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**THE GREEK MINORITY IN THE SOVIET UKRAINE (1950s – 1980s):
A “SILENT” STRUGGLE FOR IDENTITY**

The studies on social and cultural activities of ethnic minorities of the Soviet Ukraine in 1950s – 1980s are poorly represented in historiographical discourse. In certain degree it is connected with minimization of ethnic minorities' activity in the conditions of authoritarian national policy. Nevertheless, some separate facts of dissent can be found, primarily related to the ethnic policy of the Soviet state, which was very important for the preservation of the ethnic identity of small nations. In this context, the case of the Greeks in Ukraine can illustrate a trend.

The Greek minority in Ukraine amounts to 91,500 people (0.2% of the total population of Ukraine) and they live compactly in the South-East of the country, in the Donetsk region, which is named Northern Priazov'e (Northern seacoast of Azov Sea)¹.

Greeks of Priazov'e represent a distinctive group in ethnic and cultural relations, which differ from other Greek Diasporas that have been historically formed in different countries. Greeks appeared in Priazov'e at the end of 18th century, when these territories were part of the Russian Empire. Greek inhabitants migrated from the Crimean Khanate on the Russian government's initiative. Two sub-ethnic groups of the Greek community were formed in Crimea; they differed on the basis linguistics. They were Rumeys (the original name of Greeks that speak a dialect similar to Modern Greek) and Urums (that speak the Turkic dialect). These differences remained among Greeks after their migration to Priazov'e.

In the period of establishment of the Communist regime in the territory of the former Russian Empire, the territory of Priazov'e was included in Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, which was one of republics of the USSR and had only nominal sovereignty. In the first years of Soviet authority (1920s and the beginning of the 1930s) the Communist government of Ukraine held the policy of encouraging cultural development of national minorities including the Greeks

¹ Про кількість та склад населення України за підсумками Всеукраїнського перепису населення 2001 р. [Електроний ресурс]. – Режим доступу: <http://2001.ukrcensus.gov.ua/results/general/nationality/> - Назва з екрану.

of Priazov'e. They were allowed to study native language at schools, to found newspapers, folkloric and literary groups using the Greek-language presses. This policy has been generally named «korenizatsia» ("indigenization"). In case of Ukrainian Greeks it was called "hellenization".

In the second half of the 1930s, due to the consolidation of Stalin's totalitarian regime, such policies changed entirely. The term "national minority" was excluded from legislation and its representatives found themselves under persecution because of a farfetched pretext. So, by 1937-1938 more than 3000 Greeks of Priazov'e were repressed, which was a heavy blow for such a small ethnic group.²

After Stalin's death in 1953 the ethnic policy of the Communist party, in spite of their release from a frankly repressive character, still saved the main priorities of Stalin's age. According to the logic of development of the command system that supposed the most centralised, unanimous structures, the main aim of national policy in that period did not include the realisation of the national and cultural needs of the USSR's numeral nations; it included formation of the sense of their community, identity, and the unification of national peculiarities.

It is important to specify the following threats to the ethnic identity of Ukrainian Greeks in 1950s – 1980s.

1) The Communist government ignoring their ethnic and cultural needs, and the implementation of de-ethnisation, new russification and assimilation policies under the slogans of "the rise and approach" of nations and building a new historical community of the Soviet people.

In the post-war years, the non-structures of national and cultural development that were destroyed during Stalin's terror – Greek schools, periodicals, national and cultural institutions, theatres, etc. – were renewed. De-ethnisation of the educational system, absence of national and cultural centres, and the introduction of new "socialist ritualism", which were called up to supplant traditional national rituals, recreated the formation of national consciousness into a private affair on the family level without any practical meaning. Assimilation trends in Greek society became stronger. In 1926 81.4% of Ukrainian Greeks called Greek their native language, but by 1959 there were

² Никольский В., Бут А., Добров П., Шевченко В. Книга памяти греков Украины. Донецк, 2005, с. 6.

only 7.9 %, in 1970 it was 6.7%, and in 1979 it was 8.5%.³ Language assimilation of Greeks was characterized by russification, due to the Russian-speakers in industrial Priazov'e, the corresponding policy of the central government, and the high level of region urbanisation. Russian was considered as the language of international communication, as an instrument for drawing together the nations, and was one of the most important components of the concept of the "unitary soviet nation". Use of languages of indigenous republics' nationalities was limited, and the languages of ethnic minorities lost the majority of their social functions and became an instrument for communication at most at an everyday level. Due to all of this by 1959 Russian became the native language for 88.8% of Ukrainian Greeks, by 1970 for 90.5%, and by 1979 for 88.7 %

Renaming almost all settlements of the Priazov'e with historically Greek names was a display of the "internationalization" of social life, and one of the means to influence the historical memory and consciousness of Greeks. Thus, Mariupol became Zhdanov (in honour of A. Zhdanov, Communist figure and companion-in-arms of I. Stalin), the village of Velyka Yanisol' became Velyka Novoselivka, the village of Mala Yanisol' became Kuybysheve, the village of Mangush became Pershotravneve, the villages of Sartana and Gurzuf received the same name of Prymors'ke. Though renaming was held at the end of the 1940s the authority continued to be sure in the expedience of this decision.

2) *Widespread suppression of Greek identity because of its belonging to a low social class and fear of the possible return of repression.*

The numbers show the absence of a Greek population increase and its decrease in quantity from 1970-1979 and 1979-1989. In 1926 104,700 Greeks lived in Ukraine (without Crimea).⁴ In 1959 there were 140, 300 (with Crimea).⁵ And further the quantity of Greeks remained approximately at the same level. In 1970 106, 900 Greeks lived in Ukraine (93, 900 lived in the

³ Итоги Всесоюзной переписи населения 1979 года. Т. 4. Национальный состав населения СССР - союзных и автономных республик, краев, областей и национальных округов. Кн. 1-3 / Государственный комитет (ГК) СССР по статистике. Информ -издат. отдел.М., 1989. Кн. 2, с. 3.

⁴ Терентьева Н. Греки в Украине: экономическая и культурно-просветительская деятельность (XVII - XXвв.)./ Н. Терентьева. - К.: Аквилон –пресс, 1999, с. 271.

⁵ Итоги Всесоюзной переписи населения 1959 г. Украинская ССР. / Центральное статистическое управление (ЦСУ) СССР. – М.: Госстатиздат, 1963, с. 168.

Donetsk region),⁶ in 1979 there were 104, 100 (90, 500),⁷ and in 1989 it was 98,600 (83,600).⁸ The effect of the ruling ideology and the socially prestigious nature of Russian culture caused the supplanting of national problems to the periphery of mass consciousness. First of all, this became apparent in the transition of Greeks (particularly of city residents) and their children to Russian, rarely to Ukrainian, identities.

The researchers qualify the situation as related to the realisation of social rights of ethnic minorities in the USSR in different ways. Kleyner says that there were secret instructions that limited the promotion of representatives of separate ethnic groups. At the same time, he recognises that in Soviet society there were no obstacles for self-realisation under the terms of loyalty to the regime and the absence of nationality demonstration.⁹ Terent'eva notes the existence of secret restrictions in Greeks and representatives of other ethnic minorities holding governing offices. At the same time, there are known examples of the successful careers of persons with Greek nationality.¹⁰

3) *Interpretation of most manifestations of national identity as hostile, nationalist and anti-communist.*

In 1968, Maria Gaytan, the Director of the palace of culture of the village of Prymors'ke (Sartana), started trying to recreate Sartana's folk group that had existed in the 1930s and the inhabitants supported her efforts. "Sartans'ki samotsvity" (the name of this group) sang historical songs, lullabies, ballads, and songs with poems by Anton Shapurma, Leontiy Kir'yakov and Dmitriy Papush, who were all Greek poets. The group had strongly pronounced the national colouring that determined certain conflicts of its directorate with local

⁶ Итоги Всесоюзной переписи населения 1970 года: В 7 Т. Т.4 Национальный состав населения СССР, союзных и автономных республик, областей и национальных округов. / ЦСУ СССР. – С. 152-173..

⁷ Итоги Всесоюзной переписи населения 1979 года. Т. 4. Национальный состав населения СССР - союзных и автономных республик, краев, областей и национальных округов. Кн. 1-3 / ГК СССР по статистике. Информ -издат. отдел. – М., 1989. – Кн. 2, 3–29.

⁸ Национальный состав населения СССР. По данным Всесоюзной переписи населения 1989 г. / ГК СССР по статистике. – М.: Финансы и статистика, 1991, 78–80.

⁹ *Клейнер І.* Національні проблеми останньої імперії (Національне питання в СРСР очима радянських дисидентів) / І. Клейнер.- Париж, 1978, с. 25.

¹⁰ *Терентьева Н. Балабанов К.* Греки в Україні: історія та сучасність. Навчальний посібник для вищих навчальних закладів // Н. Терентьева, К. Балабанов. – Київ, 2008.- Т. 2, с. 175.

authority. So, in 1968 the Village Council made the decision to dismiss Gaytan from the office of palace of culture “because of the disintegration of ideological work”.¹¹

Also, Gaytan protested against falsification in the census of the population in 1970, when bodies that took the census consciously ignored Greek identity, and Greeks by descent were put down as Russians. Gaytan with Eduard Khadzhunov, a scientist of folklore, addressed this with party bodies and the press. However, the results of such activity gained negative attention. Gaytan and Khadzhunov were called to the KGB (the Committee of National Security) for “preventive conversations” and accused of “nationalism”; Khadzhunov was dismissed from his office in the school.¹²

In the context of such attitudes to ethnic and national themes any statement or recollection concerning the national problem was the reason for immediate accusations of nationalism or persecution. It is important to emphasise that representatives of the Ukrainian national movement, human rights activists and non-conformists, such as Levko Luk’yanenko, V’yacheslav Chornovil, Petro Grygorenko, Ivan Svitlychnyy, Oleksa Tyhyy, etc., in their letters to party leaders and samizdat (dissident activity) works spoke in support of the national rights both of Ukrainians and of other ethnic groups in Ukraine.¹³ So, in 1979 Oleksa Tyhyy, a literary man in Donetsk, who later was accused and convicted of raising national problems in his appeals to party leaders, artistic and public works, wrote: “National issue in Donetsk region is not solved, it will be solve only when every Ukrainian will be conscious person who is the part of nation, when friendly foreigner (Greeks, Jews, German) will have their national and cultural communities, newspapers, books in their native language, schools”.¹⁴

Separate representatives of Greek creative intelligentsia tried to counter these threats. These attempts were characterized both by seeking compromises

¹¹ Державний архів Донецької області. Ф. Р - 3071. *Исполком поселкового совета п. Приморское г. Жданова*, оп. 1., спр. 234. Протоколы заседаний исполкома поселкового совета п. Приморское г. Жданова за 1968 г, с. 123.

¹² *Хаджинова О. Гайтан Мария Георгиевна /О. Хаджинова// Жизнеописание заслуженных греков Украины (информационно-справочный материал) // Под ред. Н. Коссе. – Мариуполь: Федерация греческих обществ Украины, 2009, 110–112.*

¹³ *Рафальський О. Національні меншини України у ХХ ст.: історіографічний нарис // О. Рафальський. - К.: Полус, 2000, с. 128.*

¹⁴ *Тихий О. Думки про рідний донецький край. – О. Тихий. Донбас, 1999, №1, с. 20.*

with the regime and by certain demonstrations of disagreement with its policy. This activity showed itself in the following way.

1. Aspiration to adjust to the officially permitted rules of cultural creativity (so-called "socialist realism") in the literature to have an opportunity to publish works in the Greek language. Partially, they succeeded to do it.

Leontiy Kyr'yakov and Anton Shapurma, Greek writers, were officially recognised by authority; they were published permanently, but mainly in Russian. The scientific popularizing work of Hellenist philologists of Kiev State University professor Andrey Beletskiy and his wife associate professor Tatyana Chernyshova was of great importance to the resurrection of Greek literature life in 1960s. During the 1950s - 1970s 12 expeditions of Kiev scientists were organized in the Greek villages of Priazov'e for the aim of information gaining and analyzing of dialectological stuff. A. Beletsky and T. Chernyshova presented the diversified description of Rumean dialect, substantiated the isolation of a separate Rumean language and developed its phonological alphabet based on Russian and Ukrainian graphics, thereby opening the prospects for the activization of Greek authors' creativity¹⁵.

Communist themes in their creative work, and the glorification of Lenin and the Soviet authority, were especially encouraged. It is this collection, which was dedicated to the 100 year anniversary of Lenin that became the single work of Greek poets published not in translation but in their native language during the end of 1930s to the end of the 1980s.¹⁶

2. Ignoring the Communist ideology in their sphere of culture, and attempting to demonstrate their belonging to the Greek ethnic culture through both their official and informal activities.

It was typical that the above-mentioned activity of Maria Gaytan, the scientific work of Eduard Khadzhyrov, a linguist and folklorist, partly for the work of artists Lelya Kuz'menkova and Valentina Konstantinova that such behavior was suppressed. People who demonstrated it were discharged from their jobs and were put under the control of security services.

¹⁵ *Араджиони М.А.* Греки Крыма и Приазовья: история изучения и историография этнической истории и культуры (80-е г. г. XVIII в. – 90-е гг. XX в.)./М. А. Араджиони/ - Симферополь: Амена, 1999, с. 31.

¹⁶ *Балабанов К., Пахоменко С.* Національно-культурне та громадське життя греків України у другій половині XX – на початку XXI ст.// К. Балабанов , С. Пахоменко. – Маріуполь, 2006, с. 46.

3. *Activity of informal ethnic-culture group (writers, journalists, artists) in Mariupol, which held meetings in private apartments and country cottages, where they discussed the problem of the preservation of Greek culture and some creative issues; they also criticized the policy of the Communist Party as related to the ethnic question.*

“The scientific plan of the Greek nation” created by Khadzhyinov at the end of the 1960s may be considered as a complete enough concept of the Greeks of Priazov’e revival. It enclosed practically all spheres of cultural and social life. Several of its provisions were implemented at the beginning of the 1990s, such as the foundation of national and cultural organisations, schools studying Modern Greek, ethnographic museums, publication of dictionaries, works of national literature and folklore, and returning villages to their historical names.¹⁷

However, “The scientific plan of the Greek nation” was not like the generally recognised action program for national intelligentsia. It was a vision of the development of Greek ethnos given by one of its representatives. Separate tasks were more urgent among activists of national culture, where literary men created the core. The foundation of Greek periodicals and the possibility too of publishing in the native language was the main task.

It is important to underline the absence of social and political accents in the Greek cultural movement. Returning to the principles of Lenin’s national policy, with which Hellenisation in the 1920s-1930s was associated, was the single claim of activists of the Greek culture of Priazov’e to authority (besides, it was not fixed in any document, it was spoken during private meetings). This period of ethnos history was the stuff of dreams and the hopes of national intelligentsia in the post-Stalinism period till the beginning of 1990. In the consciousness of intelligentsia it was idealised as a myth.

4) *Mass signature-collecting campaign to support the establishment of learning the Greek language in the Greek villages in the Donetsk region. The campaign was organized in 1985, but was not crowned with success.*

In 1985 Maria Gaytan, the Director of “Sartans’ki samotsvity” initiated in the village of Prymors’ke (Sartana) the collection of signatures for a letter to the Ministry of Education of the USSR with a request to organise the studying of Greek. The workers of the Regional Authority of Education, along with Communist party workers, during meetings with village inhabitants, tried to

¹⁷Хаджинова О. Очерк о жизни и деятельности Э. В. Хаджинова // О. Хаджинова. - Эллины Украины, 1998, № 5, с. 4.

convince the community of the absence of any prospect of studying the national language and compelled them from starting further petitions for this issue.¹⁸

The first public demonstrations of anti-communist activity in Greek society began at the end of the 1980's, the time of Gorbachev's perestroika. Then the Greeks joined a number of democratic and ecological movements in the region including movements in Mariupol. A specific character of the participation in these movements consisted of placing an emphasis on the requirements of the free cultural advancement of Greek life.

A Greek national organisation (the Mariupol Greek Community) was founded in Mariupol in 1989 on the basis of general democratic movement "For a clean Mariupol", that together with problems of ecological security demanded that power structures return Zhdanov to its historical name. A specific character of the participation in these movements consisted of placing an emphasis on the requirements of the free cultural advancement of Greek life.

The Mariupol Greek Community's first meetings were held semi-legally, in private apartments, where its representatives were watched. The organisation, representatives of which took part in anti-communist moves in Mariupol and demonstrated their opposition to the local authority, did not receive juridical registration.¹⁹

Practically from the first days of its existence the organisation started active operation, directed at the integration of Greek community, the realisation of ideas of national and cultural revival, in particular of national education revival. By then this organisation had received the status of being a basic primary institute of national and cultural movement of ethnic Greeks.

The activity of participants of the Ukrainian dissident movement, who are of Greek origin, takes absolutely special place in context of this theme. Though some of them were from Priazov'e, they had no connection with the cultural movement of Priazovian Greeks. Under their circumstances of living, these people were found in different regions of the Ukraine and were engaged in human rights movements. This way, Raisa Moroz (native Lefterova) left her native Priazovian Greek village Velika Karakuba in 1955 after graduating from school to study at Lviv State University. She got involved in Ukrainian culture quickly. In Lviv she became acquainted with a historian and future dissident called Valentin Moroz and they got married. With her husband and his friend

¹⁸ Державний архів Донецької області. Ф.326., оп. 136., спр. 13. Протокол № 26 Пленума Донецкого обкома КПУ от 23 ноября 1989, 51–52.

¹⁹ Коноп В. Мариупольскому греческому обществу – 10 лет: историческая справка / В. Коноп. – Мариуполь, 1999, с. 4.

she joined the Ukrainian national idea and became an active participant of the Ukrainian national movement.²⁰ Moroz was the author of many underground works in which he criticised the Communist regime and the Soviet leader's personality cult, as well as the denationalisation policy of the Soviet government. For anti-Soviet activity and propaganda was sentenced to nine years of imprisonment. Despite this, Raisa didn't leave her husband and supported him in every way that she could. With help of her friends (dissidents) she distributed samizdat works and was even interviewed by Western journalists at a private flat in Moscow. In the interview she told about the destiny of her husband and the violation of human rights in the USSR where she had been fired from work watched over and her relatives were pressured.

The interview had worldwide resonance. In Canada, the USA, Australia, Argentina, and other countries committees were created devoted to the protection of Valentine Moroz. Andrey Sakharov, the Soviet physicist and human rights activist, even stood up for him.²¹

Finally, within the scope of international détente policy between the USA and the USSR, it was agreed to interchange took place on the nights of 27th to 28th of April 1979 in New York at John F. Kennedy International Airport. Subsequently, Raisa Moroz left the USSR with her husband. Having settled in New York, she immediately joined in with human rights activities. From 26th to 29th of September 1979 Petro Grygorenko, Nadiya Svitlichna and terrible atmosphere in Ukraine.

From 1980, Moroz worked for the Ukrainian socio-political journal "Suchasnist" and as a non-staff correspondent of "Voice of America".

In her works, Moroz talked about the colonial situation of the Ukraine within the USSR, the fate of Ukrainian political prisoners, and reported on the translations of their works and appeals to foreign languages. She was the only one who for 50 years from the late 1930s to the end of the 1980s drew the attention of the general public using Western assimilative processes among its native people - the Azov Greeks.

In 1980 in the journal "Suchasnist" Moroz pointed to the Ukraine's lack of Greek schools, national centres, that youth don't know the national language and traditions, and summed up the situation with a disturbing conclusion:

²⁰ *Овсієнко В.* Мороз Раїса Василівна [Електроний ресурс]. – URL: <http://archive.khpg.org/index.php?id=1226043346> – Назва з екрану.

²¹ *Мороз Р.* Проти вітру. Спогади дружини українського політв'язня. / Р. Мороз. - Львів: Свічадо, 2005. - 216 с.

“Catastrophic trends continue for the Greek minority. That’s the way ”“the flowering’ of nations and national languages looks for socialism”.²²

Another Greek woman – Irina Goloborodko-Linardato was one of the founders of the Odessa department of a Ukrainian human rights organization – the Ukrainian Helsinki group. Goloborodko was born in Crimea; despite the fact that the majority of Crimean Greeks had moved to Priazov’e in the 18th century a small group of Greeks were joined by new expatriate Greeks in the late 19th - early 20th century.

In the years of Communist rule the fate of the Crimean Greeks, too, was tragic. In 1944, on the orders of Stalin, they were deported from Crimea to Central Asia, Kazakhstan and the South Urals.²³ As a child Goloborodko was deported and after Stalin’s death she returned to Ukraine, moved to Odessa and worked as a doctor in Critical Care Medicine.²⁴

In the second half of the 1970s, Goloborodko joined the Odessa department of the Ukrainian Helsinki Group and, in the beginning of perestroika, became a founding member of the Odessa Branch of Narodnyy Rukh Ukraini – a socio-political movement of the national-democratic orientation, which was the main opposition force of the Communist government in the Ukraine.²⁵

Thus, excluding Raisa Moroz and Irina Goloborodko, the representatives of the general Ukrainian dissident movement for human rights, the opposition activity of the Greek ethnic groups had inexpressive forms and was limited to cultural life, and generally the activity wasn’t against the Communist regime, but against its ethno-national policy.

²² *Мороз Р.* З життя національних меншостей України: греки // Сучасність. Альманах (література, мистецтво, суспільне життя) / Р. Мороз. – Нью-Йорк, 1980, ч.12, 77–78.

²³ *Балабанов К., Пахоменко С.* Національно-культурне та громадське життя греків України у другій половині ХХ – на початку ХХІ ст.// К. Балабанов , С. Пахоменко. – Маріуполь, 2006, с. 23.

²⁴ *Колтунова В.* Нужны ли чиновникам журналисты? Еще как! Только здоровые! [Электронный ресурс]. – URL:: <http://zahvat.net/15/3389/> . – Название с экрана.

²⁵ *Максимович В.* Как все начиналось в Одессе. В ознаменовании 20-летия Народного Руха Украины [Электронный ресурс]. – URL:: http://politikum.net/asosiasia/kak_vse_nachinalos.htm - Название с экрана.

Conclusion

- 1) The nature of Soviet ethnic policy in 1950s – 1980s. – in particular, its course towards “convergence and merging of the nations” and creating “a unified entity of the Soviet people” – resulted in effectively “erasing” the issue of ethnic minorities from both legal and political spheres through an almost complete disregard for their need to maintain ethnically centered cultural and political practices. It negatively impacted the ethnic identity of the Greek people in Soviet Ukraine, thus encouraging assimilation tendencies within their community.
- 2) The attempts made by individual members of the national intelligentsia to bring the issue of Greek identity into the public arena and restore some of the elements of their cultural infrastructure were prevented by the Communist party.
- 3) Under such conditions, the officially approved forms of cultural expression for the Greeks of Ukraine were quite fragmented; they were forced to conform to the criteria and norms of the so-called international social culture (especially characteristic of literary creations). Thus, Greek culture was supported only through the efforts of a small albeit nationally conscious group within the community.
- 4) Centers of ethnic and cultural life in the form of gatherings maintained by prominent personalities within the local Greek communities did not take on a more stable organizational structure. In turn, the demands, objectives and activities of the members of the national intelligentsia did not transcend their cultural context and become oppositional and socio-political in nature.
- 5) The liberalization of both social and political life in the late 1980 s resulted in a surge of activity within the Greek community: it underwent further ethnic consolidation, which was expressed by establishing civic associations and openly articulating the dissatisfaction with the national and cultural situation of Greeks in Ukraine.
- 6) Among the Greek intelligentsia in Ukraine, Raisa Moroz and Irina Goloborod ko-Linkordato deserve a special mention as active participants

of the Ukraine's national and human rights movement. By virtue of circumstances they found themselves disconnected from the Greek community in the region of Northern Asov, and thus were out of touch with the centre of the Greek cultural movement. However, they realized their civic potential and democratic beliefs by taking an active role in the activities of Ukrainian dissidents, but at the same time remembering and honoring their Greek roots.

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