily directed either to Turkey or Romania. Crimean Tatars constituted the majority of the population of Crimea at the moment of its inclusion to the Russian empire, but during the following one and a half centuries the number of Crimean Tatars decreased almost three fold and made no more than 25% of the population of Crimea according to the census of 1939 [1]. But if migrations of the tsar period can be in the modern categories regarded as being between "forced" and "economic", the Soviet period, brought the Crimean Tatars, a sad familiarity with the forced migration under the name of deportation [2, p. 5].

The beginning of the World War II in June 1941 brought to the mobilization to the Red Army of the call-up age men including the Crimean Tatars. In October 1941 most of the peninsula was occupied, after the fall of the Sevastopol city in 1942 Crimea was entirely occupied by the German forces. Crimea was liberated in May 1944. But early in the morning of May 18th 1944 all Crimean Tatars were deported from the territory of the Crimean peninsula on charges of collaboration sharing the fate of other previously repressed peoples – Crimean Germans, Kalmyks, Karachays, Balkars, Chechens [1].

Crimean Tatars were allowed to return to Crimea in 1989 in the result of Perestroika movement started by the Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev referring to the restructuring of the Soviet political and economic system. During more than 20 years of repatriation more than 300 settlements of compact living of Crimean Tatars were built in Crimea. Today Crimean Tatars are the minority in their homeland – 12% of the population, the majority are Russians and Ukrainians, 58% and 24% accordingly.

The deportation lasted for more than 50 years and became a deep collective trauma experienced not only by those who physically lived through the deportation, but also by their descendants for several generations.

This research is based on thematic semi-structured interviews conducted among three age groups who represent the three generations of Crimean Tatars – 1) the older generation of those who were born in Crimea and lived through the deportation, 2) their children who were born and grew up in places of exile 3) the generation of young people who were born in places of exile but moved to Crimea in their early childhood or those who were already born in Crimea.

The issues of trauma and memory: the experience, preservation and translation of the fact of deportation in the folk memory are of the most importance for the present research. The place of deportation in the collective memory of different generations of Crimean Tatars, the images and symbols used in the narratives are some of the issue aspects.

I conducted the field-work in spring of 2011 in Simferopol. I was planning to record 18 interviews, 6 in each of the age groups, with three men and three women in each group, but there were cases when family members interested in the topic joined the conversation which gradually developed into separate interviews. Thus I have 20 interviews recorded – 6 in the first and third groups, and 8 in the second group of respondents where there are 3 men and 5 women. I also used two interviews with people who lived through the deportation recorded earlier in 2008 and 2009. The oldest respondent is 90 years old, the youngest is 20. Interviews with the first generation were primarily conducted in the Crimean Tatar language, the interviews with the second and third generations were mostly in Russian for the fact that Crimean Tatars, who were born in places of exile or after the repatriation grew up primarily in a Russian language environment.

The monograph of the American anthropologist Greta Lynn Vehlin called Beyond Memory, anthropological study on Crimean Tatars deportation and return was of great help in conducting the research. The monograph was published in New-York in 2004 and is based on both archive sources, mass media publications and also on the field work materials [4].

Even though the respondents who lived through the deportation and their children who grew up on the stories of the deportation repeatedly mentioned that the life story of any Crimean Tatar would make the whole book, the narratives about the deportation were not recorded until the very repatriation to the Homeland nor were the memories written down by the deportees themselves. On the one hand the deportation was a banned topic in the

Soviet historiography, on the other hand most of those who lived through this tragedy in a conscious age were not literate enough both in their native language and in Russian. One of the main reasons could also be a weak tradition of writing diaries among Crimean Tatars. Undoubtedly it was also a fear instilled by Stalin repressions of 1920s-1950s.

During the exile period there were no mentions neither about the deportation nor about the Crimean Tatar ethnos. The ethnonym of Crimean Tatars had been banned. Official Soviet historiography imposed the idea that the Crimean Tatars are a splinter of the Mongol armies of Chingiz Khan and Batu, that they are no different from the modern Volga Tatars.

The respondents who grew up in the places of exile told that the first time they consciously learned of the deportation was when hearing in their address the insulting nickname of traitors most often in school history lessons or from their peers. *"In school at the lessons of Soviet history, when they told me that you Crimean Tatars are traitors, because of that you were evicted, that's when I learned I did not know the word deportation, I learned that we were traitors, it's the first thing I learned about my people"*, - told one of the respondents, whose school years were spent in exile (male, 39 years old). The respondents repeatedly stressed that it was a shock to be addressed as traitors.

Representatives of all three age groups bitterly underscored the injustice of charges of treason during the Second World War and sought to provide examples refuting such allegations. *"My mother, grandmother cooked bread for the partisans. My grandfather helped the partisans. My aunt and other relatives were among the partisans. And what is the result? My father returned from the war having lost his hand, but when he came home he was deported within 24 hours"*. (Female, 61 years old) The respondents also noted that the ones deported were the innocent people – the women, elderly and children, they recollected of their relatives who died fighting in the Red Army and despite of this "became traitors in one hour".

The 26 years old Ridvan who practically does not remember the places of exile (his family repatriated when the boy was 5 years old) answering my question whether he attends the annual commemorations on May 18th after a long pause said: "It's a pity. The two dates are close – May 9th – the victory day, and May 18th the deportation day. Well, the years are different but the dates are still close. We also fought for this victory, but in the result were charged as traitors".

Following the adoption by the Supreme Council of the 1989 Declaration on recognition as illegal and criminal of the acts of repression against the forcibly displaced peoples, and with the beginning of the massive repatriation of Crimean Tatars in Crimea, they began to create their own history about the events of the World War II and their participation in it. Book writer Ablyaziz Veliyev wrote about the Crimean Tatars - the heroes of the Soviet Union. The book was published for the first time in the Crimean Tatar language, and later was translated into Russian and published again; another book by the same author is about the Crimean Tatars – prisoners of the Nazi concentration camps. [6, 8] There are also other books that publish materials on the great patriotic war in Crimea and the Crimean Tatar eye witness accounts on it [3, 5, 7].

When recording the interviews my ethnicity was a factor which could influence how the narratives were shaped. The fact of belonging to the same community made the respondents assume I heard the stories of the deportation plenty of times. "I know the same things others do" – the words I often heard from the respondents of the second and third generations. The social nature of today memories of the deportation is obvious. To my request to tell how the members of her family were deported one of the respondents felt perplexed "My grandmother was telling me but now there are so many stories about it that I can mix something up, they are so similar to each other". The commemoration events of the deportation victims have been taking place annually for the last two decades on the main square in the capital of Crimea in Simferopol. Close to this date the deportation eye-witness testimonies are broadcast on TV and Radio, published in the printed mass media. As it is known the power of collective memory is not in scrupulous, systematic reconstruction of the past but in creating simple and bright images. The visual materials used by the mass media use bright and repeating images – cattle cars filled up with people, soldiers with guns, crying women and children.

Not only those, for whom the events of 1944 is a post-memory, are under the influence of the images constructed by the mass media but also are the eye-witnesses of the deportation. Here are some quotations: *"Everyone had seen what I am telling about, how they gave us 15 minutes, how they moved us from our places, loaded into trucks... On TV people constantly tell about it, we all had seen it"*. And from another interview: *"if you want to know deeply – they show it on TV, how they came with guns, and ordered to free our houses, we see it on television"* (Male, 87 years old).

The date of May 18 has acquired a symbolic meaning. One of our interviewees recollecting the events of 1944 starts his story with the words: "I was born on January 1, and on that day I was 5 years, 5 months and 18 days old, this is how it was". The date is mentioned in the narratives of all three generations. No matter what age the interviewees were the narratives had a similar structure, had common elements and used similar symbols and images.

While the narratives of the old generation are memories of the personally lived trauma, the younger generation narratives were rather reflections on the outcomes of the deportation on their personal lives, lives of their family members and their community in the whole. But the common topic for the narratives of all the three generations are the stories of interrupted and broken lives. "Actually we have lived through two deportations, - points out one of the respondents – one was compulsory in 1944, and another voluntary – which is our repatriation in the 90-es. We settle in one place, build houses, have our lives, and in a moment we have to move and start everything from the zero" (Male, 39 years old).

To my question whether the young people who have never seen the places of exile still remember the events of 1944 the respondent said. Surely they do. We came here to Crimea in the 90-es, managed to seize a parcel of land from the government, built our houses on a bare land. Living in such settlements with bad roads, poor conditions you plunge into this history every day, there is no way you can escape from it”.

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