

Malgorzata Flaga, Wojciech Janicki
Department of Economic Geography
Maria Curie-Sklodowska University of Lublin, Poland

Crimea – difficult return to lost multiethnicity

Introduction

The Crimean Peninsula is commonly called „the peninsula of diversity”. This name reflects, first of all, the diversity and richness of the area’s nature and landscapes. However, it can also relate to the cultural sphere since in Crimea there are historic monuments and material remains dating from all historic epochs. Another consequence of its rich history is its incredible mosaic of peoples. In spite of the constant rotation of tribes and nations, Crimea could always serve as an example of the co-existence of a variety of societies of very different cultural features.

This multiethnicity, which nowadays can be considered as an important element of the “diversity” of the peninsula and a representation of its non-material resources, in the times of communism was regarded as one of the drawbacks to the area. The existence of a number of different nations did not match the Soviet vision about nationally homogenous Crimea. That ideology resulted in numerous repressions against minorities, which entailed a long-term destruction of the area’s multiculturalism. Not before a new political order had been implemented after the collapse of the USSR, was it possible for the persecution-affected communities to regenerate. A gradual return to ethnic diversity on the peninsula became possible as well.

The aim of the following paper is to show Crimea’s multiethnicity, which, having been subdued for many years, is reborn nowadays. The paper presents the stages of the formation of the multiethnic Crimean society, along with the events that led to its destruction. It also describes the contemporary ethnic structure of the population, and the circumstances in which individual minorities are being reborn. The paper shows not only the opportunities that the minorities can take, but also the obstacles that they face when wishing to return to the Crimean society and exist in the political and social life of the region. It appears that multiethnicity in the peninsula, in spite of its long tradition, is not easy to recreate, but if it is supposed to exist as a sign of Crimea’s cultural heritage, then it constitutes a serious challenge

for the authorities and inhabitants themselves. It seems that with reference to this region the following question is extremely relevant: “Multicultural society – a reality, a goal or a myth?”

Forming basis of the multiethnic society of the peninsula

Among the nationalities that inhabit Crimea now, it is the Greeks that appeared here first, namely already in 8th century B.C. (fig.1). They established several settlements on the coast, where their main occupations were craftsmanship, minor industry and trade with the local Scythian population. With time, they assimilated into the inhabitants of the peninsula (Chazbijewicz, 2001b; Matelski 2004). The second stage in the development of the Greek settlement was connected with the time when Byzantium imposed its superiority and introduced Christianity. There were more and more people in Greek towns, whereas in the mountains religious centres appeared and monastic life developed (Matelski, 2004; www.eastway.pl).

Fig.1. Peoples and states in the region of the Crimea in the antiquity and the Middle Ages

Source: elaborated by K.Łucjan on the basis of: Wielki atlas historyczny świata, ed. Demart, Warszawa, 2003.

Another two nations whose connections with the Crimean Peninsula date back to ancient times and which were formed in Crimea are the Karaims and Crimchaks. The very Karaim religion, which later became a symbol of the Karaim nation, reached Crimea around the 9th century as a result of Karaim missionary work. At that time in the peninsula there existed the country of the Khazars (see fig.1), a nomadic people of Turkish descent, whose ruler was famous for his religious tolerance, thanks to which Khazar cities were inhabited by pagans, Christians, Muslims and the Jews living next to each other (Jakowenko, 2000). The new religion was accepted by the Khazar khagan and his closest environment and by a major part of Kipchack-Polowiecki Turkish tribes that inhabited the Crimean steppes. Out of the fusion of the tribes inhabiting Crimea a new nation arose. It professed the Karaim religion, after which it was named the Karaims. As gifted farmers, craftsmen and soldiers, Karaims played an important role in Crimea’s development (Połkanow, Połkanowa, Zinczenko, 2004). Regardless of who ruled in the peninsula, they could enjoy a considerable religious freedom and numerous privileges and because of their model way of life they were respected by other nationalities (Karaimi..., 1987; Pełczyński, 1995). In the 19th and 20th centuries Karaims were

involved in various forms of cultural and social activity. They arranged artistic and scientific meetings within their own community. Moreover, they became engaged in charity, which was beyond ethnic or religious boundaries (Połkanow, Połkanowa, Zinczenko, 2004).

The genesis and moment of the Crimchaks' arrival in Crimea are only known to some extent. It probably came into existence in the 6th – 7th century out of the local non-Tartar population (the Jewish diaspora) and other tribes (the Khazars) that adopted Judaism (Matelski, 2004; www.eastway.pl). The Crimchaks belonged to the poorer strata of the Crimean society and their main occupations were craftsmanship or agriculture. In the times of the khanate's rule they adopted many Tartar characteristics, however distinguishing themselves by their religion and way of life. In the Roman Empire, because of the belief that they professed, they were often associated with the Jews, due to which they experienced some legal restraints. The consolidation of the Crimchaks' community, an increase in the sense of national autonomy and its legal confirmation took place in the 19th century due to the necessity of being distinguished from new Jewish settlers that flooded Crimea (Matelski, 2004; www.eastway.pl).

Since the Middle Ages there has been a record of the existence of the Armenians and the Jews in Crimea as well. The influx of the Armenian population was gradual and it resulted from wars that reached Armenia (Matelski, 2004; www.eastway.pl). The Armenian colonies were of commercial nature. In the 14th and 15th centuries, when the Armenians enjoyed the time of prosperity, the peninsula was called the "Seaside Armenia". Thanks to the Armenian population, that concentrated in big towns and built numerous temples and monasteries, Christianity grew stronger and stronger in Crimea. Since the end of the 15th century, once Crimea was conquered by Turkey, the Armenian community started to diminish.

The Jews constituted a less numerous but also significant Crimean community. They were mostly immigrants looking for refuge from their persecutors in Europe. Similarly to the Armenians, they lived mostly in large administrative centres, developing their trade. The Jewish colonization, due to the introduction of settlement restrictions, diminished for some time after Russia took over Crimea but after the abolishment of those barriers there was another influx of the Jews into Crimea. A drastic depletion of the Jewish community was caused by both world wars (Matelski, 2004).

Along with nations and tribes already living in Crimea, since the turn of the 13th and 14th centuries, a new nation of the Crimean Tartars started to form there. It was formed out of the tribes and nations of Turkish origin, which inhabited Crimea in various periods of time: the Huns, Khazars, Pechengs, Turks, Kipchaks and Protobulgarians. The gradual assimilation

of those peoples was a pre-initial stage of the Crimean-Tartar nation's development (Chazbijewicz, 2001b; Kucy, 2006). The next stage was connected with the conquest of Crimea by the Mongolian army in the 13th century, as well as the rule of the Golden Horde that started to transform from a Mongolian khanate into a Tartar country and undergo Islamisation (fig.1). From the onset of the Golden Horde Islam became the dominant religion in the peninsula. Because the Tartar population was characterized by significant religious tolerance, towns in Crimea were of multi-confessional nature and there were churches of various confessions, synagogues and mosques functioning next to each other. Interdenominational marriages were not a rarity either (Kucy, 2006). The further development of the Tartar nation concurred with historic events: the collapse of the Golden Horde and the rise of the Crimean Khanate in the first half of the 17th century (fig.1 and fig.2). From then on, a gradual displacement of the Crimean-Tartar nation from its ethnic land commenced, which did not prevent it though from keeping and further forming its national identity (Chazbijewicz, 2001b).

Fig.2. Peoples and states in the region of the Crimea in the 16th century and before the outbreak of the World War I

Source: elaborated by K.Łucjan on the basis of: Wielki atlas historyczny świata, ed. Demart, Warszawa, 2003.

In order to make the national image of Crimea complete, it is necessary to point out that the Italians also did mark their presence in the peninsula. Those were the Venetians and Genoveses, who already in the 12th century traded with settlements on the south coast. Their descendants still lived in Crimea in the 20th century, distinguishing themselves solely by professing Catholicism (Chazbijewicz, 2001b; Hryszko, 2004). In the 14th century there were also the Cherkes flooding Crimea, migrating from nearby Caucasus (fig.2) and since the 16th century Slavonic people started to appear. Tartar hordes brought them as captives, mainly from the areas of the Republic of Poland and Russia (Matelski, 2004).

The annexation of Crimea by Russia in 1783 ended a certain specific stage in its history; most of all, it ended the period of the Crimean Khanate, which, according to Chazbijewicz (2001b, p.33): "... is described by many authors as *Crimea's greatest epoch*, as far as political power, and also culture and civilization are concerned". Thanks to the fact that each of the nations inhabiting Crimea contributed to the peninsula's life, after the pre-Russian

era, a rich cultural heritage remained there, in terms of customs, traditions and material objects.

Changes in Crimea's national composition during the Russian Empire

Once Crimea was taken over by Russia at the end of the 18th century (fig.2), a new epoch of ethnic settlement started. Most of the nationalities appeared here for the first time. The tsarist authorities started a systematic colonization of the peninsula, which reached its peak in the second half of the 19th century. The ethnic policy was subordinated to a superior purpose – an increase in the level of economic development of Taurida Oblast, which was supposed to take place with the aid of the new nations brought to Crimea (Chazbijewicz, 2001b; Matelski, 2004). New settlers came mainly from Russia. The Russian gentry and soldiers of higher rank along with officials received significant land grants. Another, numerous category of colonizers was constituted by Russian peasants and regular soldiers, whose service was coming to an end (Chazbijewicz, 2001b; www.eastway.pl).

Russia's initial activity was aimed at eliminating previous inhabitants of the Crimea, first of all, the Tartars. The tools to do that were laws made and interpreted in a specific way as well as intensive Russification. The Tartars were deprived of their land, their religious freedom was restricted. All that caused a massive migration of the Tartar population, which began shortly after the annexation of Crimea to Russia and took place gradually until the beginning of the 20th century. In addition, many Tartars died as a result of wars, famine and epidemics (Chazbijewicz, 2001b; Matelski, 2004).

Although the Tartars became second-category citizens, they did not lose the sense of autonomy and since the end of the 19th century they have made efforts to revive as a nation. Those efforts related to the spheres of culture, society, economy and politics. All that reflected the formation of various associations, organizations and movements. A special chance for a formation of an independent Tartar country in Crimea appeared after 1917, however those efforts were subdued by the Bolsheviks, who in 1921 formed the Crimean Autonomous SSR subordinated to the Russian SFSR (Chazbijewicz, 2001b; Kucy, 2006).

Even before Russia's seizure of Crimea, at the time of the Turkish-Russian war, Russia forced the Armenians and Greeks to emigrate from Crimea, which seriously weakened the economy in the peninsula and depleted its population resources (Chazbijewicz, 2001b; Matelski 2004; www.eastway.pl). However, shortly after Crimea's annexation, a tsar's decree came out. It encouraged the colonization of the Taurian land and for that reason new Greek

and Armenian settlers began to appear there. This way in the peninsula at the end of the 18th and 19th century there was a revival of those two nationalities (Matelski, 2004; www.eastway.pl).

In the 19th century another two non-Slavonic nations, encouraged by the tsar's decrees, started to settle in the Crimean Peninsula. Those were the Germans and Estonians, who brought Protestantism to Taurida Oblast. They lived in the area or in the vicinity of big towns. The Germans, thanks to the fact that they had already been known as good farmers in some other areas of Russia, in Crimea they were given large land grants or were also offered significant discounts when buying it, together with some extra privileges (Matelski, 2004; www.eastway.pl).

Due to the colonization, in Crimea Slavonic nations appeared as well. These were namely the Bulgarians, Czechs, Poles and Ukrainians. The Bulgarians who came to Crimea were usually the sultan's subjects who in the Turkish-Russian wars claimed to support the tsarism, and as a result they had to escape to Russia. Together with the Greeks they settled in the Crimean countryside and took up gardening and orcharding (Matelski, 2004).

The Czechs marked their presence in Crimea to little extent. They appeared there in the 1860s but since the tsarist authorities did not keep their promises concerning granting land, most Czechs came back to the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The group that stayed in Crimea underwent a profound assimilation, as a result of which the number of Czechs became significantly reduced (Matelski, 2004).

Permanent Polish settlements started in Crimea at the end of the 18th century. Part of them was established by farmers looking for free land to cultivate and by workers hoping for employment in various branches of craftsmanship and trade. Quite a numerous group was formed by people who were involved in the national independence movement in Poland and who emigrated to Crimea to avoid persecution (Chodubski, 2004). Still some other groups of Poles settled in Crimea in order to run a commercial activity, especially in the Black Sea harbours. Another group were the Poles who worked for Russia – they came to Taurida Oblast to perform administrative functions on behalf of Russian authorities (Chodubski, 2004; Matelski 2004).

The first Ukrainian settlers were the Cossacks and displaced peasants. Since the second half of the 19th century they were joined voluntarily by Ukrainian soldiers who were no longer in service and also by enfranchised peasants. In spite of those migrations, the Ukrainian population in Crimea was still scarce for a long time until the peninsula was incorporated into the Ukrainian SSR (Matelski, 2004, www.eastway.pl).

Ways of homogenizing the Crimea society under the Soviet regime

Shortly after the formation of the Crimean ASSR (see fig.3) the Russian authorities initiated in the peninsula the policy called “koryenyzacya”, which meant supporting and sharing the power with local ethnic minorities. In Crimea it took the form of “tartarization” since it mostly concerned only this population. The policy was implemented through filling public and party vacancies with Tartars, disseminating their culture, religion and education as well as promoting their native tongue, which, next to Russian, became the second official language of Crimea (Chazbijewicz, 2001b; www.eastway.pl).

Fig. 3. Political affiliation of the Crimea in the 20th and 21st century

Source: elaborated by K.Łucjan on the basis of: Wielki atlas historyczny świata, ed. Demart, Warszawa, 2003.

This period of liberties for the minorities lasted in Crimea from 1923 to 1928 and it ended at the time when Stalin changed his nationwide ethnic policy. The previous “koryenyzacya” was replaced by the consistently implemented Sovietization, which again affected mostly Tartars. It was also aimed at other Crimean minorities that had the sense of national identity or religious autonomy and had their own intelligentsia (the Greeks, Karaims, Armenians, Germans), through which they could pose a threat to the homogeneity and strength of the USSR. The Sovietization lasted, with fluctuating intensity, through the 1930s. It also took various forms: starting with the extermination of culture and national traditions, through the deprivation of religious liberties and land and compulsory collectivisation of peasants, limitation of food supplies in the periods of famine, through transportation to Siberia and concentration camps, as well as executions. According to estimates, between 1921 and 1941 as a result of all the repressions (regardless of the short period of political freedom) about 160-170 thousand Tartars died, which comprised over half of this nation. At the time of the Bolshevik rule the number of Armenians, Estonians and Poles decreased and about 50-80% of Germans suffered severely due to the famine in the 1930s. (Matelski, 2004).

The most tragic period in the history of all Crimea’s nations was World War II. Shortly after the USSR was attacked by the Nazis, around 50,000 Germans were transported by the Russians to Kazakhstan and Siberia. Then, the Crimean society was affected by the repressions of the German army. Between 1941-43 around 40,000 Jews and many Armenians were murdered. The Germans also murdered the Tartars and people of other nationalities

suspected of guerrilla activity or sent them to concentration camps in Germany or Austria. At the same time, the Germans displaced around 1,500 Estonians to Estonia (Matelski, 2004). After the Red Army seized Crimea in 1944, the Soviet authorities took action that was aimed at the final cleansing of unwanted people from Crimea. As such were regarded the Tartars and other nations with a strong cultural autonomy. An excuse to perform ethnic cleansings was the alleged cooperation with the Germans and anti-Soviet activities. Initially, the Tartar population was under the command of the NKVD soldiers, which resulted in endless murders, robberies and rapes. Then came a massive deportation of people. In May 1944 about 180,000 Tartars were deported, along with the population of few other Turkic and Kazakh nationalities: the Chechens, the Ingush, Balkars, Kalmyks. Most of them were sent to the Ural and central Asian USSR republics: Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan, without the right to return to the homeland. Soon, the evictions also affected about 36,000 Greeks, Armenians and Bulgarians, whose destination became the northern districts of the Russian FSSR and the Mari and the Bashkir ASSR (Chazbijewicz, 2001b; www.eastway.pl). Since the supervisors of the deportations were officious, the Karaim group from the Black Sea coast was also included, although this nation was not supposed to be deported (Kefeli, 2004). Moreover, the assimilated Crimean Italians, Crimchaks, Germans, Poles, the Turkish and Iranians were also deported (Chazbijewicz, 2001b).

After the deportations were over, the authorities began the consistent eradication of Tartar's traces, destroying their houses and farms. They burnt Tartar books and press, did away with the education system, whereas cultural, educational and sacred objects were turned into storehouses and farm buildings. They even cut out cypresses, which were a characteristic element of the Tartar landscape. This way the infrastructure and the cultural Islam-Tartar environment in Crimea was almost completely destroyed. Towards the end of 1944 they also decided to change into Russian all proper names that had something in common with Tartar, German, Greek or other non-Russian traditions (Chazbijewicz, 2001b; www.eastway.pl).

Also the Tartars in exile were subject to disintegration and extermination. First, deprived of material goods, then transported in inhumane conditions, they arrived in the areas that were completely alien to them. There they were deprived of their civil rights and underwent strict inspections. They were not allowed to leave their places of residence, hence keeping in touch with the family or friends was impossible. Finally, the extremely difficult living conditions – lack of housing, famine and hard work contributed to high morbidity and death rate. As a result, according to the estimates, 1,5 years after the beginning of deportations about 46% of all deported Tartars died (Chazbijewicz, 2001b).

Another step on the way to the Russification of the Crimean Peninsula was a change of its administrative status. In June 1946 the Soviet authorities put an end to the existence of the Crimean ASSR and they turned it into another district subordinated to the Russian FSSR. The removed Crimean population was gradually replaced with new Russian settlers coming mainly from central Russia. There were also kolkhozniks from Ukraine and Belarus who came voluntarily or were forced to do so. Their number increased after 1954, when the Crimea was given to the Ukrainian SSR (Chazbijewicz, 2001b, www.eastway.pl). As a result, the ethnic structure in Crimea became definitely more homogenous (see fig.4). While the Soviet authorities were gradually lifting the restrictions of the deported people (apart from the Tartars), very scarce groups of the Germans, Greeks and Armenians started to return to Crimea (Matejski, 2004). In spite of that, the Crimean society was still dominated by Russians and Ukrainians and it lasted in such a form until the beginning of the 1990s.

Fig. 4. The national structure of the Crimean population in the period of the Soviet Union (in %)

Source: Matelski D. 2004, *Narody słowiańskie i niesłowiańskie na Krymie w XIX i XX wieku* (in:) *Polacy na Krymie*. Edited by E. Walewander, "BAMKA", Lublin, p.97

National and ethnic groups in Crimea at the turn of the 20th century

1989 and 1991 became the critical years in the process of the formation of contemporary Crimea. The beginning of the "perestroika" and "glasnost" politics in the USSR along with the gaining of independence by Ukraine opened up new perspectives to ethnic minorities. The groups victimized in the times of the USSR were given an opportunity to revive their own national life. For the Crimean Tartars the time of fight to keep their national identity came to an end as was the case with the more or less successful attempts to resettle in their homeland. "Since 1989 the problem has been: not *whether the Tartars can come back to Crimea* but *how many and when the Tartars will come back to Crimea*" (Chazbijewicz, 2001b, p.179).

The Tartars' return to Crimea and their political activity gave rise to the activity of other minorities as well. However, what the Tartars strove to do to a great extent was to gain their national-territorial autonomy (Chazbijewicz, 2001b, Kucy, 2006). Other communities, which also grew in numbers, focused rather on rebuilding their social and cultural life, to which they were predestined by the position that they had had in the Crimean society before.

The changes that took place in the ethnic structure of Crimea after 1991 were reflected in the results of the National Census in the Ukraine in 2001 (tab.1). According to the results, the contemporary multiethnic society of Crimea consists of over 125 national and ethnic groups (www.ukrcensus.gov.ua), however, only three are of major importance.

Tab.1. National structure of the Crimea in 1989 and 2001.

The core of the Crimean population comprises the Russians and Ukrainians, however, they are not indigenous inhabitants of the region. The population peculiarity is also exemplified by the fact that the number of Russians, who in Ukraine generally belong to ethnic minorities, is twice as big as the number of the Ukrainians in Crimea (Horska, 2007). The third largest national group at the moment are the Crimean Tartars, who were totally ignored in population statistics for a long time.

The other minorities comprise altogether around 5% of the Crimean Peninsula's population, and their respective shares, apart from those of the Belarusians, do not even exceed 0.5%. There are also a few nationalities in the Crimea, whose percentage does not even reach 0.1%, due to which they are not mentioned in the statistics. Yet, they are crucial to the history and culture of Crimea. Some of them are e.g. the communities of the Karaims and the Crimchaks, which in the 1990s counted respectively around 800 and 600 people (Połkanow, Polkanowa, Zinczenko, 2004; www.turkiye.net/sotakaraim).

Although the Polish and the Ukrainians were still the most numerous nationalities in Crimea, in the 90s their number decreased considerably, which was related to political changes in Ukraine. Facing a new, not really secure or stable political and economic situation many people decided to come back to their homeland or emigrate. Those were the reasons for the decrease in the number of Russians as well as in the number of Ukrainians, Belarusians, Moldavians, Poles and Jews. The number of Ukrainians could have decreased for two reasons. On the one hand, it resulted from the economic or political migration of those people who had strong bonds with Russia and it was where they emigrated. On the other hand, the decrease was related to a change in the national identity of many Crimean inhabitants, who during the census in the communist period (1989) were afraid to reveal their true origin, whereas in 2001 they claimed to be of different, not Ukrainian nationality (Zastaynyj, 2003).

The mass return of the Tartars to their homeland was confirmed in the statistics, which said their number had increased six times (tab.1). The increase also concerned other nationalities, historically connected with the Crimean Peninsula, e.g. Armenians, and to a

lesser extent, the Germans and Greeks (www.ukrcensus.gov.ua). For some nationalities, namely the Uzbeks, Azerbaijanis, Georgians and the Roma, whose number in the 1990s grew as well (www.ukrcensus.gov.ua), Crimea became a migratory destination since it offered security and better living conditions when compared to their homeland.

New perspectives for the Crimean minorities

The revival of minorities in Crimea was supported by the ethnic policy of the Ukrainian authorities, which at least to some extent tried to settle ethnic problems in the country. However, much more was achieved in the legislative rather than in the executive sphere.

The first important steps were taken when the USSR still existed. In 1989 the Superior Council of the USSR passed a declaration that through the condemnation of Stalin's ethnic policy re-enacted the right of the population deported in the period of persecution to come back to Crimea. Those issues were supposed to be handled directly by the National Commission on the Crimean Tartars and the Committee on the Soviet Germans. In 1990 there was the Ordinance of the Ministry of the Ukrainian SSR about the initiation of activity connected with the return of the Crimean Tartars to Crimea (Baluk, 2002).

The next step, taken already in independent Ukraine, was the renewal of the Crimean Autonomous SRR in 1991, which in 1995 was renamed as the Autonomous Republic of Crimea (ARC), with its own parliament and government. Its authorities were given the opportunity to shape their ethnic policy independently, whereas the rights of Crimean nationalities were guaranteed in the ARC constitution, enacted in 1998. In 1995 the Ukrainian Cabinet passed a regulation on the means of solving political-legal, socio-economic and ethnic problems in the ARC, in which they mentioned the issues of the Crimean Tartar Parliament's status, the rehabilitation of the deported nations and return of the repatriates (Baluk, 2002). In 1999 the Council of the Crimean Nation Representatives was created by the President (Kucy, 2006).

The regulation and stability of the ethnic situation in Crimea was supposed to be supported by nationwide legal acts, e.g. the declaration of Ukrainian nations' rights of 1991, the ethnic minority act of 1992, the immigration act of 1993, the act of legal status of immigrants of 1994, and also others concerning the language, freedom of conscience and religious organizations, local governments and unification of citizens (Baluk, 2002).

From the beginning of the 90s there started to appear various national institutions, whose goal was to implement the Ukrainian ethnic policy. Still in the period of the Soviet

Union, in Ukraine there was created the National Committee on Nationality, at which in the next few years there was created the German-Ukrainian Foundation and the Crimean Foundation of Deported Nations. These organisations were involved in obtaining grants for the repatriates' needs. In 1993 there was appointed the new Ministry of Nationalities and Migration, which having been reorganized a few times, was finally transformed in 1999 into the State Department of Nationalities and Migration. On the other hand, the Commission of Ethnic Policy, International and Interrepublican Relations and Culture was formed by the Crimean Parliament. Similar committees, whose task was to examine and secure minority rights, could also be appointed on the level of regional and local councils in different parts of Crimea. The problems of deported nations were handled by the State ARC Committee of Nationalities and Deportees (Baluk, 2002).

Legal acts as well as the establishment of appointed institutions were supposed to help avoid ethnic conflicts and they provided the foundation for the construction of a multiethnic society in Crimea. Most of all, the authorities appreciated the historic heritage of ethnic minorities for the formation of the contemporary Ukrainian society. At the same time they expressed reverence for the culture of all ethnic groups. In the Declaration of Nationalities' Rights of Ukraine of 1991 the country ensured all the minorities the same civil rights: political, cultural and economic. It also guaranteed the rights to "traditional places of settlement, development of language and culture, profession of their own religion, the use of symbolism and celebration of national holidays" as well as the rights to the support of the development of national identity through grants from the national budget (Baluk, 2002, p.208). However, it needs to be stressed that the Ukrainian authorities, being afraid of separatist tendencies, did not grant the minorities the right to form national administrative units but they solely consented to national-cultural autonomy.

Splendours and miseries of return to multiethnicity

The most serious ethnic problem of contemporary Crimea is the issue of the Russian population and its relationship with the country and the population of Ukraine. Throughout the years of affiliation of the Crimean peninsula to Russia, in the region there took place very strong Russification of the inhabitants, which is reflected not only in the number of Russians but also in the dominance of Russian cultural and spiritual traditions (Horska, 2007). The gaining of independence by Ukraine did not significantly affect the number of the Russian community and it did not deprive it of its actual power in the Crimean ASSR. Nonetheless, being a foreign nation, they felt threatened due to the return of the indigenous Tartars and the

necessity for integration and subordination to the Ukrainian authorities. It gave rise to the increase in nationalist attitudes in Russian circles (Baluk, 2002).

In the political dimension, nationalism manifested itself through the tendencies to separate from Ukraine and subordinate to Russia. The basis for all these activities, apart from “the Tartar threat” and “the threat of Ukrainian nationalism” (Kucy, 2006, p.183), was also strong economic connections between Crimea and Russia, as well as the presence of the Black Sea Fleet in the peninsula (Kucy, 2006; Horska, 2007). What guaranteed the Russian position in Crimea was also the isolationism of the Crimean administration, dominated by the Russians, retaining quorum in the Parliament and keeping most important positions in ARC. In such cases, moral and financial support was provided to Crimean Russians by the Russian Federation, which aimed at strengthening its political power in the peninsula (Kucy, 2006; Horska, 2007).

The authorities of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, having the right to an independent ethnic policy, shaped it in a pro-Russian spirit, especially in the field of education and culture. What they clearly discriminated was the Ukrainian school system. It received lower donations than the Russian system. It was difficult to form groups and schools with Ukrainian as the language of instruction. According to the propaganda their standard was lower than that of ordinary schools. Even in the first half of the 90s there was not a single Ukrainian school in Crimea, while there were over 600 Russian schools (Baluk, 2002).

In spite of attempts to limit the role of the Russian language in the Ukrainian public life and promote the Ukrainian language, it was Russian that has remained the dominant language in Crimea. Since it is considered the mother tongue by 77% inhabitants of the peninsula (www.ukrcensus.gov.ua), it has been registered in the ARC constitution as, equal to Ukrainian, the official language of the autonomy (Baluk, 2002). Most foreign literature is available in Russian. Russian also dominates in scientific literature and fiction. It is commonly used in public institutions. On the other hand, the efforts to “ukrainize” public and social life are falsely assessed as an attempt against biculturalism and bilingualism of Crimea and treated as an infringement of the Russian population’s rights. In this way under the pretext of protecting the Russian population, Russian authorities have one more opportunity to interfere in home affairs of Crimea and Ukraine (Baluk, 1998).

Nevertheless, what became a difficult and burning problem was the issue of the Crimean Tartars. Although the Ukrainian authorities have granted them the repatriate rights, in the peninsula they are still treated as second-category citizens. On the one hand, through the whole process of return they had to stand up to the unfriendly, or even hostile pro-Russian

Crimean authorities (Chazbijewicz, 2001a). It frequently took the form of hindering the acquisition of the Ukrainian citizenship that over 40% Tartars living in Crimea still do not have (Baluk, 2002). The Tartar people faced religious discrimination and encountered obstacles when opening schools with the Tartar language and reintroducing old Tartar names (Kucy, 2006). On the other hand, Tartars frequently met with unfriendliness of the local people, especially the Russians. Those conflicts were usually triggered by the Tartars reclaiming their farms lost in the past. That negative attitude of the Crimean inhabitants to the Tartar repatriates was even more fuelled by the local political authorities opposing the processes of the national revival of various minorities and supporting the visions of Russian or, alternatively, Russian-Ukrainian Crimea (Matelski, 2004; Kucy, 2006). The major problem of the Tartars coming back to Crimea was the lack of their own housing and employment. Although the Ukrainian government designated large construction areas and spent large sums of money on housing needs, until the beginning of 2002 less than 56% Tartar repatriates had their own house or flat. The others lived in temporary accommodation, e.g. in tents and at camping sites. The Tartar estates, which were usually built from scratch, did not have the basic infrastructural facilities, namely water, sewage system or electricity (Kucy, 2006). The financial situation of the Tartars was complicated by the fact that governmental means, which were meant to help them, were frequently suspended due to the economic crisis in Ukraine (Chazbijewicz, 2001a). Moreover, the Tartars frequently encountered discrimination when looking for jobs, especially in public offices. As a result, around 60% of the Tartars are unemployed (Baluk, 2002). It has not been easy to create administrative or representative structures of the reviving Tartar nation. In 1991 they summoned a national meeting of Tartars – *Kurultai*, which was formed by *Mağlis*, a representative body. The declarations and decisions made by *Kurultai* and *Mağlis* stressed the Crimean Tartars' rights to self-determination in their ethnic land. *Mağlis'* task was to “implement *Kurultai's* decisions, cooperate with state organs in matters connected with the issues of the Crimean – Tartar nation, solve problems concerning education, culture, religion, etc.” (Kucy, 2006, p.184). Although *Mağlis* has not been recognized in the Ukrainian and ARC constitution as the representative of the Tartar nation so far, it still has official relations with the Ukrainian President and government, with associations dealing with repatriates and with some countries, e.g. Turkey. Unfortunately, there are no Tartar representatives in the ARC Parliament, as well as in administrative authorities of different levels (Baluk, 2002; Kucy, 2006).

The aim of far-reaching activities of Tartar national movements is to create the autonomous republic in Crimea, functioning as part of Ukraine. It needs to be stressed that the

Crimean Tartars in Russian – Ukrainian conflicts always supported the Ukrainian side, being aware that “it is thanks to independent Ukraine – in spite of all shortcomings and problems – they finally had a real opportunity to return to their homeland” (Chazbijewicz, 2001b, p.180; Baluk, 2002). However, wishing to become an autonomous nation in the future, Tartars have to face contemporary threats, such as general cultural globalisation of the Crimean society, the assimilation of the young generation, the lack of a clearly specified position among other nationalities, especially in relations with the Russians and Ukrainians (Chazbijewicz, 2001b).

Apart from the conflict-generating and difficult ethnic situations, in Crimea one can observe many positive phenomena connected with the presence of various nationalities. As such one can consider all the signs of socio-cultural revival of minorities. One of its forms is the appearance of various organizations and associations, frequently establishing relations and starting to cooperate with other nationalities. In 1991 in Crimea there were several organizations of national minorities, e.g. Azerbaijani, Bulgarian, Georgian, Armenian and Crimchak. In 1993 at the conference of minority representatives they made a decision to form a common inter-ethnic party, which in 1995 was transformed into the Association of National Societies and Communities of Crimean Nations (Chazbijewicz, 2001a). Another positive sign was an international folk festival that took place in Crimea in 1997. The festival was an undertaking planned by the Ukrainian Council of Minority Representatives (Baluk, 2002).

Minority associations usually intend to unify the community and care for its culture. And so for instance in 1996 in Crimea they started to publish the “Surb Chacz” magazine, which was about the Armenian culture, in 1997 they consecrated a new Armenian church in Simferopol, and in the following years they remodelled the Surb Chacz monastery in the vicinity of Old Crimea. In a few Crimean towns there are Armenian schools operating, and at the University of Simferopol students can attend courses for future teachers of the Armenian language. Similar cultural-educational activity is run by the association of the Greek minority, which also prepares TV and radio programmes in Greek (www.eastway.pl).

After the post-war disintegration, the Karaim minority undergoes a revival too. Since the end of the 1980s associations unifying the members of that community have appeared, e.g. the Association of Crimean Karaims. They initiated the native language learning at the Karaim community centres. It was also thanks to them that the Karaim necropolis in Josaphat Valley was examined and the security watch of the fortress in Czufut-Kal was arranged. In 1995 the Association took part in the preparation for a conference concerning the centuries-long presence of the Karaims in Crimea (Romaško, 1995). In 1999 thanks to the efforts of the worshippers the Little Kenesa in the complex in Eupatoria was remodelled, which enabled the

local clergy to perform regular church services there (Połkanow, Połkanowa, Zinzchenko, 2004). Finally, in 2000 Crimean Karaim Spiritual Board was founded. It deals with the issue of regaining the rights to Cufut-Kale (Pilecki, 2004).

Since the beginning of the 1990s an increased socio-cultural activity has been manifested by the Polish minority. The goals of the Polish organizations in Crimea are as follows: “e.g. they try to cherish the Polish cultural heritage in Crimea by presenting the signs of the presence and activity of the Poles living there, reconstructing some signs of their activity, including churches, the revival of the Polish language, promotion of Polish education and science, (...), development of welfare institutions, e.g. for the elderly, numerous families and other people and families in need of pecuniary, legal and moral assistance” (Chodubski, 2004, pp.138-139). Extra emphasis is put on the Polish language and cultural education among the Polish diaspora as well as other people concerned. The Polish language is taught in several towns in Sunday schools and at two universities in Simferopol. The Catholic Church is also involved in the work of the Crimean Polish diaspora and pastoral care (Gadomski, 2004).

Conclusions

The principles of the ethnic policy of the Ukrainian authorities reflect their great respect for the ethnic variety of Ukraine. They aim to create the best opportunities for all the ethnic groups in the country to coexist in harmony. However, Crimea is one of the regions where it is especially difficult to ensure peaceful coexistence of all the nationalities. It partly results from their number, but most of all, from historically conditioned relations and contemporary problems of the Ukrainian state. Ukraine, which for not so long has been building the structures of a democratic and civic state, and in addition to that, is still struggling with an economic crisis, is not capable of catering for all the current political, social and economic needs of the minorities.

At the moment, the most urgent and difficult to solve ethnic problems in Crimea are the issues of the Russian and Tartar populations. The extreme destabilization of the ethnic status is caused by the nationalist and separatist attitude of the Russians, who have a negative approach to any signs of socio-cultural activity of the Ukrainians and Tartars. The solution of the problem is hindered by the support the Russian Federation gives to the Crimean Russians.

The situation of the Crimean Tartars calls for a lot of attention. The rebuilding of national structures, social and religious lives, as well as solving economic problems are the perspectives of the Tartar community for the next couple of years. What makes one feel more

optimistic is the situation of some other minorities. In spite of unfavourable circumstances, they have managed to keep their national identity, and now they are gradually rebuilding their social and cultural infrastructure.

The phenomena of the revival of various nationalities observed at the moment in Crimea along with the supportive attitude of the Ukrainian authorities to the multiethnic model of the country make it possible to expect that, after an almost 100-year break, the atmosphere of multiethnicity will return to the peninsula. Obviously, this is a long-term task. However, with the interest and engagement of all the ethnic groups, with the current ethnic policy and support of the Ukrainian state this aim is achievable.

References:

- Baluk W. 1998, *Grupy etniczne Ukrainy w procesie przemian ustrojowych*, Acta Universitatis Wratislaviensis, Nr 2049, Politologia XXII, p. 99-108.
- Baluk W. 2002, *Koncepcje polityki narodowościowej Ukrainy. Tradycje i współczesność*, Acta Universitatis Wratislaviensis, Nr 2348.
- Chazbijewicz S. 2001a, Awdet czyli powrót. Walka Tatarów krymskich o zachowanie tożsamości narodowej i niepodległość państwa po II wojnie światowej, Wyd. Uniwersytetu Warmińsko-Mazurskiego, Olsztyn.
- Chazbijewicz S. 2001b, *Tatarzy krymscy: walka o naród i wolną ojczyznę*, Oficyna Wydawnicza LIKON, Poznań, Wrzesnia.
- Chodubski A. 2004, *Polacy na Krymie w końcu XIX i na początku XX wieku* (in:) Polacy na Krymie. Edited by E. Walewander, "BAMKA", Lublin, pp. 117-140.
- Gadomski A. 2004, *Szkolnictwo polskie na Krymie*, (in:) Polacy na Krymie. Edited by E. Walewander, "BAMKA", Lublin, pp 157-165.
- Horska N. 2007, *Mniejszość rosyjska na Ukrainie* (in:) Ukraina w stosunkach międzynarodowych. Edited by M. Pietraś and T. Kapuśniak, Wyd. UMCS, Lublin, pp. 64-86.
- Hryszko R. 2004, *Z Genui nad Morze Czarne*, Towarzystwo Wydawnicze „Historia Iagellonica”, Kraków.
- Karaimi: III Pieniężnińskie Spotkania z Religiami. Materiały z sesji naukowej. Edited by A. Dubiński and E. Śliwka, Muzeum Misyjno-Etnograficzne Seminarium Duchownego Księży Werbistów, Pieniężno, 1987.

- Kefeli A. S. 2004, *Karaimi jako zesańcy „specjalni”*. *Mało znane stronice historii narodu karaimskiego* (in:) Karaj kiuńlari. Dziedzictwo Narodu Karaimskiego we współczesnej Europie. Edited by M. Abkowicz and H. Jankowski, „Bitik” Oficyna Wydawnicza ZKP, Wrocław, pp. 37-40.
- Kucy A. 2006, *Problem Tatarów krymskich po rozpadzie Związku Radzieckiego* (in:) Mniejszości narodowe i etniczne w procesach transformacji oraz integracji. Edited by E. Michalik and H. Chałupczak, Wyd. UMCS, Lublin, pp. 181-187.
- Matelski D. 2004, *Narody słowiańskie i niesłowiańskie na Krymie w XIX i XX wieku* (in:) Polacy na Krymie. Edited by E. Walewander, “BAMKA”, Lublin, pp. 93-116.
- Pełczyński G. 1995, *Najmniejsza mniejszość. Rzecz o Karaimach polskich*, Wyd. Stanisław Kryciński i Towarzystwo Karpackie, Warszawa.
- Pilecki S. 2004, *Karaimi* (in:) Karaj kiuńlari. Dziedzictwo Narodu Karaimskiego we współczesnej Europie. Edited by M. Abkowicz and H. Jankowski, „Bitik” Oficyna Wydawnicza ZKP, Wrocław, pp. 17-20.
- Połkanow J., Połkanowa A., Zinczenko N. 2004, *Krymscy Karaimi – Karaje. Stan i perspektywy zachowania etnokultury. Z przeszłości w przyszłość* (in:) Karaj kiuńlari. Dziedzictwo Narodu Karaimskiego we współczesnej Europie. Edited by M. Abkowicz and H. Jankowski, „Bitik” Oficyna Wydawnicza ZKP, Wrocław, pp. 140-151.
- Romaško N. 1995, *Karaimi na Krymie w XX wieku*, Rocznik Muzułmański, R. IV, T. 3, pp. 76-80.
- Wielki atlas historyczny świata, Wyd. Demart, Warszawa, 2003.
- www.eastway.pl
- www.turkiye.net/sotakaraim
- www.ukrcensus.gov.ua
- Zastavnyj F. D. 1994, *Geografija Ukrainy*, Wyd. „Svit”, L’viv
- Zastavnyj F. D. 2003, *Demografični vtraty Ukrainy, Golodomory, vijny, emigraciji*, Ministerstvo Osvity i Nauki Ukrainy, L’vivs’kyj Nacional’nyj Uniwersytet im. I. Franka, L’viv.
- Jakowenko N. 2000, *Historia Ukrainy do końca XVIII wieku.*, Instytut Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej, Lublin.

Summary

The paper presents the issue of the multi-ethnicity of Crimea. Due to its rich history, the peninsula has always been an example of the co-existence of numerous nations and tribes. They changed over the ages and each of them left some traces in Crimea's cultural landscape.

At the end of the 18th century the peninsula was incorporated by the Russian Empire. As a result its multi-ethnicity became limited and some nationalities were discriminated against. It mainly concerned Tatars who were an indigenous nation of Crimea. Repressive measures against different ethnic minorities intensified under the Soviet regime and they became the most severe during the World War II. However, since 1945 Crimea has been almost a homogenous region as to its national structure.

The situation in Crimea changed at the beginning of the 1990s, when the Soviet Union collapsed and all the minorities got an opportunity to revive their national identity as well as social and cultural life. However, this process, which also encompasses regulating inter-ethnic relations, is long-lasting and requires interest and involvement of all nationalities and assistance from the authorities.