

FROM KRESY TO KAZAKHSTAN: THREE GENERATIONS OF POLISH
MINORITY

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts in
Eurasian Studies

at

NAZARBAYEV UNIVERSITY – SCHOOL OF SCIENCES AND
HUMANITIES

2022

Acknowledgements

I want to thank all faculty members of GSSH. Due to their help, I was able to write this study, and to present it in the form of thesis. I admire the professionalism of Zbigniew Wojnowski and Mikhail Akulov for their contribution to the development of my study. Special thanks to my supervisors – Curtis Murphy for his support of the study for giving me feedback owing to which I found out the right direction for the whole research and completed my thesis.

Abstract

This study aims to investigate the transformations of ethnic identity of three generations of Kazakhstani Poles and their ancestors who were deported from Ukraine to Kazakhstan in the 1930s. Deportation and Sovietization led to the impoverishment of ethnic identity, therefore in independent Kazakhstan Poles had to look for new sources of identification. On the basis of preserved ethnicity Poles pursue two opposite trends: the reconstruction of identity on the basis of preserved ethnicity or try to distance themselves from it by assimilation. The base of the research is collections of memoirs and fieldwork data in the village Kamenka in North Kazakhstan. Thesis uses the generational approach to show how the boundaries of ethnic identity have been changed inside the community. Using this approach, we emphasize the importance of historical memory. We cannot exclude the historical narrative and use only recollections to save the objectivity of the presented facts, recollections show the transmission of specific characteristics and their erasing from generation to generation.

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NAZARBAYEV UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

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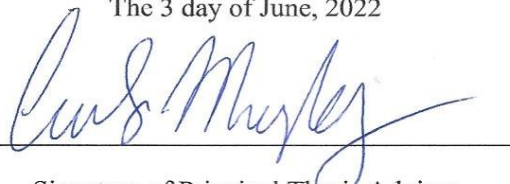
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Introduction

The phenomenon of ethnicity and ethnic identity is one of the most fluid in relation to historical realities. These concepts are transformed under the influence of social and political processes, and often participate in them. In the modern world ethnicity does not lose its relevance both in socio-political and scientific discourse. And the changes in the nature of this phenomenon can be traced by certain historical examples. The focus of this work is the fate of the Polish population that inhabited the territories of Western Ukraine and Belarus.

Since the first decades of the Soviet period this Polish population have come under the repressive operations of the government: first dekulakization, then terror, then mass purges of the 1930s and military repressions of the 1940s. Most of them were exiled to special settlements in Siberia, Ural, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. However, only certain groups had to stay in the deportation points for the next generations. Kazakhstani Poles from Western Ukraine and Belarus became one of them. On the example of this group we can trace the crystallization and following transformation of ethnic identity which escalated in the Soviet period, although the identity formation process had begun earlier.

Since the time of tsarism, the West borderland¹ of the Russian Empire has been perceived by the authorities as a hindrance due to their complex ethnic composition and non-compliance with state initiatives.² The same thing continued in the Soviet Union, first Poles reluctantly accepted Soviet power, avoided joining collective farms and followed the authorities' rules. In 1932, when most of Ukrainian territories were almost collectivized, most regions of the border zone lagged behind, with Polish Marchlevsk at the bottom rung, recording only seven percent.³ From a geopolitical point of view, the Poles were seen as a subversive element for imperial authorities and for Bolsheviks, although in the borderlands – strategically important lands for the Soviet Union, especially in the interwar period, – the authorities could hardly allow any deviation from their ideological and economic plan. However, there was little progress on the Western borders, especially among scattered villages and hamlets: the pace of collectivization in Western Ukraine was low.

¹ These territories had different names. In Polish historiography it is called *kresy*, in Russian – *okrainy*. We will develop the former, as this term came to wider use.

² Since the partitions of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, the Russian Empire struggled with the solution for the 'national question.' In spite of several operations of Russification, adding the economic sanction into them, only 4% spoke Russian as the first language, the language of majority was Ukrainian, and the rest of the population spoke Polish and Yiddish. Polish nobles who mostly supported Polish patriots controlled much of the lands in the Right bank. At the beginning of XX century other nationalist movements of non-Russian groups emerged (Ukrainian, Lithuanian, Jewish, Georgian, Armenian, etc.). They became the significant forces in the political movements for the reforms. The government considered them as "chauvinist and divisive" and tried to diminish them. They failed these national challenges, it brought the Empire to the political crisis which ended with the socialist revolution (Hillis, Faith. 2013. *Children of Rus': Right-Bank Ukraine and the Invention of a Russian Nation*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 4–6).

³ Brown, Kate. 2009. *Biography of No Place. From Ethnic Borderland to Soviet Heartland*. Harvard University Press, 109.

In the 1920s and 1930s, nationalist movements were active in these territories, which partly prompted the authorities to take radical measures – repression. By the mid-1930s, an inflection along the ethnic line began and not members of secret organizations, officers and soldiers of the Polish army, but also ordinary residents who somehow showed their Polishness or had an indirect relationship to the “enemies of the people” fell under suspicion and punishment.⁴ Since 1936 most of the Poles were deported to Siberia and the Central Asian republics, including Kazakhstan.

Deportations launched the process of adaptation and transformation of ethnic identity. The first generation were treated as ‘state’s betrayers’, whereas their children became Soviet citizens because of strong ideological influence. The deportation reasons, process and following Sovietization of the deportees is well-researched and documented, while the post-Soviet period is least popular among researchers. There are various theories on mass deportations and the archival collections on every ethnic group that were deported, but the fate of the Polish minority (as well as other minorities) in independent Kazakhstan remains hazy. The topic of deportations became one of the key factors of Kazakhstani-Polish diplomatic relationships. Hence, Kazakhstan supports

⁴ Savin, Andrey. 2017. “Ethnification of Stalinism? Ethnic Cleansings and the NKVD Order No 00447 in a Comparative Perspective” In *Ethnic and Religious Minorities in Stalin’s Soviet Union: New Dimensions of Research*. edited by Kotljarchuk Andrej and Sundström Olle. Huddinge: Södertörns högskola, 47–67.

repatriation programs and local Polish communities work on spreading knowledge about Poland, including language and culture. However, state activities do not cover the ethnographic component of this heterogeneous ethnic group which includes Poles from Ukraine, Belarus and West territories.

Meanwhile the interest in national history is growing among the Kazakhstan population and the problems of historical memory as the source of identity appears more often in scientific discourse. The members of the Polish community in Kazakhstan also struggle with identification problems.

The main argument of this thesis is that Kazakhstani Poles were cut from the culture of ancestors by Sovietization which led to the identity crisis which generated two opposite trends: the reconstruction of identity on the basis of preserved ethnicity and the attempt to distance themselves from it by assimilation.

The phenomenon of ethnicity was significant for every generation of Poles as an essential part of the construction of the personal and collective identity. We see that the stability of their ethnic identification is mostly the reaction of outside coercion. This fact is confirmed by the constructivist theory which claims that ethnic identity/-ies frequently develop out of recognition and articulation of a shared experience of discrimination and subordination.⁵

⁵ Barth, Fredrik. 1998. *Ethnic groups and boundaries: The social organization of culture difference*. Waveland Press, 13.

Moreover, every generation transformed their traditions and other cultural features without changing their self-determined ethnicity which defines the nature of this phenomenon as “ascriptive and exclusive”.⁶ Talking about the reasons for these transformations, we cannot refer to Barth’s book, because among his external reasons which could influence the ethnic boundaries (personal choice, economical and demographical reasons, ecological circumstances)⁷ the political forces were barely mentioned. This thesis focuses on the transformations of ethnic identity under the different political regimes and the actions every of them affected this group of Poles.

This thesis concerns the ‘ethnic–state’ relations which had a contradictory nature. The state can form ethnicities, as the colonialists did it with African tribes, but more often governments use ethnicities for nation-building, as it was in the imperial period. The modern Kazakhstan also appeals to the ethnic roots trying to recreate Kazakh nation after the colonial and Soviet period. Soviet nation-building was quite different from imperial and modern. And since much attention is paid to the ethnopolitics of the Soviet period in this work, it is necessary to define some terms. After a period of searching and experiments Soviet authorities accepted Stalin’s hierarchy of peoples (*narody*) which

⁶ Ibid, 14.

⁷ Ibid, 13.

includes nation (*natsiya*) – nationality (*narodnost*) – tribe (*plemya*).⁸ A nation was defined as a community of people with obligatory characteristics: territory, common form of economy, language, culture. Nations had the right for creation of an administrative-territorial unit, autonomies were created for nationalities if they could prove economic efficiency, and tribes (most often ethnic minorities of other countries on Soviet territory or without statehood) were used as a production force for more numerous and structured ethnic national units and in most of the times were assimilated with them. The ethnic factor was eventually united under the general concept of "friendship of peoples", but it did not become the main one in Soviet times. The Bolsheviks supported the multi-identities, which should have been headed by a social, or supranational, which unified all 'Soviet people' (*sovetskii narod*). Party leaders conceived this category as a multi-faceted identity, "entailed a promise of ethnic tolerance and equality."⁹ Soviet wars distinguish the USSR's citizens from outsiders, defining them as followers of socialists values and ideals, instead of capitalist and bourgeois. The Sovietization of Polish minorities separated two generations and left an indelible mark on the modern generation of the descendants of the deportees, so this process takes up most of this research.

⁸ Stalin, Joseph. 1929. *The national question and Leninism*. New York: International Publishers, 3.

⁹ Wojnowski, Zbigniew. 2015. "The Soviet people: national and supranational identities in the USSR after 1945." *Nationalities Papers*, 43(1), 3. DOI: 10.1080/00905992.2014.953467

Besides that, this thesis uses the generational approach to show how the boundaries of ethnic identity have been changed inside the community. Using this approach, we emphasize the importance of historical memory. Memory is not an unmediated reproduction of the past, but the selected recreation depends on the social context of the individuals or the community.¹⁰ We cannot exclude the historical narrative and use only recollections to save the objectivity of the presented facts, but memory of deported Poles is the main tool for the research because it represents “the history that cannot be written.”¹¹ In other words, recollections show the transmission of specific characteristics and their erasing from generation to generation. The notion of ‘generation’ in this thesis is similar to Karl Mannheim’s understanding of this term. Equal to cohort, generation is considered as a social phenomenon, rather than biological, based on socio-historical bonds more than kinship.¹² Mannheim claims that without outside coercion the new generation/cohort’s change is slow, but “only where events occur in such a manner as to demarcate a cohort in terms of its “historical-social” consciousness, we can speak about true generation.”¹³ And the fate of Polish groups from non-Polish territories is the practical example of

¹⁰ Huyssen, A. 1995. *Twilight Memories: Marking Time in a Culture of Amnesia*. London: Routledge.

¹¹ Lambek, Michael. 2002. *The Weight of the Past: Living with History in Mahajanga, Madagascar*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 211.

¹² Mannheim, Karl. 1952. The Problem of Generations. In Kecskemeti, Paul (ed.). *Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge: Collected Works*. New York: Routledge, 276–322.

¹³ Schuman, Howard, and Jacqueline, Scott. 1989. Generations and Collective Memories. *American Sociological Review*, 359. DOI:10.2307/2095611

this statement. Being an ethnic and religious minority, Polish peasants and minor nobility could not really fit into the state and national hierarchy of the Russian Empire, as they barely accepted the Soviet power, without the state violations which forced the population to obey. And if the imperial authorities forced Poles to crystalize their ethnic identity with Russification processes, the Soviet authorities sealed the ethnicity for the Polish deportees by the forced dislocation and following isolation in special settlements.

Therefore, we distinguish the generation of deportation (first), Soviet generation (second) and the generation of Kazakhstani Poles (third). Every chapter is dedicated to each cohort and their epoch. We also introduce the term ‘liminal generation’ which represents that group of Poles who had been caught in the crossfire. Their identity formation had two controversial sources: parents’ knowledge (with the remains of *kresy* local identity) at home and the Soviet state ideology in public spaces. Liminal generation includes the children of deportations (born between 1920–1935).

Divided into three chapters, this thesis explores how the Polish community’s ethnic identity transforms under historical and political circumstances. The first chapter provides a detailed overview of the *kresy* – pre-deportational – identity of the Polish population and its transformation under the dislocations to Kazakhstan. Specifically, the chapter describes the

historical turbulences which had pushed the Polish population to deeper localization, which facilitated the development of 'new' local identity within special settlements.

Chapter two focuses on war and post-Stalin periods exploring the ways of Sovietization of the Polish minority. This part of the thesis represents the causes of social integration of the second generation through the disconnection from ethnic identity and local parents' identity. Also, it touches on the continuing processes deviated from public policy like Catholic movement.

Chapter three is dedicated to the third cohort of Polish deportees. Post-Soviet period is characterized by the certain ways of ethnic identification based on the present official policy of Kazakhstan and Poland, connection to the family and relatives, personal choice and economical situation in the region. The post-Soviet as well as the modern period is characterized by the segmentation of Polish groups of different awareness about family history and/or the intensity of ethnic identity. The difference of this period from the previous is that the links between generations are direct and open: family knowledge and ethnic culture or neutralized (Sovietized) culture can be traced between three-four generations.

The materials on the history of the Polish ethnic group are wide and diverse. The research is drawn from three kinds of primary sources: oral and

written recollections, field observations and archival documents. Only a few research books contain archival data of the imperial and early Soviet period.¹⁴ Many recollections of the Soviet and modern period as many public archival materials of the Soviet time collected in the edited volumes or documentary collections. Also, the publications of the official Polish community “Więź” called *Almatyński Kurier Polonijny* are used as the primary source for this thesis. However, most of them are limited to the data on internal culture (family tradition and beliefs) and do not cover the Polish populations of all regions in Kazakhstan. Therefore, I decided to fulfill the data with oral histories and field observations in one of the former special settlements. The fieldwork was held in the village Kamenka in Astrakhan’ region with 185 houses and 790 peoples, half of them Poles. It is not encouraged to discuss the topic of deportations in this community, as well as the issues of ethnicity and ethnic identification, especially with outsiders. Every interviewee has personal reasons for such aversion, although within every family this recollection is the part of heritage and it is important to transmit it. Being a part of this community I had the opportunity to collect memoirs avoiding the obstacles that the newcomers could face. At the same time I did not reach those members who are not close to my

¹⁴ See Brown, Kate. 2009. *Biography of No Place. From Ethnic Borderland to Soviet Heartland*. Harvard University Press. Snyder, Timothy. 2002. *The Reconstruction of Nations: Poland, Ukraine, Lithuania, Belarus, 1569-1999*. Yale University Press.

relatives and acquaintances in Kamenka. Nevertheless, I have collected quite necessary materials including the prayers written in the local patois *surzhyk* and Polish-Ukrainian songs. Moreover, I found a two-volume autobiography of the Catholic priest Waclaw Poplawski who was born and raised in Kamenka.

Besides the history of the Catholic church in Kazakhstan, he described a lot of local cultural features. The fieldwork covers not only Kamenka but also deportees descendants in Nur-Sultan city and those Kamenka inhabitants who were repatriated to Poland recently. Thesis contains not only the data from interviews that were recorded in June 2021 but also the observations from more than 15 years that I have visited Kamenka where me and my sister were christened and where my grandparents, godparents, aunts, uncles, cousins and other relatives still live.

In June I managed to collect four interviews in Kamenka and one later in January. Most of them were with the older generation and each of them lasted about one hour. Face-to-face interviews were highly effective and brought the most applicable data, because during the interview-conversation villagers forgot about the recording and told to me new facts about their lives or the facts that they did not want to share “for research purposes” at the beginning or were afraid to make mistakes in dates or names. There are not a lot of people of age less than 50 who live in the village permanently. Firstly, I asked a friend of mine

and his parents to give the interview, but I was suddenly denied. Only my Godfather agreed to speak with me and (what is more important) found time for the interview. Because mostly they were busy with their daily routine. With other second-generation representatives, I met later in Nur-Sultan. For second and third generations I had to adapt my questionnaire to survey because it was more comfortable for them to fill the document without interviews. I collected 10 surveys (4 from the second generation and 6 – from the third) in June 2021.

This is a wide and ambitious topic which is difficult to research fully in the context of a Master's thesis. The main goal for this work is to show how the ethnic identity had transformed through the generations and what role state apparatus played in these transformations. The most difficult period for research is the modern time. The process of ethnic identification is ongoing, and my findings and outcomes could be fulfilled by the more recent. For example, this work does not fully cover the quantitative side of repatriations to Poland. As well as I could not it is impossible to fully trace the migration processes in which Poles of Kazakhstan were/are involved.

Nevertheless, this study enriches the history of Poles in Kazakhstan and covers the postcolonial and identity studies, the history of Soviet oppressive policies and its consequences, also, it helps to shape the understanding of the

role and state policy of the ethnic minorities in post-Soviet and modern
Kazakhstan.

Chapter I. Transformation of the local identity: the first generations of deportees

In the 1930-s during the anti-kulak, collectivization, and Great Terror campaign Kazakhstan became the place of destination for millions of exiles, including many ethnic groups (Germans, Poles, Koreans, Ingush, Kalmyks, Tatars, Finns, Greeks, etc.). In total, by the end of 1945, according to the NKVD data, there were more than two million people in the special settlement.¹⁵ However, it is quite problematic to determine how many Poles were deported to Kazakhstan due to the large number of Soviet repressive operations, points of dislocations and waves of deportations.

The researcher identifies two main waves of deportation of Poles¹⁶: in 1936-1937 by Decree of the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR No. 776-120ss (45,000 people, including the German and Polish population¹⁷) and in 1940-41 by Decree No. 497-177ss (103,757 people – officially Poles¹⁸).¹⁹ The

¹⁵ Bugai, Nikolai. 1978. Iosif Stalin–Lavrentii Beriiia: “Ikh Nado deportirovat”: Dokumenty, fakty, komentarii [in Russian]. Moscow: Druzhba Narodov, 14.

¹⁶ Ibid, 5.

¹⁷ Council of People's Commissars of the USSR. Postanovlenie SNK SSSR No 776-120ss “O vyselenii iz USSR i hozjajstvennom ustrojstve v Karagandinskoj obl. KASSR 15 tys. pol'skih i nemeckih hozjajstv”. Almaty: LEM, 2014.

¹⁸ Council of People's Commissars of the USSR. Postanovlenie SNK SSSR No 497-177ss ob utverzhenii “Instrukcii o vyselenii iz zapadnyh oblastej USSR i BSSR lic, ukazannyh v Postanovlenii SNK Sojuza SSR ot 2 marta 1940 g. No 289-127ss”. Almaty: LEM, 2019.

¹⁹ There is also the data of two censuses which share the numbers of Poles in Soviet Republics in 1926 and 1939. According to these, Kazakhstan hosted 51 thousands Poles for 13 years, whereas 116 thousands “disappeared” from Ukraine and 39 thousands – from Belarus for the same period (Shinkevich, S., and Zarinov, Igor. 1992. “Poljaki Rossijskoj imperii: istoricheskaja spravka i harakteristika sovremennoj situacii”. *Research in Applied Ethnology*, 13). Polish researcher Iwanow argues that the initial statistics was understated about 3 times, he refers to a secret document of the Director of the Minsk branch of the Statistical Department (Iwanow, Mikołaj. 1990. *Polacy w Związku Radzieckim w latach 1921–1939*, Wrocław, 69–72).

first wave included mainly the rural population from Zhytomyr, Vinnytsia and Kiev regions, who were legally registered as kulaks and “subversives” of the Soviet government; the second wave included categories of family members of prisoners of war and officers of the Polish army, police, intelligence officers, as well as “refugees from the territory of f[ormer] Poland, which had retreated to Germany, who expressed a desire to leave the Soviet Union for the territory now occupied by the Germans, and were not accepted by the German government.”²⁰

Bugai indicates that they were mostly residents of eastern Poland, most of the refugees were from the Ukrainian-Polish (Lviv and Galicia regions) and Belarusian-Polish borderlands (Brest and Grodno regions).²¹ At the end of the war, most of the deportees of the second wave were repatriated back. The law provided for the repatriation of only that part of the Poles who were Polish citizens before 1939.²²

Therefore, Soviet Polish exiles groups were not homogenous, every of them was subjected for different reasons, every of them were involved in different production spheres (agriculture, manufacture or mining), every group had unique background and cultural features, and the deportations affected

²⁰ Council of People's Commissars of the USSR. Postanovlenie SNK SSSR No 497-177ss ob utverzhdenii “Instrukcii o vyselenii iz zapadnyh oblastej USSR i BSSR lic, ukazannyh v Postanovlenii SNK Sojuza SSR ot 2 marta 1940 g. No 289-127ss”. Almaty: LEM, 2019.

²¹ Bugai, N.F. 1978. Iosif Stalin–Lavrentii Berii: “Ikh Nado deportirovat”: Dokumenty, fakty, kommentarii. Moscow: Druzhba Narodov, 5.

²² Kość-Ryżko, Katarzyna. 2013. “Doświadczenie wywózki i życia na zesłaniu w relacjach Polaków wywiezionych z Kresów w latach 1940–1941.” *Studia BAS*, 2(34), 44.

every of them differently. The focus of this thesis is the deportees inhabited the Right Bank Ukraine, Western Belarus – borderland territories between Poland and Soviet Russia – subjected during the first wave of deportation and had to stay in the deportation regions for centuries.

According to the 1926 Soviet Census, there were more than 400 thousand Poles in the Ukrainian Republic and 97 thousand in Belarus.²³ And this census occasioned debates on (ethnic) nationalities and languages, which were recorded separately.²⁴ Nevertheless, what is sure is that in the borderland of Ukraine, Belarus and Poland the population represented varieties of ethnic, language and religious hybrids for centuries (borderlands' ethnic map included Poles, Germans, Jews, Ukrainians, Belarusians, Czechs, Russians and others). The ethnic identity was mostly a matter of self-definition, which confused the officials.²⁵ In the 1920s, when Soviet authorities decided to recognize in greater depth the origins of the population who defined themselves Poles (to establish the national districts and ethnic villages in Ukraine and Belarus), although “it took years to sort the borderlands, dividing Polonized Ukrainians from

²³ Eremenko T. 1994. *Pol'ska nacjunal'na menshina v Ukraini v 20-30-ti rr. XX stolitja* [in Ukrainian]. Kiyev, 695.

²⁴ In this regard, Dönninghaus also points out the problem of ethnic transitions (peretekanie) – from Polish to Ukrainians and Belarussian – which were initiated by the census workers to the people who did not speak Polish or who were not born in Poland and by the population to avoid persecution based on continuous suspicions of Polish espionage (Dönninghaus, Viktor. 2011. V teni “Bol'shogo brata.” *Zapadnye men'shinstva a SSSR 1917–1938 gg.* [In Russian] Moscow: Rosspen, 71–75.).

²⁵ Hirsch, Francine. 1997. “The Soviet Union as a Work-In-Progress: Ethnographers and the Category “Nationality” in 1926, 1937, and 1939 Censuses.” *Slavic Review*, 56(2), 255.

Ukrainized Poles” and “Ukrainian from dialects of Belorussian,”²⁶ the ancestors of that population were Poles.

Also, the authorities found out that ethnicity was a matter of family links and thinner cultural features (religion, in most cases). For the rural population the place of living was a locus of those links. Every village in the borderland had their ethnic composition with different proportions of the Ukrainians, Poles, Germans, Jews, etc. And rarely villages combined into larger units, preferring isolation.²⁷ Nevertheless, the Soviets came to “the ethnification of the enemies” principle, which led not only to party purges, but also to the purification of borderland territories on the West and East, and mass deportations of ethnic groups to remote territories of the Union.

This chapter will discuss the core of the ethnic identity of the Polish group and its transformation after the deportations in the 1930s. I claim that despite all the turbulence of dislocations, deportees saved the pre-deportation worldview and extrapolated/adapted it to the new circumstances. Meanwhile, as the pressure of the authorities on the population increased, more and more features of the Polish population were “erased”, besides the main feature which is

²⁶ Brown, Kate. 2009. *Biography of No Place. From Ethnic Borderland to Soviet Heartland*. Harvard University Press, 9.

²⁷ *Ibid*, 84.

self-determination. The focus is on the first generation of the deportees who became the base of ethnic identity for the next generations.

Prehistory: the reasons of deportations

Before the examination of the Polish ethnic identity we have to focus on the reasons that caused mass deportations. In explaining these reasons, researchers mention concerns of the Soviet authorities based on the official perceptions of the Polish population and remembering Polish uprisings.²⁸ The notions of “fifth column” and “cleansings” also appear in the papers on the reasons for massive deportations. Particularly radical researchers imply genocide.²⁹ Brown supports the idea that the reason for deportations is dedicated to a broader context of nation-building – “creating distilled nation-space” – the place of one nation cleared from minorities.³⁰

In general, researchers agree about the practical reasons for deportation. The majority of the researchers point at “security problems” or the fight with “total espionage”³¹ and some believe that deportations were ethnic cleansings as a punishment for “bourgeois nationalism.”³² The last theory seems radical;

²⁸ Kotljarchuk, Andrej. 2017. “Introduction.” In *Ethnic and Religious Minorities in Stalin’s Soviet Union: New Dimensions of Research*, eds. Kotljarchuk, Andrej, and Olle Sundström Södertörns högskola.

²⁹ Pohl, Otto J. 2016. “The Persecution of Ethnic Germans in the USSR during World War II.” *The Russian Review*, 75(2), 285.

³⁰ Brown, Kate. 2009. *Biography of No Place. From Ethnic Borderland to Soviet Heartland*. Harvard University Press, 230.

³¹ Kotljarchuk, Andrej. 2017. “Introduction.” In *Ethnic and Religious Minorities in Stalin’s Soviet Union: New Dimensions of Research*, eds. Kotljarchuk, Andrej, and Olle Sundström Södertörns högskola.

³² Martin, Terry D. 2001. *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923–1939*. Cornell University Press.

however, they are not groundless. The history of Soviet–Polish relations is not impeccable. The military conflict between Bolsheviks and Poles in 1919–1921 represents the attitudes of two states: Poland had sought independence instead of being a part of the Union. Moreover, the rural population of the borderland population of the Right Bank Ukraine did not accept the Bolsheviks friendly. Due to a lot of economic struggles (caused by the war, revolution and collectivisation), there were a series of uprisings in villages in the 1930s.³³ Some groups who lived very close to the Polish borders marched there chanting “Beat the communists, Poland will help us.” And those groups included Poles and Ukrainians.³⁴ Based on the economic situation, Brown addresses the idea of the ‘backwardness’ of the West borderland that was prevalent in Soviet official rhetoric and became one of the reasons for reshaping *kresy*.³⁵

Ultimately, massive ethnic deportations could be a pre-war borderline cleansing which solved the security problem. Although the Decree No 776-120 on the eviction of 15,000 Polish and German households from Ukraine does not contain the direct reason for displacements, like the Order of the NKVD Directorate for the Leningrad region No 0100 does, the subjected population

³³ There is no evidence that rebellions in the western borderlands were before the 1930s. Kate Brown mentions only two centers of uprisings – Kalinivka and Golynchintsy (Brown, Kate. 2009. *Biography of No Place. From Ethnic Borderland to Soviet Heartland*. Harvard University Press, 105).

³⁴ Vasil’ev, Valeriy & Viola, Linn. 1997. *Kollektivizatsiia i krestjanskoe soprotivlenie na Ukraine (noyabr’ 1929 – mart 1930 gg.)* [in Russian]. Logos, 241.

³⁵ Brown, Kate. 2009. *Biography of No Place. From Ethnic Borderland to Soviet Heartland*. Harvard University Press, 6.

was called “unreliable” for the first time in the letter from the People's Commissar of the NKVD G.G. Yagoda to the Chairman of the SNK V.M. Molotov about the resettlement of Polish families from the border areas of the Vinnytsia and Kiev regions (27th October, 1935).³⁶

First Polish deportees were sent to special settlements or the places that they had to organize had the status like that. The legal status of deportees was equal to the first Soviet deportees – *kulaks* – they were labeled as special settlers. According to Zemskov, until 1934, peasants sent into “kulak exile” were called special settlers (*spetspereselentsy*), in 1934–1944 – labor settlers, since 1944 – special settlers (*spetsposeleentsy*), and all these three terms are synonymous.³⁷ The special settlers formally retained the status of ordinary citizens of the USSR, but were deprived of the right to leave the place of residence established by the state, their labor was used in various types of work, mainly in the area of responsibility of the GULAG. The social-ethnic deportations of the 1930–1940s had much in common with the social deportations in the process and functions, but kulaks from one region knew that they were accused by trial, whereas Polish deportees had different views on the reasons for relocations. And most of them did not know they were sent to

³⁶ Jagoda Genrih Grigor'evich to Molotov Vjacheslav Mihajlovich, 27 October 1935, CPC USSR №13809, Alexandr N. Yakovlev Archive, The fund of Alexandr N. Yakovlev, Russia.

³⁷ Zemskov, V. 2005. Special settlers in the USSR, 1930–1960 [In Russian]. Moscow: Nauka, 3.

Kazakhstan as convicts. Moreover, Polish deportees barely fit the class description of *kulak*. This fact influenced the perceptions of the deportees toward Soviet authorities which will be described in the next subchapters as well as the interpretations of the reasons for deportation from the deportees themselves.

In fact, reasons for deportations of every wave should be explored separately based on the contingent of deportees and the situation in the region. However, all of them were “an amalgam of policies aimed at both social welfare, social protection, and punishment.”³⁸

Kresy local identity

The literature on the culture of the Polish population before deportations is puzzling and fragmented. The main obstacle and the feature to provide the complete image of this ethnic group is the location. The interethnic nature and ‘between-the-states’ position made the culture ‘fluid’ and hybrid.

Geographically, *kresy* is the area between the Dniestr and Dnipr rivers.³⁹ At the present time, all these regions are divided between Western Ukraine, Western Belarus, and South-Eastern Lithuania.

³⁸ Ibid, 91.

³⁹ Ibid, 18.

The ethnic, religious and language composition of these regions were heterogeneous. The population of the *kresy* included Poles, Germans, Jews, Ukrainians, Belarusians, Czechs and Russians. All of them interacted with each other, primarily for economic reasons, adopting languages and characters. Overall, Kate Brown describes the synthesis of the region in this way: "...where many Poles spoke Ukrainian, where traditionally Orthodox Ukrainians went to Catholic or Protestant churches, where Jews mixed Russian into their Yiddish or Yiddish into their Russian, and where settlements of Germans, Czechs, and even Swedes pockmarked the nominally Ukrainian countryside."⁴⁰ Even Hybrid Uniate Church⁴¹ was formed there.⁴²

In political discourse *kresy* has defined different regions from different perspectives. In Poland-Lithuania, this word was employed for referring to the militarized frontier with the Ottoman Empire and the Crimean Khanate.⁴³ It is also largely associated with the northern areas of the "Pale of Settlement", devised by Catherine the Great to limit Jews' settlement (1791–1917). With the rise of Polish ethnolinguistic nationalism in the late XIXth century this word was employed for denoting the eastern half of former Poland-Lithuania. At that

⁴⁰ Brown, Kate. 2009. *Biography of No Place. From Ethnic Borderland to Soviet Heartland*. Harvard University Press, 8.

⁴¹ The "union" of Eastern Orthodoxy with Roman Catholicism occurred at the Union of Brest (1596).

⁴² Magosci, P. Robert. 1996. *A History of Ukraine*. Toronto, 163.

⁴³ Eberhardt, Piotr. 2004. *Polska i jej granice. Z historii polskiej geografii politycznej* [in Polish]. Lublin.

period the *kresy* had been correlated to Russian *okrainy* ('an edge', 'a periphery'), which referred to 'non-Russian' (or 'non-Russophone') western peripheries of the Empire.⁴⁴

In the XIXth century both states sought to nationalize these territories. From the imperial perspective it was a positive modernizing policy of Russification (*obrusenie*) and the Polish national movement's Polonization (*polonizacja*).⁴⁵ The latter had a limited effect when Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was divided between three empires. After the Partitions of Poland all territories of former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, including *kresy*, were the subject of November and January Uprisings, but firstly Polish insurgents fought against the Russian Empire. In response the Russian authorities resorted to intensified persecution, confiscations of property, bans of the sale of lands to Catholics and repressions to Siberia and Kazakhstan. These actions marginalized the borderlands economically. The tsarist authorities also changed the administrative organization. Moreover, under the policy of assimilation Russian language was introduced in schools and others were banned.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Kamusella, Tomasz. 2018. "The Russian Okrainy (Окраины) and the Polish Kresy: Objectivity and Historiography." *Global Intellectual History*, 22(1). DOI:10.1080/23801883.2018.1511186

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Snyder, Timothy. 2002. *The Reconstruction of Nations: Poland, Ukraine, Lithuania, Belarus, 1569-1999*. Yale University Press, 34.

The next historical occasions contributed further economic backwardness of the kresy region: the WWI, the civil war, the Polish-Soviet War brought the chaos in a decade. Same was on the social perspective. At the beginning of XX century these territories and the terms *kresy* and *okrainy* served Moscow and Warsaw political potentials, continuing the earlier Russian imperial and Polish nationalist discourses. During 1920–1929, when *kresy* had divided between Poland and the Soviet Ukraine, Poland took a particular try to annex the region by sending *osadnicy* (Polish settlers, retired Polish Army servicemen) there under the Riga Peace Treaty of 1921. In response Soviet state chartered national minority regions and villages in Ukraine and tried to gain trust of minorities by designing an adequate Soviet national policy. However, Stalin had a different view on the borderlands' population. All Polish-Russian geopolitical disputes of previous centuries influenced on Soviet nationalistic attitudes, Poles and all who were close to them were considered as a state threat and deported to Central Asian Republics, Siberia and Ural.

In 1936 the population of *kresy* region (Khmelnyskyi, Zhytomyr and Kyiv regions) were subjected to the first line. Mostly, the rural population with different levels of education and work experience found themselves in the naked steppe as special settlers, where they had to completely reorganize their 'cosmos'.

In general, before the deportation the Polish population shared the local identity based on Slavic and Christian traditions. Brown represented the period when the Soviet Union came to *kresy*. She pointed to the lack of architectural variety in villages, “local formulas” – folk beliefs in combination with strong religious culture and the hybrid language.⁴⁷ The integral part of the *kresy* culture was pilgrimage among Christians.⁴⁸ Edelman notes the ‘unified worldview’ where the spiritual and material worlds existed in close synergy. He sees the roots in the single-room houses where all kinds of activities were carried out (from cooking and sleeping to praying and learning) people “entered the world and often left it.”⁴⁹ The house was the microcosm of the village construction. There was a separate place for icons, holy water and candles, as well as, the church was at the center of the village, although it did not differ from other houses sometimes. The knowledge was local as well, rooted from the older generations and religion (most of the villages had Catholic schools). At the same times this communities “which were held together by religion and family”⁵⁰ were not static and conservative. When the Soviet came, they adapted

⁴⁷ Brown, Kate. 2009. *Biography of No Place. From Ethnic Borderland to Soviet Heartland*. Harvard University Press, 77.

⁴⁸ Ibid, 67.

⁴⁹ Edelman, Robert. 1993. “Everybody's Got to Be Someplace: Organizing Space in the Russian Peasant House, 1880 to 1930.” In *Russian Housing in the Modern Age: Design and Social History*, edited by Brumfield William Craft and Ruble Blair, New York, 8.

⁵⁰ Brown, Kate. 2009. *Biography of No Place. From Ethnic Borderland to Soviet Heartland*. Harvard University Press, 80.

readily to the political changes, although they could not drop the essential issues that the authorities were against.

'New' local identity

In the 1920s the Polish population of *kresy* got into the Soviet social experiment. The Polish communists Feliks Kon and Julian Marchlewski initiated the establishment of the Marchlewsk Autonomous Polish Region in 1925, in Belarus Dzerzhinsk Polish National District was created in 1932. It was the act of political efforts to reorganize the population and the territories of the borderlands. However, borderland Poles did not fit the Soviet national policy. Martin highlighted the “affirmation actions” toward the ethnic minorities. This was Lenin’s method to achieve class separation and, eventually, achieve socialism. Bolshevik authorities planned to make it as quickly as possible. Therefore, instead of counteracting nationalism, the affirmative action was chosen to promote it – in the form acceptable to the Soviets. When national-economic territories were established in 1923, the Soviets had taken on ‘backward’ nations, but a problem emerged. On one hand, national/ethnic minorities were the problem for the Soviet authorities. But on the other hand, Soviet policy was against national assimilation; at the same time the policy was

not intended to create autonomy (Lenin and Stalin believed that it would lead to rising nationalism and conflicts). However, the human resource was of high value, and the Soviet authorities had never considered the idea to encourage minorities to emigrate.⁵¹ Early in Soviet history, the authorities tried to frame adequate national policy. They supported ethnic minorities, supported the idea of national consciousness and unity of nations. For instance, programs were initiated to create written alphabets for certain ethnicities. Martin attributes *korenizatsiia* to the main method in the “soft-line” Soviet policy. And Polish Regions (or National Districts) were created in the frame of this politics. However, this support was held to those groups who had ‘standard’ national identity. The “hard-line” determined not only the nature of deportation processes but also the behavior of the subjected population. Martin states that “hard-line” methods were applied by the Soviet authority in 1930. He claims that such cruel methods were consequences of political pressure on local administrations: “Local officials were constantly being asked to fulfill an unrealistic number of often contradictory assignments. They, therefore, had to read central signals to determine which policies were high priority and must be implemented and which could be deferred or ignored with impunity.”⁵² Holquist

⁵¹ Martin, Terry D. 2001. *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939*. Cornell University Press, 22.

⁵² Ibid.

sees the base of the terror in the category-based policy of the Soviet Union which was similar to the Nazi's worldview. These methods were adopted from the Russian Civil War. He also see a huge scale of terror in its "prophylactic" dimension to the ultimate normalization of radical views.⁵³

The Polish borderland population watched all stages of radicalization of the policy: from the exchange of population between two banks in Ukraine, then repressions of *kulaks* and *local authorities* and eventually deportations to distant territories.⁵⁴

Under the special operation, in 1936–1937 the borderland population of *kresy* was deported to Central Asian and Siberian special settlements (*specposelenie*), which was similar to more common at that time labor settlements where political prisoners served the sentence. In reality the destination point was in most cases a naked steppe place near the river. The majority of Polish deportees were settled up in the North region of Kazakhstan. If we zoom in on the map of the region, we can see a lot of *tochka-s*⁵⁵ (that is how special settlements were called initially). It is multiethnic and multireligious, backward by authorities as Ukrainian villages where Poles and

⁵³ Holquist, Peter. 2003. "State Violence as Technique: The Logic of Violence in Soviet Totalitarianism." In *The Stalinism: The Essential Readings*, edited by Hoffmann David L. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 129–158.

⁵⁴ Brown, Kate. 2009. *Biography of No Place. From Ethnic Borderland to Soviet Heartland*. Harvard University Press, 115.

⁵⁵ Settlement points (that is how special settlements were called initially).

Germans lived together, but here in Kazakhstan the climate is harsh continental with dry hot summers and hard snowy winters.

Almost immediately after the deportation, the planting of Soviet ideology began. The Soviet Union was a state with strong civil culture, which had been influencing the population's identity intensively during the post-war period. But deportees experienced it in a purely totalitarian manner before the war. The image of *sovetskii grazhdanin* (Soviet citizen) and *Sovetskii narod* (Soviet people) was widely promoted. Massive ethnic deportations were a kind of Soviet experiment – a creation of the ideal *Sovetskii grazhdanin*.⁵⁶

Two instruments of Soviet power – terror and ideology – had different social effects. Regarding ideology, Suny states that there were “millions of Soviet citizens with the dilemma of reconciling their ethnonational connections with their supranational loyalties.”⁵⁷ The author presents different ways of people's behavior. Some preferred assimilation with the ‘title’ nation – Russians; and others (mostly large-numbered nationalities) distinguished ethnic and national identities.

The first generation of deportees formulated their attitudes to Soviet authorities based on the initial issues, how they were forced to go to

⁵⁶ Kotkin, Stephen. 1995. *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization*. University of California Press, 164.

⁵⁷ Suny, R.G. 1993. *The Revenge of the Past: Nationalism, Revolution, and the Collapse of the Soviet Union*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Kazakhstan, and how they had to survive in steppe under the state restriction.

Kate's Brown interviewee, the elder villager of Kostanay region, Maria Andzhe'evskaia, born in one of the villages of the Marchlevsk Region, shared the remembers from her childhood: "They [local Soviet officials] had told us we were going to Kazakhstan and they would give us land and homes and we would live well."⁵⁸ Instead of that, they had lost all familiar features, landmarks, and "family heirlooms." The interviewees from Kamenka village (Astrakhan' district) which is a little bit younger than Maria Andzhe'evskaia and remembers the history only from the older children (parents usually did not share recollections about deportation); he shared another way of convincing villagers to move to Kazakhstan. NKVD officers falsificated the sign of the foreman of the kolkhoz on the order of the displacement. The paper was shown to the farm workers who trusted their foreman, and only after dislocation they found out the trick.⁵⁹ Both interviewees did hear anything about the indictments or decrees on dislocation. Alina Polyakovskaya, the granddaughter of deportees from the village Yasnaya Polyana in Tajinshi region, shares the deportation history that majority experienced: "At the end of may the villagers were informed about the dislocation to Kazakhstan. They had a week to pack baggage."⁶⁰ However, this

⁵⁸ Brown, Kate. 2009. *Biography of No Place. From Ethnic Borderland to Soviet Heartland*. Harvard University Press, 174.

⁵⁹ Author interview, 9/VI/21, Kamenka, Kazakhstan, audio tape.

⁶⁰ Kazinform. 2016. "80 let deportacii poljakov v Kazahstan: perepletenie istorii i sudeb." URL:https://www.inform.kz/ru/80-let-deportacii-polyakov-v-kazahstan-perepletenie-istorii-i-sudeb_a2918271

case contains additional coercive measures that are rarely mentioned. According to her grandfather's recollections, all men of the village Sloboda-Chernetskaya were arrested and taken to Novograd-Volynsk for that week to avoid escapes.⁶¹

Official reports also contain data on the attitudes among deportees. The head of the GULAG, M.D. Berman, in a report to the People's Commissar of the NKVD of the USSR, G.G. Yagoda, presenting the measures for the resettlement of families from Ukraine, reports that there were three groups of the population differing in political sentiments:⁶²

1. The first one is in a “satisfactory mood” and says that in places of settlement the land is more fertile, the surrounding collective farms have a lot of bread for workdays. They were confident in the economic structure of the NKVD, which would “ensure the success of the case⁶³, the state would give significant benefits, loans.”⁶⁴ This group of settlers, according to the report, consisted of many recently demobilized Red Army soldiers and collective farm assets.
2. The second group showed confusion and expressed dissatisfaction in the following: “We were deceived, the houses were taken away without paying their cost, they promised to take us to the south, but they brought

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² M.D. Berman to G.G. Yagoda. July 14, 1936. In *Iz istorii deportatsiy. Kazakhstan. 1935–1939*. ed. E. Gribanova. Almaty: LEM, 2014, 66.

⁶³ What was the “case” is unknown in the report and following documents.

⁶⁴ Ibid, 67.

us to the north. Why do we have to pay entrance fees to the collective farm for the second time, whether their cooperative share will be transferred to a new place of residence, whether they will be drafted into the ranks of the Red Army, etc.”⁶⁵

3. The third group of migrants is clearly hostile, does not want to listen to any explanations and says: “There is no water here, they brought us to death, we will not build houses, we should be given ready-made for free, as promised.”⁶⁶ Also they declared: “You are afraid that we will not go to Germany, okay, you know, we will be there anyway, the war will start, and they will help us. Why didn't you bring Jews and Ukrainians here, but write in the Constitution that everyone is equal, robberly took away our homes, and in the Constitution you write that property is protected by law.”⁶⁷ This group is labeled as counter-revolutionary and anti-Soviet which established contact with the local German population, organized escapes, agitated for “a military attack on the USSR, calling for Hitlerite help, calling for revenge on Jews, etc.”⁶⁸

Deportees were on the road for three weeks, in freight trains, without primary facilities, meanwhile, their cattle were dying, and their children could

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid, 68.

not stand lack of food and cold.⁶⁹ After all, challenges and the fact of lies shaped negative attitudes and behavior of the first generation.

The interviews collected by Kate Brown present another side of adaptation processes. The former special settler Edward Vinglinskii was born in 1919 in the borderlands and deported to Akmola in 1936. In Ukraine he joined the collective farm. And the switch between one *kolkhoz* to another was not significant for him, although there was a 1,500-mile distance between them. He proudly told about his chairman position in Communist Party in the 1950s and achievements of his village's farm. While the chapter with the revealing title *Deportee into Colonizer* shows an attempt at forging cooperation between deportees and Soviet authorities to repopulate and cultivate "arid steppe." As Brown proposed, that "narrative offers a detour around victimization toward the accomplishments of resettlement"⁷⁰ or it could be identified with the Soviet image of the 'ideal worker', an identity that was propagated among all kinds of population. This idea of recultivation of Kazakhstani lands was the official version for the most deportees from rural territories, including Germans, Koreans and other ethnic groups. However, restrictions and social isolation of special settlers during the 1930s and the 1940s contradicted this idea. The first

⁶⁹ Author interview, 11/VI/21, Kamenka, Kazakhstan, audio tape.

⁷⁰ Brown, Kate. 2009. *Biography of No Place. From Ethnic Borderland to Soviet Heartland*. Harvard University Press.

generation could not leave the special settlements more than 10 kilometers away, they did not have passports (only *metrika* – birth certificate), they had to register at police stations or commandant 's office every month and register at work places. Foreman controlled every worker with the system of labour days (*trudodni*) which substituted the money salary with a ration (*pajok*). And the behavior of the first generation of deportees was not close to humility, the cases of escapes and thefts,⁷¹ but most of the resistance cases were concealed.

The theory of James Scott on *public* and *hidden transcripts* can be implied to explain the ways of resistance of the first generation of deportees. These are kinds of reactions to the action of power by subordinates. Repressive methods such as Terror created *hidden transcript* – the form of resistance which is hidden from authorities.⁷² Different groups of deportees had different ways to oppose them. For example, Chechens and Ingush usually used public transcripts. These nationalities are known for “their long-standing rebelliousness against the rule of the Tsar and later the Soviet regime”. They were punished for suspicions in cooperation with the Nazis. And following the “prophylactic terror” line more than 500000 people were deported in 1944. Concerning Chechens and Ingush, history knows the examples of mass killings.⁷³ Hence the North Caucasus

⁷¹ From decembre 1936 to march 1937 302 Poles escaped settlements in the North region (Legitaeva, Lydmila. 2000. *Iz istorii poljakov v Kazachstane (1936-1956 gg.)*. Almaty, 56.).

⁷² Scott, James. 1990. *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*. Yale University Press, 32.

⁷³ The most well-known is shown in the film *Ordered to Forget* by Hussein Erkenov.

groups were belligerent.⁷⁴ Their behavior in the ‘naked steppe’ was not the same as in their homeland. They were settled in the same villages as the population of *kresy* or there were villages with another mix. This is why there were no huge ethnic conflicts, nor full understanding and cooperation. Brauer reports that Chechens and Ingush were thankful for the hospitality of other deportees and the Kazakh population, although their strict traditions kept most of them from integrating into the new society for a long time. Their rules about intermarriages and burial rituals were particularly strong. And during the 1950s when they were leaving Kazakhstan massively the deportees from the North Caucasus stayed quite ‘distant’. Poles and Germans on the other hand seized upon *hidden transcript*.

The 1930s in Astrakhan’ region was called *khapun* (from the dialectical *khapat* – to grab), because it was the period of a large number of arrests: commandant’s officers grabbed a lot of deportees to labour and concentration camps. First years people were arrested for unaccepted action to authorities, theft of state property (mostly, food) and for leaving the settlement. The former chairman of Kamenka’s village remembers that the number of arrested people in 1938 was corresponding to the year: 38 villagers were registered as *vragi*

⁷⁴ Brauer, Birgit. 2002. “Chechens and the survival of their cultural identity in exile.” *Journal of Genocide Research*, 4, 387–400.

naroda.⁷⁵

The hidden transcript of Polish deportees was mostly based on the strongest feature of their identity. The real basis for the ethnic differentiation was religion, like during the imperial period.⁷⁶ The Soviet position on religion was negative, the 1930s was also the period of anti-religious repressions. Most of the Catholic clergy were sent to GULAG concentration or labour camps. However, for Polish deportees, religious features were transformed into cultural and even ethnic issues.⁷⁷ Therefore, religion played a significant role for deportees during the Soviet period and after. Persistence of religion meant that the villages of *kresy* were not under Soviet power completely and it also meant that the identity of Ukrainians was not similar to the borderland's population. They had rather a local identity with their unique contaminated worldview. The deportations forced those people to drastically change their perceptions: "Instead of faith and tradition, the new settlements in Kazakhstan were organized around the surveyor's sextant and the state's legal incorporation."⁷⁸

⁷⁵ This data was archived in the post-Stalin epoch in the regional centers of North Kazakhstan, but after the collapse of the Soviet Union most of the documents had been lost or destroyed (Author interview. 30/1/22. Kamenka, Kazakhstan, audio tape).

⁷⁶ Shinkevich, S., and Zarinov, Igor. 1992. "Poljaki Rossijskoj Imperii: Istoricheskaja Spravka i Harakteristika Sovremennoj Situacii" [In Russian]. *Research in Applied Ethnology*, 12.

⁷⁷ According to the religious studies of that historical period, acculturation of religion was a common case in the Soviet time. Khalid, describing the fate of Islam in the USSR, claims that it was not only localized, but also "was rendered with tradition" (Khalid, Adeeb. 2007. *Being Muslim in Soviet Central Asia, or an Alternative History of Muslim Modernity*, *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association*, 18(2), 134).

⁷⁸ Brown, Kate. 2009. *Biography of No Place. From Ethnic Borderland to Soviet Heartland*. Harvard University Press, 176.

However, some of the settlements made secret sanctuaries in their homes to save a little piece of the past. The Catholic priest, who was born in Kamenka village, Waclaw Poplawski (his parents were deported from Zhytomir region) offers a detailed history of the Catholic Church in the Akmola region.

According to it, the majority of Poles brought family bibles and icons. This community had secret prayer houses, later (after Stalin's death) the villagers of Kamenka began to come to neighboring village Zelenyi Gai where the first semi-public prayer house was organized by the first priest Dzepecky.⁷⁹ Those parents (like the mother of Poplawski who was a singer in a church choir) who were close to church in Ukraine tried to teach their children with prayer and celebrating Christmas and Easter even in the most hungry years.

Religious worldview influenced even the structure of living places. Brown asserts that deportees from Ukrainian villages sought to recreate the “cosmos” with a ‘center–periphery’ structure where the heart of the village was always a chapel or a cross.⁸⁰ In Kazakhstan the center of the village was taken by administrative buildings and *Dom kultury* where all kinds of all events were held. And the Soviet culture added to the village's new kind of buildings: the most important for authorities were bigger and architecturally more formal than

⁷⁹ Poplawski, Waclaw. 2015. *Zemnye desyatiletiya* [In Russian]. Astana, 56.

⁸⁰ Brown, Kate. 2009. *Biography of No Place. From Ethnic Borderland to Soviet Heartland*. Harvard University Press, 191.

people's houses that were decorated with Slavic ornaments (windows and roofs) or with their 'Soviet' interpretations – adding symbols like star.



Image 2. Pieces of the home design in Kamenka village: drainage system and window frame.

There was a range of religious teachings in the *kresy* region before deportations. This was reflected then in the religious composition of Kamenka and nearby villages with Poles, Germans (deported at the same period), later Chechen-Ingush (in 1944–1945). Although Poles and Germans belonged to similar religions – Christianity, they did not share the same prayer houses and

led masses in their mother tongue (German and Polish). Catholic Poles differentiated them from evangelist Germans calling them *schwaby*.⁸¹ Religious features (prayer books, Bibles, icons and rosaries) were the treasure of every deported family which were hereditary.⁸² Practically, these attributes became the identical.

As the comparison of public and hidden transcripts between Chechen and Polish communities shows, other meaningful issues can be highlighted. One of such issues was language. The first generation of deportees spoke their mother tongue: the language of interethnic communication was Russian, German for Germans, Chechen for Chechens, and for the Polish community it was *surzhyk* (mixed Slavic language, similar to Ukrainian with Russian and Polish elements). Polish was mostly the language of mass, although in every special settlement were few Polish speaking families – descendants of nobles or conservative families. There is a lack of written documents in *surzhyk* because most deportees could not write and read. But the ‘liminal’ generation recorded their parents’ speech, particularly few prayers are saved (image 1).

⁸¹ The man from the second (late Soviet) generation told me this definition. He also shared the moniker for Polish-speaking Poles *psheki*, but he did remember how other ethnic groups called Ukrainian Poles (Author interview, 1/VI/21, Nur-Sultan, Kazakhstan, audio tape).

⁸² According to observation and the data from the first and the second generations, every family have old Bibles, prayer and church books, icons or rosary beads from pre-deportational times.

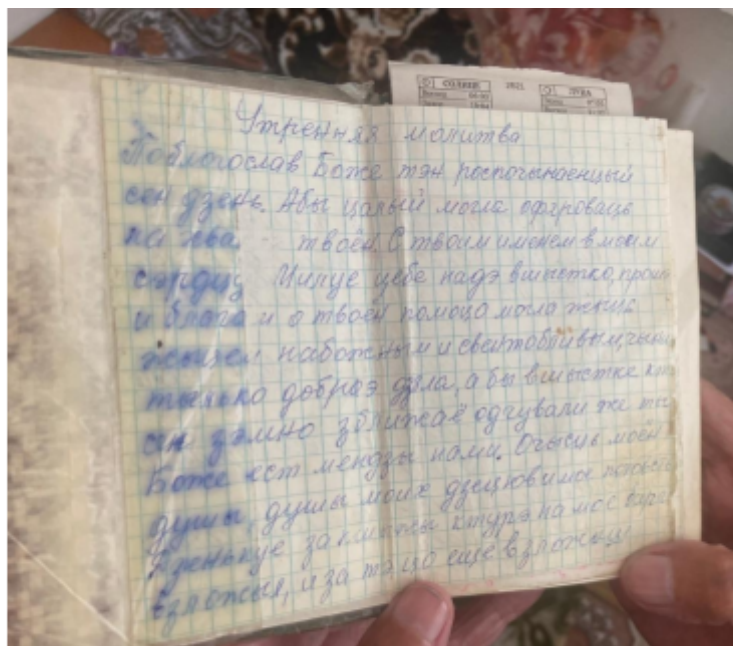


Image 2. One of the prayers is written in *surzhyk* (morning prayer).

Group differentiation by language principle had social meaning for Germans and Poles, that is how both groups marked social boundaries in everyday situations. In the case of the Chechen-Ingush language issue brought practical inconvenience because this group had a poor command of the Russian language and did not seek to learn it. This was one of the ways of their resistance to deportation.

In general, the first generation of Poles tried to save *kresy* local identity and shield from other ethnic groups (some families were against intragroup marriages). Their separate identity was strengthened because the Soviet authorities isolated ethnic deportees from larger Soviet society. The authorities restricted the free migration processes of ethnic groups (deportees did not have

identification documents until the 1950-s, they were prohibited to leave their *tochka-s* without special permission). At the same time, authorities had pursued the policies of Sovietization (i.e. Russification) which was more influenced than deportees' forces.

Nevertheless, internal migration processes functioned because deportees were used as free workforce, they were sent to Siberian and Ural deposits or Akmolinsk and Karaganda. It encourages free relocations, intragroup interactions, and new social context which will be described in the second chapter.

The liminal generation

In general, children who were deported before reaching 15–16 years of age or who were born in the Kazakh steppe between 1936–1949 are the generation with a liminal identity between private and public spaces. They were those who heard Polish prayers at home but would never repeat them in school or in front of Soviet officials.

Ideological education played a significant role in raising the Soviet spirit in the children of deportees. Waclaw Poplawski who was born two years after the deportations experienced all ideological methods at school: from speaking-only-in-Russian rule to the songs of praise for Stalin.⁸³ Another

⁸³ Poplawski, Waclaw. 2015. *Zemnye desyatiletiya* [In Russian]. Astana, 36.

interviewee – a 78 years old man – remembered the situation when his mother prevented him from becoming an *oktyabryonok* (Little Octobrist)⁸⁴ and how he, being a little boy, was upset. There was an invisible battle between ideology and culture.

Soviet authorities emphasized on the education of the children of deportees. The loyalty to the Soviet ideology was widely promoted in schools and social institutions where all languages besides Russian were restricted and the religious or Soviet critique were punished. The status of the Russian language was more strongly consolidated among the male population due to military service. During the war period as at postwar period the deportees and their descendants were drafted into the Soviet army. There, adaptation, including in the language environment, meant more than at school.

Every settlement elaborated their own scope of rituals and methods, concerning medicine and social behavior within the community. However, while on the micro-local-level the population more and more cooperated with each other, the state policy clearly divided the younger generation to become a full-fledged citizen and the older generation who were labeled ‘blamed’ and had to do hard physical work. The ‘liminal’ generation were mostly protected from the deportation subject because of the fear of their parents of the state.

⁸⁴ A member of a Communist organization for children between seven and nine, closely associated with the Komsomol.

Therefore, their recollections are based on the 1950s when most of the restrictions and the economic situation in the region got improved. Meanwhile, a lot of them remember their “hungry” childhood, language struggles and the religious celebrations which were initiated by their older relatives in the 1940s. Waclaw Poplawski in his autobiography remembers *trep* (wooden-soled shoes) that his mother worn even during winter when feet were frozen to the sole; he remembers how his relatives spent evenings with friends and neighbors playing in cards (the game called *durak*) and smoking *samosad* (home-producing tobacco).⁸⁵

The main feature of the liminal generation is double names. Most of them had/have a Polish name and its Russian interpretation: Lengin – Leonid (diminutive Lyonya), Katarzyna – Ekaterina (Katya), Marynya – Maria (Masha), Maryan – Mikhail (Misha), etc.⁸⁶ One of the owners of such a name, who was born Kamenka in 1944, said that he did not know his Polish name before he went to the army in 1960 and saw his first passport. Everyone in the village, including family members, called him with a diminutive name, while the ‘real’ one was displayed only in the birth certificate. Now he does not accept

⁸⁵ Poplawski, Waclaw. 2015. *Zemnye desyatletiya* [In Russian]. Astana, 42.

⁸⁶ There was also the information of changing surnames, but it was not widespread in Kamenka. Only one of the chairman of the village Raputov who was not local but sent to Kamenka by authorities is known as someone who had changed the surname from Raputa to Raputov to Russify and protect himself. The interviewer said that his family was from Ukraine, but their ethnicity is unknown (Author interview. 11/VI/22. Kamenka, Kazakhstan, audio tape.).

his Polish name asking his relatives to write the Russian one on his gravestone, although on the question “What is your ethnicity?” he replies: “Polish without any nails.”⁸⁷

Ethnic policies of the Soviet Union were ambiguous, sometimes contradictory because the Polish population had not an unambiguous vision on their ethnicity and nationality at the at the junction of epochs. The main contradiction is the mixing of ethnic and national identities. With all the contradictions deportees had to adopt Soviet ideology, most of them did it for their children – to protect them. However, they could not get rid of their mixed language and, more importantly, they could not get rid of Catholic faith because it played a significant role in moral support. The multiethnic composition of every village in Kazakhstan also played a role in maintaining ethnic identity on the level of self-determination. Nevertheless, Soviet education affected the liminal generation mostly forcing them to alienate from their ethnicity on the conscious level. In the next chapter we see how the children of the liminal generation promoted Soviet culture while their grandparents tried to preserve ethnic traits, especially in rural areas.

⁸⁷ Author interview, 9/VI/21, Kamenka, Kazakhstan, audio tape.

Chapter II. Sovietization: intragroup interaction

This chapter explores further changes within the Polish community in post-Stalin years. The worldview of the descendants of the deported is drastically different from the parental one. Poles who do not know Stalinism and the war years became part of Soviet society, e.g. reduced the importance of ethnicity to a minimum by urbanization and interethnic marriages. Although the cultural feature which the old generation continued to keep and the ethnic label in everyone's passports saved the base for following ethnic revival in the post-Soviet period. The great role for maintaining the identity line was religion. The Khrushchev Thaw released Catholic priests and preachers from the camps and allowed them to settle into the areas of special settlements (e.g. freed villages from this status). Authorities did now expect them to renew the religious activity, but from the second half of the 1950s Catholic clergy had preached all over North Kazakhstan. This was the reason for maintaining and developing the distinctive features of the Polish population, which served for ethnic identification in previous historical periods. As Khrushchev could not use Stalin's terror methods to reduce the impact of Catholics, although he supported anti-religious communism, he promoted "scientific atheism" which influenced on the second generation by the same way as for the liminal – education.

Nevertheless, oppressive methods were not excluded: the 1950–1970s were characterized by harassment, surveillance and contract killings.

Special attention in the chapter is paid to the war period, which made a significant contribution to the process of erasing the topic of mass deportations through the switching attention to the war meaning and a general decline in the quality of life in the USSR in the 1940s. Later, in the 1950s and 1970s, the ideas of "development of virgin lands" and the culture of veterans appeared, where Poles also took part along with other Soviet citizens.

Social, economic and cultural causes of this growing integration

During World War II mass deportations to Kazakhstan continued. In the 1940s groups of Chechens-Ingush, Crimean Tatars, Greeks, Moldovans, Bulgarians arrived in Kazakhstan. Also, the second wave of Polish deportees settled Aktobe, Akmola, Kostanay, Pavlodar, North Kazakhstan and Semipalatinsk regions. Kamenka and nearby villages received Chechens, Ingushes and the German deportees from the Saratov region. Interviewees do not remember the conflict situation between ethnic groups, and there are no official documents about massive ethnic conflicts. Polish villagers helped

Chechen families with food and work, but experienced difficulties with communication because of the language barrier. There is also a lack of information about interactions between Polish groups of different waves. The representative of the second generation of Kamenka villagers remember that locals (including Poles) used the word *psheki* applicable to Polish-speaking deportees. However, the context and further details are unknown. Therefore, we cannot make any assumption.

There are a lot of recollections about war years. For deportees these were the years of adaptation in a new climate and recreating of own farms (*khozyajstvo*): garden and livestock. The latter was in the interest of authorities because the cities and army needed the provisions. Therefore, during the war period, deportees were deeply involved in home front activities. According to recollection, the food tax in Kamenka was more than half of all natural products. To avoid class division the authorities had a strict restriction on the scale of each garden and numbers of animals. For every “redundancy” there was an additional tax.⁸⁸ The war period for Kamenka villagers was a years of growing liminal generation, they did not see the battles but saw the hunger and a

⁸⁸ Author interview. 30/1/22. Kamenka, Kazakhstan, audio tape.

lot of death of family members because of unsanitary-caused diseases.

Some Polish deportees of the first wave (1936–1937) even had been drafted to the army. First German deportees of the same period were mostly refused to be drafted. However, all deported groups in Kazakhstan were under the same restrictions and were not rehabilitated until 1956. Also, among the residents of Kamenka, the memories of those whose relatives went to the army have been preserved. Open sources inform about two Polish military divisions in the USSR: Anders Army (1941–1942) and Berling Army (1943–1945). However, the majority of Polish special settlers were sent to the labour army in Ural, including women. At the end of the war they were demobilized back to Kamenka or sent to Karaganda for further work. They worked with criminals and political prisoners without being accused.

Later, in the Soviet period those of them who were at the front line had a special status – *frontovik* which allowed Polish veterans and their family members priority to administrative workplaces. Although until the Brezhnev's period the Victory Day was not celebrated widely, military experience became a significant factor which indoctrinated deportees into another social group. In Kamenka one of the Polish *frontoviks* became the chairman of the collective

farm in the 1960s.



Image 3. The monument to the warriors of World War II in Kamenka.

This occasion became a part of the Sovietization process that will be described later. In fact, the Victory did not bring Kazakhstani deportees any benefits. Special settlers continued to register in the commandant's office, were not allowed to leave the living place and paid high taxes. Brown claims that until the 1950s deportees stayed isolated from Soviet society.⁸⁹

I had no opportunity to find out what divisions Poles were in. The only

⁸⁹ Brown, Kate. 2009. *Biography of No Place. From Ethnic Borderland to Soviet Heartland*. Harvard University Press, 190.

interviewer – the son of frontoviks of Kamenka – did not know what army his father joined, but remembered that it was a Polish division. However, there is a monument of WWII soldiers in the square of the village which includes the father of the interviewer as well as other 50 people (see Image 3). According to the official information that I took from the local librarian, other frontoviks were the Soviet soldiers because they had Soviet military awards such as Badge of Honor or Order for Bravery in Battle.⁹⁰

In general the war and postwar period were the years of developing the kolkhoz. Villagers had serious difficulties with climate adaptation and food provision. The children of the 1940s remember those years as marked by “constant feeling of hunger” as well as floods (the largest one occurred in 1949, and Kamenka villagers had to move the village and rebuild the houses, school and administrative center).

In the 1940s arrests on thefts and escapes decreased but continued.⁹¹ Hunger and need pushed villagers to violate Soviet rules. Besides that a lot of deportees convicted under Article 58: counter-revolutionary activities (which

⁹⁰ This information was presented through the video dedicated to Victory Day, which contained names, short biographies and military awards. Unfortunately, this video was not published in the open source.

⁹¹ Barnes, Steven. 2011. *Death and Redemption: The Gulag and the Shaping of Soviet Society*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 155.

included anti-Soviet and anti-Stalin comments). According to recollections, most of them were made because of *donos* (denunciation) which were rewarded by the local commandant. Kamenka villagers still remember the surnames of those who “turned” people over to the authorities. Curiously enough, their ethnicity was not meaningful because they were motivated by material needs. One person cost 28 *kopeek*.⁹²

The efficiency of special settlements is arguable. The elderly foremen and other workers of Kamenka remember only high state taxes and frequent cases of the neglect of collective and individual work plans (*trudodni* – labour days), although most of the special settlers worked for 10–12 hours without days off.

All ruling positions in Kamenka and nearby villages were placed under the most educated members of the local community. Soviet authorities did not provide staff for special settlements until the Brezhnev period. Teachers were also Polish or German who agreed to support Soviet ideology (at least at work time). Only the commandants sent to the settlements were, according to recollections, Russians and Kazakhs. Until the cancellation of *komendatura* in 1956 commandants had unlimited power: extortion was the most widespread

⁹² Author interview. 30/I/22. Kamenka, Kazakhstan, audio tape.

method. Many women suffered from violent actions to avoid arrests or to take some provision for children.⁹³

All of this constructed the culture of fear which affected the next generations and prepared them to fit in the 'safe' Soviet pathway: kindergarten, school, college, work and family.

One of the deportees writes about these confusing feelings on the most important news of 1953: "Stalin died. The family did not know how to react, we wanted to celebrate, but there was a great fear, we had to cry, but we did not want to."⁹⁴ This phrase describes mixed feelings of deportees about the reorganization of Soviet authorities: they were happy that Stalin was gone, but they did not know what or who would be after him.

The first act of liberalizing the regime – the "Beriev amnesty" (Decree of the USSR PSS of March 27, 1953) – practically did not affect the regime of special settlement. In 1956 first rehabilitation came to Kamenka's administration. Although it was not dedicated to deportation processes (documents were mostly on the arrested under Article 58 or for escapes), special settlers of Kamenka and all Kazakhstan felt the Thaw. At this stage

⁹³ Jolluck, Katherine R. 2002. *Exile and Identity: Polish Women in the Soviet Union during World War II*. University of Pittsburgh Pre, 242.

⁹⁴ *Poplawski, Waclaw. 2015. Zemnye desyatiletiya* [In Russian]. Astana.

(1954–1963), we can talk about amnesty, but not rehabilitation of Poles in Kazakhstan.

Then followed the exposure of the cult of Stalin, the official transformation of special settlements into state farms and permission to leave them. However all ethnic deportees could move anywhere besides their previous place of living. Anyway, the Poles did not rush back to Ukraine. Some of the deportees with their children visited Ukraine where they saw “poverty.” Agriculture of Kazakhstan became better than Ukrainian which suffered from WWII battles.

The first generation who experienced 20 years of hunger chose to stay in established places of special settlements. Deportees did not have the opportunity to become part of the Polish People’s Republics, because this part of the Soviet Union did not propose any repatriation programmes.⁹⁵

Besides economic reasons, the first generation of Kazakhstani Poles were led by the desire of social comfort for themselves and their children. Their attachment to local identity with state agitation maintained deportees as explorers of the steppe made the first generation affiliated with their villages in Kazakhstan. The second generation had a thin connection with parents’ memories, language and even culture, including religion. They shared a local

⁹⁵ Those Poles and Polish groups who were deported from Polish territories or who had relatives in those territories could not move there, because of state’s restriction (deportees and repressed people could move anywhere beside their indigous lands) and lack of adaptational programmes for Ukrainized/Russificated Poles in Poland.

identity, but in another – ‘Soviet’ – way. They were affected by the state ideology in a much stronger way than the first generation. Moreover, they had limited opportunities to grasp ethnic identity, due to lack of family education (practicing traditions and focusing on family history). Work and physical labor they took up most of the adult population's time. And the children were left to themselves and the school. The differences between two generations and the features of the second generation are described in the next subchapter.

Manifestations of the integration

In the 1950–1960s Sovietization became different. If in childhood the transitional generation more often adhered to "family" views that prescribed keeping to religion and speaking *surzhyk* surrounded by representatives of their ethnic group, in adolescence even this connection with the older generation weakened. The status of the Russian language at that time was already unconditional. The second generation heard Ukrainian (or more rare Polish) from their grandparents. In the interview one representative of the second generation (born in 1979) shared the desire to know Polish, but as his surroundings spoke Russian it was “almost impossible.”⁹⁶ The main reason to know the language was to teach children and consider himself ‘true’ Polish.

⁹⁶ Author interview. 14/VI/22. Kamenka, Kazakhstan, audio tape.

Despite the fact that after Stalin's death, the topic of resettlement is discussed more often, the older generation began to pass on history to children and grandchildren, but this does not become an impetus for the revival of ethnic identity among the younger generation. The young people used the opportunity to leave the village to get higher education in the nearest cities. The choice was caused by the wide promotion of education. Furthermore, it was free, but only in Russian which stimulated the assimilation processes with Soviet-Russians.

The second generation shows controversial attitudes to the fact of deportation. Most interviewees clearly differentiate the Soviet position to their parents and grandparents and to them personally. They evaluate the Soviet attitudes to them as positive, but negative to their ancestors. The main justification is the difference between periods. For the second generation Stalin's period was associated with wars, repressions and fear that they had not hit. But Khrushchev and Brezhnev brought the feeling of future communism and free education, medicine and other social benefits.

From the perspective of modern time, it was difficult to differentiate nostalgia from historically meaningful features during the interviews with the second generation. Most of them are struggling with perceiving changes that have come after the Soviet period, especially in the ethnic/national question. It seems that the Soviet idea of ethnic invisibility was better accepted than the

multiethnicity of independent Kazakhstan. One of the reasons that most of the interviewers faced the conflicts or neglects that were based on language and ethnic reasons, between Russian- and Kazakh-speaking mostly (this includes only micro-level of the social life, for example, disputes in the bus or market); which were unusual and even condemned in the Soviet period. Nevertheless, the wider historical context allows to divide and differentiate nostalgia from facts.

Some researchers also call interethnic marriages a tool of Sovietization.⁹⁷ The number of mixed marriages increased even in the 1940s. Usually then a Polish married German, Russian or Kazakh in Kamenka it was a tough occasion for their parents. Olesya Statsenko, sharing the recollections of her grandmother – a deportee from Barnevka (North Kazakhstan), says: “He met my grandmother Miretskaya Yanina Ivanovna in Kokchetav region in the village Krasnaya Polyana at the dances. Surprisingly, she had already had a beau, handsome German, they had dated for a long time. However, when her parents found out that they dated, they forbade them to see each other. She ought to marry a Polish guy, such were the principles [*ustoi*] then. And my grandmother could not disobey them and married my grandfather Maryan...”⁹⁸ In the next decades this was normalized. In Kamenka all types of Russian, Polish, German,

⁹⁷ Edgar, Adrienne Lynn. 2007. “Marriage, Modernity, and the ‘Friendship of Nations’: Interethnic Intimacy in Post-War Central Asia in Comparative Perspective.” *Central Asian Survey* 26 (4), 580.

⁹⁸ Kazinform. 2016. *80 let deportacii poljakov v Kazahstan: perepletenie istorii i sudeb*. URL:https://www.inform.kz/ru/80-let-deportacii-polyakov-v-kazahstan-perepletenie-istorii-i-sudeb_a2918271

Ingush, Kazakh marriages existed. Soviet authorities elaborated the policy and ideology to interethnic marriages only in the post-war and post-Stalin period.⁹⁹ Dedicated to post-war period Edgar states: “The Soviet state celebrated mixed marriages as proof of the unbreakable ‘friendship of nations’ and a sign of the imminent appearance of a ‘Soviet people’”. And in the Khrushchev and Brezhnev years interethnic marriages were considered “evidence of progress in the consolidation of a unified ‘Soviet people’” which means that the assimilation was a twin goal of interethnic marriages in Soviet policy.¹⁰⁰

Moreover, mixed marriages contained the component of ‘modernity’ that the second generation followed unconsciously. Descendants of deportees had not a lot of differences (they were not as religious as their parents and spoke mostly Russian) besides household and food habits. That is why “mixed families tended to adopt the features of standardized ‘all-Soviet’ culture which the local population, tellingly, called ‘Russian’. Weddings were celebrated ‘po-russki’ – at the Soviet registry office (ZAGS), followed by dinner with family and friends.”¹⁰¹ Edgar claims that this component of ‘modernity’ encouraged “more equitable gender relations,” although in rural areas it

⁹⁹ Edgar, Adrienne Lynn. 2007. “Marriage, Modernity, and the ‘Friendship of Nations’: Interethnic Intimacy in Post-War Central Asia in Comparative Perspective.” *Central Asian Survey* 26 (4), 582.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Ibid, 589.

changed. Men and women had strict areas of responsibility with a patriarchal accent.

However, the Soviets could not make all ceremonies culturally neutral or transformate to the Soviet way. The cultural (religious) features were stable for funeral ceremonies. The interviewee shares the memories of a special person for prayer, black banners (*styagi*) and funeral crosses. There were several traditions at the memorial service: diggers should sit separately, everyone should eat with spoons and everyone should eat the main meal – *kutya* (rice with raisin). Yet Victoria Smolkin pointed out the mixed reaction of the Soviets to the funeral, which was associated with anti-religious campaigns. And if the wedding managed to be translated into a civil channel, then the person's send-off concerned spirituality, which Soviet atheism could not cover. The main attempts to transform social rituals belong to the Khrushchev period, when the militant anti-religious movement turns to “scientific atheism”.

Persisting "deviations"

The first generation did not cease to be religious in the post-Stalin period. Catholic religion is tightly connected with the ethnic identity of Kazakhstani

Poles.¹⁰² Secret masses were held in private homes, the liminal generation was secretly baptized by grandmothers (church servants have not been in special settlements for a long time), and the tradition of celebrating religious dates is preserved. Subsequent generations perceive the latter as an intra-family tradition. Almost all respondents share memories of celebrating Christmas and Easter. And almost everyone continues to implement it in their families. Some of them even admit that “they cannot believe in the Christian God” at the same time, none of the respondents consider themselves atheists.

Nevertheless, the Catholic movement in Kazakhstan is reviving, Karaganda becomes the religious center, where Catholic priests were exiled in the 1930s and 1940s. Among the liminal and the second generation of deported Poles of Kamenka, there are also representatives who are committed to the Catholic movement not only as a tribute to their ancestors (including Waclaw Poplawski or others who helped to build *kostel* in Zeleniy Gay). In the 1950s and 1970s, Catholics were still in a defensive position towards the authorities, under Khrushchev, priests supported and tried to unite those believers who had not departed from their beliefs.

¹⁰² We distinguish here two notions: religion and church – because the role of Catholic church in preserving ethnic identity is arguable. Catholic church has never shown preference to any ethnic group nor in the Soviet period, nor in post-Soviet time.

The tradition of religious *chudo* (miracle) which was very popular in Ukraine was spread among Kazakhstani Catholics in the 1950-s. The most popular is the story of the village Ozernoe where “after the long hunger years” the local lake had filled with fish. This place became the point of pilgrimage.

Another interesting item is the celebration of Farewell to Winter (analog of Maslenitsa) in the post-Stalin era. This event was public and was supported by the local commandant's office. Farewell to Winter was celebrated on a large scale: an effigy was burned in the village square, which had previously been carried around the village on a "Russian stove" (decorated motorcycle); a fair and games were held on the same square (for example, a Fair pole).

In the late Soviet period the second generation joined the ethnic revival activities. In 1989 the first Polish Union in North Kazakhstan was found. The ethnic revival was not wide-spread and chaotic: some Poles tried to collect or write memoirs, another recorded prayer or songs in *surzhyk*, Polish or Ukrainian.

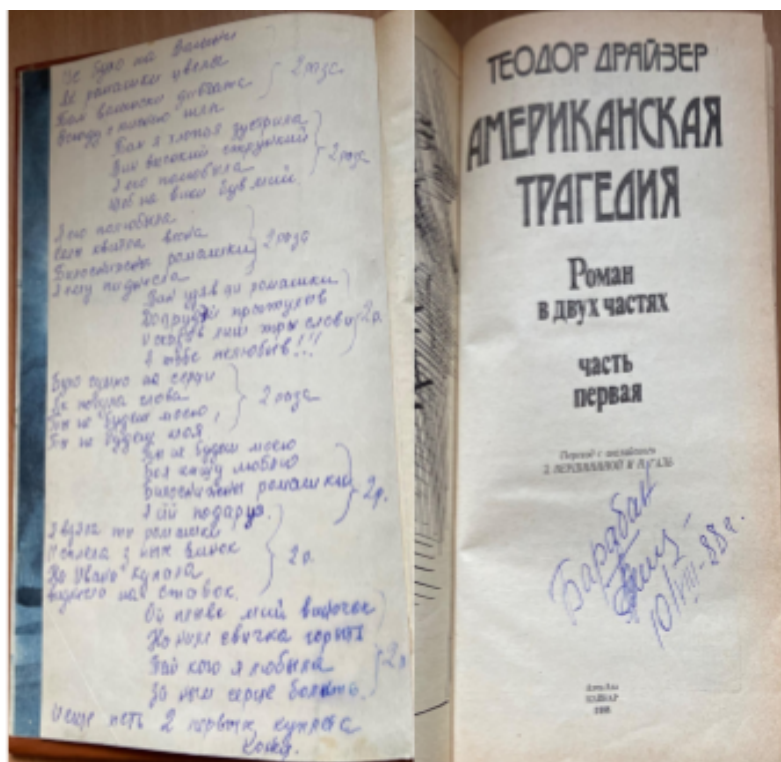


Image 4. The Ukrainian song written on the blank page of popular in the Soviet time T. Dreiser's novel *An American Tragedy* (published in 1988).

Kozlov states: “For all the similarities between popular sedition in the Stalin and post-Stalin periods, there were two very important differences. The first was the level of risk and likely degree of punishment, which were far higher in the Stalin period. The second was that by the 1950s and 1960s, Soviet society was no longer as isolated from the outside world as it had been before the Second World War.”¹⁰³ This was absolutely relevant, because they were no longer scared of *cherny voronok* and execution for any offense. The level of fear in the second generation has decreased. And they really were less isolated than

¹⁰³ Kozlov, Vladimir A., Fitzpatrick, Sheila and Mironenko, Sergei V.. *Sedition*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011, 3. DOI:10.12987/9780300168563

their parents. After 1956 Poles in cities no longer had to register at police stations every month, they were given passports before entering university/service. And going abroad still seemed unrealistic. The older generation of deportees at that time traveled within the Union with metrics and accompanying relatives who already had passports. That is, passports were issued in special cases and for special purposes. And the older generation, who were accustomed not to leave the settlements, had no such reasons, and the administrative authorities were reluctant to give them official documents. There is another relevant issue for the second generation by Brown: “Perhaps deported persons from the borderlands were drawn to new simplified Soviet identities (in one language and monoculture rather than numerous local cultures and dialects) because their lives no longer contained the social and economic breadth of their former lives in the kresy.”¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁴ Brown, Kate. 2009. *Biography of No Place. From Ethnic Borderland to Soviet Heartland*. Harvard University Press, 191.

Chapter III. Soviet footprint and individualism of the descendants of deportees

The second generation of Polish deportees reacted to the collapse of the Soviet Union in the same way as the absolute majority: with a sense of confusion and fear of the future. The issue of economic stability was as relevant as the issue of identity and self-determination. From another perspective the dissolution forced new independent states to formulate national policies. Kazakhstan chose the concept of a multinational state in the early post-Soviet period due to the extensive polyethnicity in the Central Asian republic. Every ethnic group, diaspora is formed in the community and promotes its culture. Borders are opening up for religious initiatives and foreign support both for a certain group and for the whole state.

It is clear that ethnic and national communities are not the only forms of existence of ethnic minorities in the country. Different national and ethnic groups either follow social trends and join emerging movements, or take the role of passive observers, shutting themselves off from their ethnic and/or national identity. The Polish population in terms of ethnic identity was divided into the following types:

- 1) Those who emphasized their identity and declared it among representatives of other ethnic groups;
- 2) Those who tried to incorporate to the society of the ‘historical homeland’ – Kazakhstani repatriates to Poland;
- 3) Those who, recognizing their ethnic differences, closed themselves off from other groups in local societies;
- 4) Those who did not realize/denied Polish identity (for various reasons) and tried to incorporate into other groups.

This classification is close to what Barth proposed when talking about the basic strategies of minorities to participate in the macro-society.¹⁰⁵ The first type promoted Polish activism developed in Kazakhstan, which clearly distinguished the national and ethnic identity of the members of this trend; the fourth type gave rise to the rare phenomenon of the Kazakh-speaking Pole¹⁰⁶ or more wider Russian-speaking people of Polish-Kazakh roots, and the second, on the contrary, became an attempt to introduce into a larger society that meets the criteria of personality and group. The third type prevails among the rural population (mainly the first and second generation) and describes the current

¹⁰⁵ Barth, Fredrik. 1998. *Ethnic groups and boundaries: The social organization of culture difference*. Waveland Press, 41.

¹⁰⁶ Almatyński Kurier Polonijny has data on the cases when Polish deportees had to learn Kazakh to communicate with locals. Most of the first generation who were deported in the south region of Kazakhstan were settled to the existing Kazakh auls. And they had to learn the language of majority first rather than the state Russian language. (Levitckaya, Nina. 2013. “Istoria i sud’by rodnogo Zhanashara” [In Russian]. *Almatyński Kurier Polonijny*, 3(5), 15).

state of villages of the Kamenka type. The latter type is typical for a modern urban Kazakhstani and is not uncommon.

In this chapter, each of the types will be considered in detail, as well as the roles of all three generations in modern society will be determined. The main focus is on people who were born in the 1980s, 1990s and 2000s. The main question is ‘What is the difference between them and their parents in expressing their ethnicity?’ Each of the adopted positions and actions will be considered from the point of view of meeting the social needs of the ethnic minority.

Kazakhstani Polonia: the official representation of Polish minority in the republic

In Kazakhstan there are eleven district Polish community organizations and cultural centers concentrated around “Związek Polaków Kazachstanu” (the Union of Poles in Kazakhstan), which has a total of around four thousand members.¹⁰⁷ The Union is a part of the global phenomenon of *Polonia* – the Polish diaspora comprises Poles and people of Polish heritage or origin who live outside Poland.

The first Polish organizations were founded before the dissolution in 1989 in Kokshetau, Karaganda and Almaty. In 1992 all of them were registered

¹⁰⁷ Website of the Union of Poles in Kazakhstan. URL: zpkz.kz

as official organizations. The Union became the part of the greater company – the Assembly of People of Kazakhstan – and took over the functions of social and political representation of the Polish minority in the state. In most branches the descendants of Polish deportees took management positions. The communities initiated state and religious celebrations (The Unity Day and Independence Day of Kazakhstan and Poland, Christmas and Easter), music contests, language courses, etc.

The structure of these communities includes the chairman and few administratives, however it is wider because of various social initiatives. For example, in Nur-Sultan there are language courses based on the school №5 or there is a corner of Polonian literature in the Auezov Library. Besides that every year communities provide singing competitions, forums and meetings with Embassy officials.

The structure and the ‘philosophy’ of those organizations are similar to the Soviet local or central authorities such as VLKSM or its *yacheykas*. The chairman and other administratives are elected collectively and the main aim is to “support and promote” certain values: from Soviet to (Kazakhstani) Polish. The formal nature of Polish local organizations was adapted by the second ‘Soviet’ generation of deportees. The previous chapter shows that the adoption of official structures was not the only consequence of the Soviet influences.

According to Census data, in 1989 Kazakhstan was inhabited by 60,000 Poles and, in 1999, by 47,297.¹⁰⁸ And only 12.2 percent of people declaring Polish nationality spoke Polish (a considerably lower percentage than in the other largest ethnic groups in Kazakhstan). Russian is the mother tongue of most Poles in Kazakhstan. Also, during the Soviet period Polish distinctive cultural features were displaced by Russian under the spreading of Russian culture and migration processes in Central Asian republics.¹⁰⁹ Preservation of Polish culture was also hampered by the dispersion of Poles in Northern Kazakhstan and near Almaty. Ewa Nowicka calls the identity of Poles in Kazakhstan “residual Polishness,” whereby individuals retained only the basic criterion of Polishness — the psychological feeling of being Polish, derived from their family histories.¹¹⁰

The members of Kazakhstani Polish communities are rarely spotted to be negative-minded towards Kazakhstan, likewise there are no registered cases of anti-Polish attitudes in Kazakhstan. From the social perspective, Polish communities seem to be a compromising way to solve the problem of identity in

¹⁰⁸ Polish diaspora organizations and researchers place their estimates considerably higher. Marek Gawęcki, a researcher of Kazakh Poles and former ambassador of the Republic of Poland in Kazakhstan, also claimed that the official statistical data from the USSR need to be corrected, giving an estimated number of Poles in Kazakhstan of between 120,000 and 150,000.

¹⁰⁹ Martin, Terry. 1998. “The Russification of the USSR.” *Cahiers du monde russe*, 39/1-2, 19.

¹¹⁰ Nowicka, Ewa. 2000. “Wprowadzenie,” in *Polacy czy cudzoziemcy? Polacy za wschodnią granicą* [In Polish]. Warsaw: Nomos, 7–15.

modern society.¹¹¹ Choosing between Kazakhstani and Polish national identity Polish activists mostly pick the former one, because it correlates with their dual identity. Nevertheless, it is quite significant for them to promote their identity for personal and global (historical) reasons.

Why does the majority of the Polish population in Kazakhstan not participate in ethnic communities? The interviewees share the opinion that the formal nature of the community prevents them from participation. The events organized in the communities are based on generalized versions of Polish traditions, although, as we know, the Polish population were not homogeneous. For example, every year the Polish community in Nur-Sultan hold pre-Christmas divinations (*Mikolajki*), whereas even the first generation of deportees from West Ukraine and Belarus were not familiar with. *Mikolajki* tradition was imported from contemporary Poland rather than from family tradition. Overall, the narrative of Kazakhstani Poles is mostly based on the deportation and repatriation history, which is nevertheless important, but limited. The only Polish magazine published in Kazakhstan by the Almaty Polish Cultural Centre “*Więź*” *Almatyński Kurier Polonijny* has a regular column of Polish legends, traditions and beliefs. And all of them connected with

¹¹¹ It includes the dilemmas between ethnicity and nationality or between different ethnicities. There is the representatives of Polish-Tatar activists in Kazakhstani society who support both their ethnic roots, but in most cases the individual chooses one predominant ethnicity (under the influence of parents’ patterns mostly).

Poland itself, while the stories of local Polish cultures such as ceremonies, folklor (songs, legends, ‘miracles’ and other), cuisine are ‘hidden’ in the “Deportation histories.”¹¹² For Poles from Kamenka such culture and traditions are similar to the Soviet celebrations of Spring Farewell or “Soviet” weddings – these are reinvented traditions. The source and aim of these ‘inventions’ are also similar: it is the state’s try to replace the previous ideology.

Also, the magazine *Almatyński Kurier Polonijny* informs about every scientific publication on Kazakhstani Poles and their history. Some sources of this work were covered there. For example, the collection by Aktobe historian Nadezhda Stepanenko *Formirovanie polskoi dispory v Kazakhstane* and another monograph *Zhivaya pamyat’* that were sponsored by Soros Foundation.¹¹³ However, neither the initiatives of Polish communities, nor the publication are connected with culture-, tradition-exploring opportunities. It becomes the matter of every family.

Therefore, official Polish communities in Kazakhstan promoting state Polish knowledge propose to solve the ethnic identity question in the most simple way – choose civil position, whereas the part of descendants do not associate themselves nor with Polish statehood, nor with Kazakhstani. This part

¹¹² Bielawska, Deonizja. 2013. “Istoria Belyavskoj Deonizii Pavlovny” [In Russian]. *Almatyński Kurier Polonijny*, 3(5), 8–12.

¹¹³ See *Almatyński Kurier Polonijny*, 2(30), 26–27.

perceives patriotism through the “localism” calling the motherland (*Rodina*) the places where they were born and raised. This is the reason why there is a difference between Polish diaspora and Polish ethnic minority in the state. Although the term *diaspora* for many researchers is closely connected with the “dislocation from the ancestral homeland” and the term *ethnic minority* does not always include the component of displacement,¹¹⁴ the Polish case in Kazakhstan presents another perspective. The notion *diaspora* goes into the political plane, whereas the *ethnic minority* characterizes the Polish population in all its diversity.

Repatriation: a way to return the past or the political reaction on the historical abuse

Another type of action among the descendants of deportees was the migration to other countries. In the first years after the dissolution Russia became the main point because of the lack of language and cultural barriers. In the first years of independence people migrated mostly due to economical reasons. Another part of the descendants used the opportunity to repatriate. In

¹¹⁴ See Brah, A. 1996. *Cartographies of Diaspora: Contesting identities*. Routledge; Clifford, J. 1994. “Diasporas.” *Cultural Anthropology*, 9(3), 302–338; Cohen, R. and Fischer, C. 2019. *Routledge Handbook of Diasporas Studies*. Taylor & Francis Group.

the 1990s numbers of countries launched privileged ethnic migration programmes, including Poland.

Contemporary repatriation law was preceded by the postwar repatriation system, which lasted until the 1960s and were based on bilateral agreements and initiated by official institutions such as the Office of the Government Plenipotentiary for Repatriation.¹¹⁵ In 1997 the Parliament of Poland passed the first law on foreigners, which introduced a special repatriation visa (art. 10) designated for foreigners of Polish ethnicity or Polish origin who were intending to settle permanently in Poland. Nevertheless, a major step in the repatriation system in Poland was the Law on Repatriation of 2000. The law defines a repatriate as a person of Polish origin who arrived in the Republic of Poland with a national repatriation visa and the intention to settle permanently (art. 1, Sec. 2). A person of Polish origin is perceived as someone who declares Polish nationality and demonstrates a connection with Polishness – through language, traditions, and customs – and who has at least one parent/grandparent/great-grandparents with (or had in the past) Polish nationality (or ethnicity) or citizenship.¹¹⁶ A person arriving in Poland with a

¹¹⁵ Łodziński, Sławomir. 1997. “Repatriacja osób narodowości lub pochodzenia polskiego w latach 1989– 1997” [In Polish]. *Problemy prawne i instytucjonalne*, 586.

¹¹⁶ Most descendants have *sprawkas* of rehabilitation of the whole family or a certain member where the nationality is pointed. In another case the descendants used their grandparents/great-grandparents’ birth certificates to prove their Polish origins. Those descendants who don’t have those documents, but know the region of living of their grandparents/great-grandparents can request a certificate from local authorities.

repatriation visa acquires Polish citizenship at the moment of crossing the border of the Republic of Poland. The spouse of an applicant who is not himself or herself of Polish origin but who intends to settle in Poland together with the applicant, also receives permission to settle.

The present third wave of repatriation¹¹⁷ began with the transformation of the political system in 1989 in Poland and in 1991 – in Kazakhstan. The first stage of repatriation, lasting to the mid-1990s, can be termed “spontaneous repatriation,” as it was mainly based on informal individual or social initiatives.¹¹⁸ The second period, from around 1996 to 2000, was the laying of the foundations of an institutional repatriation system in Poland. In its first phase, from September 1996 to the end of December 1997, 334 repatriate families were invited to settle in Poland – around 1,290 people in total. Between 1997 and 2010, only 6,223 people overall arrived in Poland as a result of repatriation. In the same years, 297 people were recognized as repatriates on the basis of art. 109 of the Law on Foreigners of 25 June 1997; based on articles 16 and 41 of the Law on Repatriation of 2000, the regional authorities recognized a further 734 people as repatriates. In total in the period 1997 to 2010, some 7,079

¹¹⁷ The first was in the 1940s and the second – in the 1950s.

¹¹⁸ Grzymała-Kazłowska, Aleksandra, and Grzymała-Moszczyńska, Halina. 2014. “The Anguish of Repatriation: Immigration to Poland and Integration of Polish Descendants from Kazakhstan.” *East European Politics and Societies*, 28(3), 10.

people went to live in Poland thanks to repatriation. Nevertheless, statistics show a clearly declining trend in repatriation immigration since 2001.¹¹⁹

Officially, repatriation means arrivals in the state covered by a special state policy, with the objective to settle people of Polish origin who, as a result of border changes and resettlement, lived prior to 2001 in the Asian part of the Soviet Union. In accordance with the binding Law on Repatriation from 2000, “a repatriate is a person of Polish origin who arrived in the Republic of Poland on the basis of an entrance visa with the objective of repatriation and the intention of permanent settlement” (art. 1). Importantly, on crossing the Polish border, a repatriate obtains the status of Polish citizen.

However, the concept of “repatriation” has been the source of debate and doubt. The term *repatriation* was initiated by the Polish government and expanded to the research world as a compromise term, though it is not perfect. For example, Robert Wyszynski notes that, with this category of immigrants, there is no return to their homeland in a literal sense, because it was “the homeland that left them.”¹²⁰ As a result of politics and changes in border emplacements, Polish repatriates do not return to the lands of their ancestors, but arrive in their historical and ideological homeland. Repatriates to Poland are

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Wyszynski, Robert. 2008. “Citizenship or Nationality – a Difficult Return from Kazakhstan.” In *Homecoming. An Anthropology of Return Migration*, edited by Nowicka Ewa and Firouzbakhch H. Kraków: Nomos, 118.

the descendants of people resettled in Central Asia and Siberia, often those who were born in Ukraine or Belarus. But proposed alternative academic terms such as *return*¹²¹ or the *so-called repatriation*¹²² of Poles from the former Soviet Union or even *impatriation*¹²³ in reference to the current phenomenon, have not been widely accepted.

The results of repatriation are highly promoted by Kazakhstani and Polish media as positive and productive. However, there is a lack of information about the adaptation process and difficulties of repatriants in open sources, while this topic is quite popular among researchers because it identifies the nature of repatriation and gives a complex image of this movement. The research papers help to find out why repatriation does not fit certain groups of the Polish minority. Kozłowski distinguished the main types of adaptation problem for repatriates in Poland: sociocultural, administrative, living standards, and professional.¹²⁴ A similar typology was proposed by Hut with a division of problems into formal/legal, professional, material/living, sociocultural and climate-related.¹²⁵ Hut stressed the lack of support from state offices because of

¹²¹ Ibid, 127.

¹²² Ruchniewicz, Małgorzata. 1999. "Repatriacja ludności polskiej z ZSRR w latach 1955–1959" [In Polish]. *Dzieje Najnowsze*, 31/2, 171.

¹²³ Hut, Paweł. 2002. *Warunki życia i proces adaptacji repatriantów w Polsce w latach 1992–2000* [In Polish]. Warsaw: Oficyna Wydawnicza Aspra-JR, 43.

¹²⁴ Kozłowski, Bronisław. 2004. "Diaspora polska w Kazachstanie w świetle wyników powszechnego spisu ludności z Kazachstanu z 1999 Roku" [In Polish]. In *Repatriacja jako element polityki demograficznej Polski*, Poznań: Nakom, 67.

¹²⁵ Hut, Paweł. 2002. *Warunki życia i proces adaptacji repatriantów w Polsce w latach 1992–2000* [In Polish]. Warsaw: Oficyna Wydawnicza Aspra-JR, 36.

the lack of social-insurance agreements between Poland and most of the countries of the former USSR. However, Polish-Kazakhstani relations were fully elaborated in the 2000s. And for the repatriates from Kazakhstan there is other main adaptation problems: the entry and maintenance of repatriates on the labor market in Poland¹²⁶ and repatriates' low linguistic and cultural competence.¹²⁷ The family who recently have repatriated to Poland have a quite universal profession – truck driver, but after the move he found out that the process of skill attestation in Poland takes half a year in total, which led to considerable financial problems for all family because of his impossibility to work so long.¹²⁸ The workers of educational and media spheres struggle with more serious problems: often their degree is not recognized by the Polish officials and they should choose physical work. But in most cases the representatives of non-technical education refuse the opportunity to repatriate.

The second problem of low linguistic and cultural competence can lead to a lack of acceptance of repatriates in Polish society. A 1994 study by the Public Opinion Research Centre (CBOS) showed that 39 percent of Poles definitely and 43 percent somewhat supported the idea that “every person of Polish origin, if he/she wants to, should receive Polish citizenship and the right to settle in

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Kozłowski, Bronisław. 2004. “Diaspora polska w Kazachstanie w świetle wyników powszechnego spisu ludności z Kazachstanu z 1999 Roku” [In Polish]. In *Repatriacja jako element polityki demograficznej Polski*, Poznań: Nakom, 178.

¹²⁸ Author interview, 23/VI/21, Nur-Sultan, Kazakhstan, audio tape.

Poland.” This result was confirmed by research in 1994–1996 by the Centre of Migration Research at the Institute of Social Studies (University of Warsaw). However, there are many stereotypes among Polish citizens. The accent of repatriates is associated with Ukrainian and Russian citizenship which in some cases is the subject of conflicts and discriminations.¹²⁹ Social alienation does not encourage repatriates to make steps to solve the problem, otherwise they try to find the Russian-/Ukrainian-speaking community or leave the country.¹³⁰ Interestingly, some repatriates consider themselves patriots of Kazakhstan. Being in Poland, they form an active position in relation to important events of the "second Motherland".

The next law allowing people of Polish origin in the territory of the former USSR or those who are stateless in these countries to come to Poland is the *Karta Polaka* (Card of the Pole) from 2007. This card can be awarded to a person who either declares Polish national affiliation, demonstrates a connection with Polishness through at least a rudimentary familiarity with the Polish language and a knowledge and cultivation of traditions and customs, who has parents/grandparents/great-grandparents of Polish nationality or citizenship, or who can demonstrate his or her active involvement in the promotion of the

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Grzymała-Kazłowska, Aleksandra, and Grzymała-Moszczyńska, Halina. 2014. “The Anguish of Repatriation: Immigration to Poland and Integration of Polish Descendants from Kazakhstan.” *East European Politics and Societies*, 28(3), 15.

Polish language and culture. Among its benefits are a long-term residence visa, the right to take up employment and economic activity in Poland, and access to the free education and healthcare system. Holders of the Karta Polaka can also benefit from art. 52, which gives them a wide range of rights similar to those of Polish citizens, with the exception of voting rights. This path is sometimes called “hidden” repatriation.¹³¹

A particularly important role was played, both in the resurgence and formation of the Polish community in Asia and in the daily lives of the Polish communities in Kazakhstan, by the Catholic Church, although it did not become actively involved in the process of repatriation. The latest studies also show that the Catholic Church in Kazakhstan is abandoning ethnically oriented (pro-Polish) activity in favor of the construction of a religious and social parish community at a global level (referring to the universal teaching of the Church) and a local one (adjusted to local multiculturalism).¹³²

The third generation has another way to integrate in Polish society – educational programs. Most of them are initiated as other programs for foreigners who do not speak Polish. With an additional ‘language’ year students have greater opportunity to explore life in Poland and adapt there than the

¹³¹ Biuletyn Migracyjny №4, 2005. “Ukryta repatriacja do Polski” [In Polish].

¹³² Grzymała-Moszczyńska, Halina, and Chlebicka, Anna. 2012. Strategie akulturacyjne misjonarzy: Perspektywa Interaktywnego Modelu akulturacji” [In Polish]. in *Wposzukiwaniu ciągłości i zmiany. Religia w perspektywie socjologicznej*, edited by. I. Borowik. Kraków: Nomos, 117–137.

repatriates who have to learn language before the repatriation or during the short language courses. Poland as many other countries promote its educational programs for foreigners and the descendants of deportees have little privileges toward the representatives of other ethnic groups.

Neutralization, assimilation or multiply ethnic identities

Most Polish descendants did not fit into ethnic local communities and have not tried to repatriate to Poland. One group of the remaining Polish population in Kazakhstan localizes their identity following their ancestors behavior, another recoils their ethnic identity or the family history (if their ethnicity was changed under the historical abuses) and follows the national or 'civic' values more. One of the reasons for the existence of the second group is the state policy. The latest works on Kazakhstan policy and historiography shows the meaningful changes since the 1990s. Beachain and Kevlihan (2013) mention the process of *Kazakhization* as a following ideology after multiculturalism. Although the law is still in the position of every-ethnic-equality. Meanwhile, the preference on the side of Kazakh culture and language. The spreading happens unnoticeable for the wide population, but the fact that parents (not only Polish) prefer Kazakh-speaking kindergartens for

their children which remains the Soviet situation when ethnic minorities preferred to teach their children Russian instead of native/family language to “make their life easier” take place. And another reason for the neglect of ethnic identity is a lack of awareness of family history. The ‘Soviet’ parents who did not have opportunity to discover the genealogy because this topic was not in the public sphere have limited possibilities to pass the knowledge of their ancestors.

Nevertheless, there are cases when grandparents pass their family histories directly to their grandchildren and uncover the ethnic narrative. This is facilitated by the lack of a framework in the form of fear of the Soviet government and grandmothers teach their grandchildren Polish prayers, and grandfathers tell family legends. For the most part, this knowledge is limited by the experience of a particular person and therefore forms a certain cultural code for the third generation. They could celebrate Easter and Christmas in the family without visiting Catholic churches and considering these traditions as a part of family culture mostly.

There are diverse narratives of ethnic identity among the third generation of Polish deportees – Kazakhstani Poles. The years of independence gave various opportunities: from integrating to Polish society through repatriation and educational programs to neglecting the ethnic component. Nevertheless, this component is still significant and considerable as for the political sphere as for

the social one. Therefore, most descendants are in the identity searches. Even if they were aware of their 'ethnic' history, they had problems with finding a satisfying way to reconcile their national, ethnic, social and language identities. This is why the question of minorities in Kazakhstan still needs to be elaborated by the government of Kazakhstan and Poland.

Conclusion

This research aimed to identify the modifications of ethnic identity of three generations of Polish population in Kazakhstan. Based on multi-sourced analysis of social tendencies among each generation, it can be concluded that different policies (Stalin's terror, Soviet nation-building and the policies of independent Kazakhstan) and different types of mobility (deportation, urbanization and repatriation) define the formation of ethnic identity of the generations. The thesis proposes the rich historical background and the selective phenomena of adaptation processes which influence the next generations along with official policies.

The thesis infers that most of the mobility processes which were initiated by the government played a key role in the identity formation: deportation and following isolation localized deportees; urbanization in the context of Sovietization led to the attenuation of ethnic identification; the post-Soviet generation had a choice between ethnification, alienation and neutralization (e.g. unconscious assimilation) of ethnicity. And neutralization seems the most widespread way among the modern generation of Poles in Kazakhstan. The research extends the understanding of Polishness by describing how *kresy* identity transformation in the Central Asian republic.

Overall, this research shows the power of state's policy in the identity formation processes. We see how one layer of identity can mobilize to the reaction of outside coercion or shrink beyond the strong social identification. This case can be an advantageous example for the studies of identity in different forms.

It is impossible to fully explore such an extensive topic. The main task of this work was to enrich the history of Polishness, the history of resistance and sedition in the USSR by presenting 'hidden transcript' and to show that the phenomenon of ethnic identity is influenced by many factors, including the political regime and its methods, as well as the collective initiative of population groups and the stability of their cultural characteristics.

The topic still has a great potential to research. Further research could explore every generation separately to more selective analysis. The most poorly-studied period is the modern one. The third generation of Polish deportees is needed to determine the causes and possible solutions for the identity crisis and the ways of integrating in various societies. In the context of post-colonial studies the case of Poles in Kazakhstan confirms the irreversible consequences of totalitarian regime and state's violations.

Also, there is a noticeable difference between descendants of deportees of the first (the 1930s) and second (the 1940s) waves of forced dislocations. Poles

of the first waves who were deported from non-Polish territories and deported Polish citizens who had to stay in the deportation points played a different role in identity formation of the next generation, as each group had a different contribution to the social and political image of the Polish minority.

In a broader sense this thesis helps to fill the lacunas in the history of ethnic minorities in Kazakhstan and gives the nudge to improve the policy on ethnic minorities to a more advanced approach. Therefore, the topic of Polish identity needs ethnographic support and wide research opportunities.

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