

POST-TRAUMATIC GENERATION: CHILDHOOD OF DEPORTED CRIMEAN TATARS IN UZBEKISTAN

Martin-Oleksandr KISLY

*Ph.D. Candidate
Department of History
Kyiv-Mohyla Academy*

Abstract: *The article's main purpose is to tackle with how narratives within familial space shaped the Crimean Tatar identity in exile. Based on oral testimonies, this article also focuses on the living conditions and some aspects of the everyday life of the Crimean Tatar who were born in exile in 1950s and 1960s's. By focusing on the oral testimonies of the Crimean Tatars who were born in exile, this article aims to fill the gaps in the historiography of the Crimean Tatars exile.*

Key words: *Crimean Tatars, deportation, everyday practices, exile, oral history, testimonies.*

POSTTRAVMATİK KUŞAK: SÜRGÜN EDİLEN KIRIM TATARLARININ ÖZBEKİSTAN'DAKİ ÇOCUKLUKLARI

Öz: *Bu çalışmanın ele aldığı esas sorunsal, aile içinde aktarılan anlatıların, sürgünde Kırim Tatar kimliğinin oluşmasındaki rolüdür. Bunun yanında, bu çalışma, tanıklıklara dayanarak, 1950'ler ve 1960'larda sürgünde doğan Kırim Tatarlarının yaşam koşullarına ve bazı günlük pratiklerine de odaklanmaktadır. Sürgünde doğan Kırim Tatarlarının tanıklıklarına dayanan bu çalışma, Kırim Tatar sürgününe dair tarih yazımındaki bazı boşlukları doldurmayı hedeflemektedir.*

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Kırim Tatarları, Tehcir, Günlük pratikler, Sürgün, Sözlü tarih, Tanıklıklar*

Introduction

The forced relocation of national groups from their traditional areas of settlement, also acknowledged as ethnic cleansing by some scholars, was a widespread phenomenon in the Soviet Union. Indeed, deportation has been a common practice in the twentieth-century nationalist projects. However, Soviet Union was not a nation-state. Soviet authorities practiced forced relocations of different populations defined by class, religion, ethnicity and political affiliation. Total number of deported people was approximately 2 millions.¹

The deportation of Crimean Tatars started on May 18th, 1944. The reason alleged by the Soviet authorities for this was the collaboration with German and Romanian forces during their three-year occupation of Crimea. Soviet authorities did not try to consider who was actually responsible of. the collaboration, but deported the entire Crimean Tatar population, including women, children, and the elderly who had no connections to the Nazi regime. According to official statistics, total number of deported Crimean Tatars was 191,044.² Moreover, Crimean Tatar servicemen who had fought in the Soviet Army were sent to so-called labor army after the WWII.³ They got the opportunity to find their families only after 1948. As a result of a state-organized violence, Crimean Tatars became a nation in exile (*Sürgünlik* in Crimean Tatar). Their final destinations were Uzbekistan (35,275 families) and labor camps in Ural (Molotov oblast, Sverdlov oblast) and the Volga district (Gorky oblast, Mari Autonomous Soviet Republic).⁴ Thus Crimean Tatars became an “unnation”⁵ for the regime and unwanted neighbors for local populations, particularly for the Uzbeks. More than 40 years Crimean Tatars remained in exile, three generations were born and raised in Uzbekistan.

Traditionally, historiography has focused on several themes and issues, namely background and reasons for deportation, deportation process itself and the struggle of the Crimean Tatars for the return to Crimea

- 1 J. Otto Pohl, *Ethnic Cleansing in the USSR, 1937–1949* (Connecticut: Greenwood press, 1999), 5.
- 2 Oleg Bazhan, ed., *Krymski tatari: shlyah do povernennya* (Kyiv: Institute of Ukrainian history, 2004), 71.
- 3 Fisher, W. Alan. *The Crimean Tatars* (Stanford: Hoover Press, 1978), 171.
- 4 Nikolay Bugai, ed., *Iosif Stalin – Laverentiiu Berii: “Ikh nado deportirovat” dokumenty, fakty, kommentarii* (Moscow: Druzhba narodov, 1992), 140.
- 5 Robert Conquest, *The Nation killers: the Soviet deportation of nationalities* (London: Macmillan, 1970), 67.

within the framework of the dissident movements in the USSR. Within the historical scholarship, however, a fairly large gap exists and this article is an attempt to partially fill this gap by examining the everyday life in post-deportation period, education of Crimean Tatars in exile, children activities, and holidays. The article's main purpose is to tackle with the ways that family narratives helped to shape the Crimean Tatar identity in exile.

This article is based on the oral testimonies of the Crimean Tatars who were born in exile gathered through semi-structured interviews. The semi-structured interviews consisted of twenty-seven questions. The average duration of the interviews was one and a half hours. Interviews were conducted in Russian. A total of twenty people were interviewed, who fulfilled two criteria: date of birth (1950s – 1960s) and place of birth (Uzbekistan). First three interviewees were contacted through personal acquaintance and the others interviewees were reached through snowball sampling.

How to Survive: Practices and Strategies

The lack of proper housing conditions, shortage of enough nutrition, inadaptability to new climatic conditions, absence of basic health care facilities and the consequent rapid spread of diseases not only caused severe demographic effects, but also created brutal conditions for Crimean Tatars during the first years of exile. According to official documents, the number of deaths among Crimean population (Crimean Tatars, Bulgarians, Greeks and Armenians) was 44,887 between 1941 and 1944. Death rate in first year of exile was the highest one.⁶ Another document demonstrates that in the period from July 1st, 1944 to July 1st, 1945 22,355 of Crimean Tatars perished in Uzbekistan.⁷ Only in 1949 the birth rate exceeded the death rate.⁸

Almost every family witnessed losses due to starvation or infectious diseases. Chief of NKVD (soviet secret police) department on Volgostroy Labor Camp, where deported Crimean Tatars were forced to work in, wrote in his report: “throughout this month, Crimean Tatars’ negative mood was observed. They received a lot of letters about the

6 Bugai, “*Ikh nado deportirova*”, 265.

7 Bazhan, Krymski tatari, 10.

8 Victor Zemskov, “Spetsposlentsy, (po doukemtatsii NKVD-MVD SSSR)”, *Sotsiologicheskie issledovaniia* 11 (1990): 12.

death of their relatives in Uzbekistan.” Then the officer quoted some letters: “Papa! Server, Vilyada, Lenar and Gulnara died. Mama is in the hospital, her feet have swollen. Maria and I got malaria, Lily has diarrhea. 50 people died from our village...”⁹ As this report reveals, children, women and the elderly were the most vulnerable.¹⁰

As a result, majority of the interviewees told that they grew up without grandparents. Shefika Abduramanova, born in 1950, recalls:

I do not remember my grandmothers at all; they died in the late 1940s due to starvation, before I was born. The highest death rate was in the first and a half year. Because there were no men, only women, children and the elderly, they were defenseless.¹¹

Crimean Tatars were involved in exhausting works in the industrial sites that the Soviet authorities relocated industry from the western borders to Central Asia during the war. Crimean Tatars worked in chemical production in a city of Chirchik, Uzbekistan.¹² According to a decree of the Council of People’s Commissars, all able-bodied special settlers had to engage in socially useful work in agricultural, industry and building.¹³ As stated in documents, many of the deported Crimean Tatars worked in agriculture (117,431), others were involved in industry and construction works (34,173).¹⁴

Shefika Abduramanova remembers that the Crimean Tatars were working on the most demanding jobs without salary, unlike the Uzbeks, who regularly received salaries.¹⁵ Yet, this was not a part of the state policy, but a practice of local authorities towards the unwanted people; according to the official documents, Crimean Tatars were to be provided housing, salaries, foods and health care. Rather, this was an example of

9 Gulnara Bekirova, “News of the death of families become more frequent...”, *Crimean studies. News bulletin* 1 (2003): 119.

10 Yuriy Zinchenko, *Kryms’ki tatar: istorichnyi narys* (Kyiv: Holovna spetsializovana redaktsia literaturny movamy natsional’nyh menshyn Ukrainy, 1998), 111.

11 Shefika Abduramanova, interview by author. 9 January 2014.

12 Greta Uehling, *Beyond memory: the Crimean Tatars’ deportation and return* (New York: Macmillan, 2004), 100.

13 Bugai, “*Ikh nado deportirova*”, 231.

14 Oleg Bazhan, “Deportatsia narodiv Krimu v roky Drugoi svitovoi viyny cherez prizmu dokumentiv radyanskih spetsluzhb”, *Istoriya Ukrainy: malovidomi imena, podii, facty* 26 (2004): 163.

15 Shefika Abduramanova, interview by author. 9 January 2014

the soviet phenomenon of *peregiby na mestah* (distortions), which refers to the infringement of the law by local chiefs or commandants that seek to show off to central authorities in the expectation of some favors.

In order to survive, people had to sell their valuable belongings, i.e., jewelry, clothes, and household items that they managed to bring with them from Crimea. Certainly, they sold it if they managed to take it from home, Crimea. Revziye Ametshayeva, born in 1953, recalls how her mother complained that she could not keep jewelry for her daughters:

Crimean Tatars had a lot of gold, because they got it as a gift on weddings. On the next day of our arrival, my mother and brother went to work in the field. In the morning they did an obligatory work, and after dinner they were selling gold. They exchanged it for corn or cereal because it was necessary to eat, so no one died. Mama said afterwards, “I had a clock with three lids. Why did not I barter these lids separately?”¹⁶

Children, too, were obliged to work especially at cotton fields. Lenura Dzhemileva, born in 1946, argues that her childhood was difficult because it was obligatory to work in cotton fields from April to December.¹⁷ Revziye Ametshayeva recalls:

I was a first grader, cotton ripened and on the 1st of September we were sent to collect it. For 1 kg of cotton we were given two, sometimes three kopykas. So we collected it, and then my sister, she was a teacher, took it. Once I got 50 or 60 kopykas and this happened in the first grade! We collected cotton until December. If we collected less than obligatory norm we were blamed at school.¹⁸

Places of resettlement of Crimean Tatars in Central Asia were named “special settlements” (forced settlements) that were originally launched as a way to repress the *kulaks*, who were labeled as class enemies by Soviet authorities in 1930’s, which were also instrumental for the colonization of remote regions of Soviet Union.¹⁹ In comparison to the

16 Revziye Ametshayeva, interview by author. 10 January 2014.

17 Lenura Dzhemileva, interview by author. 9 January 2014.

18 Revziye Ametshayeva, interview by author. 10 January 2014.

19 Zemskov, “Spetsposlentsy”, 3.

Gulag camps, special settlements had some ‘normalcy’. People had the opportunity to live with their families in a relatively uninterrupted. Regime in special settlements was guided by “special commandant” and NKVD. Displaced persons had to visit commandant’s office regularly to check in. By the decree of the Presidium of Supreme Soviet of USSR on 1948, to leave such settlements was strictly prohibited. The punishment of escape was 20 years of hard labor camps.²⁰ Dzhizayir Khalilov recalls:

I perfectly remember that I was ill, there was no x-ray, I had to go in Almalyk, and it was 10 km away. And police accompanied me. We could not even make X-ray. I was traveling to Almalyk with an armed policeman in the back of a truck.²¹

Between 1948 and 1950, after the liberation from the labor camps, men (approximately 9,000 former officers and soldiers)²² began searching for their relatives. Reunion of the families significantly improved everyday lives of the many Crimean Tatars. Moreover, return of fathers, sons, brothers and husbands played a significant role in improvement of emotional wellbeing of the deported Crimean Tatars. Besides, by the return of the men, people felt more secure from the abuses of the officials and better relations were established with the Uzbeks.²³ Khalilov’s family in 1953 began to build their own house.²⁴ Revziye Ametshayeva similarly remembers that in 1953 they began to build a house with 3 rooms.²⁵ Lenura Dzhemileva remembers that they continued to live in the barrack.²⁶

Ava-Sherfe Mametova remembers that her family was lucky to get accommodation in an orphanage where her father worked. Six children and parents used to live in this place:

I remember we had one room with a very long table. And this table was always full of children. And they said to my

20 Svetlana Alieva, ed., *Tak eto bylo. Natsional'nye repressii v SSSR* (Moscow: Insan, 1993), vol. 1, 167.

21 Dzhizayir Khalilov, interview by author. 28 October 2013.

22 Bazhan, Krymski tatari, 82.

23 Brian Glyn Williams, “The hidden ethnic cleansing of Muslims in Soviet Union: the exile and repatriations of Crimean Tatars”, *Journal of contemporary history* 37 (2002): 343.

24 Dzhizayir Khalilov, interview by author. 28 October 2013.

25 Revziye Ametshayeva, interview by author. 10 January 2014.

26 Lenura Dzhemileva, interview by author. 9 January 2014.

daddy “baba”, and to my mother “ana”. I was 5-6 year old and I thought, “Are they my brothers and sisters for real?” I thought about that when evening came and after they went to the orphanage where they used to stay – these had to be my brothers and sisters. But in the evening we went to sleep on the floor and I again didn’t understand who were my brothers and sisters.²⁷

Shefika Abduramanova recalls that they did not build a house at first, since they hoped that they would return to Crimea soon.²⁸ This was a widespread belief.²⁹ People believed that the deportation was a mistake and expected that the problem would be solved because the Crimean Socialist Soviet Republic (downgraded to the status of a regular oblast by Stalin in 1945) had been formerly established by Lenin. Moreover, it was Lenin, who formulated the right to self-determination for each ethnic group. Therefore, people were waiting for the death of the “bad Stalin” and the return of the “good Lenin” and his nationalities policy. The loyalty to and the belief in communism deeply influenced Crimean Tatars National movement for return. For example, Crimean Tatars practiced laying flowers on the Lenin’s monument on the anniversary of the creation of Crimean Socialist Soviet Republic. Ironically, they were arrested for this.

The special settlements regime began to soften after Stalin’s death in 1953. In 1954, by a decree of the Government of Soviet Union, special settlers received some rights. Two years later, in 1956, special settlements regime was eventually canceled.³⁰ However, whereas the deported Chechens, Ingush, Kalmyks, Karachays, and Balkars were allowed to return to their homeland, Crimean Tatars, Meshetian Turks, and Volga Germans were not given the same right without a clear reason.³¹ Despite removing the special settlement restrictions from the Crimean Tatars, the Soviet government still considered them guilty of treason; Crimean Tatars were given the right to freely across the territory of the Soviet Union, but the Crimean peninsula.

After the termination of the special settlements regime, many Crimean

27 Ava-Sherfe Mаметова, interview by author. 9 January 2014.

28 Shefika Abduramanova, interview by author. 9 January 2014

29 See, Gulnara Bekirova, *Krimskotatarskaya problema v SSSR (1944-1991)* (Simferopol: Odzhak, 2004).

30 Zinchenko, *Kryms’ki tatary: istorichnyi narys*, 111.

31 Pohl, *Ethnic Cleansing in the USSR*, 56.

Tatars moved to the cities, where they were valued as specialists due to their education, knowledge of the Russian language, and experience in working on leading positions before the deportation.³² As a result, living conditions of the Crimean Tatars improved significantly. Yet, this does not mean that poverty was not widespread among the Crimean Tatars. For example, Ametshayev's family always had food, but did not have money to buy furniture:

My parents had very calm attitude to things. We did not buy anything. Furniture? There were some mattresses on the floor for sleeping. But we always had food: chickens, sheep, and turkeys. Whoever came – all were fed, my mother cooked delicious meals!³³

Ava-Sherfe recalls:

When father brought something delicious, he always said, "This is yours, and this is yours". And I knew that I could not take it because this was brother's or sister's. I remember he brought a sprat for us and it was delicious. There was some chocolate in a local store, but I did not know what it was, only heard about. Or wrapper on street... I did ... it's a shame even to tell ... I raised it, smelt it, I wanted chocolate so much. But daddy was not wealthy – six children, so he said, "There are worms crawling in this chocolate". But daddy was unable - six children... Well, he brought us cheap candy Karamelka, that's why Karamelka "it's yummy! Tastes good!"³⁴

Hulsum Mustafayeva, born in 1954, recalls that her family had nothing but lentil for the meals. But herring remains desirable delicacy for her due to memories from Hulsum's childhood:

It was a holiday for us, when father received a salary. He bought melted butter, one kilogram of herring, bread, and for us it was a holiday. Mom cooked potatoes, father cleaned herring and cut it. And we ate it with butter. We definitely knew that if daddy received a salary, it would be herring and potatoes.³⁵

32 Bekirova, *Krimskotatarskaya problema v SSSR*, 76.

33 Revziye Ametshayeva, interview by author. 10 January 2014.

34 Ava-Sherfe Mametova, interview by author. 9 January 2014.

35 Hulsum Mustafayeva, interview by author. 8 January 2014.

Rustem Vaapov, born in 1957, was the only child in the family. His father died during the war and his grandparents in the first years of exile:

Our family was pretty poor. My mother was a nurse and her salary was between 40 and 60 rubles. We didn't have a household. Firstly, my mother had problem with housing, so she rented a hut among small private houses. It was cold in the winter. And I attended twenty-four-hour kindergarten. In summertime mother took me home. Then my mother got a room in communal apartments and when I went to the first grade she got one-room flat.³⁶

Zera Bekirova, born in 1959, recalls that childhood was not dreadful, but she had to work on cotton fields:

In that place where we lived cotton was grown. So we used to start working from March. Our whole childhood was spent in cotton fields. Each family member had duties: someone had to look for cows and sheep, someone had to clean house and to help mother in the kitchen, someone had to water vegetables. But we were not forced; we saw that our father and mother needed our help.³⁷

On the other hand, Remziye Zidlyeva, born in 1958, says that she remembers her childhood as a "good" one. Her father worked at a factory as a mechanic, and her mother was employed at the same factory in the personnel department, so the family was relatively well-off. The family lived in the city. They did not have a household, so the only duty Remziye had to do was house cleaning:

My mother's name was Hatidzhe and our Russian neighbors called her "Katia". They always said, "How do you have time to clean everything? Your apartment is always shining!" My parents accustomed us to cleanliness and order. I think it was our "face". I have a sister, we are twins, so we were on duty alternately.³⁸

Venera Bekirova, born in 1959, describes her childhood as "normal", because their family lived in the military town of Tahchiyan. Military

36 Rustem Vaapov, interview by author. 8 January 2014.

37 Zera Bekirova, interview by author. 30 October 2013.

38 Remziye Zidlyeva, interview by author. 9 January 2014.

towns in Soviet Union were a comfort place for living. Her father worked at the motor depot, her mother was the chief accountant. They had only three garden beds and planted tomatoes, so children's only duty was to stoke fire in the stove.³⁹

Elvira Akhtemova, born in 1962, recalls that her parents worked in the trades. The level of wealth in the family was average, and they lived very well:

Although we lived in a city, we had chicken, heifers, and sheep. My duty was to sweep the yard, with my younger brother we fed cattle. My sister washed the floor. Elder brothers had their own duties. Sometimes we were lazy, but my father accustomed us to work.⁴⁰

Refat Useinov born in 1968, describes his childhood as lighthearted and bright. He said that family lived modestly but they did not fall behind of anything. . Refat boasts that as a child he had a big kid's car, bike and shoes like sneakers. Moreover, family had a car that was bought with the money "Grandma had saved money for 2 years"⁴¹

Education

Most of the respondents had no preschool or additional education. Some parents were illiterate and others just did not have enough time for teaching children. Grandparents were usually not involved in the education of grandchildren. If one parent did not work, kindergarten did not accept the child. Sometimes children under eight did not attend the day nursery.⁴²

Also it was a dilemma for parents which school to choose for their children. It was considered, that Russians schools in Uzbekistan had better standards. On the other hand, assimilation of the youngsters was less likely in Uzbeks schools. Shefika Abduramanova recalls that instead of an Uzbek school, she was sent to the Russian school:

39 Venera Bekirova, interview by author. 30 October 2013.

40 Elvira Akhtemova, interview by author. 9 January 2014.

41 Refat Useinov, interview by author. 27 October 2013.

42 Lenura Dzhemileva, interview by author. 9 January 2014.

Before the school, I did not speak Russian, I spoke Crimean Tatar and my parents seriously considered which school I should attend, Russian or Uzbek. They were ready to send me to Uzbek not to let me get assimilated. And now it is easy to understand which school Crimean Tatars attended. Especially when it was a village, there were no Russian schools. But Uzbek one was weaker, so parents send me to the Russian school.⁴³

However Revziye Ametshayeva attended Uzbek school:

No one studied with me. My mother was illiterate. She could only read the Koran in Arabic. Father also was able only to read Arabic.⁴⁴ But they had no education. At home, we only spoke Crimean Tatar. When my Uzbek friends came to us, I translated between them and my parents. So I went to the Uzbek school.⁴⁵

Entertainments

All the interviewees recall that as children they did not have national stereotypes and they could communicate in different languages; “We teased Koreans in Korean, and they teased us in Crimean Tatar”.⁴⁶

The most popular games among children were the typical Soviet games, such as *Chizhik*, *Lotto*, jumping and *Lyanga*, a widespread game in Central Asia similar to European Footbag.

Liliya Khalilova, born in 1953, remembers how they used to play simple games. She also defines Timur Movement⁴⁷ as a game:

We used to play cops and robbers. We used to climb tall poplar trees until they were chopped down. Obviously, girls played with dolls or played hospital game. There were no candy wrappers at first, candies had no wrapper, but later

43 Shefika Abduramanova, interview by author. 9 January 2014.

44 That means that her parents knew some part of Koran by heart.

45 Revziye Ametshayeva, interview by author. 10 January 2014.

46 Shefika Abduramanova, interview by author. 9 January 2014.

47 Timur Movement – youth volunteering movement through WWII, later the movement became governed by state.

candy wrappers appeared and we started collecting them. We picked them up from different people. We did not have candy every day because it was a luxury. Later after that we used to play Timurites (timurovtsy), there was a headquarters; we used to help the old ladies.⁴⁸

Many interviewees recall that families they did not have money to spend for toys back in 1950's. Thus, only the homemade toys available for the kids.

Nadiye Kadyrova, born in 1951, recalls:

We were very little kids when our father worked for forestry as a driver. And we were given an apartment by the forestry. There was a horse we rode on. It was like a rocking horse. There were no toys. And Christmas tree... Do you know what we did? We lived in poverty, we cut down green bush and put it in a bucket with sand. Christmas tree decorations were made of cardboard, cut out from napkins. We hung some sweets on a Christmas tree.⁴⁹

Shefika Abduramanova recalls when she had an opportunity to play with a real doll:

I had very good toys, my uncle brought it from Moscow. Other children had dolls made of cloth. It was the usual handkerchief rolled into a roll ... Nevertheless we liked to play in such way. When my father brought the Christmas tree, we decorated it. That's the smell of juniper... We had very good Christmas decorations, I kept them until marriage. I was good at making whistle from willow. Also we used to create figurines from clay because we were told that Allah had molded man from clay and breathed life into it. We left sculptures to dry and clay cracked. We were disappointed that our creatures did not come to life. From corn with hair we also made dolls.⁵⁰

48 Liliya Khalilova, interview by author. 10 January 2014.

49 Nadiye Kadyrova, interview by author. 9 January 2014.

50 Shefika Abduramanova, interview by author. 9 January 2014.

Holidays

Holidays had great importance for the children. The new year's eve and May 1st (International Workers' Day) were the most favorite holidays for the interviewees. New year's eve was always celebrated, even if there was no possibility to have a Christmas tree and toys. May 1st was like a festival; a holiday with a lot of flags, garlands, demonstrations and parades. Moreover, children loved May 1st because it was the time when parents were buying them new clothes. Children always participated in parades within schools or within enterprises where parents worked at.

Religious Muslim holidays were also celebrated, although some families avoided these holidays. One of the most significant reasons of avoiding Muslim holidays was the Soviet anti-religious policy, Therefore, particularly the party members refused to celebrate religious holidays to avoid the risk of being accused by the secret service. Secondly, traditions were forgotten in some families, since grandparents as the main guardians of the national traditions, as well as family traditions, had passed away. Thirdly, religious families in which the adults used to read the Koran and follow religious prescriptions had a strong fear of punishment and persecution by the authorities and the secret service, so that they had to hide their religious beliefs and practices. By the same token, children of these families were forbidden to talk in public about the religious practices at home. This post-deportation fear was very strong among Crimean Tatars. On the contrary, local Uzbeks felt more comfortable in this regard, so sometimes holidays were celebrated together.

Lenura Dzhemileva, whose two best friends were Russians and who attended a Russian school, recalls an interesting phenomenon:

Ironically, we did not celebrate birthdays for unexplained reason. I do not remember that my parents celebrated such an event as a birthday... New Year's eve, perhaps. I remember we went with my friends singing Christmas carols. Maybe it was on the eve of the Old New Year?⁵¹ Or on Uzbek Boychechak? I don't remember clearly...⁵²

51 The Old New Year or the Orthodox New Year is an informal traditional holiday, celebrated as the start of the New Year by the Julian calendar. In the 20th centuries, the Old New Year falls on January 14 in the Gregorian calendar.

52 Lenura Dzhemileva, interview by author. 9 January 2014.

We can see that Lenura is confused with different holidays. Old New Year was popular in Soviet Union among the orthodox believers. Boychechak, literally *Snowdrop flower*, is an Uzbek spring song for Nawruz, holiday of first day of the New Year in Persian calendar.⁵³ From Lenura's memories, we can assume that the merging of two completely different religious was a result of the social environment in which Crimean Tatars lived. In addition, she was influenced by the Soviet milieu, so she seems to perceive cultural borrowings as a usual pattern.

Something similar can be traced in the memories of Liliya Khalilova, too. Liliya tells that her family celebrated the Easter:

We celebrated 1 May and Easter. On Easter people came to us, they said "Christ is risen!" And we answered, "Truly he is risen!" 1 May we liked because "May Day" were good. On first of Mays, you could go somewhere with parents and spread out a blanket. Also Election Day was a holiday for us. People were able to see each other in the elections. They prepared Barbecue, brought some tasty meals. Also we liked 7 November and New Year's eve.⁵⁴

Ametshayev's family, in spite of prohibition, celebrated religious holidays. As a child, he also enjoyed some soviet holidays:

We celebrated Uraza Bayram and Kurban Bayram. My parents were young so nephews and nieces came to us on holidays because their parents had died. In the morning we always had coffee, tea and sweets. We loved soviet holidays, because we always went to parade. In school we had to go to the parades. We made pigeons of cardboard and parents bought us new clothes.⁵⁵

Venera Bekirova remembers that they celebrated both Soviet and Muslim holidays. Her family exemplifies a type of religious Crimean Tatar family that preserved religious practices, despite anti-religious state campaign:

On May 1st, parents always bought new shoes and new

53 Nawruz is a holiday of first day of spring and the beginning of a year in Persian calendar and is widespread in Central Asia. It is celebrated between 19 and 22 of March.

54 Liliya Khalilova, interview by author. 10 January 2014.

55 Revziye Ametshayeva, interview by author. 10 January 2014.

dress and went to the demonstration. When we were children, we went to parades with parents, they took us with them. In school, participation in parades was obligatory. I remember there was Nowruz Bayram in Uzbekistan. Crimean Tatars called this holiday as Nawrez, it is like a New Year. And we celebrated it because our neighbors were Uzbeks. They prepared a special national dish named sumalak. Well, they invited and treated us. I want to say that our grandfather was a Mullah and he read the Koran, and my mother also read the Koran in Arabic. Grandfather did this, even when it was not allowed in Soviet times. He did fasting (Uraza), made Namaz. When he came to us, he did it five times a day. We knew the most common prayers, even if we didn't understand what they meant, but we always read it.⁵⁶

Zera Bekirova recalls something similar as her family also celebrated Muslim holiday:

Father on May 1st and November 7th drove us to the countryside. We had a motorcycle with sidecar. Although father worked all day and night, he found time to travel with us. We always celebrated Kurban Bayram, Uraza Bayram. These are perhaps the brightest memories of childhood, the celebration of Uraza Bayram. And in the morning my mother said, "Go to seniors, kiss their hands and congratulate them on the occasion, drink tea with them, and they will give you gifts". We went to the Tatars. Uzbeks themselves came. On the eve of holiday we fried chiburekki. I remember that we fried over one hundred pieces! I always said: "Mom, we do not eat so much!" And she replied: "Well, our neighbor Halidapa will come, she has 10 children, so you should give them 10 pieces". And Uzbek brought pilaf.⁵⁷

To be a Crimean Tatars or just Tatars

Soviet authorities tried to remove "Crimean" from "Crimean Tatars" to encourage assimilation. Greta Uehling writes in her book that "they were

56 Venera Bekirova, interview by author. 30 October 2013

57 Zera Bekirova, interview by author. 30 October 2013.

Crimean Tatars, but they must live outside the Crimea; they were exiled for being Crimean Tatars, but there is no such people”.⁵⁸ Crimean Tatars did not have certain solution to this dilemma. After 1956 it became evident that Soviet authorities would not let them return to their homeland and the idea of the return was rather an utopia.

Crimean Tatars who were born in 1950s and 1960s are a post-deportation generation. They did not witness the deportation. Their historical memory about the deportation was mainly shaped through the narratives circulated within the family. This generation was mostly protected by their parents from the trauma of deportation, although knowledge about deportation were leaked from occasional conversations of the adults or from the accusations uttered publicly by the representatives of different nationalities.⁵⁹

Greta Uehling identifies three styles of narratives recounted within families: intensive, selective and reluctant. Intensive style was used for recounting their former lives in Crimea to children “as bedtime stories and mealtime conversation”.⁶⁰ Children absorbed these stories and appropriated them and over time, they made their own stories.. The second style, the selective one implied such narrative strategy as “waiting until children reach adolescence and considered to be ready to understand”.⁶¹ The last reluctant style is narrative of silence, which means that parents did not talk at all about Crimea.⁶² Greta Uehling argues that both intensive and selective styles were the most widespread among Crimean Tatar families.

During my research, interviewees were embarrassed to answer the question “when did you hear for the first time that you were living not in your homeland?” Knowledge about deportation, acquired within time, is graved on their minds so deeply that majority of respondents answered at first, “We, Crimean Tatars, have known about it since our childhood.” Nevertheless, answers to duplicated questions have revealed quite a different picture. For example, some respondents answered, “When I studied at primary school,” and others said, “When I became an adult.” So when and how did children learn about past?

58 Uehling, *Beyond memory*, 39.

59 Ibid., 14.

60 Ibid., 114.

61 Ibid., 115.

62 Ibid., 116.

The most common way of learning that can be referred to selective style I define as an *occasional*. It consists of random conversations of the adults, communication with other people, and accusation in betrayal. Greta Uehling mentions that it happened often when someone outside of the family told children about deportation.⁶³

Lenura Dzhemileva remembers that Crimean Tatars were called “traitors” at primary school. She asked her mom why they were traitors and mother told her about deportation. She believes that it was the first time when she realized that her nation was not living in the homeland.⁶⁴

An accusation of betrayal, the main feature of the life of Crimean Tatars during the first years after the deportation, used to take place even in 1950s. The accusation of betrayal could have been said by other, non-Crimean Tatars children during a quarrel or in order to offend Crimean Tatars, “You, Tatars, are betrayers”, “You are traitors.” Yet the signs of accusation have disappeared in the recollections of Crimean Tatars born in 1960s. Perhaps, the phenomenon was widespread only at the countryside, where deported Crimean Tatars were initially settled, and where such a negative image of Crimean Tatars had been artificially created by the Soviet state propaganda.

Nadiye Kadyrova recalls that she was 10 or 11 year old when a Russian schoolgirl called her “traitor”:

There was a girl at school, a Russian girl that called me “traitor”. I remember that I grabbed her hair and beat her. Then I went home crying and asked my mother, “Mom, why did she call me a traitor?” Obviously, the girl’s mother came to us and said, “Your daughter beat my daughter.” And I said, “You’d rather ask her why I did it. Your daughter called me a traitor. Whom and what have I betrayed?”⁶⁵

When I asked respondents for the first time whether they heard about deportation from adults, when they were children, the typical answer was “yes”. However after answering the same question one more time they started doubting if their parents had told them about deportation.

63 Ibid., 116.

64 Lenura Dzhemileva, interview by author. 9 January 2014.

65 Nadiye Kadyrova, interview by author. 9 January 2014.

Shefika Abduramanova states that her parents kept deportation issue away from her but nevertheless she heard from them every time, “Qiryım, Qiryım”. She explains, “Crimea was like a promised land”. She specifies that she understood what had happened to her nation only when she grew up.⁶⁶

Nadiye Kadyrova says that she had not heard about deportation until she was 10-year-old:

It is interesting that even my mother never told me about it. Then, when I was 10-year-old people who collected money in order to solve Crimean problem in Moscow came to our home once... And they collected money as much as possible to reach Moscow and live there. I asked my mother, “What is going on?” and she told me about deportation in 1944 and that we lived in exile.⁶⁷

Elvira Akhtemova realized the “tragedy of her nation” when she was twelve:

I was aware of it when I was 12 years old because in 1974, my friend moved with her father to Crimea...Musa Mamut⁶⁸ and his daughter...We had studied in the same class... So when I was 12, I realized.⁶⁹

Another part of testimonies can be referred to intensive style of cognition. It is closest to “bedtime and mealtime stories”. Hulsum Mustafayeva states that she was told about living in exile in her childhood. Her father emphasized that their family would come back home, to Crimea, because it was their motherland.⁷⁰ Rustem Vaapov says that in the Crimean Tatar families the elder people always underlined that their homeland is Crimea, yet they ought to live in Uzbekistan against their will.⁷¹ Zera Bekirova remembers that the deportation and related issues were constantly discussed in family.⁷²

66 Shefika Abduramanova, interview by author. 9 January 2014.

67 Nadiye Kadyrova, interview by author. 9 January 2014.

68 Musa Mamut immolated himself in Crimea as a sign of protest against the repression of Crimean Tatars.

69 Elvira Akhtemova, interview by author. 9 January 2014.

70 Hulsum Mustafayeva, interview by author. 8 January 2014.

71 Rustem Vaapov, interview by author. 8 January 2014.

72 Zera Bekirova, interview by author. 30 October 2013.

Remziye Zidlyaeva, born in 1958, says that comprehension of living in exile came with “mother’s milk”:

Elders often gathered and remembered their childhood, life in Crimea, and we were happy to listen. But we did not understand why we did not live where our parents spent their childhood. Children from an early age knew that Central Asia was not our land.⁷³

Lastly, some testimonies are good examples of silent narrative, reluctant style of cognition. There were families that were afraid of persecution or tried to avoid emotional pain. Revziye Ametshayeva says that nobody told children about deportation.⁷⁴ Ava-Sherfe Mаметova remembers that she began discovering the history of her nation only when she was at college.⁷⁵ Ulker Galimova, born in 1968, recalls that she heard about deportation when she was 15 years old for the first time. She tells that her father protected them from this trauma, although he had “a folder with some materials”.⁷⁶ As Greta Uehling mentions “the style of selective recounting was employed to avoid pain”.⁷⁷

It should be noted that Crimea was a common topic of the family narratives. Crimea was pictured the “promised land”. According to Greta Uehling it was typical for selective narrative: “There were extended conversations on the taste of Crimean well waters, and the strength of the Crimean sun. Some members of the second generation had a metaphysical theory that the molecules of the Crimean fruits and vegetables that their parents ate became part of their bodies”.⁷⁸

Shefika Abduramanova remembers that her parents used to compare everything with Crimea, so they repeated all the time, “Everything was different in Crimea”:

When we sat down at the table my parents took the grapes and said, “Is it supposed to be called grapes? There were grapes in Crimea. Is it supposed to be called an apple? There was apple in Crimea.” If somebody returned from

73 Remziye Zidlyaeva, interview by author. 9 January 2014.

74 Revziye Ametshayeva, interview by author. 10 January 2014.

75 Ava-Sherfe Mаметova, interview by author. 9 January 2014.

76 Ulker Galimova, interview by author. 28 October 2013.

77 Uehling, *Beyond memory*, 116.

78 Uehling, *Beyond memory*, 115.

Crimea, they brought flask with water. While swimming in the sea, they took some water, while transporting, that water became rotten. "This water is of the Black Sea!" When one is ill, he is given that water. It was said that everything was different there... Everything was glorified. It was even said that the taste was different. When I returned to Crimea, I did not like fruits because they were waterish and tasteless. There is more sun in Uzbekistan, they are sweeter and more fragrant.⁷⁹

Zera Bekirova said that for her Crimea was a magic country Susambil from Uzbek fairy tales, which she used to read:

That is really fantastic Susambil country with the sea, palm trees, cypresses and this fertile land. An unusual country, very beautiful, with warm climate. When we played father always said, "But in Crimea games were different". Spring came, and he began to say, "But in Crimea at this time that blooms". When we bought tulips, he said, "Oh! What the tulips in Crimea!" Crimea therefore has always been perceived a country Susambil, fairyland.⁸⁰

Conclusion

Until the abolishment of special settlement regime in 1956 majority of Crimean Tatars lived in villages or nearby *kolkhoz* (soviet collective farm). This is connected with the exploitation of Crimean Tatars as work force in the cotton fields, unskilled workers for the most difficult manual labor. Some respondents mention that while being children they were involved in picking cotton too. In the 1960s the quality of life changed significantly, because the vast majority of Crimean Tatars moved to cities. This transformation had a huge impact on the childhood of our respondents. They almost unanimously recall their childhood in the 1960's as "bright, not difficult, and cloudless"

The image of Crimea was permanently present in family's narratives. Parents told children about Crimea, describing it as the promised land or *yeşil ada* (the green island). The deported people compared exquisite scenery and temperate climate of the peninsula to waterless steppes of

79 Shefika Abduramanova, interview by author. 9 January 2014.

80 Zera Bekirova, interview by author. 30 October 2013.

Uzbekistan. Comparing two territories, they pictured even an arid Azov steppe as a flourishing land between the Black Sea and the Azov Sea.

According to collected testimonies about childhood of Crimean Tatars in exile, I argue that those Crimean Tatars who were born in exile in 1950s-1960s were partially assimilated that led to *sovietization* of Crimean Tatars. They had no dreams or illusions concerning to obtain education in native language, thus it was a great fortune to study in Russian schools because Russian schools were much better than the Uzbek ones. The Crimean Tatar language was used only within family. Absolute majority of respondents remembers that as children they loved May 1st. Muslim holidays were not so popular among Crimean Tatars because of Soviet anti-religious policy and a strong fear of persecution.

Not all the interviewees knew about the deportation or that Crimea was their genuine motherland while they were children. It was caused by selective style of family narratives, as parents waited for the appropriate time to tell their children truth. This can dispel the myth of the Crimean Tatars identity that “passed with mother’s milk”. Forging of Crimean Tatars nation in exile was a complicated process consisted of different components. And as we can see, choosing family narratives pattern did not play a significant role when we are talking about childhood. Crimean Tatars accepted their parents’ trauma and history since they were already young adults.

Bibliography

- Abduramanova, Shefika, interview by author. 9 January 2014.
- Akhtemova, Elvira, interview by author. 9 January 2014.
- Alieva, Svetlana, ed. *Tak eto bylo. Natsional'nye repressii v SSSR*. Moscow: Insan, 1993.
- Ametshayeva, Revziye, interview by author. 10 January 2014.
- Bazhan, Oleg, ed. *Krymski tatari: shlyah do povernennya*. Kyiv: Institute of Ukrainian history, 2004.
- Bazhan, Oleg. "Deportatsia narodiv Krimu v roky Drugoi svitovoi viyny cherez prizmu dokumentiv radyanskih spezslyuzhb", *Istoriya Ukrainy: malovidomi imena, podii, facty* 26 (2004): 155-167.
- Bekirova, Gulnara. "News of the death of families become more frequent", *Crimean studies. News bulletin* 1 (2003): 117-130.
- Bekirova, Gulnara. *Krimskotatarskaya problema v SSSR (1944-1991)*. Simferopol: Odzhak, 2004.
- Bekirova, Venera, interview by author. 30 October 2013.
- Bekirova, Zera, interview by author. 30 October 2013.
- Bugai, Nikolay, ed. *Iosif Stalin – Laverentiiu Berii: "Ikh nado deportirovat"*. dokumenty, fakty, kommentarii. Moscow: Druzhba narodov, 1992.
- Conquest, Robert. *The Nation killers: the Soviet deportation of nationalities*. London: Macmillan, 1970.
- Dzhemileva, Lenura, interview by author. 9 January 2014.
- Dzhizayir, Khalilov, interview by author. 28 October 2013.
- Fisher, Alan W. *The Crimean Tatars*. Stanford: Hoover Press, 1978.
- Galimova, Ulker, interview by author. 28 October 2013.

- Kadyrova, Nadiye, interview by author. 9 January 2014.
- Khalilova, Liliya, interview by author. 10 January 2014.
- Mametova, Ava-Sherfe, interview by author. 9 January 2014.
- Mustafayeva, Hulsum, interview by author. 8 January 2014.
- Pohl, J. Otto, *Ethnic Cleansing in the USSR, 1937–1949*. Connecticut: Greenwood press, 1999.
- Uehling, Greta. *Beyond memory: the Crimean Tatars' deportation and return*. New York: Macmillan, 2004.
- Useinov, Refat, interview by author. 27 October 2013.
- Vaapov, Rustem, interview by author. 8 January 2014.
- Williams, Brian Glyn, “The hidden ethnic cleansing of Muslims in Soviet Union: the exile and repatriations of Crimean Tatars”, *Journal of contemporary history* 37 (2002): 323-347.
- Zemskov, Victor. “Spetsposlentsy, (po doukemtatsii NKVD-MVD SSSR)”, *Sotsiologicheskie issledovaniia* 11 (1990): 3-17.
- Zidlyaeva, Remziye, interview by author. 9 January 2014.
- Zinchenko, Yuriy. *Kryms'ki Tatary: istorichnyi narys*. Kyiv: Holovna spetsializovana redaktsia literatury movamy natsional'nyh menshyn Ukrainy, 1998.