

THE HISTORY OF SOCIO-POLITICAL FORMS OF SUBJECTIVATION AND POLITICIZATION OF THE RUSSIAN ETHNIC COMMUNITY IN CRIMEA BEFORE ITS ANNEXATION BY RUSSIA (1989–2013)

The article is dedicated to analyzing the history, prerequisites and peculiarities of socio-political forms of subjectivation and politicization of the Russian ethnic community in Crimea before its annexation by Russia, in particular in the period of 1989–2013. The author found that the dawning of the subjectivation and politicization of the Russian ethnic community in Crimea and consequently the peculiar preparation for annexation of the peninsula were noticeable throughout the “twilight” period of the USSR and the post-Soviet development of Ukraine. They were mainly manifested in socio-political form, in particular in the design and development of public (non-governmental) organizations, which were engaged not only in social, historical, cultural and human rights character, but also in politics, and thus formed certain strategies for the attitude of a large part of the Crimean population (and in some places of the official institutions of Crimea) to the state authorities in Ukraine. It was revealed that Russian organizations of Crimea used a wide range of different approaches in cooperation with the Ukrainian authorities during the period up to 2013. On the one hand, almost all organizations remained in the legal field of Ukraine. Nevertheless, on the other hand, by 2013 and even earlier in Crimea there was a process of politicization of Russian ethnicity, even in the programs of activities of Russian organizations and communities of Crimea, since political motives prevailed over national and cultural ones. Therefore, different parties and organizations ideologically were ready to change the status of Crimea and received support for this in 2013–2014.

Keywords: Russian ethnic community, Crimea, Ukraine, Russia, the annexation of Crimea, public and political organizations, the politicization of ethnicity.

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ІСТОРІЯ ГРОМАДСЬКО-ПОЛІТИЧНИХ ФОРМ СУБ'ЄКТИВАЦІЇ І ПОЛІТИЗАЦІЇ РОСІЙСЬКОЇ ЕТНІЧНОЇ СПІЛЬНОТИ В КРИМУ ПЕРЕД ЙОГО АНЕКСІЄЮ РОСІЄЮ (1989–2013)

Проаналізовано історію, передумови й особливості громадсько-політичних форм суб'єктивації та політизації російської етнічної спільноти в Криму перед його анексією

Росією, зокрема в період 1989–2013 рр. Встановлено, що паростки суб'єктивзації і політизації російської етнічної спільноти в Криму, а відтак і своєрідної підготовки до анексії півострова були помітними впродовж усього періоду «сумерків» СРСР і пострадянського розвитку України. Вони головно виявлялись у громадсько-політичній формі, а зокрема в оформленні та розвитку громадських (неурядових) організацій, які були зайняті діяльністю не лише соціального, історично-культурного та правозахисного характеру, але й політикою, а відтак формували певні стратегії ставлення значної частини населення Криму, а подекуди й офіційних інститутів Криму до державної влади в Україні. Виявлено, що впродовж періоду до 2013 р. російські організації Криму, взаємодіючи з українською владою, використовували широкий спектр різноманітних підходів. З однієї сторони, майже всі організації залишались у правовому полі України. Але з іншої сторони, вже до 2013 р. і навіть раніше в Криму відбувся процес політизації російської етнічності, причому в програмах діяльності російських організацій та громад Криму, оскільки політичні мотиви переважували над національно-культурними. Відтак суто ідеологічно різні партії та організації були готовими до зміни статусу Криму й отримали на це підтримку в 2013–2014 рр.

Ключові слова: російська етнічна спільнота, Крим, Україна, Росія, анексія Криму, громадсько-політична організації, політизація етнічності.

Russian annexation of the Crimea and its unlawful, in terms of the international law, proclamation a part of Russian territory in 2014 have become an unprecedented phenomenon in the novel political history of Eastern Europe. Nevertheless, the germs of subjectivization and politicization of the Russian ethnic community in the Crimea, along with the so-called preparations for annexation of the peninsula, were noticeable throughout the «twilight» in the USSR and post-Soviet development of Ukraine, at least embracing the period of 1988–2013. They manifested themselves mainly in the socio-political plane, more specifically in the design and development of public (non-governmental) organizations, involved in various activities not only of social, historical, cultural and human rights nature, but also of politics, but consequently, certain strategies for the evolution of the Crimean population, and at times attitude of the official institutions of the Crimea towards the state authorities in Ukraine appeared. Respectively, the socio-political subjectivisation and politicization of the Russian ethnic community in the Crimea became a kind of bridgehead, leading to quite a simple and effective annexation of the Crimea in 2014. From such a perspective, an analysis of the socio-political activities of the «Russian» Crimean organizations over the period 1988–2013, especially given the fact that Russians in the Crimea (mainly ethnic and cultural) have constituted a relative majority of the population, hence their organizations typically advocated rapprochement with Russia, poses a topical research issue in the context of the present-day complication of the international environment,

accompanied by the intensifying militarization of the Ukrainian-Russian contradictions. This is utterly relevant against the background that it is the socio-political subjectivation of the Russians in the Crimea that primarily contributed to the creation of the appropriate ideological settings, having become both a prerequisite and basis for the annexation of the peninsula.

Historically the Crimea is known to have reached the turning point of the independent public-political organizations formation at the turn of the 1980s - 1990s, like most regions of the former USSR. The crucial task of various organizations from the very beginning of their formation was the protection of national-cultural, historical and linguistic identity, as in the case of protection of the Russian population of the Crimea. For instance, in 1989, a department of the All-Union Society «Memorial» was officially registered in the Crimea, with participation of prominent politicians, including the future President of the Crimea, Y. Meshkov. At the same time, the organization «Democratic Tavrida», which put forward the slogan of the creation of the Republic of Crimea within the USSR, insisting on of the state language status of the Russian language on its territory. The growing disintegration of the Soviet Union further contributed to the activation of socio-political organizations among the Crimean Russians, since it was the Russians in the Crimea who constituted the relative majority of the population. Particularly politicized was the fact that even in disregard of the January 1991 referendum, the Crimea was granted the status of an autonomous republic within Ukraine, not the USSR. Thus, with the participation of the Democratic Taurida, a completely new structure was created, specifically «The Republican Movement of Crimea» to transform into a political organization, the Republican Party of Crimea (RPC), in 1993.

In defense of their own social interests, the leaders of the Republican Party of Crimea have put forward a number of slogans of a very radical nature. It was a course on bringing the Crimean autonomy closer to Russia, up to the format of full annexation by Russia, entering into a military-political union with Russia, granting Russian citizenship to the inhabitants of the peninsula, etc. In January 1994, a pro-Russian social and political figure, Y. Meshkov, was elected President of the Crimea, with the RPC-supported bloc «Russia» obtaining a majority in the Verkhovna Rada (Parliament) of the autonomy. In fact, according to L. Grach, «... the early 1990s elections ... actually put to life the slogan about the return of the Crimea to Russia»¹. Тим не менше, ситуація, що склалася після виборів у 1994 р., була, по суті, найбільшим успіхом проросійського руху в Криму упродовж періоду 1988–2013 рр. However, following the 1994 elections the situation proved, in fact, the greatest success of the pro-Russian movement in the Crimea over the period 1988-2013, for soon afterwards this movement brought up grave problems. First of all, it was found, that despite the triumphant upheaval of the pro-Russian forces in the elections, the Crimean leaders did not really have a significant financial and economic base to secure real autonomy on the peninsula. The fate of Crimean autonomy

¹ *Партия регионов опять будет дурить украинский народ своей любовью к России: Интервью Леонида Грача информационному агентству КБвМиМ, Regnum, źródło: www.regnum.ru/news/846818.html [odczyt 01.11.2019].*

was also adversely affected by the lack of managerial experience among its leaders and the predominance of «rallying» and «street» type politicians in their environment, a characteristic feature of the early 1990s. Ultimately, almost complete lack of support on the part of Russia, this movement was oriented to, played the utterly negative role in the fate of the pro-Russian movement in the Crimea. The leadership of Russia at that time focused on rapprochement with the West, the soonest possible integration into Euro-Atlantic structures, and therefore viewed the speeches of pro-Russian figures abroad as a vexing obstacle that could «resurrect» suspicions of «eradicating the imperial ambitions» of Russia in the West. In such circumstances, Ukrainian leaders, exercising pressure, as well as manipulation of Crimean politicians (or so-called «civic nationalism» representatives), already in 1995 managed to change the constitution of the Crimean autonomy as well as eliminate the post of President of the republic.

Consequently, the 1994-1995 events appeared to be a severe blow to the organizations of the Russian population of Crimea. Once finding themselves in smouldering ruins, the pro-Russian socio-political forces of the peninsula were suspended, having lost the 1998 elections to the parliament of autonomy. For some time the pro-Russian organizations put the political component on a back burner, so issues of language, religion, culture, historical identity and maintaining ties with the historical homeland, being Russia, as they thought, began to play a more important role. The revival of political activity became noticeable only since 2002, when with the participation of the RCP such organizations as «Russian Community of the Crimea» and the party «Russian Bloc» were created, having been able to obtain seats to in the Crimean parliaments. The most important «irritant» the socio-political organizations of the Russian Crimea faced up against turned out to be the 2004 «Orange Revolution» in Ukraine, whose slogans were perceived as absolutely hostile by a large part of the peninsula's population (similarly to 2013-2014 events). The situation was further aggravated in 2008 by the events on the international arena, i.e. the declaration of independence of the province of Kosovo, the beginning of the international financial and economic crisis, as well as the conflict in the Caucasus and the subsequent recognition of independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia by Russia (this was also emphasised on the eve of the annexation of the Crimea in 2013-2014).

The self-consciousness of the Russian population of Crimea, as well as the ideological programs of pro-Russian socio-political organizations over the period 1988-2013 were marked by a deep-rooted sense of alienation from the outside world, outer political organizations and power structures. Moreover, the «own» Crimean authorities shared this feeling. The sharp dissatisfaction with the official Kyiv policy in the domains of language, culture and education was attended by a pragmatic desire to survive in the socio-economic chaos, caused by a continual and painful formation of market economy structures in Ukraine, and subsequently by the events of the Orange Revolution (likewise, Revolution of Dignity and Euromaidan in 2013-2014). For this reason loyalty to Russia, naturally perceived as the historical homeland, was aggravated by dissatisfaction with its overly passive policy towards Ukraine, its mistrustful and suspicious

attitude towards Russia's «official allies» in Ukraine, as previously to the Party of Regions. In the long run, the issues of the Russian population of the Crimea and its historical identity remained unsettled, because, contrary to a popular belief, the Soviet period, when the peninsula was transferred to Ukraine, in the eyes of indigenous Crimean population was far from the «gold age». With similar ideological and cultural-psychological luggage, «Russian» socio-political organizations of Crimea entered all elections in Ukraine and the Crimea².

In the course of 1988–2013, there was an entire array of socio-political organizations in the Crimea, declaring their pro-Russian stance and claiming to voice the interests of the Russian population. In our study we analyzed the position of the two of them, namely the People's Front «Sevastopol-Crimea-Russia», as well as the organization «Russian Community of Crimea». The former, established in August 2005, in the wake of political instability following the 2004 presidential election in Ukraine and uniting 14 pro-Russian organizations in 8 Crimean cities (the Russian People's Viche / Chamber of Sevastopol, the Russian Community of Evpatoria, the Yalta Voter Club, Russian community of Kerch, and the like). The latter, being one of the most influential organizations of the Russian population, originated from the Republican Movement of Crimea. Politically, the «Russian Bloc» Party was also closely associated with the Russian Community of Crimea. Therefore, to clarify certain aspects of the views of the Russian population of the Crimea, we have referred to the statements of recognised politicians with a pronounced pro-Russian orientation, as well as the materials of pro-Russian Crimean periodicals and Internet agencies.

2008 became a turning point for the political development of the Crimea, coinciding in time with the declaration of independence of Kosovo and its subsequent recognition by some of the leading Western countries. It provoked a sharp response on the peninsula and directly influenced the stance of Russian organizations along with expression of sentiments of politicians and the media. The events in the Serbian Region stirred up a wave of separatist, patriotic and nationalist outcries about the right to self-determination both in Ukraine and the Crimea. Thus, one of the the RPC leaders, L. Grach, stated that the West's recognition of Kosovo's independence yet again gave the pro-Russian forces stimulus to question the legitimacy of «presenting Ukraine with Crimea in 1954». For Crimean Tatars leaders, this event stipulated discussing the need to transform autonomy from the one with a territorial status to national (Tatar) status, whereas the organization of Ukrainian National Democrats demanded instead to deprive the Crimea of autonomous rights³.

The Crimea passed another serious test, being the international financial and economic crisis since 2008, whose painful course compelled pro-Russian organizations to discuss the inability of the Ukrainian state to ensure stable economic development and protect the social

² Волкоглонова О., Подунов А., Политизация этничности в современной Украине: русская диаспора и межнациональные отношения в Крыму, «Россия и современный мир» 2008, nr. 2, S. 144–163.

³ *На Украине есть пороховая бочка, у которой много фитилей и нетрезвая охрана: Крым за неделю*, Regnum, źródło: www.regnum.ru/news/966564.html [odczyt 01.11.2019].

rights of its citizens. However, the events in South Ossetia in August 2008, followed by the proclamation of independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia had the most profound impact on the moods of the Russian population of Crimea. On September 17, 2008, the Crimean Parliament adopted an appeal to the Parliament of Ukraine, initiated by the Russian Community of Crimea in support of «the peoples of Abkhazia and South Ossetia in their right for self-determination» and «the Russian Federation's actions to ensure their security.» The appeal was backed by representatives of the Crimean branches of the Party of Regions, the Russian Bloc Party, the Progressive Socialist Party of Ukraine, the Communist Party of Ukraine, a number of city councils and «the general public of Crimea». Thus, in the address of the Russian Community of the Crimea to the participants of the 7th World Congress of the Ossetian People, sent in June 2009, it was stated that «the Crimeans stand in solidarity with the brotherly Ossetian people, wishing them unity, freedom, success in restoring the destroyed economy.»

Further on, triggered by the 2008 perturbations, the activation of the official Kyiv policy was regarded by the Russian population of Crimea as entirely hostile measures, provoking a predominantly sharp reaction. A particularly negative response was evoked by signing the Strategic Partnership Charter in December 2008 by the Heads of Foreign Ministries of Ukraine and the United States, envisaging the opening of a US diplomatic mission in Simferopol with its respective status and functions. Meeting with the US Ambassador to Ukraine W.Taylor in January 2009, Sergei Tsekov, the leader of the Russian community, accentuated that the opening of a «US presence» post in the Crimea would become a source of constant conflict and tension. In the words of S.Tsekov, a large part of the Crimean population, does not trust the US because of their anti-Russian policy towards Russia and the course of unconditional support for the Kyiv government. «In the Crimea, 60 percent of Russians live by nationality and 80 percent by language: you have to take these reality into account!», said the Russian community leader to the ambassador, adding that «You should know that Russia is our motherland and we will not betray it»⁴.

The measures, undertaken by the official Kyiv to establish closer ties with the NATO faced rigorous protests by pro-Russian Crimean organizations. For instance, President Viktor Yushchenko's appeal to the bloc's leadership to include Ukraine in the NATO Membership Action Plan was met with severe protests against the launch of Sea Breeze exercises together with NATO troops in the peninsula. In January 2008, the city of Sevastopol unanimously declared the city a «NATO-free territory». In addition, the deputies stressed that «they reserve the right to invite the people of Sevastopol to mass protest actions in case of continuation of the course of Ukraine to join NATO». The aggravation of the political situation has prompted numerous Ukrainian political as well as public organizations (especially from the western regions of

⁴ *Сколько крымчан планируют убить США при добыче нефти на Черноморском шельфе?*, «Крым за неделю», źródło: <http://vlasti.net/news/36051> [odczyt 01.11.2019].

Ukraine) to raise the issue of deprivation of Sevastopol of its special status, limitation and even elimination of the Crimean autonomy. Naturally, this caused a very negative reaction in Crimea.

Against this background, the urgent question was how representatives of pro-Russian organizations saw the future of Crimea, estimated the prospects for its development within the Ukrainian state, as well as its relationship with Russia. To answer this question, it should be emphasized that the feeling of alienation from a large part of Ukraine (especially from the western regions) and the policy of the official Kyiv was at any rate typical of any politically active representatives of the Russian minority. Thus, according to A. Nikiforov, speaking on the «Russian Tuesdays», initiated by the Russian community in February 2009, the Crimean and East Ukrainian elites «should not focus on winning an opposite part of Ukraine, but on sparing a decent niche in their political project» as an alternative to its own wishes». According to the Russian Community leader S. Tsekov, the only salvation of Ukraine as a state was the federalization and proclamation of the Russian language as the second state language. He noted that «these are the two main points that, if implemented, will lead Ukraine to a peaceful and normal life.» The Crimea was expected to establish relations with Kiev on an agreed basis, being the only strong guarantee of the republic's autonomy.

Simultaneously, against the background of the widespread pro-Russian moods, the reactions of organizations of Crimea were quite varied⁵. Thus, the most radically-minded representatives of the Russian population, the leaders of the People's Front «Sevastopol-Crimea-Russia», believed that the transfer of the peninsula to Ukraine by the Khrushchev, without taking into consideration of the Crimean population opinion, was «deportation» for the Russian population of the Crimea, whereas Ukrainization policy, implemented by the official Kyiv, should be seen as an «ethnocide.» In the light of such views, the ultimate goal of the pro-Russian movement was to declare «a decisive end to the violent deportation of 1954 and, following the example of other repatriated peoples, to return to their homeland, Russia, with a long-ago torn away Crimean peninsula as soon as possible.» According to the leaders of the People's Front, «the inhabitants of the Crimea and Sevastopol» «turned out to be beyond their homeland» «by the will of fools, traitors and obvious enemies.» Upon the collapse of the USSR, Ukraine unilaterally extended its sovereignty to the Crimea and Sevastopol» or «illegally annexed Crimea», the consequences of which were to be eliminated on the basis of the principles of international law. As stipulated by the documents of the People's Front, Ukraine like all states certainly had the right to sovereignty and independence, but «without the lands stolen from Russia, together with millions of Russians, living there compactly»⁶.

The socio-political instability, having intensified since the events of 2008, has contributed to growing sentiment. «Today's Crimea is a rebellious territory, which Ukraine has lost control

⁵ *Крымчане отметили день республики Крым*, Портал русского народа Крыма, źródło: <http://www.ruscimea.ru/news.php?point=289> [odczyt 01.11.2019].

⁶ *Из резолюции митинга в Севастополе 24 августа 2005г. и Декларации о провозглашении Народного фронта „Севастополь-Крым-Россия“*, Сайт Народного фронта «Севастополь-Крым-Россия», źródło: <http://sevrus.narod.ru/#v25> [odczyt 01.11.2019].

over», stated the materials of the independent informational resource «Unconquered Crimea», supported by the People's Front. Three months later, the site's authors informed readers that the Ukrainian project in Crimea had long ago failed, and «independence will be unilaterally declared as soon as the collapse of Ukraine begins.» According to the authors of the site, the movement for autonomy, let alone independence had to cover not only Crimea but also other regions - Subcarpathian Rus, Bukovina, Donbass, etc. «The broke Ukraine will soon have to part with all these territories and pull out its miserable existence in already a broken state,» the resource noted. Interestingly, back in 2006 the leadership of the People's Front sent Y. Meshkov (the former President of the Crimea) an invitation to return to Crimea as the legitimate president of the autonomy (he moved to Russia in the 1990s)⁷.

However, not all representatives of the politically active part of the Russian population of Crimea were so negatively-minded towards the Ukrainian state. Many were open to finding a compromise with the official Kyiv. «We are not against Ukraine, but we are against the policy, pursued by the independent Ukraine over the past 17 years,» O. Slyusarenko, the chairman of the executive committee of the Russian Community of Crimea, said on the day of the in Simferopol march to celebrate the 55th anniversary of the transfer of Crimea to the Ukrainian SSR (February 19, 2009). In general, the desire to compromise with the official Kyiv was characteristic of the organizations and politicians most integrated in Ukraine's political structures, in particular the organization of the Russian Community of Crimea and the Russian Bloc Party, cooperating with the Party of Regions. These political forces sought to develop formulas, to suit different social forces, and spoke about the status of the Crimea in the context of common integration processes in the post-Soviet space. In an interview with «Rosbalt» in June 2008, O. Radivilov stated, «We are integrationists. And reunification with Russia is a historical process. We, the Crimean Russians, would like to do it legally through parliamentary activities. ... If Crimea wants to be a subject of the Union Treaty, it does not mean that it wants to withdraw from Ukraine. It can simply be a subject of the Customs Union, or some other association»⁸.

According to the Russian Community leaders, in the course of their activities organizations of the Russian population of Crimea were called to «strengthen the eastern geopolitical vector of the modern Ukraine development» and «to turn the Ukrainian state» ... «towards restoring the allied political relations with Russia», namely they were to implement tasks, the formulation of which nevertheless provided for the existence of an independent Ukrainian state. The main thing, according to O. Slyusarenko, was that «in the foreseeable future on the world arena and in the negotiations with Russia» Ukraine must not be represented by politicians, expressing

⁷ Пригула В., *Чи повернуться экс-президент Криму Юрій Мешков?*, Радіо «Свобода», *зródlo*: <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/946672.html> [odczyt 01.11.2019].

⁸ «Жареный петух» для русских крымчан: *Интервью О. Родивилова*, Росбалт, *зródlo*: <http://www.rosbalt.ru/2009/06/22/649201.html> [odczyt 01.11.2019].

views «far from the interests of Russia and the Slavic-Russian world as a whole»⁹. Also common were the «moderate» wing arguments that the preservation of the Crimea in the composition of Ukraine should encourage this country to maintain close ties with Russia. The peninsula, as Crimean Communist leader L. Grach emphasized, «has a complex mission, - an anchor mission to keep Ukraine near the coast of Russia»¹⁰. These and similar speculations provoked a sharply negative reaction from the radical organizations of the Russian population of the Crimea¹¹.

Curiously, the differences between the organizations of the Russian population in Crimea and the politicians, claiming to express Crimean interests were caused not only by disputes about the fate of the peninsula, but also by deep differences in the social nature and programmatic materials of these organizations. Thus, for L. Grach, the Party of Regions was positioned as a bureaucratic, liberal-bourgeois party of large oligarchic capital, which was under American control, serving as a lever of party manipulation by the United States. Not surprisingly, the Crimean Communist leader described the Party of Regions (Ukraine's largest pro-Russian party) as «the most sinister deception in all post-Soviet history.» In turn, the Sevastopol-Crimea-Russia People's Front, perceived L. Grach himself as a «tough Ukrainian statesman», yet a supporter of the Marxism-Leninism ideology, alien to the leadership of the People's Front. The latter called on L. Grach to break with the Communist Party of Ukraine, and then comfortably integrate into Ukrainian political structures, «to part with the bankrupt and corrupt communist ideology, as well as to begin activities for the good of the peninsula. Therefore, the Crimean Russians utterly differed above all due to the stances of all-Ukrainian political forces there, e.g. the Party of Regions and the Communist Party, being simultaneously perceived in Ukraine as pro-Russian.

Representatives of the «moderate» wing of the pro-Russian movement - the «Russian Community of Crimea» - generally praised the activities of the Party of Regions. Thus, according to the head of the Russian Community S. Tsekov, the union with the Party of Regions was generally seen as positive for the Crimea. In a number of cases, not criticizing even the official Kyiv policy, but defending the status quo, the Russian community and its allies effectively defended the interests of the diaspora. By itself, the Party of Regions' moderate and compromise policies played a special role in this context. «It is really good,» said S. Tsekov, «when one political force (in this case the Party of Regions) acts cautiously and sensibly, and the other, that is, the Russian Community of Crimea or the Russian Bloc, is more radical. As a result, we are able to make deliberate decisions, beneficial to the Crimea and Crimeans». The leadership of the People's Front «Sevastopol-Crimea-Russia» (as well as L. Grach) had a severely negative

⁹ Слюсаренко О., *Украина в контексте российской цивилизации*, Портал русского народа Крыма, źródło: <http://www.ruscimea.ru/cms/?go=mon&cin=view&cid=12> [odczyt 01.11.2019].

¹⁰ *Партия регионов опять будет душить украинский народ своей любовью к России: Интервью Леонида Грача информационному агентству КБвМиМ*, Regnum, źródło: www.regnum.ru/news/846818.html [odczyt 01.11.2019].

¹¹ *Лидера крымских коммунистов раскритиковали за нежелание упразднить Конституцию Крыма (Украина)*, Regnum, źródło: <http://www.regnum.ru/news/1086245.html> [odczyt 01.11.2019].

reaction, regarding the inconsistent policy of the Party of Regions towards NATO, as well as protection of the Russian language. Beyond doubt, The Party of Regions, represented by V. Yanukovich, has reneged on its major election promises,» said the coordinator of the People's Front V. Podyachi. It comes as no surprise, for the party representatives had long ago expressed the desire to sell voters' support in exchange for portfolios¹².

The impending consequence of this situation was irreconcilable differences of the pro-Russian organizations of the Crimea in 1991-2013 and, as a result, the ineffectiveness of their undertakings. «In the Crimea, we (representatives of the Russian population) comprise 80 percent, and, unfortunately, we cannot say that we are acting very effectively» , S.Tsekov had to acknowledge in an interview with the agency «New Region». Even more strongly, such sentiments were expressed by more radically-minded politicians. «The pro-Russian political forces of the Crimea are fragmented and, in fact, have embarked on a path of financial misery. They oppose each other and thus play directly into the hands of anti-Crimean forces,» said L. Grach. The differences in the center of the pro-Russian movement of Crimea also mirrored in the conflicts, dividing the representatives of the Russian community and the Communist Party of Ukraine in the Crimean parliament, the departure of some officials from the pro-Russian slogans with which they went to the elections. Yet another serious factor made a negative impact upon the activities of the pro-Russian organizations in Crimea was the lack of a clear policy and support from the state, on the convergence with which the activities of these organizations are oriented (quite the opposite logic was observed in 2013-2014, leading to the annexation).

Discussing the attitudes of the pro-Russian organizations of Crimea towards Russia, it is worth mentioning that the course of unity with the historical homeland, preservation of historical memory and a sense of belonging to a common culture were crucial factors of their activities. Organizations of the Russian ethnic community in Crimea regularly held events, to commemorate the significant milestones in Russian history (of pre-revolutionary and Soviet period), with a particular attention to the need for unity with the historical homeland. Thus, during the demonstrations in Simferopol on May 1 and 9, 2009, participants carried Russian flags, portraits of D. Medvedev and V. Putin, as well as chanted slogans «Glory to Great Russia!», «Glory to the Russian Winner People!». Moreover, aimed at preserving the historical memory were the anniversary of the alignment of the Crimea with the Russian Empire and the birthday of Queen Catherine II, the erection of memorials in honour of the Romanov dynasty in Crimea. This attested to the fact that the Russian sentiment had been actively present in the Crimea regardless of the political circumstances. At the same time, specific aspects of Russia's behavior on the international arena, as well as its policy towards the Crimea have caused controversy among representatives of pro-Russian organizations.

¹² Виктор Янукович защищает только интересы олигархического клана: организация «Севастополь-Крым-Россия», Regnum, źródło: www.regnum.ru/news/685803.html [odczyt 01.11.2019].

Those pro-Russian claims regarding Russia's policy towards Crimea could be divided into two categories. Some of them concerned the inept and weak defense of Russia's cultural and ideological interests in Ukraine, especially noticeable against the backdrop of energetic activities of Western countries in Ukraine, primarily the United States. According to L. Grach, Russia demonstrated a «harmful and unacceptable delicacy» pertaining to the Crimean problem. In the words of O. Slyusarenko, Russia in its attitude towards Ukraine found itself in the position of a «deceived investor». It has for years subsidized the Ukrainian budget at the expense of low gas prices, without paying attention to the ideological, spiritual, cultural and educational support of pro-Russian forces in Ukraine. Western states, first and foremost the United States, acted in quite an opposite manner: cautious about investing in the unstable economy of Ukraine, yet they paid special attention to the influence on the consciousness of the Ukrainian elite through funds, grant programs, exchange programs.

Much of the discontent also concerned the Russian diplomatic actions, their foreign policy towards the Ukrainian state. Claims of such a kind were voiced first of all by the proponents of radical socio-political organizations. They were dissatisfied by the absence of diplomatic demarches of Moscow in response to the dissent of Sevastopol's internal affairs bodies regarding the Black Sea Fleet sailors, the Russian Embassy's in Ukraine condemnation of statements by Moscow Mayor J. Luzhkov on the status of Sevastopol, the Moscow continuation of the so-called «Great Treaty between Ukraine since 1997». Extending the treaty, the Kremlin formally recognized the amicable state that participated in the recent Caucasus war against Russia, conducting anti-Russian activities inside the GUAM bloc, and actively involved in the information war against Moscow, supporting the international anti-Russian action, celebrating Nazi henchmen and historic enemies of Russia»¹³, as Crimean Russians were convinced.

Most interestingly, the opted for tactics in such environment and circumstances is worth looking into. Some of the pro-Russian organisations preferred to focus on ideological advocacy, cultural and educational activities, issues of education and historical awareness. Such activities, peculiar for the «moderate» wing of Russian community organizations, frequently received considerable resonance and played a prominent role in the life of the Russian population of the peninsula. For instance, in 2008-2009 mass rallies were organized by the Russian Community of the Crimea and other pro-Russian organizations in protest against commemoration of historic heroes, proclaimed by the official Kyiv, namely I. Mazepa and R. Shukhevych; as well as demonstrations against the decision on Ukrainisation of the film distribution, actions «a Russian flag in every window!»; a rally in honor of the March 17, 1991 referendum on the preservation of the USSR; a run in honor of the Defender of the Motherland Day (February 23,

¹³ Независимая республика Крым: Редакционный комментарий [Электронный ресурс] // Опубликовано 2 октября 2008 г. – Сайт „Непокоренного Крыма“. – Режим доступа: <http://www.freecrimea.org/independant.html>

unlike December, 6, as in the entire Ukraine)¹⁴. «Moderate wing' organizations also focused on defending the interests of the Russian population through parliamentary activities, especially since the 2006 elections, the Russian Community of the Crimea and the Russian Bloc Party held strong positions in the Crimean Parliament (in 2010 they were the only bloc together with the Party of Regions and again obtained the majority of votes: 48.93 percent (party lists) and 48 seats (single-member voting districts), ultimately ending up with 80 seats out of 100. On the initiative of pro-Russian organizations, in 2009 the Crimean Parliament adopted a decree «On measures to support the Russian language in the field of education in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea» and a decree «On the prevention of fascism and racial intolerance, rehabilitation and heroization of fascist collaborators», for Kyiv had previously begun to launch new historical and cultural symbols (re-evaluation of the activities of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army). The parliament objected to the attempt of Kyiv authorities to stop broadcasting Russian television programmes on the territory of Crimea, as well as and to the reduction (and in the future - the termination) of Russian-language instruction in secondary and higher education institutions of the Crimea, etc.

A number of cultural and educational events, organized by pro-Russian structures were large in scale and received loud resonance. These include, first of all, the International Festival «The Great Russian Word» organized with the active participation of the Russian Community of the Crimea and held in a number of cities of the autonomy from June, 6 to June 12, 2009 (the date of birth of O. Pushkin - the Day of Russia). A number of Russian politicians and high officials attended the festival, with the President of Russia sending greetings. Within the framework of the festival there were a number of large-scale events, such as the conference «Russian language in the multicultural world» and round tables «Ukraine and Russia - spiritual and cultural-historical community», «Mass media of Ukraine and Russia - steps to meet». Hence, following the festival outcomes, it was decided to create an organization «Russian-speaking Ukraine», called to engage in human rights activities. According to the festival initiators, the events marked a new stage of the pro-Russian movement of the peninsula, having wide prospects. However, not all representatives of the pro-Russian movement of the Crimea considered this course of action sufficient to effectively safeguard the interests of the Russian community.

As the leaders of the pro-Russian radical wing were convinced, the People's Front «Sevastopol-Crimea-Russia», the implementation of cultural and educational actions failed to significantly alter the situation on the peninsula, moreover serving only as a mere screen for the further deployment of actions hostile to Russia¹⁵. In such a situation, the leaders of the People's Front may have considered it sensible to raise the question of the state self-determination of

¹⁴ *Защитникам Отечества посвящается: Резолюция митинга патриотических сил Крыма, посвященного Дню защитника Отечества г. Симферополь*, Портал русского народа Крыма, źródło: <http://www.ruscimea.ru/news.php?point=327> [odczyt 01.11.2019].

¹⁵ *Закончилась досудебное следствие по делу о призывах крымских общественников к воссоединению Крыма с Россией*, Regnum, źródło: www.regnum.ru/news/1106066.html [odczyt 01.11.2019].

the Crimea and Sevastopol, seeking to attract attention and not being afraid of repressions (perhaps even subconsciously counting on them). Thus, in January 2008, the People's Front Coordinator V. Podyachiy stated at a press conference the need to implement the results of the January 20, 1991 referendum on the autonomy of Crimea (within the USSR, not Ukraine) and the adoption of the Declaration of Reunification of the Crimea with Russia. Subsequently, the Security Service of Ukraine launched a criminal prosecution of V. Podyach and other front activists on charges of undermining sovereignty and violating Ukraine's territorial integrity. This enabled the activists of the front to appeal to the judicial authorities of different instances, demanding the termination of the prosecution, that is, the court was used here as a tribune. In the meantime, activists of the front began to file lawsuits against the Crimean Parliament, demanding to repeal its decision on annulment of the 1992 Crimean constitution and adoption of the 1998 the constitution (Ukraine without Crimea)¹⁶. It should be noted that the leaders of the Russian Community of Crimea have found it necessary to support the activists of the People's Front during the trial, even despite sharp criticism on their address¹⁷.

It is worth mentioning, that with all the radicality of the slogans, representatives of pro-Russian organizations in the Crimea, including its more radical wing, sought to adhere to legal methods in their activities. According to the head of the human rights organization «Faith» S. Kompaniets, Russian non-governmental organizations of the Crimea have acted exclusively in the constitutional field of Ukraine throughout the years upon the Orange Revolution. The campaign «Ukraine without the Crimea» was conducted in the form of lawsuits, with the fight exclusively within the judicial bodies. In the course of this struggle, its participants emphasized that they wanted to fulfill their demands solely by nonviolent methods, relied on the will of the people (the results of the Crimean referendum of January 20, 1991). Accusations of «separatism» were dismissed, whereas spreading separatist sentiments was accounted for as a response to the policy, pursued by Kyiv, as well as violation of human rights in the Crimea¹⁸.

Human rights arguments and activities in the human rights field generally played a significant role in the programmatic materials and practical activities of organizations of the Russian population of the Crimea. The leaders of the pro-Russian movement in the Crimea sought to draw the attention of the world community to these problems. Hence, in September 2008 L. Grach, heading the Public Council for the Protection of the Constitutional Powers of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, addressed his statement «On flagrant violation of the basic constitutional powers in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea by the ruling regime of Ukraine» to the UN, Council of Europe, OSCE and the governments of Russia and the US. The listed violations included restrictions on the scope of the Russian language use, conducting NATO exercises on the peninsula, violations of budgetary autonomy, and others. In the speeches of

¹⁶ В Крыму набирает обороты акция «Украина без Крыма», Regnum, źródło: www.regnum.ru/news/985450.html [odczyt 01.11.2019].

¹⁷ Сергей Цехов: Крым «твоей силой» не возьмем, Росбалт, źródło: <http://www.rosbalt.ru/2009/04/03/631054.html> [odczyt 01.11.2019].

¹⁸ Все это мы уже слышали от товарища Сталина, Портал русского народа Крыма, źródło: <http://www.ruscrimea.ru/news.php?point=353> [odczyt 01.11.2019].

representatives of Russian organizations and members of the Crimean Parliament, protests against the official Kyiv's linguistic, educational and cultural-ideological policies were justified by references to international legal acts and laws of Ukraine. The reference to the current legislation served as a basis for bringing actions before the courts of various instances, up to the Constitutional Court. It is noteworthy that the organization «Russian-speaking Ukraine» was established in 2009 and had primarily human rights character.

However, by acting mainly in the human rights mainstream, organizations of the Russian population of Crimea encountered a serious problem, it being that, according to numerous statements by the pro-Russian movement, international human rights organizations refused to acknowledge the gravity of problems of the Russian population of Crimea. According to S. Tsekov, the only ethnic group that has attracted the attention of Western human rights activists are the Crimean Tatars, having suffered from Stalin's repression in due time. Representatives of international organizations and ambassadors of Western countries, seldom coming in contact with representatives of the aforementioned organizations, met the Tatar movements leaders on a regular basis. Western journalists and human rights activists, according to the leader of the Russian Community of the Crimea, took delight in discussing the return of Tatars and their plight. They generally ignored the proposals to compare the well-being of the Tatar and Slavic people.

Accordingly, the protest sentiment («separatism») in the Russian population mainly related to «outside incitement.» Claims that such sentiment is primarily linked to the policy, pursued by Kyiv, have aroused discontent among Western observers. As the leaders of the Russian organizations argued, it occurred due to the preservation of a wide field of Russian language use and the memory of the common Russian (or Soviet) past were interpreted in the West as a «vestige of Russian imperial claims» and were therefore excluded from the scope of activities of human rights organizations. Notable in this regard is the question that Western journalists and diplomats have often asked representatives of the Russian population in the Crimea: «Why do you love Russia so much?» S.Tsekov¹⁹ considered that such an approach defied the principle of the rule of human rights as a universal value and therefore should not be reflected in the activities of international organizations. According to the Russian community in the Crimea, this was a policy of double standards.

Representatives of the Russian population were convinced that tensions in the Crimea were also aggravated by the unequal attitude of Kyiv to different ethnic communities in the Crimea (primarily Slavic and Crimean Tatar population). Quite frequent were the accusations against the authorities of ignoring the land self-capture on the part of the Tatars, the activities of officially unregistered organizations (such as the Majlis of the Crimean Tatar People). The principles of recognition of Kosovo's independence by a number of Majlis figures as well as their demands for

¹⁹ Сергей Цехов: *Мы уже почувствовали свою силу*, «Крымское эхо», źródło: <http://kr-cho.info/index.php?name=News&cop=article&sid=1977> [odczyt 01.11.2014].

the transformation of the Crimean autonomy from territorial to national-territorial were also subversive, from the perspective of the Russian population. The estimation and interpretation of certain events in history, most notably the Great Patriotic War also was a subject of sharp discrepancies. On the whole, the state of the Russian population in the Crimea at that time was characterized by a widespread discontent, and even a direct protest, which needed serious measures by both the authorities of autonomy, Ukraine and Russia.

To conclude, it is reasonable to argue that over the period up to 2013, Russian organizations of the Crimea, in cooperation with the Ukrainian authorities, were governed by a wide range of different approaches. On the one hand, almost all organizations, seeking to remain in the legal field of Ukraine, resorted first and foremost to legal measures, addressing the protection of the cultural, linguistic and historical identity of the Russian population and referring their activities to the human rights protection. Therefore, most pro-Russian organizations and politicians were convinced proponents of the Crimea as part of Ukraine. Even those, objecting to such a state of affairs, were mostly acting within the legal scope. Instead, the protest methods, employed by various socio-political organizations included rallies, demonstrations, and peaceful marches. On the other hand, by 2013, and even prior to that a process of politicization of Russian ethnicity had taken place in the Crimea, with political motives prevailing over those national and cultural ones. Therefore, ideologically different parties and organizations were ready to change the status of the Crimea. The only thing is that they did not have the sufficient strength, resources and support, emerging only in 2013-2014. Therefore, it was be apparent a few years before the annexation of the Crimea that the radicalization of the organizations of the Russian population of the Crimea would be increase, lest there should be changes in the policy of the Ukrainian authorities and normalization of relations between Ukraine and Russia.

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